

**President's Commission on the Status of Women
West Chester University
2020-2021 Annual Report to the President and Cabinet**

Who We Are

We unite students, staff, and faculty across a broad range of campus constituents to advise the president and his cabinet on emergent issues and best practices that will promote the *recognition, leadership, and success* of women on campus. Our membership includes equal numbers of faculty and staff representatives from 30 offices and organizations. Each member represents their constituency at general assembly meetings and serves on at least one project team. Our student membership includes representation from undergraduate and graduate education. This year, Sabrina Von Ahrens represented the Student Government Association and Jamie Piperato represented the Graduate Student Association. In addition, Emily Shaba served as a graduate student at-large member on the women of color recruitment and retention team and Kathleen Shannon served as an undergraduate at-large member on the student engagement team.

2020-2021 Executive Committee

Lisa Huebner, Chair
Juanita Wooten, Co-Chair
Sabrina Rightmer, Past Chair
Nora Maurer, Secretary

2021 -2022 Executive Committee

Juanita Wooten, Chair
Cheryl Neale-McFall, Co-Chair
Lisa Huebner, Past Chair
Michelle Wade, Secretary

2020-2021 Activities and Recommendations

Care in COVID-19 Team

In response to our ongoing goal to promote family friendly policies and practices and in response to emergent needs due to COVID-19, we formed a team specific to advocating for those who balance work and family responsibilities.

Activities:

- Secured administrative recognition of and communication about caregiving as a gendered issue.
- Collaborated with student affairs, academic affairs, and the Learning Lab work group to design a comprehensive survey, secure IRB approval, and distribute throughout campus. 342 surveys were returned and 220 of these identified as caregivers.
- Served on the Learning Lab Working Group, which will produce a report for the Provost that will outline how WCU can further support parenting faculty, staff, and students.
- Updated the WCU Caregiving Website to include policies and resources related to COVID-19.
- Made the following recommendations for faculty: reduce service expectations, extend tenure applications, support boundaries around availability for students, i.e., during regular hours, not 24-7.
- Made the following recommendations for staff: reduce labor expectations outside of job description, provide flexibility in evaluations and performance reviews, support boundaries around availability for students, i.e., during regular hours, not 24-7.

Current Recommendations:

- **Clear communication from HR on COVID 19 - related leave options and other accommodations for summer and fall 2021.**
- **Clear communication from HR on how requests for leave and accommodations related to COVID-19 should go directly to HR and not necessitate managerial support.**

Community Engagement Team

This team ensures that we collaborate with and position ourselves as resources with other PASSHE universities and in surrounding communities.

Activities:

- Collaborated with and shared information with Chester County Women's Commission and PASSHE Women's Consortium throughout the year.
- Identified Michelle Wade to serve as our liaison to PASSHE Women's Consortium which has created more open communication from the other PASSHE universities.

Current Recommendations:

- **Michelle Wade will continue to serve as appointed liaison to PASSHE Women's Commission.**
- **Continue to network with other regional commissions and organizations that serve women.**
- **Inquire about a WCU Women's Commission member serving on Chester County Women's Commission to strengthen this partnership.**

Facilities Team

In response to our ongoing goal to commit to family friendly and inclusive workspaces, this team addresses the availability and communication around gender inclusive restrooms, lactation spaces and changing tables.

Activities:

- Formed an ad-hoc university-level committee with Facilities, the Vice President for Campus Planning and Outreach, the Center for Women and Gender Equity, the Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy, and The Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion.
- University-level committee met three times to ensure comprehensive, up to date information throughout the university.
- Provided guidance to facilities regarding inclusive language and signage.

Current Recommendations:

- **Maintain the ad-hoc university committee to provide guidance on where to prioritize expansion of facilities to meet the needs of cis-women, non-binary individuals, and trans men.**

Language Team

In response to concerns from some of the membership, a team formed to explore the use of inclusive and precise language in our mission on who we serve and who we empower.

Activities:

- Met to identify key questions for the commission to consider regarding our mission and who we serve.
- Drafted possible statements.

