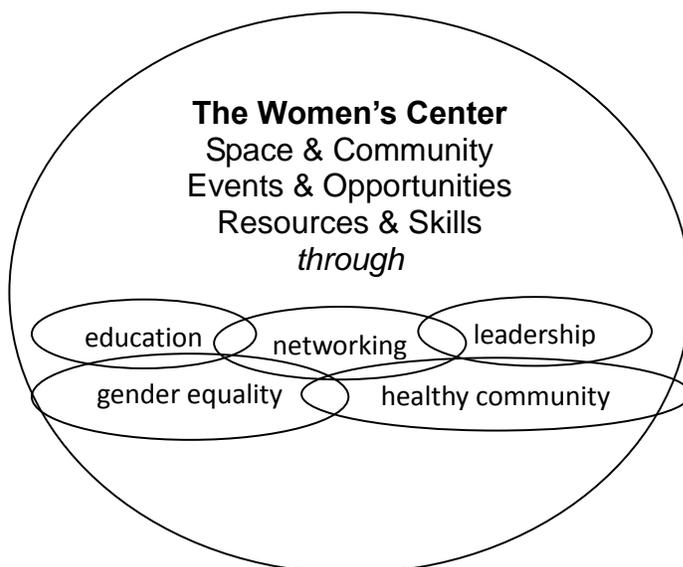


THE WOMEN'S CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2016

A 21ST CENTURY WOMEN'S CENTER: FIVE GOALS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION



MISSION STATEMENT

The Dickinson College Women's Center is a resource that builds gender education and equality into the life of the institution through space and community, resources and skills, and events and opportunities.

PLAN AT A GLANCE: framing questions

- How does the Women's Center contribute to **campus ecology**¹?
- How should the Women's Center **expand its constituency** to educate and motivate the broadest cross-section of students, particularly to invite men to experience the benefits of gender education and to advance college-wide diversity goals?
- What does the Women's Center contribute to a **21st century skill set**²?
- What does the Women's Center offer for **residential and co-curricular education** across the four years?
- What does Dickinson need for **sustainable gender-based advocacy**?

¹ A lens for seeing how the campus culture, facilities, and practices connect with students' academic, social, and personal lives, enabling a holistic approach to providing education, leadership development, and healthy community.

² Dickinson College endorses the skills identified by the American Association of Colleges and Universities' VALUE project. In Strategic Plan III, the college focuses its strategy on building students' commitment to connectivity, global perspective, sustainability, active learning, and technology and information fluency.

CONTEXT

At Dickinson College, the Women's Center has existed in a variety of forms since 1983. It is significant that this year of official incorporation also marked the bicentennial of the college's founding. Dickinson has been a trailblazer in women's education; female-identified students were admitted to the college in 1884, nearly a century in advance of students at Franklin and Marshall, Princeton, and a host of other top American institutions. Dickinson has also long recognized what Elizabeth Allan noted in a 2011 report of research on women in higher education: "drawing conclusions that equity has been achieved based on the overall proportion of faculty or students who are female ... fail[s] to acknowledge ways in which gender representation tends to be stratified" (p. 1). In keeping with a culture that seeks visionary and pragmatic solutions to complex challenges, Dickinson has observed the complexity of gender equality in higher education and responded with variety, energy and innovation.

The college's Strategic Plan III (SPIII), with an emphasis on the student experience, provides a strong platform for the Women's Center to renew Dickinson's approach to women's and gender-based education. SPIII names innovative objectives that converge with the common trends identified by Dickinson graduate Sharon L. Davie among Women's Centers nationally: "the transformational, interpersonal encounter"; "an extension of learning outside the classroom"; and "mentoring and leadership development for women" (p. 20). Dickinson's trailblazing history and this unique convergence of strategies offer us an opportunity to help students understand how women and gender operate in their daily lives and in the lives of leadership they will engage at the end of their Dickinson careers. Dickinson alumni will be working in mixed environments that demand self-awareness, empathy, effective decision-making, accountability, and leadership skills. Indeed, "Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) reported that women who served in leadership roles of co-curricular activities were more likely to select careers in male-dominated fields" (Allan p. 23). Dickinson's pursuit of independence and active learning necessitates that all of our students benefit from the competitive edge of gender-based education.

