



## 2013-2014 Annual Report

### Background

The Commission on the Status of Women, established in 1971, acts in an advisory capacity to the Office of the President on four principal areas of concern:

1. Equity and equality in policies, procedures and practices with regard to gender in appointment, employment, placement, classification, promotion, and tenure at Wayne State University for teaching and non-teaching academic, professional and administrative, and clerical and technical staff.
2. Policies and practices regarding the counseling of female students in all schools and colleges, especially those in which gender has traditionally been a determining factor in recruitment, admission and retention (e.g., Medicine, Engineering, Nursing).
3. Increased communication among women regarding events and issues of interest on university, local and national levels.
4. Representation on ad hoc committees and commissions appointed by the President.

The Commission strives to increase communication about opportunities and events for women, and raise awareness of women's needs and issues through programming, advocacy and dissemination of information.

### 2013-2014 Activities

The Commission is typically comprised of 30 members (commissioners) who, with the help of other volunteers, do the work of the Commission through its committees. The active committees in the 2013-2014 academic year were Career Development, Executive Committee, Gender & Equity, Health and Wellness (formerly Health Sciences), Information & Research, Outreach, Public Relations & Marketing, Membership and Scholarship. The full commission met ten times and the Executive Committee met monthly. The other committees met as needed to support the development and implementation of their activities. Below is a brief summary of Commission accomplishments this session.

- The **Executive Committee** revised the COSW bylaws (formally called guidelines) under the direction of member Diane Fears, developed an administrative manual to promote transparency and consistency in COSW procedures, and with input from the full commission and other stakeholders, developed a 2-year strategic plan to provide direction for the COSW's activities. The Executive Committee also worked to identify and develop relationships with university and community partners with whom we could collaborate to achieve our mission including the Michigan Chapter of the American Association for University Women and Women of Wayne.

The Executive Committee sets the agenda for the Commission meetings. A number of speakers were invited to present at full Commission meetings this year to inform our efforts and identify opportunities for collaboration. Speakers included: Dr. David Strauss, Dean of Students, to talk about issues facing students on campus and how to best engage students in COSW activities; Provost Margaret Winters, PhD and Naida Simon, Chair of Academic Staff Mentoring Committee, to discuss the mentoring program and the Commission's role; Lt. David Scott and Eleshia Evans from WSU Public Safety to discuss the implications of the Violence Against Women's Act for the university community and their efforts related to the act; Christie Bellak, MSN, RN, Public Health Program Manager, WSU Campus Health Center, to discuss the structure of the Health Center and what health services are available to students.

- The **Career Development Committee (CDC)**, chaired by Diane Fears, continued to take an active part in the planning and execution of the successful WSU Academic Staff Mentoring Program. Late in 2012, the CDC approached a number of campus constituents including the Academic Staff Professional Development Committee (ASPDC) and the Academic Staff Steering Committee (ASSC) to investigate forming mentoring programs. In early 2013, the Office of the Provost appointed CDC chair, Diane Fears, and CDC member/COSW commissioner, Kathy Fox, along with representatives from the ASPDC and ASSC, to the Academic Staff Mentoring Committee. With the sponsorship of the Provost, the Academic Staff Mentoring Committee hosted mentoring events and matched 31 academic staff mentees with mentors from across campus. Several CDC/COSW members have served as members. The CDC invited the Provost and Naida Simon, who chairs the Academic Staff Mentoring Committee, to present to the Commission on the success of the program and to encourage the Commission to embrace and promote the value of mentoring.

The CDC, under the direction of Commissioner Kathy Fox, has also been working with **PR & Marketing** to develop and post weekly career tips on the COSW Facebook page as part of Motivation Monday posts.

The CDC also collaborated with the Health and Wellness Committee to identify potential speakers for the Family Medical Leave Act event and offered promotional support for the ASPDC's program entitled "Gen Now: Communicating Among the Generations."

