Annual Report Faculty Women's Caucus 2002-3

by

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Chair, FWC, 2002-3

The first issue of Purple Prose, the newly launched monthly newsletter of the FWC, that of September, had laid out our agenda for the year. I'm glad to report that not only have most of those items listed been achieved, but one or two important new ones too, which were added to that agenda by events.

1. Purple Prose was launched, and I believe, received with some appreciation. As planned, we published an issue of each month of the active academic year, 6 in all. As it became more widely known, it attracted copy from diverse sources. In a sense, it has begun to become a platform for women faculty to discuss issues of importance to them on the Uvic campus and beyond. It has also proved useful as a platform to publicise the activities of the FWC, including announcements of events, publication of important documents produced by the Caucus (such as the submissions to the Equity and fairness Review and that to the Equity Office on the revision of the Enployment Equity Plan. Just as the FWC is an institution more or less unique to UVic, so it is to be hoped that PP will become a sister institution. It is gratifying to report that PP is well on its way to becoming such an institution, being read with appreciation and awaited by many on campus already.

2. On and Of women, our flagship speaker series, was also launched and covered a wide diversity of topics- Women and the law, the women's movement, the muses of imperialism, and, not least, women's scholarship and activism in the current context of provincial cutback to crucial welfare programmes. As the name indicates, On and Of Women was meant to feature the scholarship of women, on or off campus, on any of the wide diversity of subjects which women scholars pursued today, and not just on women's all gender related issues. It was also meant to feature scholarship on women, whether done by women or not. I am particularly pleased to note that the speaker series not only lived up to its name by sponsoring both these types of scholarship, it also added another line to its repertoire: scholarship which directly relates to and affects women's lives and politics today, giving the Caucus the beginnings of a profile beyond the campus in the wider Victoria and British Columbia communities. Our thanks to all the speakers: Rebecca Johnston, Misao Dean, Matt James, And the School of Studies in Policy and Practice.

3. Best Practices a new programme launched under which committees appointed on a given topic will review the policies in any given area at the university and report on the best practices in that area. This year, one such report published in PP was on salary evaluation policies. We hope to continue this on other topics in the coming year.

4. Submissions: Over the course of the year the caucus made two important representations. The first, on the draft Employment Equity plan, was successful in ensuring that important issues and

concerns of women and women faculty to not get lost, or compromised, in careless wording. In the second representation to the Review of the Organizational Structure and Mandates in dealing with issues of Equity and Fairness at the University of Victoria we were able to speak as the representatives of what was arguably the biggest concentration of expertise on issues relating to equity and fairness outside the organizations and institutions under review. In this case, however, the apparent delay in the publication of the report means that it will be a while before we can assess the effectiveness of our intervention. In both cases the Steering Committee of the Faculty Women's Caucus worked with the Equity Committee of the Faculty Association. This is a liaison, a connection, which we value, and which, we hope, may take new and interesting forms in coming years.

5. Provost's Forum was initiated by the Caucus as a venue for interaction with the Provost on matters of importance to women faculty. This year the Provost presented the results of a new data analysis exercise undertaken by his office on the situation with women's recruitment and salaries. There was a vigorous discussion and one of the outcomes has been an agreement between the Provost and the Steering Committee of the FWC to hold a meeting to discuss matters further and, possibly, to have regular meetings in the coming year.

6. Website and Lists: The Caucus web site has been updated and redesigned for greater attractiveness and ease, without however losing any material, textual or visual. We have also designed two e-mail lists for Caucus work, one which goes to every member of the caucus, which is used only sparingly for the purposes of announcing important Caucus events and keeping members updated and the other, whose membership is entirely voluntary, for the purposes of discussion. This last has, however, so far been dormant. I hope very much, that as and when necessary, it becomes a forum for discussion of important issues facing women faculty, and the University in general.

7. Encouraging Women in Administration: One of the most important points to emerge from the discussions which followed from the Provost's Forum was that there needed to be more women in UVic's senior administration. In view of this the FWC co-sponsored, along with the Equity Office and the Office of the University Secretary, a workshop on the subject hosted by Libby Dibikowski of Provence Consulting. Some 40 women faculty and administrators attended and it was agreed that the group of women interested in administration should be kept going.

An important omission in the work of the current year has been the failure to hold workshops on the equity issues in tenure and promotion. Rather than it delibrate omission, however, this project fell victim of the pressures of time on the Chair and the members of the Steering Committee. This is perhaps not the least reason why in my view we need a slightly larger steering committee.

It is also to be hoped that the Caucus will in coming years develop contacts and activities with other employee groups on campus particularly those in which women are in a majority. One does not have to be too pious or idealistic to see that not only do faculty women share many problems and concerns with other female employees on campus, and also with female students, graduate

and undergraduate, but also that, that ill treatment, low status, low pay, and discrimination against the any of these directly, and adversely affects, faculty women on related grounds.

But another matter of some importance which will have to be dealt with in the coming year will be to give the caucus a “constitution”. On the whole this will probably entail the codification of existing practice, although there are probably some wrinkles which may be ironed out at this opportunity. One, for example, which is clear to me already is the need to have a “chair-elect”, that is to say the person chosen to chair the caucus in the following year, in place at the beginning of the year. This would smooth the working of the caucus by making the transition from one chair to the next and easy affair. It would provide greater predictability to the lives and work of the Chairs themselves.

And finally I would like to offer a special thanks to John Roscoe without whose cheerful implementation, intelligent assistance and extensive computer skills, this Chair would have found it difficult to accomplish half of what was accomplished this year.