DU Women’s Coalition Town Hall 18 April 2013

Notes and recommendations from attendees for continued consideration and development at the Town Hall follow-up meeting to be held 20 June 2013.

Overview: Elizabeth Suarez, Director of HERS Denver Summer Institute, facilitated the meeting. The meeting began with Shelly Smith-Acuna, Associate Dean of Graduate School of Professional Psychology, providing an update on the Women’s Report. Johanna Leyba, Assistant Provost for Campus and Community Partnership, Center for Multicultural Excellence, shared with the group an overview and history of Women’s Coalition efforts.

The majority of the meeting focused on group discussion around the following two questions:

Question #1: What challenges are affecting you to be an integral part of DU?

Question #2: What can be done to address these challenges in order for you to become an integral part of DU?

Information Gathered:
The information gathered for each question has been grouped into the following topics:
  - Administration
  - Advancement Communication
  - Development
  - Environment
  - Inclusiveness
  - Problems/Issues
  - Time Concerns

Question #1: What challenges are affecting you to be an integral part of DU?

Administration:
- Silo effect. We get isolated in our own groups and have difficulty organizing across divides (this is mentioned at least three times by separate groups)
- Micro-aggressions, subtle and less subtle aggression against women in daily interactions
- Divisions between staff and faculty that get in the way of efforts to make change
- Lack of action v. reaction (wanting upper leadership to take initiative and support things they claim to believe in)

Advancement:
- There’s not a clear opportunity for advancement for women (no matter where you’re starting)
- We’d like to see more women in leadership roles on campus; relatedly, how do we maintain and support a women’s leadership style (when women move up, they’re often expected to follow a male leadership model)

Communication:
- Lack of access to decision-making; poor communicating about decision-making (we’re never given context or reasoning)
- Internal communication problems -- issues with communication and transparency

Development:
- Lots of opportunity for professional development, but not enough time to engage with the opportunities
- Lack of funding for professional development

Environment:
- A climate issue around lack of respect/civility as we are working on campus
- The de-centralized nature of DU prevents collaboration and networking between departments, divisions, etc.

Inclusiveness:
- Gender assumptions and stereotypes are still regularly encountered; some people still not comfortable working with women, etc.
- Generally being undervalued in DU (lack of access to child care, less pay, less powerful roles)
- We need a specific system of governance to formalize commitments to women at DU (real commitments with real consequences
- formal structure for moving forward
- There’s a need for greater inclusivity around these types of efforts and events to explicitly expand our group -- focus on not just women, but women of color, women with marginalized sexual identities, allies who do not identify as women but wish to support women, etc.

Problems/Issues:
- DU applies a Band-Aid for many issues but doesn’t really fix problems. Claims to support issues but lacks back up of activities.
Time Concerns:
- Work/life balance (difficulty managing and/or creating a work/life balance)
  - Expectation of service both externally and internally (examples: SAC, other committees)
- Try to integrate these efforts and events into our jobs so that they are not extra work or just a way to get together for lunch, but they could actually become a valued part of our job descriptions

Question 2: How do we become an integral part of DU? What can be done to address these challenges that are in the way?

Administration:
- Staff senate (similar to a faculty senate)
- Articulate exactly what a commitment to women looks like across campus

Advancement:
- Managers should be trained on how to be effective managers (as a requirement of their promotion)
- The pipeline inconsistencies in hiring methods need ironing out
- Career-path inconsistencies in the way people credential themselves need ironing out
- Initiating women’s workshops to help women learn networking and self-promotion

Communication:
- The Women’s Coalition could do more outreach to new female employees right away
- We need to do a better job of communicating what we’re already working on (mentoring program, HR is doing a pilot flex time/telecommute/condensed pay period thing, etc.)

Development:
- Accruing professional development hours the same way we do sick and vacation
- Make women’s role and professional development an explicit/formal part of performance evaluation
- Formal mentorship process (women to women, associated when new person hired; perhaps mentors within units as well as within the larger community)

Environment:
- Create a real cross-divisional connection

Inclusiveness:
- Have an ongoing report on the status of women on campus (so we can see improvement or lack)
- Have a study on the cost of incivility
- Mimic Sustainability Council model of having a paid person whose job it is to coordinate women’s efforts of this kind (like this lunch)
- Governance idea from first question
- set up a specific governing body that would us to create accountability for failure to support efforts
- Top-down commitment to support women’s events on campus
- Develop explicitly the goal of inclusion by creating explicit methods for creating inclusive practices
- Become champions, supporters, mentors and support our network -- step up, speak up, and really work across the many affinity groups included in the Women’s Coalition
- Hire more women - Have more women and people of color on the Board of Trustees - Commitment to salary and salary equity across the campus - Have a regular conversation/paradigm shift focused on women’s concerns - Add performance element encouraging inclusiveness (like managers should be rewarded for being inclusive) - Empower ourselves

Problems/Issues:
- The Women’s Coalition should be turned into problem/issue-based v. “level”-based.
- Task forces for specific issues with proactive action plans.
- Code of conduct for university employees (like the students have)
- Create a method for encouraging the transparency we desire

Time Concerns:
- Reclaim a reasonable workday/workload -- consider sponsoring a “reclaiming the work week” week where folks commit to coming in at 8 and leaving at 5
- Flex time (we already have an official flex time policy, though, right?) - update: it sounds like this policy is not evenly enforced across campus. some folks seem to have it and others do not) and also flexibility on where we can work (work from home, etc.)

Consistency in the way work/life balance is handled across campus

Note: Original notes retained by Katie Riddle. This list includes the “top three” choices of each table of attendees in effort to focus our attention on the most important/central needs of the DU population when the follow-up committee meets in June.