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UW-EXTENSION STATUS OF WOMEN COMMITTEE REPORT AUGUST, 2001

Background

During the winter of 2001, Chancellor Kevin Reilly appointed the Status of Women Study Committee (see attachment A, for a list of committee members). He charged the committee with examining the areas identified by the UW System Task Force Report and Recommendations on the Status of Women, and developing recommendations to address the concerns of women and improve their status across UW-Extension, at all levels.

At its first meeting the Committee met with Louise Root-Robbins, UW System Coordinator for Women's Issues to discuss the UWS Report and Recommendations, get clarification about the UW System's guidelines for institutional plans, and to learn about efforts underway at other UW institutions. Thereafter, the Committee decided to parallel the areas of focus and concerns outlined in the UWS Report and Recommendations.

The UWEX Committee began the process by reviewing the "University of Wisconsin System Gender Climate Study, Fall 1999" and the "Equality for Women in the University of Wisconsin System: A Focus for Action in the Year 2000" study. The five recommendations from the latter report were as follows:

- 1. Provide educational opportunities for women students**, by e.g., establishing activities and programs that attract and retain more women students to math, science, engineering, and technology fields; developing new initiatives to help women take advantages of changes in technology and increasing globalization; and ensuring access to higher education for women who are disadvantaged by economic or family circumstances.
- 2. Increase the hiring, promotion, and retention of women faculty, academic staff, and classified staff** by expanding the recruiting and mentoring of women faculty; improving professional development activities and career ladders for academic staff and classified staff women; and developing leadership opportunities for women to move into administrative roles.
- 3. Make the learning and working environment more welcoming to women**, and especially women of color and women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, by developing workshops and training sessions for members of the University community, beginning with administrators, managers, and supervisors; reviewing and improving the system of reporting and responding to complaints of discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence; and establishing a wider system of supports for women students and employees throughout the UW- System.

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- 4. Provide conditions that allow for balancing work and personal life**, by e.g., expanding and improving child care services and access to them; developing a more flexible workplace through flex-time, job-sharing, and equitable implementation of family leave policies; and providing domestic partner benefits such as life insurance, health insurance, retirement survivor benefits, and sick leave.
- 5. Create an effective organizational structure for improving the status of women** in the University of Wisconsin System by establishing a UW System office on the status of women; supporting the establishment of committees on the status of women at each UW Institution; and mandating that each institution develop by January 2001 a plan that addresses the key areas for progress identified in this report.

Description of UW-Extension

It is important for the readers to understand the unique structure and characteristics of UW-Extension as compared with UW-campus, so they may understand and appreciate the nature of the information and specific recommendations outlined in this report.

For over a century, the people of Wisconsin have looked to Extension as their “gateway” to the University. Charged by the UW-System Board of Regents with responsibility for statewide leadership, funding, coordination and accountability for the extension efforts of the UW System, UW-Extension translates this responsibility into a commitment to ensure that Wisconsin people have access to the resources of their University.

By applying university research, knowledge and resources to the needs of Wisconsin people, wherever they live and work, UW-Extension truly represents the embodiment of the “Wisconsin Idea.” Today, through its nearly 1400 employees and its educational programming divisions – Broadcasting and Media Innovations, Business and Manufacturing, Continuing Education, and Cooperative Extension – UW-Extension makes the *Wisconsin Idea* a reality, functioning as “the people’s university.”

Cooperative Extension faculty, based in the 72 county Extension offices and on six UW campuses, respond to the needs of farmers, businesses, communities, families and youth. High priority programs focus on water quality, families and youth at risk, profitable and sustainable agriculture, and community economic development.

Continuing Education faculty based on the 26 UW campuses and in UW-Extension offers continuing education opportunities for the professions, business and industry, workers, and the general public. Other continuing education functional units provide distance education, student services information through the HELP (Higher Education Locator Program) office, and a lead role in the University of Wisconsin System entity for asynchronous Web courses, and collaborative certificate and degree program offerings across System institutions, and UW Learning Innovations.

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Broadcasting and Media Innovations provides educational, informational and cultural programming for people throughout the state via Wisconsin Public Radio and Wisconsin Public Television (in partnership with the state Educational Communications Board).

