

## **Women's Issues**

### **Introduction**

It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon to talk about the further advancement of women at the University of Michigan.

I want particularly to thank Carol Hollenshead, Director of CEW, for convening this meeting and for her value service to the University in taking leadership on women's issues over many years now...going back even to her days as a undergraduate.

As we all know, Carol is but one of a long line of women leaders who have pulled, pushed, and sometimes dragged this University along the path to equality in life and leadership.

We all know too well that we are still a long ways from our final destination of equality.

But we should acknowledge a debt of gratitude to those many women whose efforts have brought us this far along the road...as well as to those of you with us today who are, I gratefully acknowledge, helping to guide us the rest of the way to our destination.

Before I talk specifically about where we are trying to go, it is important to make a few comments about where we have been.

### **The Past**

This is Women's History Month.

Hence it is appropriate that we pause for a moment and

reflect on the history of women at the University of Michigan,  
to honor them and to learn from the example they provide for us today.

An excellent summary of this effort is the important work of the late Dorothy Gies McGuigan, "The Dangerous Experiment", published by CEW in 1970, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the admission of women to the University, chronicling women's participation in the life of the University...  
...a history largely ignored by the male historians who came before her. I have drawn heavily from this important work.

Women themselves have consistently and persistently been the leaders in the long struggle at the University to achieve equality for women, to recognize women's contributions, and to foster an environment in which women can succeed.

From the early times in 1858 when Sarah Burger first applied for admission to the University to the present, women from the University and the community have dedicated untold effort, overcome formidable barriers, and endured considerable hardship and sacrifice to make the University a better, more intellectually challenging, and more diverse and

enriching place for us all.

Three women made history in 1858, creating great controversy when they submitted their applications for admission to the University. After heated debate on the topic, the University denied them admission, and this stance was not reversed until following the Civil War.

Finally, in 1867, the State Legislature declared that:

"The high objects for which the University of Michigan was organized will never be fully attained until women are admitted to all its rights and privileges."

Three years after this declaration, in 1870, Madelon Stockwell became the first woman to enter the University. Many followed in her pioneering footsteps. Women's enrollments

increased steadily until 1930 when they peaked at 37%.

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed stagnation and then decline, and by 1950 women represented only 32% of the student body. Fortunately, we made much progress in reversing this trend over the past several decades, and today women's enrollment stands at 48%.

Since the 1960s there has been an intensified commitment by and on behalf of women that continues to this day.

Spurred on by the efforts of many women in the audience this

afternoon and many, well known to us, the University

led the way in a number of important initiatives:

• Creating the Center for Continuing Education **Error!**

• Establishing the Women's Studies program in 1972

• Implementing the sexual harassment policy and, the

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\$\$\$\$\$de, we have seen many more women at middle and upper management and administrative levels...

- In fact, just last week, I announced the appointment of two women to senior positions in the University administration:
  - Elsa Cole as General Counsel
  - Zaida Geraldo as Director of Affirmative ActionBoth are outstanding additions to the University team.
- I believe we have improved access to women to the full range of educational programs and have achieved greater equity in pay and fringe benefits for faculty and staff.

But, we all know that not all the news is good by any means... This is particularly true in faculty hiring and retention where, despite increasing pools in many fields, the number of new hires of women has barely held steady...much less increased.

In addition, along with other universities and, indeed, our society,

we still suffer from the well-recognized problem of "the higher the fewer"

Overall it appears that we have not made much progress in total numbers of women faculty over the past decade.

In some scientific disciplines the shortages are particularly acute--although I should note we are not alone in this failure.

### **The Need for New Agenda**

In its report, the New Agenda of Women in Higher Education,

the American Council onw  
agenda of women's issues for the University of Michigan.

### **The Reasons for ` New Commitment**

My reasons for this commitment are many.

1. Of course, fundamentally, it is based on principle.  
The equal representau on of women is a matter of justice and democratic rights too long deferred...and too often denied.
2. But I am qnso a colleague, a husband, father, and a friend to many women, and they have helped me see and understand

the barriers -- large and small -- that continue to prewnt women from achieving their

their great talents and leadership, not just in the University,

but to our society.

