

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN FACULTY AND STUDENTS**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME**  
**MEETING OF February 28, 2012**  
**11:00-12:00 p.m. Main Building, Room 500**

**Members present:** Maura Ryan—chair, Kevin Barry, Jennifer Mason McAward, Paulette Curtis, Jade Avelis, Catherine Rastovski, Kathie Newman, Alison Rice, Susan Sheridan, Diane Wagner, Tracy Bergstrom, Aimee Buccellato, Anne Huntington, Claire Solas, Catherine Pieronek, Heather Rakoczy Russell

**Members absent and excused:** D. Katherine Spiess

**Permanent Invited Guests present:**

**Guests:** Dan Myers, Denise Murphy, Susan Ohmer, Pamela Wojcik

**1. Welcome**

The minutes of the October 11, 2011 meeting were unanimously approved.

**2. Discussion of campus celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of coeducation at Notre Dame**

Prof. Pam Wojcik, from Film, Television and Theater, was invited to appear today to talk about the upcoming (Spring, 2013) celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of coeducation at ND. As a member of the Gender Studies department, she is able to inform the committee of the plans being developed in Gender Studies. Dolley Duffy, in Alumni Relations, is also engaged in developing plans in conjunction with alumnae, to celebrate this milestone in ND history.

Prof. Wojcik thanked the committee for giving her this opportunity. She noted that the Gender Studies department has not formalized its plans for a celebration. There has been discussion of some sort of seminar or other academic activity. She noted that the typical idea--celebrating the attributes of women--is something which is already widely and regularly done in Gender Studies. It would be great to articulate an idea which is more unique to this event. The alumni office is coordinating the return of alums to campus. It is appropriate to have events in which alums discuss what ND was like when they arrived here, how ND impacted them, how they have fared since their time here. This leaves available an area of planning which might focus on current conditions of women at ND, the experiences of recent graduates and current students, faculty and staff, as well as recognition of further progress to be made. Prof. Wojcik stated that Gender Studies is most willing to implement ideas; it does not have a proposal to make at this time.

Prof. Wojcik reported that there are plans for an exhibit in the library, put together by Gender Studies students, which will focus on the history of women at ND. In addition, there is a plan, suggested by Prof. Jessica Collett, to collect stories from alums, a la the NPR project, "Story Corps," to be shared and archived. Finally, there has been an initial discussion of holding some kind of women's day on campus, to call attention to the role of women on the campus. Two ideas have circulated: a women's rally, in

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the mode of Occupy Wall Street, to draw attention to the 45% of campus members who are female; a Day-Without-Women, again to call attention to the place filled on campus by women.

Prof. Ryan mentioned the idea of finding funding in order to bring in a significant figure to give a public lecture; Jil Kerr Conwy was one name mentioned. Prof. Wojcik reported that the group with which she is working was not strongly attracted to this idea. She discussed the necessity of avoiding the impression that all-female education is preferable to coed. In addition, she noted that no one in Gender Studies has a background in education, so they are not able to fully develop this aspect of the celebration. Names were suggested for others to contact who might be able to contribute in this area of examining the broader impact of coeducation (Susan Bloom; Stuart Greene). Faculty connected with ESS might provide guidance.

Members agreed that the celebration should represent 'what the campus would like to see.' There was agreement that it would be desirable to have an academically focused event among the other kinds of celebrations. Anne Hutchinson and Claire Solas, undergraduate representatives, talked about programming which will happen this spring: alumnae are being invited to meet with senior women students to share their post-graduate experiences. The students stressed that undergraduate women are looking for increased contact with women 'in the field' who have already confronted and responded to the challenges which are specific to professional women. In particular, undergraduate female students would appreciate an opportunity to talk with professional women who have dealt with the challenge of balancing private with professional lives. There is a lack of this kind of contact. It was suggested that a prominent female scientist would be a good choice to secure for a presentation or lecture.

