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Women's Studies Center Annual Report 1983

Center for Women's and Gender Studies, Florida International University

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY MEMORANDUM

TO SELECTED UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

FROM WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTER
Marilyn Hoder-Salmon

SUBJECT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1983

DATE FEBRUARY 15, 1984

1983 marked the second year of the Women's Studies Center at the University. The purpose of this report is to remind the University community of our objectives, provide a summary of our progress, and to solicit ideas and participation in program development.

WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSES AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The core of our program is the development of academic women's studies. Interdisciplinary courses are offered each semester, and a student may earn a certificate in women's studies. An interdisciplinary faculty advisory committee advises the director on policy, direction, and programmatic issues. A central aspect is our effort to inform faculty and students about the merit of women's studies in terms of content, methodology, and its discoveries which alter traditional knowledge. We continue to develop resources to assist faculty with course development and research interests. A bibliography of our small collection, lists of women's studies journals, and related tools for researchers have been disseminated to interested faculty.

There is a year-round effort to inform students of women's studies as an academic option to provide a balance to traditional education, enrich their professional and personal objectives, as well as to offer pragmatic career advantages. To accomplish this we rely on brochures, fliers, posters, letter campaigns, and individual counseling, as well as the cooperation of the academic units. During 1983 we planned several specific events, such as a September open-office for students to meet faculty and learn about the available resources.

A summary of women's studies courses offered during 1983 include seven courses cross-listed for spring semester, such as a literature course, "Women Heroes of the 19th Century." Summer semester offered three courses, including a new course, "America and the Movies: Women in Film." For fall semester we cross-listed seven courses, including "Women in the Management of Business Organization." Total enrollment was 552 students. The certificate program requires 18 credit hours, which includes three required courses and three electives. Students in all majors may elect to attain a certificate in women's studies.

LECTURE SERIES

In January, Professor Judith Ochshorn spoke about her book, The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine.

During February, as a joint project with the FIU Library, Rutgers University professor Ferris Olin spoke about her forthcoming bibliographic text on women artists, "In Search of Creative Women."

With Alumni Affairs and the SGA International Week Committee, we co-sponsored a lecture by the distinguished sociologist Jessie Bernard. On March 10, Professor Bernard spoke about "The Female World from a Global Perspective."

Professor Dorothy Stetson gave a lecture drawn from her recently published book, The Politics of Family Law Reform in England. This March event was co-organized with Professor Doria Yeaman.

In November, feminist author Judith Arcana spoke about the mother-daughter relationship, the thesis of her book, Our Mothers' Daughters.

These five lectures drew a combined audience of 370 persons, comprised of university and community persons.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

We received funds from the National Women's Education Fund to hold a two-day conference on "Women in Public Life." This is the second year we formed this alliance with NWEF to develop a South Florida training experience on the techniques of public life for women. An advisory council of representatives of women's organizations assisted in the planning. The conference was held at Bay Vista on November 11 and 12, and approximately 40 women attended each day.

Another annual event was our Hispanic Heritage Week seminar, "Career Contexts/Contextos de Carreras." Four panelists presented ideas on the situation of Hispanic women in the American work environment.

During Women's History Week, we held an open-office to acquaint students with our resource collection and we sponsored a film, "Rosie the Riveter," with a discussion led by Professor Joyce Peterson.

GENERAL SERVICES

A community organization, "The 200: A Society of Professional Women, Inc.," initiated an endowed scholarship fund for women

students through our center. They opened the fund in August with \$5,000 and, in September, a visual Arts student received the first scholarship of \$1,500. During December, the organization held another benefit for the scholarship fund and will present another \$5,000 at their March meeting.

This year a committee of faculty and staff worked to develop a Policy Against Sexual Harassment. Using a selection of other university policies as a guide, and adapting our policy to respond to the information reported by faculty and students on problems of sexual harassment at our university, the committee drafted a policy. The next step is to carry-out distribution, education, and related efforts as outlined by the policy itself.

Our unit coordinates and works with university-wide events related to women whenever possible. For example, we participated in Professor Ann Marie Rizzo's workshop on "Managerial Skills for Women," and we worked with Professor Nancy Wellman and others to organize a group of FIU women in administration.

Because there is a lack of organized resources for women students and potential women students at a variety of levels, we offer minimal services. For example, the needs of the transitional woman are a concern; I provide counseling upon request, make referrals when appropriate, and assist visitors to our office in regard to a range of academic and personal inquiries. Our office maintains a supply of free materials on careers, health, financial aid and related items of interest to women. We also post notices of community-wide events as part of an over-all effort to provide links between the various community groups and individuals who program on women's concerns.

THE COMMUNITY

We continue to provide a resource service for people in the community who inquire about various concerns. This can range from an assistant state's attorney wanting a referral on spouse abuse for a client to an elementary school teacher asking about curriculum resources. Our general mailing list has grown to 6,000 and includes 670 people who specifically requested to receive information on women's studies events.

Women's organizations call on us to provide services: for example, we organized a campus voter registration drive in response to a request from a coalition of local women's groups. We send information on courses and events to organizations for newsletter and/or meeting distribution.

We respond to a growing correspondence, which can range from a professor in Buenos Aires interested in starting a women's studies program at her university to out-of-state women interested in local opportunities for women.

I speak to various groups during the year on women's studies. 1983 included a talk for the Business and Professional Women's Association, keynote speaker for the Florida State Women's Caucus of Art's Annual Meeting, Annual Meeting speaker for the Florida Association of Women Lawyers, Dade County Chapter, and meeting speaker for the "200." I also attend events sponsored by various groups in order to further develop an awareness of our program.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Our office maintains the administrative responsibility of a unit; which includes budgetary planning, master-plan development and related responsibilities. Staff support consists of a half-time secretary and a work/study student.

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As 1983 ended, our unit was planning courses and events for the coming year. A Colloquia Committee planned the Second Annual Faculty Colloquia; three interdisciplinary evenings will be held, February 6, March 8 and April 12. Another upcoming event is a co-sponsorship with the Black History Week Committee and the President's Office - a lecture by historian Dr. Helen Edmonds on February 16. A repeat of our one-day workshop for reentry women in co-sponsorship with Student Services will be held on March 31.

We will continue to plan and to push forward with a difficult agenda: to focus attention on the underrepresentation of women and the distortion of female experience in knowledge, as well as the corollary situation of women in the university system who experience the effects of gender discrimination. To bring about change, your ideas, assistance and support are needed.

I wish to thank everyone who worked with us in 1983 and remind you that I look forward to the continuing development of women's studies and women's status at FIU.