- The **Gender & Equity Committee**, co-chaired by La'Quita Lowery and Shauna Reeves, held two events. The first event, a screening of the movie "It's a Girl," was organized in conjunction with the **Outreach Committee** and was intended to increase awareness about gendercide in India and China. Eric Shovine, a WSU law student who witnessed gendercide while practicing human rights law in India, moderated the discussion that followed the movie.

The second event, which was organized in conjunction with the Wayne State School of Medicine, was the Yellow Wallpaper Exhibit. The purpose of the exhibit is to bring awareness about the time when women were excluded from political and intellectual life. This event was held during Noel Night and was open to the public.

- The **Health and Wellness Committee**, chaired by Troy Eller, held two events. One event, entitled Understanding FMLA: Medical Leave at WSU, was held on both the School of Medicine and main campus on consecutive days in February. The objective was to clarify the FMLA law and employees rights and responsibilities. Speakers

included Charlene Allemon from WSU Total Wellness and Compensation and Kurt Hadley from FMLASource. The committee also held an event entitled Creating Healthy Work Spaces and Work Places in May. The objective was to discuss office ergonomics to improve the wellbeing of students, faculty and staff on campus. Speakers were Geri Conti from Occupational Therapy and Heather Sandlin from Health Sciences.

The Health and Wellness committee, working with a WSU MPH student, conducted the Stairwell Project this year. The project aimed to investigate the impact of signage encouraging people to use the stairs by stating the health benefits of this practice.

- The **Information and Research Committee**, co-chaired by Angela Trepanier and Karly Szczepkowski (prior to her resignation from WSU), was tasked with identifying key issues facing women on campus and then using this information to help develop the Commission's strategic plan. The committee analyzed the open-ended responses from the 2009 Commission survey, which had been sent out to the entire university community, to identify the most commonly stated issues and concerns. The committee also developed, distributed and analyzed the results of a strategic planning survey sent out to Commissioners and those interested in the work of the Commission, as indicated by their participation in the COSW Interest listserv.

Also this year, the committee generated a COSW-specific awareness calendar- a calendar of national awareness days and months- highlighting those issues that are best aligned with the COSW mission. The goal is that this calendar will be used in developing the annual COSW activities calendar and editorial calendar (see PR & Marketing report, below).

- The **Membership Committee**, chaired by Commission vice chair, Kimberly Morgan, received 76 applications for 8 positions. The committee completed selections and received approval from the Commission as well as the President of the University. All interested parties were then informed and those who were not selected were encouraged to join a committee as a volunteer. Elections for the positions of chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer were held. The 2014-2015 chair is Kimberly Morgan, the vice chair is Sara Byczek, the secretary is Nannette McCleary, and the treasurer is Ezella McPherson.
- The **Outreach Committee**, chaired by Robin Collins with vice chair Sara Byczek, held a number of activities including:
  - The Clothesline Project (9/27/13), the purpose of which was to bring awareness to the campus community about domestic violence. Supporters of survivors and survivors of domestic violence made a total of 60 t-shirts to express their feelings about the abuse. The t-shirts were displayed in the UGL for the month of October.
  - The Pledge Project- I Pledge Not to Raise My Hand in Violence (10/4/13), the purpose of which was to bring awareness that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Over 200 attendees, many of whom were male, made handprints on the committee's banner, pledging against violence.
  - Take Back the Night (4/23/14), the purpose of which is to bring awareness that April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Over 125 students, faculty, staff, and members of over 20 community organizations attended the event which included speakers and testimonials from survivors of sexual assault. The evening culminated with a walk through campus. The day of the event, the WSU Take

Back the Night logo was displayed on top of the RenCen in downtown Detroit. The program brought attention to sexual assault in both men and women. Counselors from WSU CAPS were available to provide support to those in attendance who had experienced an assault. WSU's Public Safety, School of Social Work, Counseling Center (CAPS) and Health Center were all involved.

