

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN FACULTY AND STUDENTS  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME  
MEETING OF DECEMBER 10, 2010  
2:30-4:00 p.m. Room 500, MAIN BUILDING**

**Members present:** Susan Ohmer, Kevin Barry, Tracy Bergstrom, Aimee Buccellato, Jessica Collett, Paulette Curtis, Jennifer Mason McAward, Ken Milani, Kathie Newman, Alison Rice, Diane Wagner, Allison Regier, Amber Handy

**Members absent and excused:** Don Pope-Davis, Maura Ryan, Emily LeStrange, Catherine Soler

**Permanent Invited Guests present:** Catherine Pieronek, Kathy Brickley

**Guests:** Barbara Turpin-- Associate Dean, Office of Graduate Studies

- 1. Welcome and Approval of minutes of November 17, 2010 meeting:** Prof. Susan Ohmer, chair, greeted and welcomed members. New member Prof. Paulette Curtis introduced herself to the group.

Prof. Ohmer noted the sharp difference in the campus climate from two years ago when the committee issued its report on the issues facing women at ND. Today, many of these areas of concern are the focus of individuals, groups or offices across the campus. UCWFS is being sought to provide support for and input on these ongoing projects. One option for the committee in the upcoming academic year is to form task forces or subcommittees to work on the identified areas of concern. Another option is to seek out those who are already engaged with these areas and ask them to make a presentation, either to the committee or in a public forum.

If the second option is preferred, Prof. Ohmer outlined possible topics of presentations around the list of concerns that were discussed in November.

- April 2011: update on 2009 report and suggestions for further work  
Jannifer Crittendon on Notre Dame's Affirmative Action policy
- May 4, 2011: Climate Survey: models, methods, goals and areas of concern  
Erin Hoffman Harding and Office of Strategic Planning
- May 2011: ECDC committee and update  
Developing website on family resources

In reviewing the calendar, Prof. Ohmer reminded members of several points. She noted that the Provost has asked the committee to update its report, now two years old. She also reiterated that the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of coeducation at ND is approaching; the committee would like to be part of a campus-wide planning committee.

A motion was made by Prof. Ken Milani to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2010 meeting; Prof. Jessica Colette seconded the motion. The minutes of the November 17, 2010 meeting were unanimously approved.

## **2. Report on Family-Friendly policies in the Graduate School—Barbara Turpin**

Prof. Ohmer introduced Dean Barbara Turpin of the Graduate School who has been invited to brief the committee on the report which has been compiled by the working group convened by Dean Sterling. This group was charged to draft policy that would meet a two-fold goal: 1. Articulate and post on the Graduate School's website a statement of commitment to the objective of assisting graduate students to achieve a balance between career and family; 2. Make structural changes to Graduate School policy to provide this assistance.

Dean Turpin began by noting that several members of this committee were part of the group which researched and drafted this report over ten months. The report has been approved by the General Counsel, the Office of Risk Management, the Office of Residence Life, and the Director of the Graduate School. It will be presented to the Graduate Council in January, 2011; the approval by the Council will confirm the maternity policy herein stated. Dean Turpin seeks the endorsement of the UCWFS today.

Dean Turpin reported first on the statement of commitment to be posted on the Graduate School website. This statement will be posted in January 2011. It is important that the commitment of the university to foster a family friendly environment be visible.

The most important recommendation of the report is the childbirth and accommodation policy. She noted that this does not signify a leave of absence, as graduate students are obligated to remain enrolled full time in order to receive pay. This also insures access to library services, as well as providing international students with appropriate visa status.

This accommodation policy extends the student's eligibility clock; it does not stop it. Students may choose in which semester to take this accommodation. While each student should arrange the specific details of his or her accommodation with the advisor (and other departmental administrators as needed), in general students are relieved of RA and TA duties, exam commitments, and course work deadlines for one semester. Under this policy, students who are in their fifth year of study or less do not forego financial support by the university and do not forego the health insurance subsidy. Students who are in masters' programs or have completed more than five years of study may use the

accommodation but will forego financial support; the university guarantees five years of funding to graduate students. Students may elect this accommodation twice in the course of their study.

Members discussed the distinctions between a leave of absence and an accommodation and the various advantages and disadvantages which accrue to students under each policy. Financial limitations preclude other options; it is anticipated that this policy will cost \$100,000 per year. Mr. Barry asked about the impact of a termination of funding; is it more detrimental to lose funding early in the course of study or at the end? Ms. Handy noted that funding options are actually greater for a graduate student further along the course of study: it is impossible to obtain an external fellowship during pregnancy, while such a position may be more available later, as are adjunct positions. Thus, the financial benefit is likely to be welcome during the time of course work.

Dean Turpin also detailed the variations of the policy for students with external funding sources; these variations are recorded in the policy.

