

Subject: Minutes from 1/13 Retreat

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1/13/04 UMD Commission on Women Retreat, McCabe Renewal Center

Facilitated by LeAne Rutherford

Members present: Mary Cameron, Joy Michalicek, Lisa ZumHofe, Deborah Petersen-Perlman, Julie Westlund, Ruth Westra, Nancy Damberg, Amy Meredith, Martha Eberhart, Lori Johnson

N.B. On a personal note, I would like to reiterate Mary's request that personal comments made during yesterday's retreat not be repeated. Thanks.

LeAne started by sharing her preparation process with us, including her review of CW's history (the summary document written by Virginia Katz) and a google search on topics including mission, vision, strategic planning and the text, A Whack on the Side of the head. She also forecasted her plan for the day, including a SWOT Analysis and the production of a one page condensed summary identifying who we are, what we do, and who's going to do it.

Our first activity involved generating adjectives describing CW: Proactive, caring, leaderly, etc.

Next, we shared our perceptions of animals we felt represented the members of CW as well as a rationale for our choices of animals: Lionesses, mother bears, elephants, beavers, bulldogs, crows, bitches, sheep and turtles.

We identified obstacles facing UMD women:

- hiring opportunities
- lack of top-down support
- administrative leadership
- buck-passing
- unapproachability of administrators
- conflict avoidance
- paternalism attitudes of obstructionism
- negative perceptions of who we are generating a need to educate campus women and to create awareness of who we are and what we do
- dismissal
- resistance from other women
- perceptions of authority assigned to younger women (or lack thereof)
- perceptions of roles

A question was raised about what percentage of women at UMD are "term" faculty--dspp will ask Mary Allen to provide us with this information.

We identified successes facing UMD women:

- mentorship opportunities
- 51% of the UMD student population are women, 49% are men
- Most Academic Support and Student Life directors are women
- More women are teamsters than in the past
- There are existent programs which encourage diverse students to aim for careers in medicine, engineering and science.

Challenges:

We need to start early to create awareness among girls of the broad variety of career opportunities open to women.

We observed that as fields become populated with women, that field becomes identified as a "woman's field".

We need training to become mentors.

Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis for the Commission on Women

Strengths:

Child care
Celebrating women
Justice Oriented
CW offers women a group with which to work
Excellent, high quality members
Commission history/purpose
Money available for programs and grants
Some powerful women have served on the CW over the years
CW women have passion and desire to do good work
CW women are resilient, perseverant, diligent
CW women have the will to thrive
CW women are supportive of each other
CW women have some political power to make a fuss and be heard

Weaknesses:

Not realizing our own power
Time constraints
Trouble getting members
No orientation for new members
Lack of leadership continuity
Potential limitation on participation
Outreach to students
Perceptions of who we are
Competing with other responsibilities
Competition for attention
Language choices regarding our identity and our programs (e.g. CoW, luncheon, etc.)
Stereotypes
Lack of visibility

Opportunities:

Choose more powerful language to describe who we are and what we do
Our grants program
Providing leadership training and opportunities
Using media to streamline communication
Developing or forming partnerships with other groups
Providing support for women's issues and concerns
Providing education for the public about injustices facing women and others
the Commission's history
Regularity of meetings, representation, constituency
Mentoring younger people
Welcoming women new to campus
Networking

Threats:

Funding cuts
limits
unclear representation function
Others' perceptions of us
Our own perceptions of who we are
Administrative resistance
Continuity
Lack of central focus
No other UM campus CWs are active
Work overload
Information overload
Concerns about job security

We review CW activities: What do we do?

We provide grants for research on women
The Spring luncheon honoring and celebrating UMD women is well received and appreciated
"Mentoring" of UMD Regents Scholarship Recipients
Our partnership with WRAC on Take our Children to Work
We have provided a forum for issues important to women
We have monitored issues important to women (i.e. Gender Equity in Athletics, Child Care, etc.)
Advocacy and support of women's concerns

What are we going to do? What tasks face us--a preliminary list. We need to consider implementation considerations. How many things can one organization do? What should our timeline be?