- Silent Witness Project. The Outreach Committee commissioned Mr. Hinderer's woodshop class at Wyandotte Roosevelt High School to cut silhouettes of men and women out of wood and paint them red. These silhouettes were then fitted with shields that told real stories of individuals who had experienced domestic violence. The purpose is to increase awareness. The silhouettes were displayed on main campus and the medical school campus the week of Take Back the Night. They will be displayed annually in October (Domestic Violence Awareness Month) and April (Sexual Assault Awareness Month).
- The Invisible War (screened on main campus and the School of Medicine campus in April 2014). The objective of this event was to increase awareness of sexual assault in the military. Clara Kammann, a WSU alumna, 20-year retired veteran, and member of the Student Veterans' Organization moderated the discussion that followed the showing of the film.

In addition to the above activities, Robin Collins was appointed to the university's Violence Against Women's Act committee which provides the Commission with opportunities to work directly on university activities tied to increasing awareness of and preventing violence against women.

- The **Public Relations and Marketing Committee**, co-chaired by Tracy Walker and Kim Morgan, provided PR/marketing support for all COSW-sponsored events, as well as the membership and scholarship drives. Programs were publicized in multiple ways including email blasts, posted flyers, Facebook posts, Pipeline snippets, using the WSU events calendar and working with WSU departments to get programs included in Today@Wayne or featured on WSU's main site. The committee also manned a table at the Celebrate Learning Fair to promote COSW.

In partnership with the **Career Development Committee**, PR and Marketing started a weekly Motivation Monday Facebook post that provides career tips and advice.

The committee also developed an editorial calendar that includes ideas for blog, social media and website posts that will raise awareness about issues in line with the COSW's mission.

- The **Scholarship Committee**, chaired by Troy Eller, awarded three scholarships at the end of the 2012-2013 Commission year in the amount of \$2400 (\$800 each) to two undergraduate and one graduate recipients.
  - Rasha Almulaiki, a senior co-majoring in English and Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies who volunteers with Big Brothers and Big Sisters and is a founding member of the Z Collective as well as a participant in the Feminist Collective of Detroit was awarded the Gender and Equity Scholarship.
  - Reta Malallah, who is pursuing a doctorate of pharmacy degree and served as a mentor for the WSU iStart program as an undergraduate and now volunteers with underserved populations at the Huda Clinic, was awarded the Health Sciences Scholarship. Ms. Malallah also is the co-chair of internal affairs for the Fighting

AIDS with Nutrition (FAWN) group which raises money to provide nutritional supplements to AIDS patients in Africa.

- Karishma Kasad, a junior in the Honors College who is majoring in Psychology, is the founder and president of the WSU student group Gender Affecting Media and Entertainment, was elected director of the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center her sophomore year, and serves on the e-board of the anti-human trafficking group, Not for Sale, was awarded the Margaret Canty Scholarship.

The Scholarship Committee is currently accepting scholarships for the 2013-2014 year and plans to award a total of \$2000.

- **Partners:** The above-mentioned programming and activities have been developed in conjunction with numerous Wayne State faculty, students, and staff from a wide variety of constituencies including the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences; College of Nursing; College of Social Work; College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts; School of Medicine; Law School; Gender, Equality and Women's Studies; Department of Communication; Office of the Provost; CAPS, WSU Public Safety and WSU Health Center. The COSW has worked with a number of organizations including Alternatives for Girls, American Indian Health and Family Services, ASOCIAL, Black Family Development, Charter One Bank, Chasing Crows, Christian Mental Health, Community and Home Support, ENNIS Center for Children, First Step, Haven, KICK, La Vida; Life Stress Center, My Sister's Song, Northeast Guidance Center, NSO/The Bridges Center, Powerful Men of Destiny, Read All About It Literacy Library Center, SASHA Center; Sisters Acquiring Financial Empowerment, Soroptimist International of Grosse Pointe, Spaulding for Children, U.N.I.T.Y., Wayne County Safe, Will Party, and Women's Resource Center.