Caucus Annual Report for 1998/99

This year the Women's Caucus has focused on several areas and made a commitment to:

- attempt to create opportunities for social networking for faculty women, new and returning
- provide an opportunity to discuss how to be successful in the academic career
- identify issues of concern to faculty women
- facilitate professional success in areas such as the application for the internal grants
- promote woman leadership
- address academic equity
- gauge the current state of equity on campus.

Moreover, the Caucus has extended welcome and inclusion to other women on campus who are non-faculty members but who, nonetheless, are essential members of the women's community on campus.

Workshops and Activities

To fulfill the above purposes, workshops, panel discussions, and other activities were structured and provided to Faculty women with invitations extended to non-faculty woman, male faculty, and non-faculty. In the spirit of inter-disciplinary collaboration, the Caucus also engaged in collaboration with disciplines across campus in providing activities and presenting workshops. In all events and activities, support and enthusiasm of the faculty women was indicated by the generally large turn out.

Specifically, five workshops were provided for enhancing the professional development of faculty women and included:

1. How Can We Be Successful in an Academic Environment
2. How to Prepare A Proposal for A Successful Internal Research Application
3. Women in Leadership
4. Work Life Workshop
5. Panel Discussion: Academic Equity: Chilly Climates, Legal Discourse, and Social Change

For these workshops, women leaders and a few male colleagues, from inside and outside the University were invited to serve as speakers. The external speakers comprised of the following prominent feminist scholars: Dr. Dorothy Smith of University of Toronto and Professor Sheila McIntyre of Queens University's Law School. Workshops were organized in collaboration and with support from academic units across campus including Office of the Women's Adviser, Office of the Vice-President Research, Faculty of Law, and Department of Women's Studies.

Social activities included:

- Wine & Cheese Party

- Year End Get-together in December, 1998
- Year end Wine & Cheese in April, 1999.

Along with these social activities, two general meetings were held. Perhaps the greatest and most unusual event was the International Women's Day Celebration. The celebration drew women together from across the campus to share their work and thoughts. The participating women included faculty and non-faculty, with the latter encompassing professional, secretarial, health staff, and campus security. As a result of the celebration, there were many calls for a repeat of the event next year.

Statement for the Faculty Women Caucus

In the absence of a statement of the function of the Faculty Women's Caucus, a statement was drafted and revised at the Caucus meeting in December, 1998. The statement has since been approved by the Caucus. The statement is as below:

The Faculty Women's Caucus is a forum for discussion of issues of particular interest and concern to female faculty at the University of Victoria and for the development of initiatives and strategies to address those interests and concerns. The Caucus is open to all female faculty, including sessional lecturers, on and off campus. It is committed to developing strategies that originate "from the ground up" and to providing supportive social and political networks for women within the university. The Caucus serves as a channel to communicate women's views, concerns, and recommendations directly to the Vice-President, Academic & Provost. The Caucus advocates and works for positive change. The specific focus of the Caucus's activities varies from year to year.

Issues of Concern and Interest Arising from 1998-99

Based on the survey conducted in September, 1998 on interests and issues to be addressed for the 1998-99, the Worklife Workshop, and the Caucus meeting of December 9, a number of concerns and issues have been identified by the Women's Caucus. These issues are listed as follows:

1. Work overload, & stress
2. Less collegial and friendly work environments on campus
3. Sessional instructors' conditions: No job security, no [long-term] contract, poor salary
4. Questions about conditions (pay, fringe benefits) involved in sick leave
5. Student evaluation of teaching effectiveness: unfair to woman instructors and grade inflation causing difficulty for untenured professors or sessional instructors
6. Gender inequity in pay scale
7. Need for a workshop on mentoring to discuss definitions, needs and experiences of mentoring
8. Concerns that teaching and research are being played down while the "corporate mentality" is prevailing
9. Disability and implications on pay and fringe benefits
10. Mandatory retirement for women: this policy is potentially discriminatory for women because women in general enter into the work force late in their life due to family or

other societal reasons. Their career is thus shortened by mandatory retirement. Mandatory retirement for women may mean living under poverty for women later in life.