Business and Manufacturing Extension focuses on technical, managerial and general business education and support to Wisconsin businesses by mobilizing and making accessible system-wide academic resources. Specific programs include the Small Business Development Center network, based in UW-Extension and on twelve UW campuses, and UW-Extension's role in the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP). Small Business Development Center counselors, linking with area business agents, help individuals start new businesses, expand those already in operation, use technology to access learning and enhance efficiencies, improve profits and provide jobs.

An array of administrative and program services support the work of faculty and staff, including Extension Conference Centers, Instructional Communications Systems and other media and distance learning support services. The offices of payroll, personnel, purchasing, budget and finance, affirmative action and diversity programs, secretary of the faculty and academic staff, internal audit, and chancellor and vice chancellor are all involved in supporting these programs.

While the main players are the faculty and staff, whose commitment and creativity result in a vast array of innovative educational programs, they don't act alone. They are assisted by many volunteers and cooperating agencies, organizations and businesses, public and private, on the local, state and national levels to create the linkages necessary to plan, develop and deliver its educational programs and services.

The size of the effort is extensive. Each year, more than one million Wisconsin residents participate in extension programs, through a wide variety of delivery methods, from workshops and one-on-one counseling to interactive networks and correspondence study – all designed to make education accessible.

In many ways, Extension employees work with the people of Wisconsin to apply University knowledge and resources to the current needs of families, professions, businesses, and communities. It's practical, issue-focused, problem-solving education to help local citizens and leaders improve the state's economy, protect its environment, enhance the viability of its communities, and enrich the quality of life and work through continuing education.

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Introduction

The Status of Women Study Committee thoroughly analyzed and discussed the UW-System recommendations. Through discussion among its members, the Committee determined that while agreeing with the general thrust of the Report's recommendations, the recommendations had to be tailored to fit the unique and diverse ways that UW-Extension functions. For example, because UW-Extension is geographically dispersed across the state, its classrooms are often temporary sites secured to meet the immediate needs of the students. Moreover, Extension's increased use of technologies --such as the Web, interactive television, compressed video and satellite -- make it difficult to draw rigid lines around work locations, thereby making it difficult to define policies that would have application to each unique learning and working environment. Further complicating everything are the various educational partners, such as county governments and campuses that influence the work environment of Extension faculty and staff.

Despite these challenges, the Committee believes that Extension's stated commitment to diversity, outreach, and the use of cutting edge technology for program delivery, positions it to lead the charge of improving opportunity and access for women to the UW System, internally and externally. By virtue of its structure, UW-Extension is positioned to be the gateway for women, other underrepresented audiences, and "students" to the resources of the University of Wisconsin.

The Committee urges Extension administrators to consider the implications of the anecdotal observations outlined below as they determine ways to implement the recommendations contained in this report:

First, while many examples of workshops and classes designed to reach women and girls were noted, the numbers participating are small and none are uniformly offered throughout the state on a regular basis. Extension's reputation for innovation was earned by our record of starting new efforts but then quickly moving on to new innovations. Unfortunately, often no other institution continues the effort and the workshops are not repeated. Therefore, it's crucial that UW-Extension identify mechanisms for sharing information about successful initiatives and programs that might be replicated across the state.

Second, existing constituencies and stakeholders have grown to view access to Extension programs as entitlements, creating barriers for inclusion and reallocation of resources to new directions and programs for new audiences. This same phenomena sometimes operates as an impediment to hiring new employees that represent diverse perspectives and ethnic groups.

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Third, success in securing outside grants and contracts that allow for reaching diverse and low income audiences is commendable, but has resulted in a growing number of academic staff, more often female and persons of color, with little opportunity for advancement within our system, due to lack of support and funds to achieve additional credentials. This growth has other costs as well. Too often grant-funded programs directed toward new audiences, again female and persons of color, languish on soft money, lack program stability and security, and provide little growth and development opportunities for employees hired with these funds.

Fourth, Another consequence of perpetuating funding of “new” programs on soft money is those programs remain marginalized within the organization, as do the employees working in those areas. Thus it is imperative for the organization to reevaluate its priorities, and change its focus, in order to make “inclusion” and multiculturalism a reality.