Dean Turpin next discussed the policy recommendations for laboratory conditions for pregnant women students. Because of privacy concerns for the student, general counsel has stated that it is not possible to mandate a specific course of action in the event of a pregnancy. The recommendation 'strongly recommends' that pregnant graduate students inform advisors of a pregnancy and contact the Office of Risk Management which will provide professional advice for the best care of the fetus and mother.

Dean Turpin spoke next about the ten recommendations concerning the campus climate. These were shaped in good part by the work done by Prof. Mary Ann Mason. This report will be distributed to all deans and departmental chairs. In the interest of affecting campus-wide climate change, the most important recommendation of this section is that all faculty, male and female, be encouraged to open up discussion within each department about the importance of and ways to balance career and family. One result of Prof. Collett's survey of graduate students (presented to this committee in December, 2009) was the request by female graduate students that female faculty share their experiences executing this balance successfully. It is widely believed that male graduate students also desire this kind of conversation with their advisors. Because of a pervasive fear of appearing less serious, graduate students are reluctant to initiate this kind of discussion. Institutional support would facilitate more openness.

Prof. Newman introduced the topic of the deteriorating state of graduate student housing. She encouraged the renovation of student housing to be listed as a priority. Prof. Ohmer noted that housing has not been raised by GSU; Ms. Handy said it is lower on the priority list relative to other compelling issues. Prof. Milani suggested that Development might be able to attract alumni graduate students to sponsor graduate student housing. Another topic of concern mentioned by Prof. Newman was the insurance for graduate students' children: they are covered by the Hoosier Healthwise insurance program, which is a form of Medicare. Currently, each parent 'reinvents the wheel' in tackling the insurance process. She urged the university to provide a more functional institutional framework for the issues which student parents uniquely face.

Members discussed the recommendation of a part-time liaison in the Graduate School who could assist student parents in the many practical issues which they face, including the insurance question. Ms. Handy said that a liaison could also advocate for the agenda. Prof. Pieronek noted that the money saved by a higher retention rate of graduate students would balance the costs of employing a graduate student liaison. Prof. Ohmer reported that the library is about to initiate a short term fellowship program whereby graduate students with desirable skills can be employed to perform needed tasks. This model might be used to fund a liaison position to be filled by a graduate student.

Dean Turpin reminded members that HR is developing a new webpage which collects a wide range of information that would be useful to both student parents and faculty parents, information on schools, child care, emergency care options, etc. Part of the climate issue is a communication problem. Answers exist for many of the problems faced by campus parents, but there is poor communication of this information to succeeding new generations. Prof. Newman also noted that the Graduate School need not be the sole advocate for graduate students; this should be of concern to many entities on campus.

Briefly mentioned also are recommendations by the report to provide supervised play groups for student parents, to assist in child care and to provide support. The Graduate School is also continuing to work toward 90% subsidy of graduate student health insurance. The subsidy is 75% in 2010-2011. Premiums will rise 25% in 2011, so the subsidy will probably remain stable at this time. Members noted that many graduate students do not carry health insurance, including for their children; it was stated that graduate student health insurance is very expensive.

Dean Turpin reported that ND will be the first Catholic university to formulate a maternity policy.

Prof. Newman noted that the campus wide distribution of this report, with its detailed and numerous recommendations, should aid in making support of these kinds of changes more familiar and therefore more acceptable throughout the institution from administration through staff. The first step to effect policy change is to change attitudes. The adoption of a family friendly climate is an evolving process for the university.

Prof. Ohmer complimented the working group on the comprehensive and complex report which it has produced. Prof. Aimee Buccellato made a motion to approve and support the report. Mr. Barry seconded the motion. The report was unanimously approved and supported.

### **3. Discussion of the proposal, by the Office of Risk Management, to start a volunteer babysitting database**

Prof. Ohmer informed members that Mary Daly, of the Office of Risk Management, is seeking input from the committee on its proposal to create a volunteer babysitting database at ND. The purpose of the database is to bring together a list of names of people willing to provide volunteer childcare for ND student-parents. Prof. Ohmer invited Dean Turpin to participate in this discussion.

It was noted that this proposal comes through the Office of Risk Management because of liability and safety concerns. There are two sets of concerns: for the ND student doing the childcare and for the children being cared for. For the parents there are also trust and reliability concerns. The university is endeavoring to negotiate and to articulate its responsibility in this situation. If the university sponsors a data base, does that imply endorsement of the listed persons? Is the university responsible to provide childcare training and/or CPR to those on the list? Members discussed the impact of such concerns; do they inhibit the creation of such a list? Dean Barbara Turpin reported that the General Counsel has determined that if a blanket statement of 'no responsibility' were posted at the front of the website of such a data base, it would provide sufficient coverage to the university to facilitate the creation of the list. Thus, it is possible to provide this service, and, as of yet, no unit is doing so.

Members agreed that the idea of a database of names is an excellent one. It was recalled that ECDC used to have such a list; no one knew why that list was discontinued. Ms. Handy said that parents would be willing to pay for childcare; the difficulty lies in finding available childcare. Members discussed the volunteer nature of the proposal; all agreed that it could be difficult to find individuals willing to volunteer on a consistent basis.