The cost to women...and to the rest of us...is high. We .heyd 4 - need your talents, perspectives and experiences...

your leadership representixg more uan half of the human race

3. This brings me to another and more pralmatic reason for my commitment to women's equity issues. This is that our country, if it to thrive in the Cext centry, mustall .heal 3 - on the talents of all our people.

As some of you may be aware, for the past several years I have served as chair or vice-chair of one of the two standing bodies of the National Science Board, that concerned with Education and Human Resources.

It has become painfully apparent that the

underrepresentation of women in many fields of science and engineering seriously threatens this nation's security and well-being.

As we move into an era of increasing diversity, in a world where knowledge is ever more important to our society and to the world, we simply cannot ignore the needs and talents of over one half of the population.

Bringing women into full partnership in academia is a national imperative. Given the impending shortages of faculty, of scientists, and educated professionals in many fields, it is clear that women's contributions will be increasingly critical to higher education and to the public and private sectors of our economy and social life.

I suspect most of you are aware that during the 1990s, almost two-thirds of the new workers entering the job force will be women. Indeed, white, native-born men will comprise less than 15% of the new workers.

This will be occurring at a time when the decline in the number of young adults as we slide down the backside of the post-war baby boom will trigger serious shortages of young adults entering key knowledge-intensive fields such as science and engineering.

Indeed, the National Science Board has recently concluded that the only way that we can stave off the pending shortage, now estimated to be almost 1 million scientists and engineers by the early 21st century, will be a massive

effort to attract more women and minorities into these fields.

I might add that Provost Vest and I have already met with the Science Development Council to launch major discussions and eventually initiatives meant to address this pending crisis on our own campus.

4. But this is not the only reason we must seek women's equality at Michigan.

I am convinced that we also must commit ourselves to women's equity because it is fundamental to our teaching and research mission.

The scholarly contributions of women strengthen and invigorate our intellectual climate and academic standing in many ways, as we have already seen in the case of women's studies.

The research in this burgeoning field have brought important new perspectives, vitality, and theoretical interpretations to scholarship and teaching in many disciplines.

### **The Task Ahead**

But I don't really have to persuade you that our reasons for committing ourselves to address women's issues are sound.

The fact is that I have learned much of what I understand and know about this rationale from you and from other women. And I confess I am still learning.

But I do understand already that addressing the women's agenda is a compelling



necessity both for this University and for this nation.

It was last October that campus and community women's organization's honored me with an event and a reception as part of my inauguration as President. I pledged then that I would work with you to advance women's interests in the University.

Of course, we face many of the same challenges in achieving equity for women that stimulated our development of the Michigan Mandate...

While well-intentioned, many of our present efforts are

- i) ad hoc
- ii) lacking in coherence
- iii) too independent of one another
- iv) lacking precise strategy and goals
- v) provide no assurance that we will actually get where we want to go...

Hence I am convinced, as I was with the Michigan Mandate,

that we need both a commitment and a plan...

- i) shared operational goals
- ii) programs testable against these goals
- iii) a plan that provides confidence that we will succeed...

To this end, I have already taken what I believe are some important steps...

### **The President's Commission on Women's Issues**

To begin to make good on this pledge, I asked Carol Hollenshead

to chair an ad hoc women's leadership group to identify

key women's issues and to make some preliminary recommendations for addressing them.

That ad hoc group has worked hard throughout the year and its excellent report was presented to me and the other members of the administration at the end of December.

Subsequently Provost Vest and I have met with the ad hoc group, discussed and reviewed their report and recommendations, and we are beginning to take action in response to them.

It was the ad hoc group's strong recommendation that we

give high priority in the University's agenda for the ~~Error!~~ that women's issues be addressed at all levels of the University's strategic planning and policy documents

**< - and statements. We agree to this essential, commitment.**

It is my purpose here today to make this public policy commitment for my administration.

**The next action recommended by the committee was**

the appointment of a new women's commission. This is also in keeping with the ACE recommendations.

**Last week I asked the members of the ad hoc committee**

to serve on a newly constituted President's Advisory Commission on Women's Issues, along with several additional students, faculty, and staff.

