The President’s Commission on the Status of Women

Summary of Campus Community Concerns Related to Equality

The President’s Commission on the Status of Women facilitates an annual Open Forum to identify concerns within our campus community related to women’s issues and other issues of gender equality at Plymouth State University.
Introduction

What is the President’s Commission on the Status of Women?

Plymouth State University’s President’s Commission on the Status of Women was first established by President William Farrell in 1991. It is comprised of PSU community members including undergraduate, non-traditional, and graduate students, as well as Operating Staff, Professional and Technical Staff, and Faculty. The Mission of the PCSW is six-fold:

• To identify broad-based and special concerns for women’s issues and issues of gender equality at Plymouth State University.
• To create and recommend policies to improve the climate for women and guarantee an environment of equal educational and employment opportunities.
• To collaborate with existing organizations to promote a non-sexist and nondiscriminatory environment.
• To inform the University community on the status of women by collecting data, initiating and supporting outreach programs, and by preparing and disseminating informational publications.
• To help women develop their skills, continue their education, and increase networking by suggesting, and assisting in, the implementation of informational and educational programs.
• To stimulate thinking regarding the basic social changes occurring in our society as newly defined roles for all genders emerge.

Current Members of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women

Jessica Dutille (Co-Chair, AY 19-20)
Casey Krafton (Co-Chair, AY 19-20)
Chantalle Forgues (Co-Chair, AY 20-21)
Hannah Hounsell (Co-Chair, AY 20-21)
Melinda Barnsley
Sara Donahue
Kathleen Herzig
Wendy Palmquist
Mary Beth Ray
Erika Rydberg
Alice Staples
Tina Schumacher
Jane Weber
President’s Commission on the Status of Women

PCSW’s Annual Open Forum

The PCSW hosts an annual Open Forum at Plymouth State University to create a safe space for students, faculty, staff, and members of the greater PSU community to voice concerns and provide feedback about important issues related to gender equality. This year, we hosted the Open Forum at the Lamson Library at PSU. To provide an option for those who wanted to maintain anonymity or were unable to attend the Open Forum, we sent a survey via a campus-wide email. The survey prompted participants to voice any concerns they might have regarding women’s issues and gender equality at PSU and received 15 responses.

The following is an overview of topics discussed during our Open Forum and in our Open Forum Survey. It does not directly reflect the views of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women. Our role was to facilitate a process by which the campus community could provide feedback, and this report elevates collective voices of campus stakeholders. As a commission, we determined that we would reach out to the appropriate offices on campus that have the power to address the issues that emerged.

Themes Shared in Open Forum & Survey

Sexual Assault and Safety

Concerns:

- Several allegations were made of sexual assault within the PSU community, along with reports of students feeling unsafe
- Respondents expressed a need for more sexual assault and rape prevention efforts
- Respondents identified concerns about victim-blaming and lack of local resources provided with recent crime warnings regarding sexual assault
- Respondents brought up the process by which students’ criminal records, especially when sexual assault and rape is involved, are considered prior to enrollment

Recommendations:

- Increase Plymouth State programming surrounding sexual assault and violence prevention and awareness in our community
- Train staff members and students to facilitate prevention initiatives and provide direct service to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, abuse, etc. in the campus community
- Increase resources for Title IX work to scale training for faculty, staff members, and students
- Collaborate with local crisis prevention agencies and other universities to develop programming and services for survivors
- Support student organizations and other community initiatives that are passionate about addressing these issues
  - Reintroduce the student organization Safe Walk to ensure students feel safe on
Racial Diversity

Concerns:

- Students of color are leaving PSU because they are struggling to find a community/sense of belonging here
- PSU has “abandoned” past efforts and best practices for equity and diversity (i.e. staff position focused on equity, diversity & inclusion)

Recommendations:

