

COSOW (Committee on the Status of Women) Report to Faculty Council

March 2023

Committee Membership

Chair:

- Misha Becker (Linguistics) (Fall 2022)
- Kirsten Kainz, David Pfennig, Brent Wissick, co-chairs (Spring 2023)

Members:

- Ana Felix (Medicine)
- Kenya McNeal-Trice (Medicine)
- Brent Wissick (Music)
- Kirsten Kainz (Social Work)
- David Pfennig (Biology)
- Hannah Cabre (EXSS)
- Megan Winget (SILS)
- Milada Vachudova (Political Science)

Non-voting Member:

- Stephanie Forman (Employee Forum Rep, Public Health)

Committee Charge

"The Committee addresses ongoing concerns of women faculty members, identifies obstacles to achievement and maintenance of equality in the representation and status of women on the faculty, and proposes steps for overcoming these obstacles." (Faculty Code, 4-22)

Report of Activities for 2022-23

1. Meetings:

We held meetings (via Zoom) on September 15, October 6, November 7, and December 5 in fall 2022. Spring 2022 meetings have been held on January 23 and February 20.

2. Topics of Discussion:

With the passage of our committee's Resolution to Faculty Council last spring (Resolution 2022-1, On Salary Equity for Faculty Members of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), and the Chancellor's subsequent appointment of a university-wide Faculty Salary Equity Advisory Committee, we turned our attention this year to the leadership of the Carolina Women's Center (CWC), and the question of lactation spaces on campus.

At our September meeting we invited both Christi Hurt, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor and former Director of the Carolina Women's Center, and Joseph Jordan, Vice Provost for Academic and Community Engagement, to speak to us about the status of the search for a new director of the CWC. During the 2021-22 academic year there was a failed director search. Although two promising candidates were identified and interviewed and an offer was made, the salary for the position and resources for the Center were too low to attract a candidate. This year, Beth Posner, professor in the School of Law, has been charged with conducting an audit of CWC for the purpose of determining what the UNC community wants the Women's Center to be. Prof. Posner attended our November meeting to discuss

her process and solicit our opinions about what the mission of the CWC should be: whether it should focus on student, faculty and staff support, or gender violence prevention. The attending members felt that there were many areas of need for supporting women-identifying members of our campus community, and that whatever the emphasis ends up being, there is a dire need for a center on this campus that is devoted to supporting women-identifying students, faculty and staff. There was not a strong consensus from the committee on which direction should be emphasized for the CWC, but it was suggested that the CWC not duplicate areas already handled by the Title IX/EEOC office.

The other topic that was raised at each of our fall meetings, related to the CWC, is the question of who maintains the lactation spaces on campus. A request for an update on maintenance of these spaces was sent to Provost Chris Clemens and Associate Vice Chancellor Anna Wu in December. Ms. Wu responded to clarify that the rooms are open and regularly cleaned by housekeeping services. There is a campus map available to direct people to the rooms on campus and an automated email account (lactation@unc.edu) where people can get more information via an automated response. Our committee is seeking more conversation with Ms. Wu and others to ensure that: 1) we protect the initial investment in lactation rooms and ensure that the Provost's office has dedicated staff to maintain the rooms, keeping them relevant, accessible, and clean; and 2) communication is sufficient so that the rooms are used and valuable to lactating faculty, students, and staff.

3. Other Topics:

While the appointment of the Faculty Salary Equity Advisory committee is a hopeful and encouraging step, the members of COSOW remain concerned about salary equity across campus, and questions about progress in addressing inequity are a frequent topic of discussion in our meetings.

We also have been concerned with access to reproductive healthcare for members of the UNC campus community, particularly in light of the Dobbs decision by the US Supreme Court which effectively removed a guarantee of access to legal abortion in the United States. We remain concerned that pregnant people on campus may lose the ability to make safe, well-informed, important life decisions concerning their health and child-bearing, should the State of North Carolina adopt policies now in force in other states criminalizing abortion. The committee believes that the issue of reproductive justice will increase in relevance over time and requires ongoing attention, conversation, and advocacy.

Committee members attended listening sessions held by Beth Posner during the Spring Semester during which times they were able to update Ms. Posner on our conversations regarding The Women's Center and other issues relevant to COSOW. Some of the ideas shared with Ms. Posner were related to the nature of The Women's Center (e.g., possibility of a mobile unit) and governance issues that would enhance the functioning and sustainability of The Women's Center. Open questions remain about the timeline of decision making regarding the future of The Women's Center. As a committee we believe that there is strong potential to advocate in the next 12 months for a clear and compelling mission for The Women's Center as well as to operationalize the key objectives and five year goals for such a Center.

We believe the Faculty Council should be responsible for advocacy for the Women's Center through formal resolution and advisement to the Chancellor.

We also recommend that the Faculty Council pass a resolution to ensure quarterly updates to the UNC-CH Community from the Faculty Salary Equity Advisory Committee.