Special Problems

In the period of 1998-99, the Caucus received three major queries and concerns. One, a concern was raised by a local lawyer over the inequitable appointment status and pay for sessional music instructors. Two, a grievance was received from a sessional instructor over the different standards set by the academic units with regard to grading students and the related student evaluation of course which resulted in a more negative course evaluation. The consequence may be serious for the instructor since sessional re-appointment has been based on course evaluation. Three, a request was made by a faculty member for help to better prepare for the tenure decision in the fall since the faculty member had received a negative decision at the preliminary adjudication by the department in the spring. These issues were examined by the Steering Committee. As a result, in the first case, advice was given that while the issue was not within the jurisdiction of the Caucus, the Steering Committee recognized and sympathized with the concern. The second "compliant" has been integrated into the list of issues of concerns for the Caucus to address at a later date. The third case was re-directed by the Caucus Chair to the Women's Advisor for action.

Equity Survey

A major undertaking of the Caucus was the survey of equity status at the University of Victoria. Partially funded by a small work study position, a questionnaire was developed and the survey has been carried out. With the final completion date of the survey on May 31, 1999, the final analysis of the data will be made and a report prepared, which will be distributed to interested administrative offices. Although it has been the intention to submit the report with this annual report, the Steering Committee has instructed the Caucus Chair to postpone the submission until the fall after the Caucus has had the opportunity to respond to the report.

Reactions to the Identified Issues of Concerns

The identified issues of concern have been the subjects of the Year-end General Meeting which took place on April 29, 1999. The majority of the Caucus determined that the issues would be better addressed and solutions sought at the Caucus level before they are brought up for the administration's attention. This decision was based on the fear that the administration would not act to address the concerns and as a result, the document may be shelved. It was determined that small groups will be formed along different issues to seek and discuss solutions at the "grass root" level. This activity, thus, will become a majority activity for the Caucus for 1999-2000.

Election of the New Chair of Women's Caucus for 1999-2000

A call for nominations for the New Chair of Womenss Caucus for 1999-2000 was made on April 15 by the Steering Committee and the election was held on April 29 at the Caucus General Meeting. By unanimous votes, Lily Dyson was re-elected to be the Caucus Chair for 1999-2000. The term of the Chair was discussed at the General meeting and the benefits and disadvantages

of a longer-term appointment than the present one-year appointment were weighed. A longer-term appointment was desirable in that it would serve to maintain the continuity and consistency of the Caucus activities while concerns were raised regarding the possible extended responsibilities and hence, excess work for the faculty involved. The final decision was made to continue with the present practice, which also allows re-election of the same individual as Chair of the Caucus.

Summary and Perspective

The Faculty Women's Caucus has experienced a productive year with respect to the focus and goals it set for the year 1998-1999. Support for the Caucus has been maintained and indications are that the professional and social activities and events organized by the Caucus have been well-received and beneficial to faculty women. The highlights of the Caucus's achievements include:

1. The successful effort made for inter-disciplinary collaboration across the campus to address issues of interests and concerns to the Caucus
2. The extension of inclusion of other members of the university community,
3. The collection of a list of concerns and issues from the Faculty Women's perspectives
4. The conducting of a survey of equity status on campus. It is clear from the Caucus members' response that the Caucus has served important functions in providing social support for faculty women, addressing the professional interest and development of faculty women, and connecting the Caucus with others on campus, be they other women or academic units.

There are, however, continuous issues and concerns for faculty women. There is also the task to continue to expand the concept of inclusion across campus. As well, as Chair of Caucus, it is my vision that the Caucus may expand its role in serving only faculty women to taking on a broader task of other humanitarian value. The issues and challenges will, therefore, constitute major agenda for the year 1999-2000 for the Faculty Women's Caucus. Appropriate reports will be submitted for consideration for action by the Office of Vice-President Academic. The Caucus has greatly appreciated the support of the Vice-President Academic, Dr. Penny Codding, for her support of the Caucus's major activities. The Caucus also acknowledges the support of other offices such as the Department of Women's Studies, the Office of the Women's Advisor (Dr. Frances Ricks), University Secretary (Ms. Sheilagh Sheldon-Coyer) , and the Equity Office (Linda Sproule-Jones).