Do we need to change our name? LeAne admonished us to cycle back what we do in our name.

How should we address issues of representation?

What is our identity?

Provide a grant-Writing Workshop addressing issues such as how to craft a proposal for multiple organizations, how to generate a budget, how to generate a final report, how to address issues of accountability

Mentoring--students? Younger faculty? New hires? Diverse faculty?

Embark on a better promotional campaign incorporating our history and addressing questions such as why would one want to join the CW,

improving/updating the web site, bookmarks, time saving

Luncheon--what should it do, how should it be used? Do we want to frame it as a celebration? Do we want to reinstitute the recognition function?

What kinds of synergies do we have with other groups.

Leadership: LeAne offered us this phrase as we contemplate leadership:

"Leveraging the power of peers through leadership." We discussed the desire to offer workshops on improving leadership skills, to focus on empowering women, to help others develop leadership skills.

LeAne suggested we ponder the following terms:

Celebrate

Inform

Advocate

Lead/leadership

Communicate

Promote

Synergies/uniting

We attempted an analogy exercise. We weren't very successful at this; perhaps we can contemplate this in anticipation of our next meeting.

Fill-in-the blank:

"Enlisting participation in UMD's Commission on Women is like

"

We suggested "walking uphill"; "pushing a boulder uphill"; "whistling in the wind", "icing the cake", "lacing up your dance shoes" (n.b. the last three were mine, but didn't seem to resonate with anyone else).

LeAne noted that we have to acknowledge that one of the challenges facing CW in terms of relevance to the younger generation of women on campus has to do with learning styles (i.e., we tend to relate in a linear fashion, whereas younger folks are more receptive to nonlinear, visual, associative approaches.

We addressed membership. We agreed to eliminate the system-wide positions and to consider whether or not to add an additional non-bargaining unit rep as well as P/A. We will attempt to obtain constituent lists to assess these considerations.

We agreed to invite Stacey Stark to serve as the CLA rep and not to fill the

CSE position or Grad Student position until elections this spring.

We agreed to include the School of Pharmacy, but to fold that rep position into the School of Medicine.

We decided that we should appoint a WRAC member to serve on the CW.

We agreed to use electronic balloting for this year's election (and for the next few years), supplementing with paper ballots for the 20 or so women who do not have email access. We agreed to run elections in April BEFORE the Spring luncheon.

We discussed what to do at this year's Spring luncheon. LeAne recommended that we loosen it up, try to make it more of an active, playful event (we should consider having CW reps at every table, asking folks to move around in icebreaking activities like turning over a cup at the table, identifying by a colored label where to go to next, etc.). She suggested that if we want to gather information at this luncheon we'll need to keep it simple. LeAne suggested that we might want to invite non-commission members to serve on various commission subcommittees--particularly programming and publicity to bring in new blood and spread the wealth.

LeAne noted that she and dspp work with GTAs prior to fall term and that we might be able to facilitate getting a Grad rep.

We discussed the possibility of doing new member orientation.

We discussed our grants program. We agreed that accountability was a real problem this past year. LeAne recommended that we could send a follow-up letter to those folks who were grant recipients but who had not displayed their work at the fall Gallery of Grants, allowing them an opportunity for a second chance to display their work at the Spring luncheon AND WRITE A REPORT but admonishing them that failure to live up to the terms of the grant would mean we would not be favorably inclined to support future grant proposals by noncompliant grant recipients.

We still need closure on identity, vision and mission, and we need to brainstorm strategies for realizing our goals.

We did tweak our mission statement:

Our mission is to improve and enrich the working and learning environments for UMD women by providing direction, leadership, support and expertise to the UMD community.

Julie summarized the following goals:

1. Write out the mission and publish it.
2. Do a needs survey or campus climate survey.
3. Update the web page.
4. Choose partners (i.e. WRAC).
5. Do grant writing workshop.
6. Provide orientation for new board members.
7. Create a leadership series for campus women.

LeAne recommended that we should consider how these goals might be synergistic.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Petersen-Perlman, Chair
UMD Commission on Women