Fifth, while progress has been made in Extension, women and women of color are severely underrepresented in the high-level administrative ranks.

Sixth, women and people of color are often not mentored and are over-looked when administrators make interim and acting appointments, delegate higher-level work and committee assignments, or other opportunities that prepare employees for high level administrative posts. On the other hand, women and people of color often are burdened with double and triple duty administrative assignments, to fulfill administrative requirements for diverse representation on groups and committees, but leading to no advancement.

Finally, balancing work and family is an ongoing challenge for all employees, not just women, that is exasperated by the commitment Extension has made to Wisconsin citizens that we stand ready to serve them “anytime -anywhere” in Wisconsin. Many times Extension employees work long hours, nights and weekends, sometimes in unsafe environments, all adding stress.

To clearly describe how the five UW-System report recommendations apply to UW-Extension, the Committee discussed each in turn, first defining the recommendation in light of how Extension functions, next by identifying examples of best practices, and third, making recommendations for improvement. The Committee also notes that the best practices identified in this report, are not only those operational within UW-Extension, but include best practice examples from extension operations on the campuses that serve as models.

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I. Expand Educational Opportunities for Female Students.

The Committee struggled with defining an Extension “student” for purposes of analyzing and evaluating this issue for this report. In considering this issue, the Committee concluded that in most cases, an Extension “student” can more easily access the University’s resources than the campus based “student” due to the informal, locally-based, low cost, short-term nature of many of Extension’s programs. For purposes of this report, students include children (4-H and other youth-focused programs), adult women (continuing education and informal workshops) and those who access public television and radio. The discussion on this point gave consideration to the expansion of educational opportunities for both female employees and students who may be seeking educational opportunities.

The Committee makes the following recommendations:

A. Employee Development

UW-Extension administrators, directors, supervisors and managers need to be proactive in assessing, identifying and encouraging the professional growth and development of all women within the organization, including creating opportunities wherein this can occur. For example, they might encourage and support the efforts of female employees to participate in professional development opportunities that will prepare them for advancement within the organization, including working toward degrees. Other examples include the development, implementation and active encouragement of formal and informal mentoring and leadership development for women; and the identification of career tracks and “succession-planning” to specifically include women, and the provision of the requisite professional development to help women prepare for higher-level positions.

- ★ Provide career counseling and publicize career and professional development opportunities to make employees aware of educational opportunities.
- ★ Create flexibility in work schedules to facilitate pursuit of continuing education.
- ★ Consider ways to provide paid release time for study.
- ★ Assist women employees in continuing their education through professional development opportunities and attaining additional degrees by tuition reimbursement and loan forgiveness programs. Assure that funds are equitably distributed across classifications.
- ★ Assure that women are mentored and given work assignments that help them be more competitive for high-level positions within the organization.

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- ★ Appoint greater numbers of women to high-level “interim” and “acting” positions to enable them to gain the requisite experience and networks to be competitive for appointment to high-level posts.
- ★ Create mentor and internship programs to encourage women to work in UWEX in jobs/careers where women are typically underrepresented such as information systems/technology, television, radio, broadcast engineers, business and agriculture.

B. Student Development Opportunities

More targeted, relevant, and systematic outreach using various mediums appropriate to the intended audience of women and girls is needed to achieve the desired outcomes in these areas. Particular emphasis should be placed on areas and fields of study where women and girls are typically underrepresented.

- ★ Create an outreach/marketing program directed toward encouraging females of color to not only participate in Extension programs but to also pursue degrees.
- ★ Explore options to allow female students to receive college credit for life/work experiences and Extension coursework.
- ★ Identify and reduce attitudinal barriers to female participation in science, technology, math, engineering, business and agriculture.
- ★ Create internships in underrepresented areas to hire female students.
- ★ Expand the number of on-line and correspondence courses available to accommodate women who would not be able to access face-to-face class situations.
- ★ Increase use of educational technologies such as compressed video and satellite programming to enhance the comfort levels of girls and women with these technologies.
- ★ Develop and conduct technology camps for girls.
- ★ Expand funding for scholarships, tuition remission and other aid for women who participate in educational opportunities.