- Ensure exit surveys for students are explicitly asking questions regarding perceived discrimination/discriminatory harassment
- Establish a diversity office with paid staff member(s) dedicated to working collaboratively with students to implement programming that promotes diversity and inclusion in our campus community
  - Office should feature a center to serve as a safe and inclusive space for students
  - See “Action Items and Examples” section for examples at other USNH universities, including the Diversity & Multiculturalism Office at Keene State College and University of New Hampshire’s Office of Community Equity and Diversity
- Facilitate annual campus community climate survey to direct diversity office staff members in addressing community-identified needs and concerns
  - See “Action Items and Examples” section for more information on the Campus Climate Surveys at the University of NH and Keene State College
- Update and expand on available resources featured on the PSU website
- Integrate education on diversity and inclusion into First-Year Seminar curriculum to ensure that it reaches the greatest amount of students

Updates as of 10/20

- The Black Lives Matter Task Force has proposed a cabinet-level position for a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

LGBTQ+ Community

Concerns:

- It was stated by a respondent that gender equality for LGBTQ+ students “simply does not exist”
- Concerns were expressed regarding transphobia at PSU (students leaving, experiencing difficulty in changing their preferred names in the system, etc.)
- Members of the campus community that are nonbinary, genderfluid, etc. face discrimination
- The university lacks a Queer Center or institutionally recognized office/group that
provides support and outreach for LGBTQ+ students
• There is a lack of different forms of contraceptives provided for students
• Concerns were brought up about NCAA policies for transgender student athletes

Recommendations:
• Increase availability of gender-neutral restrooms and facilities on campus
  o Feature a map identifying these restrooms on the PSU website
    ▪ See “Action Items and Examples” section for more information and examples from other USNH institutions
• Provide a variety of contraceptives available through Health Services
• Establish a diversity office with paid staff member(s) dedicated to working collaboratively with students to implement programming that promotes diversity and inclusion in our campus community
  o Office should feature a center to serve as a safe and inclusive space in a central on-campus location for students
  o See “Action Items and Examples” section for examples at other USNH universities, including the Diversity & Multiculturalism Office at Keene State College and University of New Hampshire’s Office of Community Equity and Diversity
• Facilitate annual campus community climate survey to direct diversity office staff members in addressing community-identified needs and concerns
  o See “Action Items and Examples” section for more information on the Campus Climate Surveys at the University of NH and Keene State College
• Update and expand on available resources featured on the PSU website
• Integrate education on diversity and inclusion into First-Year Seminar curriculum to ensure that it reaches the greatest amount of students

Personnel-Related

Concerns:
• Reports were given of increasing hostility in the workplace toward women on campus (e.g. using sexist language, devaluing women’s contributions, power imbalances being taken advantage of, etc.)
• Reports were given of male faculty and staff behaving inappropriately and making students uncomfortable

Recommendations:
• Collaborate with Title IX Team and Human Resources Department to train faculty and staff members about sexual harassment prevention and address other identified areas of improvement
• Provide Title IX Team with necessary resources to address and prevent personnel-related incidents
• Include questions regarding faculty members creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment in course evaluations as well as faculty and staff performance evaluations
Facilitate annual campus community climate survey to direct diversity office staff members in addressing community-identified needs and concerns
  - See “Action Items and Examples” section for more information on the Campus Climate Surveys at the University of NH and Keene State College

**Lack of Education and Programming on Gender Issues**

**Concerns:**

- The loss of center and part-time employees that focused on LGBTQ+ and gender issues resulted in huge lack of gender and sexuality programming on campus
- Respondents reported that it is difficult to complete the Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies (WGSS) minor due to their lack of resources to provide sufficient class options
- Opportunities were identified to put more resources into Title IX work for the purpose of education and sexual assault prevention

