WSC Charge & Mission

The Women’s Status Committee is responsible for advising the President of the University on matters affecting women faculty, staff, and students of the University. The committee shall be particularly concerned with those university policies concerning the welfare and activities of women with regard to educational and employment opportunities at the University, as well as the social and cultural climate in the University setting.

As part of that charge, we understand the Committee’s Mission to be:

- Encourage, support, and participate in activities that **highlight women’s issues and concerns**;
- Direct and review attention to ensuring **equal access** to educational opportunities and services provided to women by the university (e.g., scholarship opportunities for women);
- Review factors contributing to the overall **physical and social well-being** of all women on campus (e.g., women’s health care coverage and provisions by the University, family day care concerns, family leave, etc.);
- Address issues concerning **equitable pay for women** in hiring, retention, and promotion (e.g., support studies to investigate and promote the employment and retention of female faculty and staff, and the promotion and compensation of women into tenured or high-level positions);
- Recognize **leadership** qualities in those who have exhibited a willingness and ability to nurture, support, and advance women and girls. This includes mentoring in the community, focusing on the health and well-being of women and girls, fostering programs that support women’s leadership, affecting policy and decision-making, and working on social justice issues.
WSC 2015 Membership

Membership of the WSC fluctuated widely in 2015, an issue we discuss further below. Individuals listed below attended at least one meeting of the WSC or participated in online discussions related to the WSC in 2015.

Camille Blake
DIEO Office
(Ex Officio and Interim Chair)
Michelle Hughes Miller
Women’s and Gender Studies
Eileen Dabrowski
Center for Victim Advocacy
Sgt. Charlotte Domingo
USF Police Department
Jessica Vanek
USF Student
Emmilia Fontaine
USF Student
Diane Price Herndl
Women’s and Gender Studies

Catherine Lynch
College of Medicine
Maggie Hall
USF Student
Chris Ponticelli
Sociology
Sonya Jacobs
College of Medicine
India Witte
USF Foundation
Vicki Gregory
Library and Information Science
Kiersten Cox
Library and Information Science

WSC Activities in 2015-2016

The WSC held three meetings in 2015-2016, in August, November and January. Progress toward our goals was stymied this year due to the evolving membership, leadership transitions, and the lack of regular meetings. Nevertheless, our Committee continued the efforts begun in 2015 and detailed in last year’s Annual Report to assess gender equity at USF. Specifically, this year the WSC members:

♦ Under the guidance of our former Chair, Diane Price Herndl, we coordinated a showing of the documentary film, *The Hunting Ground*, in conjunction with the
Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity (Title IX), the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies (WGS), and Bricolage, the USF WGS Graduate Student Organization. Following the film, we coordinated a panel discussion, where the moderator and two panelists were WSC members. This showing was very well attended and resulted in increased awareness of sexual violence on college campuses generally, and USF policies and procedures related to Title IX, specifically.

- We reviewed last year’s report and committed to an assessment of USF policies related to the inequities identified. This involved initiating a protocol and assessment strategy for reviewing USF policies on hiring and promotion, and educating ourselves about the “best practices” in both domains as identified by the American Council on Education in their Pipelines, Pathways and Institutional Leadership: An Update on the Status of Women in Higher Education (2016). We also briefly discussed whether the University of Central Florida’s model for faculty success could be emulated (see https://womenfaculty.afia.ucf.edu/).

- A second, though equally important issue, was the consideration of work-life balance policies at USF, often managed by Human Resources, and their role in women’s success. In consideration of such policies we reviewed the UC Hastings College of Law publication, Effective Policies and Programs for Retention and Advancement of Women in Academia. A cursory review of this document suggests USF has many options to become more faculty/staff friendly which would benefit all of our university employees.

- We also expanded membership, adding four individuals to the Committee and communicating with several others about joining the Committee for 2016-2017.

**WSC Recommendations from 2015-2016**

The WSC offers the following recommendations, following from the data generated during 2015 and our own beginning analysis of USF policies:

1. **Authorize and support a comprehensive analysis of gender equity among faculty and staff at USF by supporting a faculty member’s time to conduct such a review.** This task cannot be performed by a purely volunteer committee. Instead, such a report will necessitate sustained commitment by a researcher and administrative support for the gathering of relevant data. The
WSC should guide, support, and participate in the gender equity report in conjunction with the researcher.

Such an analysis is well justified; data on gender and leadership in last year’s WSC Annual Report, coupled with data from the Title IX 2015 Self-Study demonstrate ongoing concerns with women faculty and staff’s status across the university. Because status concerns exist at all stages of employment, this analysis needs to consider hiring practices, salary equity, promotion rates, work-life balance and gender climate concerns. Though our Committee’s intent is to continue our work on USF policies in 2016-2017, this work is only one piece of the larger gender equity study that must be completed for USF to ensure gender parity in employment and compensation at USF.

2. Support the WSC’s engagement with the Florida State Commissions on the Status of Women by funding the Chair’s travel to the annual meeting. Leadership transitions in 2015-2016 precluded our active engagement with other Commissions, and this significantly restricts our coordination with gender equity activists on other Florida campuses.

3. Clarify the rules and procedures for funding to be distributed to Presidential Committees. We understand the need for fiscal responsibility, yet we believe there could be increased clarity about the activities that may be funded, how much funding is available for each Committee, and how the process of funding is accomplished. With increased clarity about the rules and procedures for Committee funding, we believe the WSC should be allowed to manage its own designated budget, as it has done in the past.

WSC Goals for 2016-2017

The Women’s Status Committee has three goals for 2016-2017, each of which builds upon prior years’ work and the needs of the campus:

1. Expand membership of the Committee by engaging with various faculty, staff and student constituency groups to ensure a broad cross-section of individuals dedicated to the mission and goals of the Committee. This goal is key to our ongoing success, as dedicated membership leads to informed practice. But to accomplish this goal, we need to also accomplish our second goal:
2. **Identify and establish broad-based leadership within the Committee.** The traditional model of Committee Chair who coordinates activities of the Committee may not work for the WSC, as the activities and needs are dispersed and the constituencies vary in their interests and goals. Thus, a goal for 2016-2017 is to consider the viability of sub-committees on identified issues related to gender equity that can collectively constitute the activities of the Committee itself. Given the diversity of concerns related to gender equity, this model may, in fact, better represent the experiences of women as diverse, differentially located, and with unique concerns in our campus communities. For instance, a sub-committee located at USF-St Petersburg would be better able to identify, represent, and act upon their interests as a collective body than a single representative from USFSP on the Women’s Status Committee. Another example, UCF’s “Center for Success of Women Faculty” (https://womenfaculty.afia.ucf.edu/) may be a model for USF’s women faculty to seek advancement, but may do little to enhance the experiences of USF staff members. Empowering WSC representatives to act within their domains may, then, be a more inclusive strategy that validates our diversity but recognizes that strategies may not be effective for all. At a minimum, this model will be assessed during 2016-2017.

3. **Continue our multi-year project of the assessment of USF policies.** Because these policies drive institutional behavior, our comparison of USF policies with aspirational peer policies and national best practices models such as the documents previously discussed is key to moving USF closer to gender equity across our campuses.