C. Curriculum Development

Due diligence and critical review of publications at all levels of the organization is necessary to achieve institution-wide progress toward the recommendations outlined below.

- ★ Consistent and continual assessment of Extension curricula and publications need to systematically occur to identify and remove information that conveys or perpetuates gender bias and stereotypes.
- ★ Examine curriculum to assure educational materials are interesting, relevant and welcoming to women and girls.
- ★ Identify and remove indicators of gender bias or other stereotypes.

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Examples of Best Practices in UW-Extension and other UW campuses: Expanding Educational Opportunities for Female Students.

- ★ BioTrek: introduces youth to principles of biotechnology (UW-Madison/Extension).
- ★ 4-H and Youth Programs: offer equal access to all projects and opportunities for involvement in sports (statewide).
- ★ College for Kids-short term summer classes for youth including science, astronomy and the arts (several sites).
- ★ Public Television/Cooperative Extension program focusing on topics of interest to women, "Creating Health" and "Whole Child".
- ★ DO IT Academy (UW-Madison)
- ★ Student crew positions at Wisconsin Public Television (WPT).
- ★ Pre-college enrichment opportunity program for learning excellence (PEOPLE [UW-Madison and UWEX]).

II. Increase the Hiring, Promotion and Retention of Women Faculty, Academic Staff and Classified Staff.

Examining the current status of women employed in the UW-Extension workforce is a critical first step toward understanding the recommended actions in this section of the report. Data outlined in the workforce analysis found in the UW-Extension 2000-2001 Affirmative Action Plan (See Appendices) shows that UWEX has 1376 employees, 59.6% women, and 6.3% minorities. Across the six divisions, the percentage of women ranges from a low of 49.6% in Extension Communications to a high of 87.5% in Business and Manufacturing.

The Cooperative Extension division employs half of all minorities (females and males) in UW-Extension, 44 out of 87. Thirty-six of the 55 department units include no women of color, with five departments reporting only one man of color.

Although women hold the majority of all positions in UWEX, they are more likely to be found in classified than in unclassified positions. Women holding tenured faculty positions are more likely to be found in traditional female program areas, Family Living Programs and increasingly in 4-H/Youth Development, an area that at one time was predominantly male. Even in these program areas, women of color tend to be concentrated in low-paying soft money positions. Also important to note here, only one woman of color holds a tenured position.

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Finally, at the top-paying levels (Academic Administration¹ and Administrative Directors²), women are found in 22 of the 62 positions (35%) with 6 being women of color (9%). While women are represented in those 2 categories of jobs, their proportional representation is less than half of what would be expected, given their available representation in the labor market.

These data appear to be supported by trends in hiring. Hiring data for November 1, 1999-October 31, 2000 shows a combined total of classified and unclassified staff at 121. Women constitute the majority of hires (67%). New hires that also are people of color are concentrated in the traditionally female, low-paying and low status jobs within the organization -- General Clerical Occupations, General Laborers/Seamstresses/Upholsterers, and Nutrition Educators. The only people of color hired into any unclassified positions were found in the Family Living Programs Nutrition Educators. These four hires accounted for 30.8% of all minority hires.

A. Search and Hire process.

- ★ Strengthen institution-wide procedures for search committees that facilitate recruitment of women, and especially women of color for faculty and academic staff positions. Instruct divisional HR directors to work in conjunction with Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs to evaluate hiring practices and eliminate screening criteria that limit opportunities for women.
- ★ Publicize career opportunities with media outlets that are specifically directed toward reaching women, particularly women of color. This recommendation is being made to assure the widest dissemination of information to women about employment and career opportunities across the organization, and to assertively communicate that UWEX is actively seeking applications from female applicants.
- ★ Maximize diversity (gender, race/ethnicity/class) represented on each search, screen and interview panels and committees.
- ★ Assure that search committees receive specific instructions and training about the application of affirmative action and diversity goals and principles to the recruitment process, and how to appropriately utilize these concepts and practices during the search and selection process.

¹ Job titles include: Dean, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Academic Program Director, Associate Academic Program Director, and Assistant Chancellor.

