Women's Issues Committee Report – March, 2009

The Women's Issues Committee (WIC) is pursuing improving access to childcare for faculty members. Current access is not adequate. On paper, the Auraria Early Learning Center is available to faculty members. However, students have priority before faculty members. So, in reality, what happens is that faculty members are rarely able to get slots. Co-Chair, Beth Allen, spoke with the director of the Center, Mary McCain, about some of the data on this. They will typically have many more student families for each enrollment period than they have slots. She said it is "very rare" for faculty members to get a slot in an open enrollment period. Faculty members who do get in have gone through quite a bit of effort, such as calling every day in the hopes a student will drop out, enrolling in classes in order to get student status, etc. The priority for students is tied into the historical mission of the center, which was envisioned as a student resource. At this time, student fees subsidize the center, further cementing its mission as a student service primarily. Mary herself is open to serving the campus in whatever way governance sees fit, and if administration decides that serving the faculty members is as important a mission, then perhaps faculty members can have equal access (and pay a bond fee to offset student fee contributions).

It is a legitimate debate on whom we need to focus retention and support efforts. Certainly some might argue that faculty members have many options and students have fewer. But it is a certainly situation that stresses some faculty members’ families. WIC has found some data regarding a Georgia State University (GSU) survey of the female faculty members in 2003 that explored the obstacles for female faculty members’ success at GSU. Thirty-nine (39) percent of the women surveyed said that the lack of childcare was the greatest obstacle to their career advancement. We don’t know what the data is here, but anecdotally this is one of the biggest juggling acts faculty members have.

This issue has also been raised at the Anschutz Medical Campus (AMC) and the Boulder campus plus the Human Resources department of the CU system is also looking into it. WIC is looking into consulting with committees working on these issues at the other campuses and the CU system and is considering putting together a survey to document the needs and interests on the downtown campus.