Current Recommendations:

- **Involve the entire membership in these discussions before drafting language.**
- **Provide training on inclusive language at a future general assembly meeting to help facilitate the discussion.**

Student Engagement Team

Activities:

- Placed 2 WCU students at selected internship sites- Chester County Women's Commission (CCWC) and The Tailor-Made Life (Woman-led Wellness Company).
- Revised the internship program to include more detailed review of applications, placement guidance, consistent reflective check ins for interns, and a final presentation from interns to the commission.
- Increased student membership by reaching out to SGA, GSA, CWGE, Super Moms, Her Campus, and the Student Experience Council.
- Based on student feedback, began preliminary planning for a community and alumni panel to be held in the fall: created and administered survey to WCU alumni and community partners to gauge interest in serving on the panel.

Current Recommendations:

- **Hold Community and Alumni Panel in Fall 2021 to support students and secure additional internship sites.**

Women of Color Recruitment and Retention Team

Continue our long-term commitment to the success of women of color on campus by advocating for best practices for the recruitment and retention of women of color faculty and staff.

Activities:

- Reviewed quantitative data from WCU and PASSHE that indicate significantly low numbers of women of color at WCU.
- Designed and implemented a qualitative research study to help explain these numbers and to analyze the experiences of women of color faculty, staff, and administration. Methodology included purposeful sampling, focus group data collection with 25 self-identified women of color, and inductive and deductive coding.
- Major findings include:
 1. Although they immediately noted the lack of women of color at WCU, most participants reported positive recruitment experiences, but then experienced consistent feelings of isolation, being unwelcome, a lack of support and resources, a lack of consistent performance reviews, exclusions from meetings, bullying, being hyper-scrutinized by white colleagues, overloaded with service commitments, and feeling tokenized and pigeon-holed to limited opportunities.
 2. Participants expressed disconnect between anti-racism statements and structural actions on campus to support persons of color. For example, there should be a clear understanding of how national/regional racism and xenophobia may affect their lives and productivity and should be considered during evaluation.
 3. Most of the participants reported personal stories of cultural insensitivities, microaggressions, and blatant macroaggressions within individual departments and interactions with leadership outside of their departments.
 4. Participants expressed mixed feelings in advocating for themselves and others at WCU for fear of retaliation to job security, challenging to prove, isolation, etc.
 5. Some participants noted experiences in reaching out to support units on campus (Human Resources, Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion) and not receiving the support that they needed or confidential information being shared at mediation hearings and in other settings.
 6. Suggestions included: Maintain diversity on search committees, implement department equity scorecards that can be shared across campus, create opportunities to connect and build community with other women of color on campus (networking, mentoring, speaker events, etc.), provide advanced training and leadership opportunities for women of color (particularly Asian Americans), professional development opportunities for all employees, consistent evaluative processes for all

employees, provide a campus meeting space for women and individuals of color, salary increases and time release, and structural steps to increase cultural competence.

Current Recommendations:

Recruitment

- **Commit to increased diversity at WCU by reviewing overall department/college diversity at WCU, identify gaps, establish goals.**
- **Post position announcements through diverse communication efforts**
- **Maintain diverse search committees (include employees from various departments, racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, etc.)**
- **Administer bias training surveys to potential search committee members (in addition to current bias trainings)**
- **Increase search committee bias guidelines for searches that consist of internal and external candidates.**
- **Work with hiring departments to ensure interview questions are updated and reflective of institutional diversity initiatives.**
- **Administer recruitment and interview surveys to all candidates regarding their experiences/ use data to inform future recruitment and interview practices.**
- **HR- Streamline process for negotiating salaries across campus.**
- **Provide opportunity for women of color candidates to connect with a point person who is also a person of color to ease any tensions they may have regarding the recruitment process.**