**The Commission is charged to**

- Assist the President in incorporating women's issues and goals in the University's strategic planning activities
- Monitor national educational and social trends affecting

women in higher education

- Advise the president on matters of interest and concern to women with particular attention to access, success, and equity.
- Inquire into the status of women at the University and recommend actions to help insure full representation at all levels of the faculty, staff, and student body.
- Advise the president about University policies, procedures, programs, and practices which affect women of the community and recommend improvements as needed.

**I have every confidence that this Presidential Commission**

will make a significant contribution to progress towards greater equity for women--in part because of my confidence

**My confidence is also due to the fact that this new Commission**

is modeled on the Commission for Women appointed by

**< - President Fleming in 1971 that was so powerful a force for**

women's advancement in the University in the 1970s.

That Commission's goal was to "ensure the fair and equitable treatment of women at the University."

Its work led to salary increases for many women, a

system of job posting, greater equity in fringe benefits,

establishment of grievance procedures, increased

hiring of women in non-traditional jobs, and many other gains.

**I hope and expect that the new Commission will help the**

University enter the new century with its promises for women's equality fulfilled at last.

**We will look to the Commission for advice and counsel in**

our strategic planning and as we work with our community

for the full and equal participation of women in the life and leadership of the University.

### **The Challenges Ahead**

Let me point to a few of the challenges ahead of us, as outlined in the report of the ad hoc committee, and also indicate some of our early steps to meet them:

#### **1. Faculty Hiring**

Without question the greatest challenge before the University is to increase the number of women on our faculty at all levels and to help them advance and succeed in their academic careers.

As I said earlier, women faculty at our institution are still an unjustifiably small minority, and the number of women of color on the faculty is an even more acute problem.

Increasing the numbers of women faculty must be given a very high institutional priority.

The statistics reveal the challenge before us.

Last year there was actually a 1% decline in the number of women assistant professors.

Further, the problem of the higher the fewer does not appear to be getting any better.

This year about 28% of assistant professors are women, 19% of associate professors, and only 8% of full professors.

And of course, there is great disparity among fields with women in some of the scientific disciplines a distinct rarity.

Given the increasing numbers of women with excellent academic preparation, there is simply no excuse for not making significant progress.

We must not only succeed at recruiting and hiring women faculty at all levels, but we have to work harder to ensure their successful advancement.

One of the barriers to academic success may be the extra demands on women both academically and family related.

To help ease the pressure, faculty are being asked by the Provost's Office to develop proposals for programs that will address the competing demands of family responsibilities with those of becoming productive scholars of the first rank.

The faculty response will form the basis for the new support programs and policy adjustments.

In addition, Provost Vest is now exploring effective mechanisms

to improve the recruitment of women to the faculty in fields where they are seriously underrepresented.

## **2. Dependent Care**

Another institutional priority for action recommended by the ad hoc committee is the need to address the issues of dependent care.

If we want to be competitive and attract women and support their personal and professional advancement, we must meet the need for more responsive dependent care policies and services.

A family care program is now being proposed by the Provost's Office. It will, among other things...

- Establish a general policy disposition to establish

flexible work arrangements for faculty and staff with

family care responsibilities

- Financing family care will be one of the benefits explored  
as the University continues its investigation of a flexible benefits program
- Effective July 1, allied health, office, primary, technical, and P/A staff may use some of their own paid time off benefits to care for incapacitated, ill, or injured family members.

The University will establish a Family Care Resources Program

to facilitate informed choices by faculty and staff about family care. It will perform the following functions:

- Stimulate family care placements that meet quality standards
- Implement a resource and referral system
- Develop criteria for quality family care
- Develop educational programs to providers to improve the  
quality of care
- Provide information and educational programs for faculty  
and staff to address questions and concerns about family care
- Serve as a clearing house for operating units  
consider on-site child care to meet unique needs of their faculty and staff not met by existing community

resources.

The Family Care Resources program will operate as part of the Personnel Office. A 10 member advisory committee will

be appointed jointly by the Provost and the Chief Financial Officer and, among other things, will assess changing family care needs and recommend ways to address those needs.

### **3. Safety**

We need to improve the University environment to better support and sustain all of its women members.

We cannot tolerate discrimination or sexual harassment.

And this is a good opportunity for me to express my own sense of personal outrage about recent incidents of harassment on the campus.

I am appalled by such behavior.

It has no place in a civilized community and cannot be countenance here.

