

**DU Women's Coalition
Working Group Meeting
20 June 2013**

In attendance:

Elizabeth Suarez (Facilitator), Johanna Leyba, Natley Farris, Sable Schultz, Nashwa Bolling, Debbie Mixon-Mitchell, Katie Riddle, Lynn Gangone, Paige Mills, Pat Greer, Chelsea Scott, Donna Goben, Shelly Smith-Acuna, Theresa Hernandez, Hava Gordon

Early chatting:

As folks were arriving and settling in, informal discussion began about what exactly the current membership of the Women's Coalition is. Johanna talked us through the current statuses of the groups incorporated under the Coalition:

Women's Leadership Council (WLC) – Active

Women's Staff Alliance for Networking and Development (WAND) – Active

Association of Sisters in Higher Education (ASHE) – Active

Graduate Women's Council (GWC) – Unclear...there have been a couple of people who've used GWC funds in the past year or two, but it's not particularly clear if there is actually an active council.

Undergraduate Women's Council (UWC) – Dormant

Faculty Women's Association (FWA) – Dormant

Of these groups, WLC is the only group that has selective membership (members are women with highest rank in their divisions, as well as some invited guests).

Getting serious:

Elizabeth started our discussion in earnest by directing our attention to the notes from the May Town Hall event held by the Coalition. That meeting was divided primarily into two sections, each focused on producing answers to a particular question. Our goal today is to develop these answers into a plan of action for the Coalition in 2013-2014 (or at least begin to).

Divided into two small groups, attendees of today's working group meeting were assigned to review the answers to Question 1 from the Spring Town Hall meeting (What challenges are you facing?) and attempt to prioritize the answers that were provided by the town hall attendees. What do we think the Coalition ought to focus on addressing first in the coming 2013-2014 academic year?

There was some discussion about whether or not we should divide the answers into categories like "realistic" and "unrealistic," but we settled on a general consensus that it would be more productive to prioritize because this allows us to maintain the larger goals established at the town hall meeting (without dismissing them as unrealistic) while also arranging other, more specific and more immediately reachable, goals as perhaps nearer priorities that could be the stepping stones up to meeting the larger goals. Ultimately, we decided to try prioritizing the the answers to question 1 by category.

Results from group discussions of answers to question 1:

Pat's group prioritized according to themes:

1. work/life management and flexibility,
2. (mythical?) advancement opportunities,
3. uncivil climate -- wanting to create respect and civility

Those three areas are the priority areas and we want to address best practices there.

However, from this statement of priorities, the conversation shifted away from the original structure provided. We moved toward questions that revolved around what the Coalition's role is exactly. What is its mission statement? How do we ignite passion in the community? Where are the students in Pat's group's concerns? (i.e. who is included in the constituency of the group?)

WHAT IS OUR JOB AS A COALITION?

We need a new mission statement that helps to set the parameters for our actions.

What can the coalition tackle?

- what is the mission? we need to establish a clear mission
- as a convener of smaller individual groups, do we have some responsibility to help bolster and rebuild the smaller groups
- how do we make DU a place where women specifically want to work?
- what are we trying to do here?

If we can create a focus for the job of the Coalition, this will go a long way toward establishing our focus for the 2013-2014 year.

Focusing in on accountability, communication, advocacy, empowerment.

Lynn mentions the criteria used for considering corporations to be supportive of women:

1. corporate board has at least two women members
2. female representation at all levels
3. promotion of policies that are targeted specifically to advancement for women
4. training and accountability of managers in relation to the amount and place of women in their relationships

How powerful is the WC and how powerful should it be?

There are concerns about how much power the Coalition actually has, as well as how best to move forward with attempts to gain more power. The majority of the attendees are focused on gaining more access (and not just access as in head-pats and listening without follow-through, but access that results in actual change) via the basic channel that already exists. It is roundly agreed that the Coalition should provide access for women with no power to women with power who can then intervene on their behalf as well as agitate for changes that give women lower down the power chain more power than they have now to effect meaningful change.

Current power chain (top to bottom):

WLC Board/Advisory Board to Coalition

Coalition

Other groups (ASHE, WAND, etc.)

This conversation went a lot of directions very quickly. Primarily, it was focused on considering/developing the current structure of power within the Coalition as well as considering how people seem to be thinking about the Coalition (i.e. Natley mentioned that it's important to consider what kind of tool women think the Coalition is--do they know it exists even? What bodies/organizations do women currently consider to be their advocates? Are they going to the Faculty Senate or SAC instead of the Women's Coalition? If so, how can we make the Coalition be and appear more efficacious?)

We need to create better avenues for accessing people who have power.

Replicating corporate structures (borrowed from folks around/involved in DU--Ascenture, TIAA-CREF, Enterprise) may be a possibility here. Something to think about.

There was also a lot of discussion about how difficult it is to try to do this work when every person involved is doing it on a volunteer basis. Everybody wants staff to support the Coalition and think this would go a long way to faster improvement.

One-year mission:

We need to create and build a structure for the Coalition - this is going to be managed by the working group. Use this year to create a structure to begin in the 2014-2015 year while also making sure we maintain current efforts as normal.

Natley's idea: can we make the DU Women's Coalition visible by getting money as linked to our 150-year anniversary? Also, we really need to keep doing things for regular people this year. Think about how the typical woman on campus will be effected this year?

Should we reconsider how we identify subgroups? Should it be a cause or mission instead?

Work on creating a better structure to spread the word about the different groups.

Reconvene again in the first full week of August -- August 8th -- 9 to 11:30. Send an invite to everyone here. Also invite Amy King.