

Annual Report
July 2002 – June 2003
Status of Women Office

Connie Guberman
Status of Women Officer
November 2003

Executive Summary

The Status of Women Office was established in 1984. The mandate of the Office is to address inequities experienced by women at the University of Toronto and to promote policy development in areas of particular relevance to women. The Status of Women Office addresses issues of gender equity for women students, staff and faculty at all three University of Toronto campuses.

The roles and responsibilities of the Status of Women Office are broad. They include improving the status of women at the University of Toronto in pursuit of the goal of full gender equity by being involved in the development of policies and practices, providing advice, identifying and highlighting key issues, offering expertise, and generally being “an effective catalyst for change.”

The Status of Women Office considers it a priority to assist in developing the understanding across the University that equity for women cannot be addressed effectively in isolation from other equity issues. The issues of gender equity intersect with all other equity issues inextricably. To further this understanding, the Office has partnered with other equity-focused offices to conduct educational and outreach initiatives, focus groups, and presentations.

The Status of Women Officer is advised by the Status of Women Advisory Council which raises new issues, fosters inter-constituency alliances, acts a sounding board for the Office’s input into relevant University debates and initiatives, and identifies priorities. There are approximately forty members of the Council representing students, staff and faculty. Some members attend as individuals and others are representatives of campus groups and offices.

Priorities Identified for 2002-2003

- Increase the profile of the Status of Women Office and women’s issues for staff, students, and faculty on all three campuses
- Consolidate and enhance the Mentoring Program
- Collect best practices related to gender equity
- Plan for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Status of Women Office (120 years of women officially admitted to U of T as students)

To achieve the objectives and to address the above priorities, the Status of Women Office conducted many activities and initiatives including: The Mentoring Program, Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day, Ontarians with Disabilities Act Accessibility Plan, staff discussions, UTSC and UTM outreach.

Goals and Priorities for 2003-2004

- Host and coordinate events related to the celebration of the 120th anniversary of women being admitted as students to the U of T (also the 20th anniversary of the Status of Women Office)
- Establish greater links with others both inside and outside the University who work on issues of gender equity at the institutional level
- Continue to extend outreach to the UTM and UTSC campuses by establishing local Status of Women Advisory Councils
- Continue to balance initiatives for women students, staff and faculty
- Work in partnership with those Offices and units involved in implementing the objectives and strategies identified in the White Paper which address gender equity
- Provide advice and support to more faculties and units working toward gender equity
- Compile a profile of women staff, students and faculty at the University

Background

The Status of Women Office was established in 1984. The mandate of the Office is to address inequities experienced by women at the University of Toronto and to promote policy development in areas of particular relevance to women. The Status of Women Office addresses issues of gender equity for women students, staff and faculty at all three University of Toronto campuses.

Office Complement

Connie Guberman was appointed to a five year term as Status of Women Officer, effective August 1, 2002. She holds the position 80% full-time. The position of Status of Women Office Coordinator was established and filled at 100% full-time in March, 2003.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Status of Women Office

The roles and responsibilities of the Status of Women Office are broad. They include improving the status of women at the University of Toronto in pursuit of the goal of full gender equity by being involved in the development of policies and practices, providing advice, identifying and highlighting key issues, offering expertise, and generally being “an effective catalyst for change.”

As described in the Report of the Committee to Review the Office of the Status of Women, 1999, “The Office should function as a highly visible and effective coordinating fulcrum, reaching out to the community to identify needs and bringing them onto the agendas of those best equipped to address them.”

Objectives of the Status of Women Office

1. To participate in the development of policies and practices which contribute to the goals of improving the status of women and attaining full gender equity at the University of Toronto
2. To organize and sponsor activities relevant to women at the University
3. To advise the President and other senior administrators on issues and concerns relating to the status of women at the University
4. To represent the University both internally and externally in women’s activities. And to work collaboratively with others involved in women’s issues

Context of Initiatives

All of the activities listed in this report have multi-purposes and impacts. Some act as a means to increase the visibility of women's issues in general, some enhance the experience of individual women and women collectively at the University and others are educational in their intent. They all provide an opportunity for the Office to collect anecdotal information on the priorities and concerns of diverse women at the University.

The Status of Women Office considers it a priority to assist in developing the understanding across the University that equity for women cannot be addressed effectively in isolation from other equity issues. The issues of gender equity intersect with all other equity issues inextricably. To further this understanding, the Office has partnered with other equity-focused offices to conduct educational and outreach initiatives, focus groups, and presentations. Partners include: The Community Safety Office, Accessibility Services, Family Care Office, Diversity Relations Office, First Nations House, Assault Counselor/Educator, Faculty Renewal, Quality of Work Life Advisor, Health and Well-Being Programs and Services.