The Women's Center also has a role to play in the college's objective to build a "supportive and inclusive community characterized by respect, equality and accountability" (SPIII p. 15). Dickinson's increase in aggregate enrollment among women presents significant opportunities to develop students' capacity for perspective-taking and to address disabling conditions. A spring 2009 campus survey conducted by the Office of Diversity Initiatives indicated that respondents hear students make "insensitive or disparaging" comments about women 23.5% more frequently than they do about men. Women also feel "discriminated against or harassed" at a rate of 22.0% relative to 7.3% of male study participants. These concerns are strengthened by documented experiences of sexual and relationship violence and homophobic harassment on campus (all gender-based crimes). Like many of our peers, we are finding that "gender essentialist ideologies are highly resilient" as are behaviors correlated with those ideologies (Barone p. 170). The lived experiences of all of our students are impacted by their gender identity and the Women's Center presents an opportunity for integrated learning that could help to prevent these disabling conditions while yielding a competitive edge in all students' cognitive complexity, self-awareness, and leadership skills.

The following goals address five areas critical to the growth of complex, broad-based gender education. With an emphasis on expanding the constituency of the Center and building effective partnerships across the campus, the Women's Center is ready to support Dickinson's exceptional development of "leaders and a public who comfortably and regularly cross the borders of culture, language and knowledge" (SPIII p. 3).

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS AND GOALS

Question 1: *How does the Women's Center contribute to campus ecology?*

Goal: Resolve the Women's Center contribution to "encouraging safe, healthy and positive norms for behavior", particularly shifting/redefining its leadership role on sexual and relationship violence prevention work and exploring its contributions to other critical aspects of campus ecology (SPIII p. 18).

Strategies:

1. *Director will transition fully from direct service and violence prevention program work to supporting and oversight role as Project Director for Department of Justice VAWA grant.*
2. *Identify gender education goals that will contribute to violence prevention.*
3. *Partner with Directors to identify key areas of campus ecology/campus wellness in which a gender education perspective would be of benefit to initiatives underway (e.g., alcohol abuse prevention, body image and eating disorder awareness, gender neutral housing and bathrooms, bias incidents).*
4. *Partner with Greek life to educate and assist students in elevating their capacity to contribute to campus culture and address disabling conditions.*

Timeline:

Summer 2011

Strategy #1: Complete DOJ program report; follow-up on Disciplinary Boards action plan; support Violence Prevention Coordinator in developing Coordinated Community Response Team action plan; establish and communicate shift in expectations with Violence Prevention Coordinator and Student Development staff.

Strategy #2: Research gender education learning outcomes and successful programs for violence prevention; identify and partner with existing opportunities to implement them.

Strategy #3: Partner with champions/team leaders for campus ecology areas currently underway to determine Women's Center contributions.

Fall 2011:

Strategy #2: Implement gender education for violence prevention.

Strategy #3: Implement Women's Center contributions to existing ecology work.

Strategy #4: Begin relationship-building with Greek life; connect with Greek advisor and other colleagues to develop strategies.

Spring 2012:

Strategy #1: Complete DOJ program report; continue to support and track Violence Prevention Coordinator's implementation work.

Strategy #2: Assess Women's Center gender education programs.

Strategy #3: Continue to implement Women's Center contributions to existing ecology work.

Strategy #4: Assess Greek life strategy.

Question 2: *How should the Women's Center **expand its constituency** to address the needs of the broadest cross-section of students, particularly to invite men to experience the benefits of gender education and to advance college-wide diversity goals?*

Goal: Broaden the scope and reach of the Women's Center by increasing and diversifying regular participants and by making gender equality education visible across the college.

Strategies:

- 1. Support existing men's development work in the Division of Student Development and Academic Affairs by building gender education capacity among colleagues.*
- 2. Create a diverse and active gender peer education leadership team/WC advisory board, with the potential to build men's networks and events within the Women's Center.*
- 3. Commit resources to marketing the Women's Center by unexpected means in unpredictable locations.*
- 4. Increase campus sponsorships and partnerships with departments such as IBNM, STEM fields, and other academic and social programs heretofore undeveloped.*
- 5. Diversify calendar of events to recast the Women's Center as a multifaceted community, with particular emphasis on events highlighting diversity among women.*

Assessment: Increased attendance and diversity among "regular" or "core" Women's Center participants; assessment of Women's Center programs around meaningfulness to participants; measure capacity of other staff and students around gender equality.

Timeline:

Summer 2011

Strategy #1: Partner with colleagues currently developing men's leadership projects to understand better the programs & systems underway and determine how the Women's Center can be a resource

Strategy #2: Establish fall 2011 training goals for Women's Center interns

Strategy #3: Partner with Event Advisory Board and other on-campus entities to develop social programs that raise the profile of the Women's Center.

Fall 2011

Strategy #1: Continue men's development outreach.

Strategy #2: Implement WC intern training; begin outreach to build advisory board.

Strategy #3: Implement diversified calendar of events.

Spring 2012

Strategy #2: Assess Fall 2011 efforts.

