ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL

FOR

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-2017

Presented at the
777th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
April 12, 2018

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Jennifer Merton, Courtney Kinney Co-Chairs
Caitlyn Shea Butler
Gulru Cakmak
Dianne Sears
Patricia Vittum
Chao Xiao
Maryann Barakso
Enobong Branch
Raeann LeBlanc
Erin Lamoureux
Lori Clarke
Melody Slashinski
Anne Moore
Becky Lockwood
Hind Mari
F. Ann Carr
Laura Briggs
Joanne Levenson, Pamela Dutta
MJ Peterson
Barbara Pearson
Hayley Cotter
Emily Wilson
Clare McGladrigan
Sarah Nordberg
1. Jennifer Merton and Courtney Kinney were elected as co-Chairs of the Council.

2. The Council continued to reflect on its mission and to develop an agenda for action going forward. Three key areas of concern emerged from our conversations over the past year (starting in the 2016-2017 cycle).

First, the Council noted its concerns with sexual harassment issues both nationally and within the University community. We developed a plan to meet with Debora Ferreira and Christine Wilde to review and clarify the current sexual harassment policy and the procedures used to implement that policy (review of the new consensual relationship policy will also be a focus.) That meeting is scheduled for our April 10th meeting. We will have an awareness event before the end of the semester (tentatively scheduled for April 24th from 12:30-2:00), designed to underscore the Council's concern and engagement with this issue and to act as an educational event to inform the community about the current policies and procedures. Our hope is to have a series of listening events next semester (Fall 2018) to hear any concerns from different constituents (faculty, staff, students) about sexual harassment issues or problems with access to the process. The Council will then make any recommendations about revisions or additions to the policy, if any, after review of the policy by the Council and after input from the listening sessions. Additionally, the Council seeks to raise awareness of the current policy and protections already in place, both throughout the listening sessions and afterwards. It is our hope to work collaboratively to enhance the campus climate for all constituents and we want to be actively engaged in that process. The Council recognizes that through past inactivity the Council has not acted in a leadership role on these issues, but we sincerely hope to change that going forward.

Second, an area of ongoing concern and interest among the members of the Council has been the issue of child and family care. A particular child care issue that has been the focus of attention from many members is for conferences and events at the University outside of regularly scheduled classes and meetings. It is often difficult for faculty, staff, and students to attend these extra-curricular offerings because of child care needs. The Council has been discussing ways to address that concern. We thought we could sponsor a University-wide contest where competitors developed various plans for meeting that need and the teams had a chance to present their ideas in front of a panel of judges which would include members of the Council, along with administrators, faculty, staff, and students (perhaps a five judge panel?). Again, this would raise awareness of the issue and help to develop solutions in an engaging way. These solutions could then be presented to the administration and/or the various schools or departments and the Council could work with the relevant groups to implement one or more of the ideas and/or develop an action plan regarding this issue. Additionally, one of our student members is seeking a Campus Climate Grant to develop a proposal for this problem.
Third, the Council has long been a proponent of lactation rooms throughout campus. In light of the Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act’s effective date of April 1, 2018, it seems appropriate to re-visit this issue and to review the current facilities and to make recommendations about improvements that might need to be made in order to be in compliance with the requirements of the Act. The Council would advocate for actions beyond mere compliance so as to foster a diverse and inclusive campus climate that allowed for the full participation of pregnant or nursing members of the community. Action on this issue will take place over the summer and into next fall.

The Council renews its commitment to its mission statement and hopes to provide advocacy for all of the areas listed therein. We are choosing to focus on the above issues in order to concentrate our efforts and allow for effective advocacy. However, we are open to suggestions from the community about issues that might need the Council’s attention and we ask for input if anyone has any specific ideas that the Council should be considering.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Merton, Co-Chair
Status of Women Council