I believe that the University's complaint mechanism has led to sanctions for the perpetrators.

But sanctions after the fact are not as good as preventing harassment in the first place.

I believe the Sexual Assault Prevention Center is providing real leadership in prevention through education -- and not just on our own campus but nationally as well.

We must also continue and strengthen our efforts to assure a safe environment in which women can learn and work.

To address campus safety issues and concerns, a university-wide

task force has been convened by Provost Vest and CFO Womack,

with Dean Paul Boylan serving as chair. I hope to have a report

and recommendations for action from the group by fall.

I hope that those of you here will assist the task force to identify safety problems and recommend solutions.

#### **4. Women of Color**

We all know that women of color face the double jeopardy of racial and gender discrimination.

We have lost ground on this issue. We must pay special attention to hiring and advancing faculty women of color.

Recruitment of minority women is an integral part of the Michigan Mandate, but we may need to fine-tune some of our programs to target women of color.

I can report that one-third of the 19 Target of Opportunity minority faculty hires last year were women, and this year 3 of the 7 offers accepted thus far are women.

But clearly over the last ten years, we have lost ground for women of color in tenured and tenure track position, especially in LS&A.

Too often, too, we have seen a revolving door for women faculty, and this has been a particularly acute problem for minority women.

A new minority faculty support program in Rackham, will, I hope, help minority women faculty advance and succeed in their fields.



## **5. Gay Rights**

In a similar manner, those gay women in our community also face unusual challenges because of a dual discrimination.

It is appropriate, in view of the fact that this is Gay Pride Week, that I also state the importance in this set of initiatives that we address the particular concern that lesbians face as students, faculty, and staff.

Once again, equity and social justice for these people must be an important component of our agenda.

## **6. Staff Issues**

Staff issues are, by definition, women's issues, for over 60% of the UM staff are women.

While staff are the backbone of the University, all too often staff contributions go unrecognized.

In keeping with the recommendations of the ad hoc committee,

the University plans to develop new ways to recognize these contributions.

Moreover, there is a need to develop more and better avenues for staff development and advancement.

Staff members have to be able to grow and improve their skills and to prepare themselves for new challenges of leadership

as the University changes in the decades ahead.

In a campus as large and decentralized as ours and in a time of limited resources, this is not an easy issue to address.

Nevertheless, it is critical to our future, and we are grappling now with the new approaches to staff organization and advancement.

I will ask the new Women's Commission to help us on this front as well.

**We are working on any more specific recommendations from** the ad hoc group report. I won't go into all of the details now, but I think the main point is that the University is taking seriously women's needs and concerns, and we are taking steps to address these.

**A key to our ultimate success, I believe, is accountability,** and I think it is appropriate for me to accept the ultimate responsibility for achieving our goals.

**As we fully integrate the women's agenda into our overall** strategic planning, line responsibility will be assigned.

**I feel quite certain that the Women's Commission will play** a very key role in this accountability process.

### **An Expanded Role for CEW**

It seems to me, as well, that the University needs an organization focal point for women's educational issues and programs.

Given its demonstrated success and leadership, it seems logical that CEW should be encouraged to expand its purview to include a broader array of programs and services relating to women in the educational pipeline.

1. Increasingly we understand that education is a continuum and that the University must concern itself with lifelong education if it is to succeed in its mission.

2. It would also be helpful to have CEW serve as a clearinghouse for internal and external information about how to improve women's education
3. CEW will support the work of the Women's Commission in providing policy advice to the president
4. CEW should expand its efforts to provide advisory and consulting services to academic and administrative units on how to improve women's access and success.

It follows that CEW will require additional resources to carry out these assignments.

One source will be the Sarah Power fund.

I can think of no more fitting use for these resources.

I expect that many of you are remembering Regent Power at this time of year.

Her commitment to the advancement of women brought many improvements across the University, and it is good to know that...

### **Concluding Remarks**

Let me stress that this is only a beginning.

We must work together for improvements in the future.

I admire, respect, and am grateful for the efforts of the many women who have opened the doors of opportunity on this campus.

I commend those of you who inherit their tradition of leadership.

I pledge to work with you in the months and years ahead to achieve our common goals for equity for women in all areas of University life.