Strategy #2: Implement advisory board.

Strategy #3: Highlight marketing and outreach efforts to diversify Women's Center audience.

Strategy #4: Begin outreach to IBNM and other key departments.

Fall 2012

Strategy #4: Partner with departments to support existing events on gender and leadership.

Question 3: What does the Women's Center contribute to a 21st century skill set?

Goal: *Support all students' ability to understand and adapt successfully to gender in professional life at the local and global level and to promote a culture of effective and approachable leadership among Women's Center student interns and volunteers.*

Strategies:

1. *Build partnerships with other departments (e.g. the Career Center, the Center for Sustainability Education, academic programs) around women in the workplace; diversity in work and leadership style; women's position in sustainability efforts, global security and development; and alumni networking.*
2. *Build partnerships with untapped campus constituencies (first-year neighborhoods; teams and Greek organizations; other significant residential, academic and social networks) and reinforce gender education programs that meet those constituents' needs and/or goals.*
3. *Partner with existing training and professional development programs to enhance education for Women's Center interns and volunteer student staff, with special emphasis on these areas:*
 1. *Effective gender peer education models*
 2. *Professional development/leadership training*
 3. *Technology and social media training*

Assessment: Utilize the Student Development Division Major Programs assessment process to evaluate the Women's Center leadership program using pre- and post-test data for the student interns and assessing key events in the Career Center partnerships.

Timeline

Summer 2011

Strategy #1: Meet with key partners to identify existing strategic goals and how the Women's Center can support, co-sponsor, or reinforce them.

Fall 2011

Strategy #2: Initiate meetings and community-building among untapped constituencies to identify needs and goals.

Strategy #3: Host weekly professional development sessions for WC interns.

Spring 2012

Strategy #1 and #2: Continue partnership-building with key departments and untapped constituencies.

Strategy #3: Assess WC intern professional development and modify.

Summer 2012

Strategy #1: Partner with CSE, Career Center, and other critical departments to support more thorough integration of long-range program goals (i.e., move beyond co-sponsorships to more complex yearlong program collaboration).

Strategy #2: Develop strategic approaches for sustainable inclusion of untapped constituencies.

Question 4: *What does the Women's Center offer for **residential and co-curricular education** across the four years?*

Goal: *Develop a gender education philosophy and constituent programs that address critical milestones through active and useful learning and leadership across the four-year liberal arts experience.*

Strategies:

1. *Research best practices in student gender identity development and developmental milestones thereof.*
2. *Identify campus initiatives (first-year neighborhood program; student peer mentoring; class year-based programs) already underway that offer parallel developmental milestones.*
3. *Integrate #1 and #2 with existing or developing programs.*

Assessment:

Timeline

Summer 2013

Strategy #1: Research and write report summarizing results by August 15, 2013

Fall 2013

Strategy #2: Identify campus initiatives already underway and build partnerships to clarify how gender education supports or enhances these initiatives.

Spring 2013

Strategy #3: Begin implementing partnership contributions per colleagues' request/agreement and write a comprehensive strategy for gender education over the four years that augments other four-year programs.

Question 5: *What does Dickinson need for **sustainable gender-based advocacy**?*

Goal: *Develop a research-driven, needs-based mission for the Women's Center that clearly identifies the expectations and contributions it should make for gender equality and advocacy work at Dickinson.*

Strategies:

1. *Partner with Vice President for Student Development, the President's Commission for Women, and the Special Assistant to the President for Institutional and Diversity Initiatives to conduct a comprehensive review of campus and national research on gender equality.*
2. *Partner with the above offices to clarify the Women's Center role in the larger institutional approach for diversity and student leadership.*
3. *Identify and resolve pending staff needs (e.g. operationalizing the Director's salary and optimizing the support and program staff model).*

Timeline:

Spring 2012

Strategy #3: Consult with Assistant VP/VP for Student Development regarding Landis House/Women's Center staff support and operationalizing Director's salary.

Fall 2012

Strategy #1: Invite/explore possibility of a cross-college study group with key stakeholders.

Fall 2013-Spring 2014

Strategy #1 and #2: Convene or support a cross-college study group on national gender equality issues and responses.

Summer 2014

Strategy #1: Synthesize study group findings into a report reflecting on gender equality on college campuses nationally.

Fall 2014

Strategy #1: Partner with Vice President for Student Development, the President's Commission for Women, and the Special Assistant to the President for Institutional and Diversity Initiatives to conduct a comprehensive review of campus research, with the possibility for extending the study group.

Spring 2015

Strategy #2: Partner with above offices and the study group to identify desired role for the Women's Center.

Fall 2015

Strategy #2: Reveal clarified direction for Women's Center.

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