The Status of Women Advisory Council

The Status of Women Officer is advised by the Status of Women Advisory Council which raises new issues, fosters inter-constituency alliances, acts a sounding board for the Office's input into relevant University debates and initiatives, and identifies priorities. There are approximately forty members of the Council representing students, staff and faculty. Some members attend as individuals and others are representatives of campus groups and offices.

In 2002-2003, the Advisory Council met five times on the St. George campus. Working Groups on staff concerns and on student issues were established. Each Working Group hosted an Advisory Council meeting dedicated to discussing its critical issues. One meeting focused on quality of work life issues for women members of staff, and another meeting specifically focused on financial access issues for students.

The Status of Women Officer met with a range of people interested in women's issues at the Mississauga and Scarborough campuses on several occasions throughout the past year. It was suggested that Advisory Councils local to those campuses be established.

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Activities 2002-2003

To achieve the objectives and to address the above priorities, the Status of Women Office conducted the following activities and initiatives.

Issues and Initiatives specific to women students:

- Status of Women Mentoring Program

The Status of Women Mentoring Program experienced its second year of a pilot project. The program is designed to address the needs of women students (second year and beyond) who identify as feeling isolated on campus. The Program is specifically for women students whose identity is drawn from a number of different sources including (but not limited to), religion, language, sexual diversity, culture, disAbility, age, race, or aboriginal status.

Forty-five women students were each matched with a woman faculty member. Evaluations by mentors and mentees strongly praised the program. Participants encouraged the Status of Women Office to find a permanent home for the Program which would maintain the focus on women's needs.

The Program received funding from the Vice Provost, Students, to continue for a third year. In addition to organizing the mentoring partnerships, the goal for 2003-2004 Program is to find a suitable permanent home, to identify alternative methods of 'mentoring' that might meet the needs of a wider group of women, and to host a meeting of all the mentoring programs on campus.

- The Office participated in orientation activities for undergraduate and graduate students. The Office was a sponsor of the "Ask First" Campaign which addressed issues of sexual assault.
- To identify and address the complex challenges faced by many women students, the Officer met with women students with disabilities through the Accessibility Office, and with single mothers at Woodsworth College.
- Co-sponsored a workshop for women graduate students, "Positioning Yourself for a Career in Academia".
- The Officer met with women leaders in student government to offer strategic support.
- Women students participated in committees and events organized by the Office. For example, students continue to participate on the Advisory Council, the December 6 Committee, and 120th Anniversary Committee.

- Work Study students from the Status of Women Office conducted research at UTSC to identify the specific concerns of women students at that campus. Approximately 70 interviews were conducted. The findings from the study will assist the Office in developing applicable programs and services.

The Status of Women Office organized and partnered in a number of initiatives, which were not solely for students, but at which a significant number of students attended.

- December 6 Memorial Service: Under the direction of the December 6 Committee, the Office organized the Memorial Service which is held annually on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women to specifically honour the women killed in the Montreal Massacre and to generally reflect on violence against women.
- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence: In conjunction with other offices, the Status of Women Office organized 16 days (November 25-December 10) of workshops, videos, and presentations about gender violence. For example, the Officer co-facilitated a campus safety tour for women. “16 days of activism” is an initiative which is acknowledged globally.
- As part of Aboriginal Awareness Week, the Office co-sponsored an evening of Women’s Storytelling.
- International Women’s Day (IWD): In partnership with the International Student Centre, the Office hosted a “Celebration of International Women’s Day Internationally”. Nine women spoke about their experiences of IWD in their native country. Almost 200 people attended the gathering.
- “Passion, Politics and Peace: Three Generations of Feminists Speak Out”. The Office was a sponsor of the Centenary Lecture held at UTM.
- “Meet the Status of Women Officer”: A luncheon was held on each of the UTM and UTSC campuses to give the campus community an opportunity to meet the Status of Women Officer and to provide an opportunity for issues and concerns to be identified. The luncheon was hosted by the Principal, UTSC and the CAO, UTM.

Issues and Initiatives specific to women faculty:

- In order to identify the issues most affecting women faculty and to identify the most effective strategies, the Status of Women Officer met with a range of faculty – women and men – at different stages of their academic careers. These meetings included:
 - Co-hosting a lunch for newly hired tenure stream women faculty to hear about their experiences of coming to the University of Toronto and to offer assistance
 - Meeting individually with nine newly hired women faculty
 - Co-hosting a meeting for senior academic women to discuss challenges
 - Co-hosting two meetings with senior academic men to discuss effective strategies in working toward gender equity
 - Co-hosting a meeting with women faculty in Engineering
 - Attending meetings of Women in Arts and Science
 - Meeting with members of the Status of Women Committee, UTFA

Issues identified were incorporated in to the Officer's response to the Green Papers and were brought to the attention of the appropriate senior administrator.