**Recommendations:**

- Partner with Title IX Team and potentially a new Diversity Office to expand and promote educational programming and resources
- Incorporate WGSS curriculum into Integrated Clusters learning model
- Increase resources for Title IX work to scale training for faculty, staff members, and students
- Establish a diversity office with paid staff member(s) dedicated to working collaboratively with students to implement programming that promotes diversity and inclusion in our campus community
  - Office should feature a center to serve as a safe and inclusive space in a central on-campus location for students
  - See “Action Items and Examples” section for examples at other USNH universities, including the Diversity & Multiculturalism Office at Keene State College and University of New Hampshire’s Office of Community Equity and Diversity

**Work/Life Balance**

**Concerns:**

- Impact of new online teaching policy on women and other minority groups was discussed:
  - Preventing employees from controlling their work schedules impacts women disproportionately and “is contrary to data on effective business practices”
  - Classes historically taught online have not all been approved to go forward in this format, making faculty’s work-life balance increasingly difficult to manage
- Allegations were made that PSU’s focus on economic stability leads employees to still work long hours, just with less compensation
• Concerns were expressed about the lack of childcare and eldercare availability in the PSU community

**Recommendations:**
• Partner with Human Resources Department to improve on flexible/remote work policies  
• Work collaboratively with the Center for Young Children and Families to ensure their services continue in spite of the Early Childhood Education program closing

**Miscellaneous**

**Concerns:**
• Student evaluations of faculty have gender and race biases  
• The Barstool Plymouth account is misogynistic and fatphobic  
  o “Smokeshow of the Week” is sexist and some women featured are under 18  
• Women’s sports events take place at less convenient and popular times than men’s teams  
  o Fundraising events at sports games are typically at men’s games (Teddy Bear Toss, Chuck-a-Puck, etc.)  
• Tampon machines are empty in most bathrooms on campus

**Recommendations:**
• Work with Health Services to make tampons and pads more widely available  
  o See “Action Items and Examples” section to learn more about ongoing initiatives in NH geared toward providing free tampons and pads in public schools  
• See sections above for recommendations to improve general campus climate

“Tradition can be a good thing, but progression is much more important.”

**Action Items and Examples**

This section will expand on the recommendations of the PCSW. We have listed action items calling on various areas of our campus community to consider making changes to improve equality at PSU. We have also provided examples from other New Hampshire institutions that we can use as a model going forward.

**PCSW Actions**
• Direct allegations made during the Open Forum and in our Open Forum survey were shared with the university’s Title IX coordinator.  
• The PCSW will continue to work collaboratively with administration on updating policy issues.
• The PCSW will form working groups to create action plans to begin to implement some of the recommendations discussed in the Open Forum Report.

Establishing a Diversity Office at PSU
• The PCSW recommends that PSU establishes a center focused on diversity and inclusion with paid staff dedicated to creating a safe, multicultural campus community. We can use existing programs at our sister institutions as a model for implementing something similar at Plymouth State:
  o The Diversity and Multiculturalism Office at Keene State College (KSC) creates data-driven initiatives from their annual campus-wide Climate Survey to “respond to bias related incidents, programming, recruitment and retention efforts of underrepresented faculty, staff and students.”
  o KSC’s Office of Multicultural Student Support and Success (OMSSS) facilitates regular opportunities for students to explore their role in local and global communities. The OMSSS also provides a safe space in a central location on campus for students to “hang out, study, and build community.”
  o The University of New Hampshire (UNH) has an Office of Community, Equity and Diversity (CED) that houses several diversity initiatives and programs:
    ▪ The CED maintains an Inclusion Council made up of 12 Equity Advocates. The council creates strategic plans and projects based on their annual Campus Climate Survey on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
    ▪ Dive In and DeliDeliver initiative seeks out projects that promote diversity and inclusion. They funded 4 sustainable projects designed by students, faculty, and staff in 2019 that will each be completed within 18 months.
    ▪ The CED supports a network of 6 multicultural student organizations, the Diversity Support Coalition (DSC), which includes the United Asian Coalition, Alliance (an LGBTQ+ organization), Black Student Union, and more.