Members discussed the idea of an exchange childcare system between members of a cooperative; several have had experience with such a system. Ms. Handy noted that in graduate student housing, such co-ops exist. Off-campus graduate student-parents find it more difficult to make this kind of arrangement.

Kevin Barry stressed that such a data base should not be considered a sufficient answer on the part of the university to the problem of student-parents needing assistance with childcare in order to fulfill their varied campus 'work' obligations—such as attending class, attending meetings, performing departmental duties, etc.

Prof. Ohmer noted that there are other, similar proposals being circulated on campus. She asked for a statement of assessment of this iteration. Members agreed that it seemed unduly to complicate the simple need of student-parents. Prof. Collett noted that the ND Job board can be a simple way to find a sitter; indeed, a posted request usually elicited an excess of choices. She said the ongoing issue is one of communication—getting that list of names to those people with need.

Members agreed that the online data base is a good starting point for responding to this need. A data base with a number of sections could service a variety of needs simultaneously and comprehensively: a co-op option, a volunteer or service option; a pay-for-childcare option; and faculty needs as well as student-parent needs, etc.

Prof. Collett made a motion that the committee suggest an inclusive website or communication strategy be created that addresses childcare needs on campus. Ms. Bergstrom seconded the motion. The motion was affirmed unanimously.

#### 4. New Business:

- a. Prof. Kathy Newman suggested that the university consider creating the position of advocate for families, which could pull together resources for all university families. She noted the global emphasis of this position. It was noted that HR is working on a website that should do much to pull together resources for families. Ms. Handy said that graduate students are blocked out of chunks of the HR website unless they have access to a coded password; communication of this to new generations of students is sketchy. Mr. Barry pointed to the need for good publicity once the website is rolled out. If no one knows it is there, it serves no useful function. Prof. Ohmer offered to follow up on the question of the status of the HR website with Linda Kroll and Dee Dee Sterling.
- b. On the topic of communication across many aspects of campus life, members discussed the functionality of the university website. In particular, members noted the challenges to finding key institutional documents now that the university community has committed so strongly to being 'green.' All agreed that a central location with good publicity would be the best solution to posting key university documents such as the Academic Code, ND Reports, the university Articles, Du Lac, etc.

It was agreed that the ND website provides excellent public relations for the university. Internal communication is not as successfully served by the website. It was noted that many individual units have devised internal methods of communicating; these utilize a variety of organizational and access methods. Many sites have embedded data and materials so complexly that they cannot be reached without detailed instructions. Members discussed the suggestion of an 'intra-net' that would provide centralized access. Prof. Ohmer suggested that the Hesburgh Libraries' HESNET system might serve as a model. Inside ND was designed in part to fill this need, but has not fully done so.

Prof. Ohmer took note that members have suggested the Provost's Office would do well to create a communication's officer position to facilitate campus access to institutional materials and communication overall. Some sites to which members turn when seeking institutional materials are the Registrar's site and the general counsel's policy page. An additional concern is knowing with certainty that a document retrieved is in fact the most current version of that document. Prof. Ohmer said she would carry this discussion forward.

Finally, Ms. Bergstrom noted that information about the lactation rooms in Hesburgh Library is 'impossible' to locate through the ND website. The ongoing difficulty of rolling out the lactation rooms was noted by all.

- c. Mr. Barry asked about the feasibility of moving forward with a request to the president for an endorsement of the recommendations, made in the Graduate School Family-

Friendly report (discussed above) , to make the university climate more friendly for graduate students. Members discussed the necessity to await the Graduate School's presentation of the document to the Graduate School Council for approval. Prof. Ohmer said that a new capital campaign will be undertaken within the next year; the current one is wrapping up, after which a hiatus will be taken. She noted that during this hiatus, new goals will be formulated; this is a good time to bring forward concerns such as the need to update and/or renovate graduate student housing. She also noted that goals are more likely to be incorporated into a new capital campaign if they have the backing of a dean. Dean Sterling's support of a goal such as graduate student housing would be of great value. Prof. Newman and Mr. Barry agreed that many of the concerns addressed in this report have impact beyond the graduate student population, so that buy-in from other deans, etc. should be attainable. Mr. Barry noted the climate question is the question of work/life balance that is of concern for all university employees with families.

Prof. Ohmer suggested that soliciting a statement from the president's office would necessitate a delay of significant time, perhaps several years, due to the necessity to research and to interview all stakeholders. She suggested that, in conjunction with the input of Dean Sterling, the committee could come forward with a firm endorsement of the climate recommendations as a way of bringing the issue to the notice of the president's office.

As time had expired, Prof. Ohmer thanked members for attending; she reiterated that a key function of the committee in this academic year is to endorse, review and monitor ongoing progress in the delineated areas of concern. This will be an efficient use of committee time. That the committee's recommendation is so strongly sought by campus entities working with these topics is an indication that progress is being made.

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 3:55 p.m.