- The Status of Women Office, in conjunction with the Director of Faculty Renewal, Office of the Provost, organized a lunch discussion with the Provost for women faculty on 'women and academic leadership'. 140 women faculty participated.

Issues and Initiatives specific to women administrative, technical and professional staff:

- Under the direction of the Status of Women Advisory Council Working Group on Staff Issues, one Advisory Council meeting was dedicated to focusing on specific issues of concern for women staff. In order to increase the participation, each Council member was encouraged to bring a woman staff member as a guest to the meeting to speak with the new Quality of Work Life Advisor. Three key issues were identified: increasing workload, lack of significant opportunity for career advancement, and lack of respect.
- The Office hosted a discussion on each of 'workload', 'career advancement' and 'respect'. The findings of the discussions were incorporated in the Officer's response to the Green Papers.
- A fifth meeting of women staff was organized by the Office, and Vice President, Human Resources was the guest speaker. Professor Hildyard spoke about initiatives and directions in her portfolio which will address a range of concerns.

- The Office hosted a discussion for women staff at the Scarborough campus to hear issues and concerns particular to that campus. In response to questions, a second meeting was held with the Manager of Health and Well-Being Programs and Services and the Quality of Work Life Advisor.

Other initiatives:

Take Our Daughter and Sons to Work Day:

- In 2003, the Ms. Foundation (the founder of Take Our Daughters to Work Day) expanded the annual event to include sons. After thoughtful consideration, the University of Toronto moved to expand its event as well. The Status of Women Office partnered with the Family Care Office and the Quality of Work Life Advisor to coordinate the event this year.
- Boys and girls were invited to come to work with their parents (staff and faculty), for a full day of activities including job-shadowing, lunch, keynote presentation, career workshop, and departmental activities.
- This year 325 children, between the ages of 9-12, registered for the event.

Ontarians with Disabilities Act Accessibility Plan:

- At the request of the Vice-President Human Resources, in the spring 2003 the Officer assumed a coordinating role to develop the University's Accessibility Plan in response to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA). The Accessibility Planning Committee consisted of students, staff and faculty representing a broad range of stakeholders.

General Equity Initiatives:

- The Officer was a member of the 'Excellence Through Equity' Conference (March 2003) planning committee.
- On behalf of the Equity Issues Advisory Group (EIAG), the Status of Women Office organized three discussions about an 'equity framework' for the University of Toronto. The comments from these sessions were incorporated into the Status of Women Officer's response to the Green Papers.

Gender Equity Initiatives in Faculties and Departments

- The Officer provided advice and direction to a number of faculties and departments. These included the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, Faculty of Physical Education and Health, and the Department of Physics.
- The Officer made presentations to two search committees: Principal and Vice-President, UTSC, and Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science.

Committees and Liaison

- The Officer is an active member of several committees at the University including the Equity Issues Advisory Group (EIAG), the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies (IWSGS), the Human Resources Management Board (HRMB), the Equity Conference (2003) Planning Committee, the Dependent Care and Flexible Work Working Group, the ODA Accessibility Planning Committee, and the Positive Space Committee. She regularly attends meetings of Principals, Deans, Academic Directors and Chairs (PDAD&C) and Governing Council.
- The Officer is a member of the Status of Women Committee, Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and a member of the ODA Subcommittee of the COU. She attended the Women's Issues Conference of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT).

Referrals and Individual Cases

The Status of Women Office received 120 calls per month requesting information, guidance, and assistance. It is the practice of the Office to provide information in response to general inquiries, and to refer callers to specific resources and offices on campus where applicable. For example, the Status of Women Office does not counsel callers; callers are referred to the appropriate service such as the Assault Counsellor/Educator or the Sexual Harassment Officer.

The Status of Women Officer has received calls from 11 individual women throughout the year who brought forward multifaceted issues and concerns which are not addressed elsewhere on the campus. These are followed-up as cases.

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- Work in partnership with those Offices and units involved in implementing the objectives and strategies identified in the White Paper which address gender equity
- Provide advice and support to more faculties and units working toward gender equity

- Compile a profile of women staff, students and faculty at the University

Acknowledgements

I would particularly like to thank Lisa Carmody, Status of Women Office Coordinator, for her work throughout the year. Her superb efforts have enabled the Status of Women Office to offer a wide range of activities and initiatives.

