Caucus Annual Report for 1999/00

Summary

The activities of the Faculty Women's Caucus in 1999-2000 have been guided by the position statement of the Caucus, and therefore, have pursued the following goals for 1999-2000:

1. to promote women faculty's professional development
2. to act as an advocate for faculty women
3. to create opportunity for social networking for women faculty, especially, those of new arrival

Additionally, the Caucus has moved beyond its traditional focus on only women faculty and has extended services to male faculty and staff on campus. In this latter effort, the Caucus was intent on promoting inclusion. In pursuit of these goals, the Caucus has initiated and conducted a number of activities and workshops during the period of 1999-2000. While activities were generally structured for the faculty women, they have also been provided to male faculty and staff. Moreover, the Caucus has been engaged in collaboration with other units such as the Office of the Women's Advisor to the Vice-President Academic and the Office of the Vice-President Research, and the McPherson Library in the provision of the services to the university community.

Besides serving the Caucus members, the Caucus has also produced a number of workshops and events. Under the stewardship of the Steering Committee, major activities that took place included:

(a) Wine and Cheese Get-together
(b) Preparation for Application for Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion
(c) Responding to Course Evaluation
(d) Meeting with the Vice-President Academic for Issues of Concern
(f) Workshop on the Internal Research Grant Application
(g) Millennium International Women's Day Celebration, and year-end Gathering.

Other achievements included the completion of a survey on the state of equity in hiring, salary, and tenure and promotion and the establishment of a webpage for the Caucus.

Brief Descriptions of Major Activities

Brief descriptions for major activities are as follows:

1. September, 1999: Wine and Cheese Get-together
Organized to welcome the women faculty back to the new term and to greet new faculty members. An unprecidently large number of women faculty members joined the reception to enjoy meeting each other.

2. September, 1999: Preparation for Application for Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion
This was a new activity to facilitate the career development of the faculty, especially junior faculty members. Two workshops were held to provide guides and ideas for successful application for re-appointment, tenure and promotion in various academic units. The workshops were attended by both female and male faculty members, and positive feedback was received from everyone.

3. October, 2000: Workshop on Course Evaluation
A panel of experienced teachers and administrators led the discussion on course evaluation. The purpose was to help enhance faculty's teaching and prepare them for students' evaluations of the course. Various problems and issues related to the course evaluations were reported, including unfair evaluation and racial discrimination in the evaluations by students. Ideas for managing the course evaluation were shared.

4. November, 1999: Meeting with Vice-President Academic, Dr. Codding
A surprisingly large number of women colleagues attended the meeting to address concerns and issues arising from a 1998-1999 survey. An open dialogue between the faculty and the Vice-President Academic addressed many issues of concern to faculty women. The main issues which had yet to be resolved included: (a) work load and stress, (b) maternal health coverage, and (c) parental leave policy. There was an understanding that continuous discussion with the administration will proceed for satisfactory resolution of these issues.

5. December, 1999: Caucus General Meeting and Year-end pizza party
A fairly large number of women faculty spent an evening together for fellowship and celebration of the end of the year. The general meeting was also held. Outstanding issues included: (a) pay equity and (b) parental leave policy. Pay inequity between male and female faculty members and inadequate benefit coverage for parental leave were major concerns.

6. February, 2000: Workshop on the Internal Research grant Application
An inter-disciplinary workshop was intended to review with participants the preparation for the internal research grant application. Workshop speakers from science, humanities, social sciences and professional schools generously provided helpful experience and insight for successful application.

7. March, 2000: Millennium International Women's Day celebration
A very large number of university faculty, employees and students attended the celebration. Men and women admired the elegant display of work, works, arts, crafts and other accomplishments, which boasted the talents and gifts of women on campus. Friendly exchanges and a happy mood prevailed in the foyer of MacLaurin Building. Music, poetry, and book readings performed by distinguished faculty and talented students accentuated the joyfulness of the occasion and respect for women and the humanities. The celebration also provided an occasion for reminiscence of the political meaning and purpose of International Women's Day in promoting women's rights and well-being. These made explicit the need for continuous advocacy for women's rights and women in poverty and other disadvantaged social or political conditions.