Updates as of 10/20
• The Black Lives Matter Task Force has proposed a cabinet-level position for a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Creating a Community Climate Survey
• Facilitate annual campus community climate survey to direct diversity office staff members and other university offices in addressing community-identified needs and concerns. Data is important in meeting the needs of students and increasing retention rates. Other USNH universities facilitate comparable assessments:
  o UNH administers a Campus Climate Survey made up of over 100 questions asking campus community members to elaborate on their experiences at the UNH campus.
The survey asks about experiences of people at UNH related to discrimination, acceptance, comfort, inclusion, etc.

To incentivize participants, all survey respondents are entered in a drawing to win a tuition waiver, a meal voucher from UNH Dining, or a Visa gift card.

- KSC distributes a campus-wide Climate Survey every few years to assess the campus community in terms of diverse populations feeling welcome, supported, and safe.

- The findings are used by the Diversity and Multiculturalism Office to create data-driven initiatives to “respond to bias related incidents, programming, recruitment and retention efforts of underrepresented faculty, staff and students.”

**Updates as of 10/20**

- An annual campus climate assessment is now required by NH law; this work will fall under the responsibility of the Title IX Coordinator as the law relates to campus response to sexual assault. The climate assessment will be uniform state-wide at NH public/private colleges and universities; there will be space for campuses to add their own specific questions. The PCSW recommends that certain topics related to issues of gender equality are addressed in the campus-specific questions.

**Increasing Resources, Education, & Programming**

- Update information and resources available on the PSU website.
- Partner with offices and groups on campus to plan programming and training about issues of gender equality, diversity, etc. that can be presented to groups. We can utilize ideas from other institutions’ training programs, like the “Don’t Cancel That Class!” project at Keene State College:
  - KSC’s Diversity & Multiculturalism Office’s “Don’t Cancel That Class!” initiative offers 22 different programs and workshops for faculty members to choose from to supplement a class they would have otherwise cancelled. The workshops focus on a wide range of topics, including preventing sexual violence, social justice advocacy, cross-cultural learning, gender and sexual identity, and more, and can be scheduled with a user-friendly Program Request Form online.
- Increase gender-related content in PSU course curriculum.
  - UNH’s Department of Women’s and Gender Studies provides students with an extensive network of available classes that fit within their programs of Women’s and Gender Studies, Queer Studies, Social Justice Leadership, and Feminist Studies. Students within these programs participate in a network of classmates, faculty, staff, and alumni called the Feminist Mentorship Program, which provides members with a social support network, academic and personal advice, and post-grad guidance.
Several educational initiatives related to gender inequality are implemented at UNH through the Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP), the Affirmative Action and Equity Office, the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies, and the Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity.

- Provide free tampons and pads in restrooms throughout campus.
  - New state legislation in New Hampshire requires public middle and high schools provide tampons and pads in all gender-neutral and girl’s bathrooms.

**Preventing Sexual Assault & Harassment**

- Train students, faculty, and staff to offer direct services for survivors and facilitate prevention programming. Programs like this already exist at other USNH universities:
  - The Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP) at UNH seeks to eliminate sexual and intimate partner violence through providing direct services to survivors and implementing awareness and prevention programs. Their direct services include a 24-hour helpline (via phone, text or online chat), crisis counseling, accompaniment to hospitals, and informational resources for survivors and the people close to them. Their work regarding prevention and education includes over a dozen programs and trainings that are delivered by a trained staff of educators, as well as hosting a wide array of events (e.g. UNH Anti-Violence Rally & Walk, guest speakers, discussion series, and more).
    - These programs are made possible by utilizing students as Community Educators and Peer Advocates, as well as maintaining a small group of permanent staff members. Community Educators are trained students that volunteer for awareness and prevention initiatives. Peer Advocates provide direct services to survivors of sexual assault, partner violence, etc. They are required to complete extensive training through a credited course offering. By incentivizing students by offering course credits, SHARPP at UNH is able to staff their helpline with volunteers that are trained in crisis intervention.
  - Keene State College’s Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) program is implemented through their Counseling Center. Trained students who are passionate about crisis prevention facilitate a variety of events and programs for athletic teams, Greek life, in classrooms, and in residential halls.
  - KSC also has a Sexual Assault & Violence Education (SAVE) Committee that partners with the local crisis prevention center to collaborate on sexual violence prevention and education events.