² Job titles include: Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director, University Conference Coordinator, Administrative Officer, Special Assistant, Assistant to the Chancellor, and Controller

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- ★ Offer incentives for recruiting and hiring women, especially women of color, for faculty and high level administrative and directors positions. Examples include partial salary support, resource and financial support for research, equipment, graduate and research assistants, and professional conferences from a central fund managed by the Provost's Office in partnership with OEODP.
- ★ Explore spousal/partner hire program options to attract women, especially women of color.

B. Compensation, evaluation and promotion

Implementation of recommendations in this section is needed to continually monitor and assure gender equity in salary and other compensation practices. Monitoring and assessing equity in evaluation standards and promotion practices is a critical component of this process.

- ★ Undertake a gender equity compensation study to evaluate whether gender inequities exist across all of UWEX. An institution-wide study has not been undertaken in more than 10 years.
- ★ Analyze exit interview data to determine reasons women leave UWEX and make a strong effort to retain women faculty, academic and classified staff. If compensation is the reason, create competitive counteroffers. Take steps to assure that the UWEX Exit Interview Policy is followed, and that interviews are conducted with each separating employee.
- ★ Consistently use counteroffers as a retention device for women.
- ★ Evaluate practices and decisions that result in title changes and promotions, including increases in salary; new and/or more complex work assignments, etc.
- ★ Provide training to help supervisors understand how to conduct fair, objective and effective performance reviews.
- ★ Incorporate career and leadership development planning and training into the performance review and evaluation process. Monitor to assure that women are provided opportunities for mentoring, professional development and promotions.
- ★ Advocate for changes in the civil service structure that will provide classified staff with better opportunities for competitive compensation, promotion, reclassification, and recognition of meritorious performance.
- ★ Advocate and support the development of women in Instructional Academic Staff positions to help them progress through the promotion process. Consider whether any affected individual women might be good candidates to encourage to pursue or consider for tenure-track positions. Assign appropriate titles and status that truly reflect actual job duties.

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C. Professional Development (including mentoring)

- ★ Implement mandatory orientation for new employees to include information about the organization structure, hierarchy and progressive paths where they exist. This step is critical to assure a consistent process and employee job success.
- ★ Implement or strengthen existing mentoring programs to assure success for women; provide training and orientation for mentors.
- ★ Publicize professional development opportunities to women, offered internally and externally. Assure that women are mentored, developed and promoted, including title changes.
- ★ Increase participation of women in the Extension Administrative Leadership Program and create a parallel opportunity for classified staff.
- ★ Implement supervisory/management and leadership development programs for women.

D. Opportunities for Advancement

UW-Extension needs to devise mechanisms to identify women for interim and high-level temporary appointments and provide comparable opportunities for them. These opportunities in effect provide "on the job" training paths for them to move into higher-level positions. Men, more often than women, have been tapped for interim appointments and other temporary assignments and appointments for extended periods of time. The recommendations outlined below are intended to facilitate more equity in the process.

- ★ Develop women candidates from within by providing higher level and varied work experiences through ad hoc committee membership, work assignments and interim appointments.
- ★ Demonstrate gender equity when filling "acting" and "interim" positions.
- ★ Use internal searches to create more opportunity for upward mobility.

Examples of Best Practices

- ★ Extension Administrative Leadership Program.
- ★ Cooperative Extension's New Colleague Orientation program.
- ★ Learning Institute's Orientation program.
- ★ Cooperative Extension's Mentoring program for new hires.
- ★ Participate in the North Central Regional Cooperative Extension Leadership Development program (NELD).

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III. Make the Learning and Working Environment More Welcoming to Women, Especially Women of Color and Women Who Identify As Lesbian, Bisexual, Or Trans-gendered Women (LGBT).

UW-Extension faces special challenges in creating uniformly positive and welcoming environments because its locations are dispersed across all campuses and regional and county offices. To fulfill its stated commitment to diversity in its workforce and among its students, UW-Extension must make every effort to ensure that its work and educational environments are welcoming and safe for everyone.

