

President's Commission on Women's Issues
Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2005

Attending: Ellin Scholnick, Debbie Yow, Joanne DeSciato, Anne Geronimo, Linda LeNoir, Paige Smith, Beverly Greenfeig, Barbara Goldberg, Diane Sullivan, Laura Nichols, Cindi Hale; special guest: Gloria Aparicio

The meeting convened at 2:30 in 2141 Tydings. We had invited Gloria Aparicio, Assistant to the Vice President, Administrative Affairs, to meet with us and to discuss concerns and issues with regard to the campus' blue collar/non exempt staff. Gloria functions unofficially as a liaison to this community of employees. She indicated that there are a number of issues that create unique challenges. These include:

- **A language barrier** – many speak Spanish, Vietnamese or Russian and struggle interpreting university practices and policies as well as communicating with supervisors. While the University does offer English classes for employees, these employees frequently are poorly informed and isolated from these opportunities or simply unable to participate due to work or family obligations.
- **Fringe Benefits** – because many of these employees are Contingent I (hourly), they are not eligible to participate in the health benefit or retirement plans and this creates a hardship for them and their families.
- **Career Mobility** – many are not aware of the campus process to compete for permanent positions, with fringe benefits, or how to obtain training, knowledge and skills which would allow them to progress to better paying positions.
- **Recognition** – these employees are often treated as if they are invisible, not eligible for any awards or forms of recognition; due to the seasonal nature of their employment they do not form a strong relationship with the campus.

Members brainstormed some possible solutions to these problems, suggesting that Gloria make them more aware of programs in the Counseling Center that would help with learning English, as well as the possibility of approaching the Language Departments or the Language House for assistance. We proposed that we approach the Office of Human Resources to and ask if they could post employment opportunities in Spanish. We discussed the feasibility of running some educational sessions for these employees that would provide them with information about the services on campus that are available to them. We discussed the feasibility of working with the Health Center to provide some basic health screening for employees without health insurance. In particular we were concerned about the many female employees in this category who may not be able to get mammograms or blood pressure screenings and concluded that perhaps the "Health Workers Program" might meet this need more directly and should be explored.

We developed a plan to use the Feb 5 Women's B-Ball game (against Virginia) as a forum to invite Contingent employees and their families to the Comcast Center to see the game, enjoy a pre-game reception, and to provide them with some of the information described above. Debbie Yow offered the tickets and the use of Heritage Hall; Gloria Aparacio and Cindi Hale agreed to coordinate the event.

As of January 26, over a thousand tickets have been distributed to an enthusiastic group of employees. There was not sufficient time to pull together an information session and that has been postponed. Because of the extreme uncertainty of how many employees and guests will show up on Feb 5, we decided to cancel the reception. We were concerned about overwhelming Heritage Hall and creating a negative response. We will be welcoming and thanking the employees during half time and on the board in English and in Spanish. This has been a far more complicated event to coordinate than one might imagine and Gloria has taken on a great deal of work. We hope to pursue some of these other ideas when we have a few more volunteers to help with the coordination.

There was a related discussion about a plan to identify young girls – perhaps 8th and 9th grades – from local communities to come to the campus in order to be exposed to a university and to get a vision of what college would be like and what opportunities are available at the University of Maryland. We envisioned a program led by faculty and administrators which would encourage these girls to set some academic and professional goals and to recognize that to achieve these goals they would have to work hard in high school. We agreed that the day would end with a celebration reception and at a basketball game in Comcast Center. This wonderful idea will require a considerable amount of coordination; several people have volunteered to assist, but we need a bit more planning before we can launch this idea.

We thanked Linda LeNoir and her committee (which consisted of Beverly Greenfeig, Barbara Goldberg, Dianne Sullivan, Gloria Bouis and LaWanda Kamalidin) for the wonderful Women of Color Award Reception, held on November 3. It was a lovely and very well attended event.

The Family Friendly Committee reported that they are developing a formal request for assistance to be submitted to Dr. Wylie and Dr. Clements.

The Faculty Climate Committee met throughout the Fall and now is faced with the task of shaping a request for the Provost based on their research.

The Mentor Initiative had a productive and busy fall semester, matching up nearly 40 students and mentors. An end of the semester celebration was held in late December at Heritage Hall (Thank you, Debbie) to introduce the mentees, to provide them with encouragement and to thank the mentors.

We are still looking for someone to welcome guests to the March 11 "Voices of Women" concert to be held in the Chapel.

Barbara and Beverly agreed to co-Char the Woman of the Year Committee during the spring semester and we still need to identify a Chair and Committee for the annual Professional Concepts Exchange Conference.

The meeting adjourned at 3:50.