

Action Item: On Feb. 13, 2008, the University of Georgia Student Affairs Committee unanimously voted to support the following resolution: **“We ask that President Adams immediately appoint a task force to plan for a Women’s Center that will be established on campus to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff. We ask the President to provide a progress report to University Council no later than November, 2008.”**

Purpose:

A Women’s Center would contribute to the goals of the Division of Student Affairs and the University as a whole by encouraging diversity, increasing opportunities for service learning via internships and volunteer service, broadening the scope of out-of-class, informal educational opportunities for students of all genders, and by playing a role in the creation of an inclusive and equitable campus community.

Whether they are undergraduate students, non-traditional students, graduate students, administrators, faculty, or staff, women face unique issues and have different experiences than do men at the University of Georgia. Establishing a women’s center on campus would not only contribute to the university’s goal of creating a tolerant and non-discriminatory campus but would also provide a widely recognized, visible center that addresses women’s concerns in a broad-based, collaborative manner.

Focusing on informal education, advocacy and support in accordance with the University’s commitment to diversity and equity, the establishment of a Women’s Center would help to create a favorable campus climate for all. The center would provide extracurricular programming, volunteer opportunities, seminars, and support groups. A women’s center would also provide a central location for resources and information dealing with all aspects of life in order to promote achievement and growth both on campus and in the Athens community. The proposed women’s center would tackle five issues of central concern on campus: **education and awareness, support and advocacy, safety, equity, and community.**

Need:

According to the University of Georgia Fact Book (2006), women are 57% of the UGA student population and 60% of the graduate and professional population, figures that are comparable to national statistics. Despite this predominance, it is easy to document that gender creates special circumstances for women both during college and afterwards. Specifically:

- A national college women victimization study completed in 2000 indicated that 2.8% of college women were raped during the six-month duration of the study (Fischer et al.)
- Case studies of individual college campuses and larger national samples continually show that about 20 to 30% of female undergraduate students are sexually harassed by faculty (Charney and Russell 1994; Dziech and Weiner 1990). When student-to-student harassment is included, those figures are cited at upward of 60 percent (AAUW 2006). Sexual harassment of female staff and faculty is consistent with other workforce figures of over 40 percent (Uggen and Blackstone 2004).
- More women participate in higher education and the work force than ever before, yet women still make 72 cents for every dollar made by their male counterparts. In 1951, the ratio was 64 cents per dollar, an average increase of 0.2 cents per year (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000)

- Most partnered, post-college women struggle with balancing career and family, frequently working a second shift at home after a full workday (Hochschild, 1997)

In addition, the recent campus-wide discussion of sexual harassment has brought to light the work that still needs to be done on the UGA campus to create a safe, welcoming, and supportive climate for all students, faculty, and staff. Campus-wide response to this issue has been loud and clear. Over a period of four days in February 2008, over 1,000 signatures were gathered on an anti-harassment petition that named a Women's Center as one important component of the University's effort to improve the campus climate for the entire UGA community.

Among students, there is tremendous support for such a center. In 2002, Student Life conducted a survey which showed strong support among students for a Women's Center that could provide information, programming, and support services to women on campus in a centralized location. In 2007, a petition was circulated that garnered over 1,000 signatures in support of a Women's Center.

Precedents:

Over 400 campus-based women's centers currently operate throughout the United States, working to meet the specific needs of women in higher education. It has become the norm for prestigious and competitive universities to provide a women's center in order to ensure the quality life of all students, faculty and staff. The likes of Duke, Brown, the University of California-Davis, the University of Texas-Austin, the University of North Carolina, the University of California-Berkeley, the University of Michigan, the University of Tennessee, Northwestern, Boston College, Cornell, Texas A&M, North Carolina State, Florida State University, Cal-Tech, the University of Colorado, Amherst College, and New York University all lay claim to campus-based women's centers. By establishing a Women's Center, UGA would not only meet the standard set by our peer and aspirational universities, but would provide vital services and programs for members of the university community.

The University of Georgia is the flagship institution of higher education in the state of Georgia. Yet among the six institutes of higher education in the state that boast campus-based women's centers – the Georgia Institute of Technology, Emory, Georgia State University, Spelman College, Clark College, and Georgia College and State University – the University of Georgia cannot be counted.

***This document is based in part on a previous proposal prepared by Teresa Raetz. That proposal was developed by the Spring 2007 Women's Studies Capstone Class, and revised in Fall 2007 by Ashley Fuller, Kylie Jo Hood, and Jennifer Yoo.*