- ★ Extension administrators need to receive training and routinely make public statements reiterating their commitment to inclusion. Specific references should be made to their commitment to build and sustain welcoming educational and work environments and communities for women, people of color, and people whom are LGBT. To accomplish their stated goals of diversity and inclusion, Extension Administrators must continually strive to educate its educational partners and stakeholders, including Extension Education committees and volunteers.
- ★ Administrators, directors, managers, and supervisors must be knowledgeable about institutional nondiscrimination and complaint procedures. At least annually, they should review these policies with employees in their units, including student workers.
- ★ At least annually, provide 1-2 opportunities for training sessions for the Extension workforce designed to improve the learning and working environments for women, women of color and LGBT people.
- ★ Evaluate the reporting relationships of Extension offices designated to receive complaints and allegations of discrimination, harassment, or sexual violence to avoid conflicts of interest, minimize or eliminate the appearance of bias, and to assure that the complaints are in fact being handled fairly for both complainants and respondents. Adequately staff and resource these functions to successfully accomplish goals and expectations.
- ★ Facilities/ Building Managers and Extension faculty and staff should annually evaluate safety and security measures for offices and other educational sites to address deficiencies in lighting, parking, pathways, locks, access to means of communication to ensure that they and their students can safely participate in Extension programs.

Examples of Best Practices

- ★ Respect vs. Harassment workshop, OEODP
- ★ VISIONS Diversity Leadership Workshop, OEODP
- ★ Unlearning Homophobia Workshop, UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies
- ★ Relocation of Douglas County Youth Fair because of previous facility's decision to discriminate.

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IV. Provide Conditions That Allow For Balancing Work and Personal Life.

While changing attitudes and practices in society and organizations continue to erode traditional male/female socialization patterns, studies and evidence available suggest that working women still tend to shoulder the greater burdens and responsibilities of child-care and elder-care, housekeeping and other “at-home” duties. Further, males who might be more willing to equitably share responsibility for the household and care taking tend to be impeded by regressive attitudes, policies and managerial practices tending to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes in these areas. These phenomena often thwart advancement for women within organizations, including UW-Extension. Thus the Committee makes the following recommendations to interrupt these patterns within the workplace:

- ★ Examine similarities and differences among Extension employees concerning vacation, sick leave, family leave, compensatory time off, etc. Develop and uniformly implement equitable policies.
- ★ Educate Extension faculty and staff and their supervisors to ensure that policies are applied appropriately.
- ★ Create resource listings for employees that identify community-based resources for child-care, elder-care, sick child-care, etc.
- ★ Develop more opportunities for flex time, part time and job sharing.
- ★ Respect family and personal life demands by taking into consideration when scheduling meetings and other work-related activities.
- ★ Provide domestic partner benefits by interpreting “immediate family” to include a domestic partner wherever the institution has the legal authority to do so, such as in granting family leave or pursuing spousal hires. UW-Extension should strenuously advocate that the state make any statutory changes necessary in order to make benefits for domestic partners equal to those with legal spouses.

Examples of Best Practices

- ★ Flex-time work schedules
- ★ Telecommuting
- ★ Teleconferencing
- ★ Release time to participate in school and community activities that occur during the workday

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V. Create an Effective Organizational Structure for Improving the Status of Women in the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

The UWEX Status of Women committee recommends that the Chancellor create an Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. The committee would be charged with advising the administration in planning for and evaluating progress for women students, faculty, academic staff, and classified staff. In addition, an appropriate office or unit should be allocated a part-time FTE to support the function and responsibility of supporting the objectives of these recommendations and women across UW-Extension.

At the Chancellor's directions, the Committee would set goals, objectives and initiatives for UWEX. Extension Administration would provide support, technical assistance and staff to implement these plans. The Committee would also create and expand partnerships with other campuses and organizations that focus on similar topics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the committee wants to acknowledge departments, units, and individuals that continually work to achieve gender equity and inclusion across UW-Extension. In some areas, UW-Extension's gains are obvious; in others it is equally obvious that much work remains to accomplish true equity and inclusion for women, particularly for women of color. Diligent and continued good faith efforts, along with the will and commitment of sufficient resources to implement these recommendations will assure that UW-Extension realizes success in its efforts to eliminate most, if not all, barriers to the advancement and inclusion of women at all levels of the organization.