Retention

- **Assist newly hired employees in searching local housing, childcare, schools, places of worship.**
- **Administer anonymous workplace satisfaction surveys to employees of color at WCU/ follow up on findings.**
- **Require department/college managers and supervisors to participate in training to support new hires (establish consistency across campus)**
- **Update welcome of new employees on the WCU website**
- **Enhance communication regarding manager and staff needs and expectations.**
- **HR and ODEI-Streamline process and provide safe space for employees to report concerns/ build trust with individuals reporting concerns.**
- **Establish regular new hire check-in meetings to communicate professional responsibilities, provide feedback (consistent across campus)**
- **Guide women of color staff, faculty, and administrators in establishing professional success goals and resources to assist them in meeting those goals.**
- **Establish clear professional expectations and consistent evaluative processes.**
- **Establish policy and consequences for bullying and mistreatment at the university.**
- **Support employee participation in retention initiatives during the scheduled workday**
- **Provide mentoring for WCU women of color employees/ Invite women of color employees to serve as mentors to new hires.**
- **Provide hands on training sessions for managers/supervisors of women of color (particularly white woman managers/supervisors)**
- **Increase visibility of women of color employees at WCU (campus events, classrooms, meetings, website, etc.)**
- **Provide leadership opportunities for women of color employees at WCU.**
- **Celebrate cultural diversity across the WCU community (celebrations, lectures, curriculum, etc.)**

Women's Visibility Team

To continue our commitment to women's leadership, we formed a team focused specifically on increasing the visibility of contributions made by women at the university. This year, its primary activity was to make recommendations to honor women as part of the university-wide 150th anniversary celebration.

Activities:

- Brainstormed and vetted various ideas to recognize women in the university's 150th anniversary celebration.
- Selected project will be a virtual book to include six sections: Introduction, 150 influential women, Everyday women at WCU, History of CWGE, History of Department of WGST, and a special section to recognize all those who provided care during COVID-19.
- Launched the call for nominations for the 150 women.

Current Recommendations:

- **The inclusion of a virtual book to provide special recognition of women as part of the 150th anniversary celebration.**
- **Host an in-person or virtual celebration during Women's History Month/March 2022.**

2021-2022 Goals

Care in COVID-19 Team

- Analyze and disseminate survey results and recommendations to university community.
- Share survey instrument with other interested PASSHE Women's Commissions.
- Evaluate the feasibility of adjusting union bargaining agreements to offer alternative work arrangements post-COVID-19.
- Create enhanced training and learning opportunities for managers that address caregiving and its impacts.

Community Engagement Team

- Collaborate with PASSHE Women's Consortium, Women's Commissions at other PASSHE universities, Chester County Women's Commission, and with other regional organizations that serve and empower women.
- Collaborate with student engagement team to develop and provide the Community and Alumni Panel for students.

Facilities Team

- Coordinate the ad-hoc university committee to meet twice a semester to provide guidance on where to prioritize expansion of facilities to meet the needs of cis-women, non-binary individuals, and trans men.
- Discuss the expansion of single user restrooms as well as multi-stalled restrooms that are not restricted by gender.
- Review all building directories to advise on signage.
- Elicit stakeholder feedback through the various centers and will address any facilities-related concerns that may arise during the year.

Language Team

- Plan and facilitate training/discussion with general assembly.
- Develop drafted statements based on these discussions.
- Obtain feedback on drafted statements from commission.

Student Engagement Team

- Place two WCU students in internships.

- Collaborate with community engagement team to develop and provide the Community and Alumni Panel for students.
- Continue to increase student membership in commission.
- Create a list of future internship sites that focus on the empowerment of women.
- Continue to seek input from students about their leadership/mentoring needs.

Women of Color Recruitment and Retention Team

- Accountability and mobility discussion sessions for white women managers and supervisors.
- WCU women of color staff, faculty, and administrator mentoring initiative.
- Fall 2021- women of color staff, faculty, and administrators of WCU networking event.
- Speaker Series
- Visibility on Women’s Commission website (“WCU Women of Color Leaders”)

Women’s Visibility Team

- Prepare and distribute the virtual book.
- Honor the women included in the book by sending certificates to each woman.
- Host an in-person or virtual celebration during Women’s History Month/March 2022.

2021-2022 Budget Request (To Date)		
Team	Item	Cost
Student Engagement	Community and Alumni Panel	2,000
	Stipend for two interns	2,000
Women’s Visibility	Journals	1,000
	Certificates	60
	Certificate Folders	200
	Padded Envelopes	250
	Postage	<u>400</u>
		\$5,910