Prof. Kathie Newman presented her idea of a visual art statement to express the transformative experience of opening the campus to women. Her focus is on the change in numbers. Such a display could represent both a celebration and a notification of 'the distance to go.' It was noted that Yale has such an art piece, a spiral, situated in front of its main library building. Prof. Curtis noted that the only iconography of women on campus is the prominent but untouchable Mary statue on the dome. It was noted that getting a new piece of art approved, commissioned, and executed is a time consuming project. It might be well to begin planning now for an art piece to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of coeducation. A more temporary but available option would be a Snite Museum exhibit.

The group discussed other ways of visually celebrating the event; these might be more temporary. The idea of a website focused on this occasion was presented; many different kinds of materials could be collected and presented here. Videos of interviews and teaching experiences were mentioned. Tracy Bergstrom mentioned that when there had been talk of an ND woman website previously, Archives had pulled together a collection of photos; these are still tagged and available.

There was agreement that a focus on the present would be appropriate and important. Prof. Buccellato asked what kind of outreach to departments and colleges is happening. Developing concurrent connections with scheduled events of campus entities would be a way to add heft to the celebratory

plans. Using the example of Architecture, Prof Buccellato suggested connecting with the department's yearly lecture series; it might be possible to arrange an all-woman series, or to focus on the work of female architects. The number of female architecture majors is increasing. Included in departmental programming could be both formal and informal gatherings, offering opportunities for a range of interactions. Evening lectures followed with breakfast conversations might provide a welcome variety of venues. Prof. Allison Rice concurred that this kind of programming would be 'a wonderful idea;' enriching to audience and lecturers alike.

It was suggested that when departmental advisory councils come for campus visits in the Fall, generally in connection with football games, it might be possible to arrange interactions between students and council members, with a particular focus on women. Members agreed that increasingly, students of both genders are asking how to balance professional and private lives. Members discussed the idea of mentoring programs, such as the Career Center might be arranging. It was noted that the ideal would be to create a relationship that lasts into the future. On the other hand, Prof. Wojcik noted that FTT has developed a program to bring back graduates, on a biennial basis, for a more global and impersonal kind of mentoring that has been very successful in terms of addressing some of the questions of soon-to-be graduated students.

Prof. Ryan thanked members for the wide variety of ideas which have been suggested. It would be helpful to call a subcommittee that would sort and select among ideas that the UCWFS could get behind. She will make contact with some of the people and organizations which have been mentioned. Prof. Ryan noted that she is particularly interested in including 'women at ND now' as part of the focus of the celebration. She offered to investigate the process by which a permanent visual statement could be developed to commemorate this occasion. Prof. Wojcik offered to contact ESS, and Stuart Greene, about building an event around educational theory. It was agreed that it will be a challenge to include the past, the present and a look into the future changes that might be anticipated. There was a brief discussion of the percentage of women undergraduate students and campus policy about enrollment numbers. Kevin Barry, referring to national initiatives focused on the continuing representation of women and people of color in the STEM disciplines, suggested that this occasion could provide an opportunity both to call attention to what ND has accomplished and what progress still needs to be made.

Kevin Barry also suggested campus banners, of the sort featuring Blessed Basil Moreau which are currently hanging from campus light posts, that could attract and inform the casual campus visitor. It was noted that St. Mary's has a website featuring students with interesting stories. As part of this celebration, a website of videos could be linked to banners and other materials, creating a synergy of celebration. Jade Avelis mentioned that there is a number of female faculty who were undergraduates here; they are a resource to be tapped.

### **3. ECDC advisory committee**

**a. committee representation**

The ECDC advisory committee was formed by John Affleck-Graves as an effective way to bring to the attention of senior campus administrators concerns of campus members about childcare related issues. Among other ideas, one program which emerged from the committee is a central website for the university which brings together all family friendly issues and topics. The A & L's well designed website can serve as a model here. HR will house and maintain this new site; it will contain some social media components that permit users to casually exchange information. The concept has been vetted by the General Counsel's office. The concept is almost ready for roll out. Representation from UCWFS is requested; both graduate student and faculty representation are desired.

Members briefly discussed whether social media components would be usable by single faculty to exchange information on concerns uniquely pertinent to their demographic. Prof. Ohmer stressed that the central focus of the website will be around childcare related topics.