Serving as an Advocate

In the period of 1999-2000, the Caucus received two grievances which concerned the unfair treatment of woman instructors. The Chair of the Caucus provided support to the instructors by referring them to the Woman's Adviser for Vice-President Academic and providing them with instrumental support. Fortunately, both cases were resolved to the satisfaction of the instructors concerned. The Caucus has also responded to the concerns of the members with regard to the appointment of new Millennium Chairs in Science and Engineering. The concern related to the potential bias involved in the selection, which may result in unfair competition for woman scientists. This concern was expressed in a letter forwarded by the Caucus Chair to the Vice-President Research, Dr. Martin Taylor. In the letter, a request was further made for a fair procedure and process for the selection of the Millennium Chairs.

Other Achievements

A major achievement of the Caucus for the period of 1999-2000 is the completion of a report on the state of equity at UVic, as perceived and experienced by women faculty, with regards to hiring, salary, tenure and promotion, and work load. The report is based on a survey of mainly woman faculty. A brief summary will be reported later. Another task that has been completed is the establishment of a web page for the Caucus. This page formally places the Caucus in a visible location within the university community and allows ready access to its activities and other information. A particularly useful function of the web page is the provision of useful and important information about resources and documents (e.g., Tenure Document) on campus.

Outstanding Issues to be Resolved

Meetings, discussion, and a survey of professional needs produced a number of outstanding issues. Some of the issues have been discussed, however others remain to be resolved. The following issues still need to be addressed:

1. Work load and stress among the faculty: A 1998 survey and follow-up discussions showed that faculty women considered work load to be excessive, which causes stress in the faculty. This problem does not seem to be reduced by any means.

2. Parental leave benefits: At the December, 1999 General Meeting concerns about parental leave benefits were raised. The benefits were deemed to be inadequate. As they are far below those for other universities in the province, there was concern that the present benefit package will not attract new women faculty members.

3. Pay inequity between male and female faculty: A 1999 survey of the faculty women regarding their perception and experience of equity practice at UVic found that male faculty on average were perceived to receive greater amounts in pay than female faculty.

4. Course evaluation which is fair to faculty and beneficial to teaching: The workshop on course evaluation led to the conclusion that a major concern in this regard is the development by the university of a course evaluation scheme which will be fair to the instructors while at the same

time beneficial to their teaching. Such a scheme, however, was concluded to be lacking at present.

A Brief Summary of the Results of the Survey on Equity

A survey of perceptions and experiences regarding equity at the University of Victoria was conducted in 1999. Aspects of equity surveyed included the following: Hiring, salary, tenure and promotion, workload, and workplace. A total of 79 regular and sessional faculty members, mainly female, responded. The following is a brief summary of the results. The executive summary and the full report are enclosed:

In summary, the survey on the status of equity at the University of Victoria reveals that equity is moving towards a satisfactory state in certain areas, but that other domains are still viewed and experienced as inadequate. From the point of view of the participants, the most satisfactory areas are hiring of women faculty, opportunity for tenure and promotion, distribution of work load, and participation in university governance. The greatest inequities perceived and experienced by the women respondents lie in salary and the actual practice of the tenure and promotion policy. As a result, women were perceived as receiving less pay, spending more time in lower ranking positions, and garnering less recognition for their work than their male counterparts. Women also tended to provide more extra services, which are not recognized in concrete terms for tenure and promotion.

Recommendations for the Future

In sum, the Women's Caucus experienced a productive and happy year in its service to the women faculty. It has also contributed to the well-being of the university community as a whole through an attempt at creating inclusion and extending of its services to the larger university community, beyond the Caucus domain. Professional issues and challenges, however, remain to be resolved. The following are recommendations for the next year for the Caucus:

1. To address the excessive work load and the resulting stress as reported by the faculty women.
2. To continue observing the state of equity at UVic and to ensure the actual practice of equity in accordance with the policy.
3. To continue with inclusion of male faculty in the Caucus activities so as to be in line with the contemporary trend toward social inclusion.
4. To continue the provision of activities that benefit the members socially and professionally.
5. To continue to respond to the members' needs for support and advocacy.

It is apparent that the best results for the above issues would derive from support from and collaboration with the university administration and woman advocacy offices, mainly, Vice-President and President and the Office of the Women's Advisor. Deans, Chairs, and directors are also valuable resources to draw from, especially as many of them have facilitated and supported the activities of the Caucus in the period of 1998-2000.