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WOMEN'S CENTER

DICKINSON COLLEGE

TO: President Samuel A. Banks
FROM: The Women's Center Executive Committee
RE: Report on Activities of the Women's Center, 1984-85
DATE: May 30, 1985



The first full academic year since the Women's Center's opening has been marked by celebration of new beginnings, recognition of historic milestones, and constant activity. In order to provide an account of our progress this year and our projections for the future, we have compiled a year-end report for your review.

In early September, in order to introduce both new and returning students, faculty, administrators and staff to the Women's Center, the Executive Committee hosted two open house receptions. Both of the programs were well attended. Interestingly, the strongest representation of the student body came from freshmen and from students who had just returned from programs abroad. These two groups of students seem to be particularly open to new ideas and in search of new alternatives.

In addition to welcoming newcomers to the Women's Center, the Committee held a dinner to show appreciation for all of the Dickinson women who had worked over a number of years to bring about the creation of a Women's Center. We also used this time to gather program ideas for the coming year. Everyone seemed to agree that the Women's Center should sponsor programs of both a scholarly and a social nature, and should strive to engage Dickinson women from all constituencies in informal conversation and interaction. Out of this goal developed two ongoing and successful events at the Women's Center: monthly pre-faculty meeting pizza dinners and monthly book discussions.



In September, Peggy Garrett asked the Committee to create a Noonday Discussion on the role of Women's Studies in the liberal arts curriculum. Students, faculty, and administrators collaborated to present a panel discussion which generated lively participation from the audience. Because the topic of Women's Studies as a discipline has aroused the interest of growing numbers of students, as evidenced by the success of the Noonday Discussion and increased enrollment in courses and independent studies dealing with gender issues, the Women's Center plans to present next fall a four-part discussion of Women's Studies in the curriculum. We have already contacted several distinguished scholars in the field who have agreed to participate in the symposium.

In addition to sponsoring our own programs, the Women's Center collaborated with other groups on campus to contribute to a number of all-college events. During Parents' Weekend, a presentation entitled "Mothers and Daughters" attracted a standing-room-only crowd. As part of the Homecoming celebration, "One Hundred Years of Women at Dickinson", a number of alumni helped us to present a program on "Dickinson Women Through the Generations". Also in conjunction with Homecoming, the Women's Center and the Alumni Office cooperated in commissioning a student artist to design a poster commemorating the weekend. For the Metzger Series, the Women's Center hosted an all-college reception. A presentation on "Women in Latin America," part of the all-college teach-in on Latin America, was co-sponsored by the Center. And in December, the Women's Center became the first group on campus to sponsor a band in the newly completed Union Station.

When the Committee met to evaluate and regroup in January, we agreed to continue with successful programs such as monthly dinners and book reviews. In order to expand the circle of women participating in the Center's activities and to bring to the attention of the college community the variety of research projects in which Dickinson women are continually engaged, we decided to sponsor monthly presentations on current research by Dickinson students and faculty. These discussions were not only enlightening to their audiences, but were particularly beneficial to the student participants in providing a forum for them to present their own research, perhaps for the first time. Chaplain Mary Anne Morefield, Professor Tommie Sue Montgomery, and senior Kathie Hullfish also chose the Women's Center as a setting in which to present slides and a discussion of their trip to Nicaragua and El Salvador during spring break.

During the spring, the Women's Center continued to work with other campus groups in presenting programs: in February, we co-sponsored a presentation by the Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow during her stay on campus, and in April we aided the Biology Department in bringing a well-known biochemist to speak. In addition, we broadened our contacts within the Carlisle community by inviting the Cumberland County chapter of the National Organization for Women to use the Women's Center for their monthly meetings. In March, N.O.W. and the Women's Center celebrated Women's History Week by co-sponsoring two film showings, "With Babies and Banners" and "One Fine Day," for the Dickinson and Carlisle communities. Also in observance of Women's History Week, the Center brought Elisabeth Griffith to campus to speak on her widely-acclaimed biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

In April, the Women's Center co-sponsored the Central Pennsylvania Consortium's Women's Studies Conference. As our contribution to the program, we brought the Little Flags Theatre of Boston to campus to present "Mothers and Daughters", a lively and provocative political musical. Through this venture, we raised \$200.00 for Women In Need, the local crisis shelter for battered women.

During finals week this spring, the Women's Center honored newly tenured faculty members Nancy Mellerski and Sylvie Davidson with a reception which was attended by nearly one hundred students, faculty, administrators and staff members. As a final project for the year, the Committee plans to add to the library and furnishings of the Women's Center.

The Executive Committee believes that, during its first year, the Women's Center has contributed significantly to the intellectual life of the College. The varied academic programs sponsored by the Center have added a unique voice to the ongoing scholarly dialogue at Dickinson, raising questions and presenting perspectives often neglected by traditional scholarship. Women's Studies is one of the fastest growing and, arguably, most dynamic disciplines in the academy, and the Women's Center, along with a small but growing number of classroom faculty, is striving to engage the Dickinson community in the new issues and questions raised by feminist scholarship.

In addition to raising new academic issues, the Women's Center has cultivated a social climate in which old assumptions are challenged, women's ideas are expressed and heard, mentoring relationships are formed and friendships between women are valued. Despite positive changes over the past several years, Dickinson remains, socially, a traditional, male-dominated school in a conservative society. The creation of a Women's Center acknowledges that Dickinson women deserve better. The Center has given visibility and, therefore, credibility to the special issues faced by the women on our campus. Within the Women's Center, Dickinson women play second fiddle to no one. As a community, they are learning about themselves, their society, and their ability to affect positive change. These, certainly, are primary goals of a liberal arts college.

The Women's Center has made great strides during this first year and has seen its influence spread throughout the campus. Having established a core of support in all of the campus constituencies, we expect even further growth during the coming year. With the new Executive Committee already at work on plans for next year, we urge your continued support of the Women's Center.