**b. Faculty leave policy**

Prof. Dan Myers, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, was invited to address the committee on the topic of the family leave policy (FMLA). Accompanying him was Ms. Denise Murphy. There have been challenges in communication and interpretation of the policy; a working group was convened to examine the policy and develop some methods for addressing concerns. Many questions related to teaching release as an aspect of FMLA; most of these questions are concerned with the birth/adoption of a child. The conclusion reached by Prof. Myers is that it is time to update the campus policy. The aim is to have a formal rollout of the policy, endeavoring to fully inform all campus members of the details of the policy, and work to insure that the policy is fully understood, is being used properly, and is taken advantage of in the ways that it has been designed to be used.

Prof. Myers requested the input of the committee, as a leading voice in the discussion of effective family policies. This meeting represents a beginning to the conversation, which should be ongoing.

The FMLA policy handout was distributed to members. Some issues which have arisen include:

1. Timing of leave relative to birth of a child—there is concern about when FMLA kicks in if the birth occurs in the summer break.
2. Timing of the cessation of teaching responsibilities during the semester: currently the policy says that teaching responsibilities are relived during the semester when the child is born. Concerns focused on a birth which occurs unexpectedly, at the end of a semester, during a summer, etc.
3. Inconsistency of the application of FMLA: the policy is not implemented consistently across the campus, which results in prevention of access to the benefit on occasion.
4. Interpretation of FMLA for illness: when is FMLA paid, when can unpaid FMLA be accessed. There is confusion in part because there are two models being implemented on campus, for faculty and for staff.

Ms. Murphy stressed that the overall areas of confusion are 1. Establishment of an appropriate policy and 2. Implementation of the established policy and consistency across campus in implementation.

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Members discussed the problem of consistency as related to the assignment of teaching duties and of service. It was agreed that a clear blanket rule stating that the employee is relieved of teaching and service duties at the time of FMLA request would eliminate departmental discretion in implementation. While in some departments there is an admirable culture of support, this is not sufficient for a campus policy. One source of confusion is that some entities have interpreted the relief of teaching duties to be something which benefits the institution, while others have interpreted this to be of benefit for the faculty member. To meet industry standards, there needs to be a 'blanket rule.'

Prof. Newman added that under FMLA, it is unclear what a faculty member should do in response to a short term, unexpected sickness, such as a bout of flu. Prof. Myers made note of this variation of problem. It was also noted that faulty interpretations can be the result of periodic turnover which brings new faculty into administrative roles.

It was noted that the GSU created a handbook for graduate students which presented scenarios under which FMLA could apply, to assist the students in understanding the policy. A similar document might be helpful for department chairs.

Prof. Curtis asked who manages the oversight implementation of FMLA; it was suggested that 'a point person' from outside the department or college, who works frequently with the policy would be useful. Such a position might alleviate the perception of unfair implementation of the policy. It was noted that most colleges have an associate dean for faculty affairs, who functions as a liaison with the Provost's office. Prof. Buccellato noted that Architecture is too small for such a position. She advocated for a top down, structured document that every faculty member reads; this would address the perception that 'things are easier than they used to be.' She related her personal experience, in which she was told after two maternity leaves, during the tenure-track stage, that she could not have any more leaves. This puts her at a disadvantage with her non-childbearing colleagues. She noted that junior faculty must 'fight for their rights' which is a perilous situation. It is ironic that a Catholic institution seems to be communicating that caring for new born children is a lesser priority. There is discussion underway to move all junior faculty to a seven year clock, in part because of problems such as this described by Prof. Buccellatto.

Prof. McAward, noting that the working group is 'asking the right questions,' asked if the policy is being benchmarked. It is, and ND is both better and worse than its peers. Prof. Myers noted that a strong FMLA policy should be a recruiting tool for ND. Prof. McAward stated that a catholic university should exceed best practices.

Ms. Avelis noted that graduate students are not covered by FMLA; 'don't leave us out.' Prof. Newman reported that that policy was changed as of Fall, 2011. It was noted that this change has been poorly communicated.

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As time had expired, Prof. Myers asked members to email him or Ms. Murphy with further thoughts about the policy. Prof. Ryan offered to schedule a return visit to continue the discussion, as well.

The meeting was adjourned.