- Offer more reporting options that are easily accessible for students, staff, and faculty.
  - UNH’s “Reportit!” application of the Affirmative Action and Equity Office is an online resource that makes reporting incidents of hate, bias, discrimination, and harassment simple for students and other members of the campus community. The online reporting form, which is anonymous unless someone wants further
assistance and follow-up, is incredibly user-friendly and thorough, prompting (but not requiring) users to provide extensive information about the incident and what response/action they want from the university. This is a great way to increase reporting options for the campus community, as well as increasing data on harassment, discrimination, etc.

- Keene State maintains a list of reporting options for students that can be completed online, in-person, or via phone call.

**Updates as of 10/20**

- PSU has launched a webpage, “Reporting at PSU.” The PSCW recommends that communication about this site to students, staff, and faculty is clearer and more widespread.

**Addressing Needs for LGBTQ+ Community**

- Increase number of gender-neutral facilities on campus (restrooms, housing, etc.) and feature a map of all on-campus gender-neutral restrooms on the PSU website.
  - UNH provides gender-inclusive housing on a floor in one of their residence halls.
  - There are gender-neutral restrooms in a vast majority of buildings on both the KSC and UNH campuses.
  - The KSC and UNH websites feature interactive maps of the gender-neutral restrooms located on their campuses, which students or visitors can access online or print.
- Simplify the process of changing names in PSU system.
  - UNH’s website includes a training video and resources for students, faculty, and staff to change their preferred name within UNH system (class rosters, student ID, email database, etc.). The resources also include information about sharing and asking about personal pronouns and the importance of using someone’s preferred name and pronouns.
  - Keene State allows students to indicate their chosen first name for the majority of the college’s information systems. This can be done by completing a brief online form. KSC also has staff members dedicated to providing assistance for students wishing to legally change their names.
- Support and expand programming and events for LGBTQ+ community at PSU.
  - Keene State’s student organization KSC Pride provides a safe space for LGBTQ+ students to gather and plan awareness and tolerance programming and events, including an annual community pride parade and prom.

**Cultivating a Healthy Work/Life Balance for PSU Employees**

- Our sister institutions in the USNH system provide good examples of supporting their employees in creating a healthy work/life balance.
UNH ADVANCE is a program that focuses on improving and developing policies and practices aimed at recruiting, retaining, and advancing women faculty members in underrepresented fields. They provide resources for faculty, program directors, and faculty search committees regarding work-life balance, opportunities for career advancement and grant opportunities, and transparent recruitment strategies.

UNH’s Wildcat Working Parents Network provides an outlet for working parents in the UNH community to share resources and support one another.

The Human Resources Department at Keene State College offers several online courses for faculty and staff. Several of them focus on cultivating a positive work environment and project management.

Resources

The President's Commission on the Status of Women
Please submit any concerns, comments, ideas, or questions regarding issues of gender equality at Plymouth State by contacting any member of the Commission. The full list of PCSW members and contact information can be found on our website.

Title IX, Harassment, and Nondiscrimination at PSU
PSU Equal Opportunity, Harassment, Nondiscrimination policy, process, and resources

Voices Against Violence
Voices Against Violence is a crisis services agency located in Plymouth, NH. The agency provides information and support to victims and survivors, their family and friends, community members, and professionals around domestic violence, children who witness domestic violence, sexual violence and harassment, stalking, human trafficking, and bullying. Learn more by visiting their website.

24 Hour Crisis Hotline: +1 (877) 221-6176
Office: (603) 536-5999

We extend sincere thanks to everyone that participated in the President’s Commission on the Status of Women’s AY 2019/2020 Open Forum and Survey!