



The Center for Research on Women and Gender

Building Research Connections

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CRWG's Tenth Anniversary Celebration

September 4, 2001 marks the tenth anniversary of the Center for Research on Women and Gender. This issue of Building Research Connections focuses on the history of the Center's foundation and development.

The Center for Research on Women and Gender begins its year-long celebration of the tenth anniversary with a reception on September 5, 2001, from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. in the Rathskeller (Lower Level Student Residence Hall, 700 S. Halsted). At 4:30 there will be a brief program including welcoming remarks from Chancellor Sylvia Manning, reflections on ten years of life at CRWG by Director Alice Dan, and comments on the writing of Women Building Chicago 1790-1990: A Biographical Dictionary

by Rima Lunin Schultz and Adele Hast. Throughout the academic year panel discussions with Women Building Chicago authors from the Chicago area will be held at UIC. These events will be announced in subsequent issues of BRC.

In late March, 2002, the Center for Research on Women and Gender will honor Alice Dan as she retires from UIC. Dr. Dan was a member of the committee that initiated the process to create the CRWG and she has been director at the Center since 1991. She is also the director of UIC's National Center of Excellence in Women's Health and professor in the College of Nursing. Details will be available in the January issue of BRC and on the CRWG website. The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research will conduct a national search for a new director for the Center.

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A Brief History of the Center for Research on Women & Gender

Alice Dan, Director

Mary Lynn Dietsche, Assistant Director

UIC's Center for Research on Women and Gender traces its history through a number of efforts across campus. In 1972 the Circle Women's Liberation Union, one of the earliest Women's Studies Programs in the country, established the goal for a women's research center. Specific work towards the research center began in 1986, following a University of Illinois Board of Trustees meeting in October. Ann E. Smith, then a Trustee, had requested a hearing on the status of women at UIUC and UIC, and this occasion brought together as witnesses Alice Dan (Co-chair of the UIC Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Women) and Berenice Carroll (Director of UIUC Women's Studies). When Berenice mentioned her interest in starting a center at UIUC, we began discussing the advantages of framing a proposal for a university-wide research center. Faculty committees were formed on each campus, and several bi-campus meetings were held. At UIC the committee brought together faculty from the Women's Health Graduate program in Nursing, the Women's Studies Program in LAS, and others. Margaret Strobel was the first chair of this

Committee for Research on Women and Gender; Beverly McElmurry also served as chair. With support from the Vice Chancellor for Research -- initially Ron Legon and finally Karen Hitchcock -- the Committee developed a proposal that went through many revisions prior to its approval.

The proposal was strengthened by a survey of faculty undertaken by the Committee which showed that, while many faculty were interested in topics related to women and gender, they were thinly spread over departments and colleges and thus isolated. A primary goal for the Center was to build intellectual community across campus to overcome this isolation. It was helpful to our efforts that UIC began to emphasize research development and to seek ways of connecting faculty across the formerly separate campuses in Chicago. Another instance of timeliness was the simultaneous approval, in 1986, of Graduate Concentrations in Women's Studies and in Women's Health Nursing; clearly these new graduate programs would need access to research experiences that the Center could provide.

The Center for Research on Women and Gender received campus level approval in 1990, and went to the Board of Trustees for consideration. Meanwhile, the proposal at UIUC ran into difficulty. A compromise granted additional faculty and resources to UIUC Women's Studies, but the UIUC center proposal was dropped. The initial Board of Trustees discussion in June, 1991, was heated, with concerns raised about the "objectivity" of research on women. We all held our breath over the summer, until final approval was granted on September 4, 1991.

Since the Center opened its doors in February of 1992, it has grown in the number of projects, staff, and space. In keeping with the Center's original objectives, efforts at CRWG have focused on **work, culture, and health**. The Center began its work in women's **health** with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation which supported a state-wide conference on reframing women's health. Successive grants from the MacArthur Foundation financed a national conference and summer institute, nine post-doctoral research scholars in women's health policy research, a training program for domestic violence workers, and the beginning of the Center's evaluation program. This development culminated with UIC's designation as a National Center of Excellence in Women's Health (CoE) in 1998.

The CoE's goal is the improvement of women's health through clinical practice, research, education, community outreach, and leadership.

Women in science and engineering has been a focus of CRWG in the area of **work**. The 1992 conference "Changing Women, Changing Science" set the stage for CRWG's continued interest and leadership in promoting gender equity for women in science and engineering. CRWG is home to WISENET, an Internet listserv with 1000 members that provides a forum for women in engineering and science to discuss issues related to their professional lives. Between 1997 and 2000 the Center was part of a funded project to increase awareness of women in science in the college curriculum. In the coming year the Center will hire an associate director who will expand our program and seek additional funding. We are also beginning an "e-mentoring" project in collaboration with the Region V office of the U.S. Department of Labor. This project will use a listserv format to bring together high school age girls in sponsoring organizations and mentors in science, engineering, and technology careers. The listserv will be a forum for the girls to gain information about science careers.

In the focus area of **culture**, CRWG has been the UIC sponsoring unit for the Historical Encyclopedia of Chicago Women Project. Begun over ten years ago, the project brought together scholars and independent researchers to produce *Women Building Chicago 1790-1990: A Biographical Dictionary*. Recently published by Indiana University Press, the book is a major contribution to the study of women and urban life and is a resource for students and researchers at all levels. Nawal el Saadawi, political activist, physician, and novelist, visited the Center as Scholar in Residence during March and April, 1998. Dr. el Saadawi participated in classes and seminars at UIC and in other colleges in the Chicago area. Her stay at CRWG was an enriching experience for all who came in contact with her. A recent focus of Janise Hurtig's work at the Center, in partnership with UIC's Community Writing Project (College of Education), has been to offer adult writing workshops to Latina women in community settings, publish their writing in the magazine *Real Conditions*, and study the impact of the writing project on participants, their families, and the wider community.

The Research Information Network on Women and Girls in Illinois

(RIN) is a Center project that encompasses all three focus areas of CRWG activity. The RIN is an Internet website containing links to information on all facts of the lives of women and girls, particularly those who live in Illinois. The Center's Evaluation and Training Program is one way that CRWG reaches out to community organizations. Over the years CRWG has collaborated with Chicago Women in Trades, Girl's Best Friend Foundation, Chicago Foundation for Women, and the Illinois Department of Public Health, among others. Center staff is available to assist UIC departments, community organizations, and other agencies in developing and executing plans for project evaluation.

Another important component of CRWG's work has been the training of graduate students. Students at the master's and doctoral level have worked on all Center projects gaining experience in research development, grant writing, data collection and analysis, and report writing. Students have come from the Colleges of Nursing, Architecture and the Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the School of Public Health. They have gone on to positions in women's health clinics, university teaching positions, and public service agencies.

Through the support of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research, other UIC units, and many funding agencies, the Center for Research on Women and Gender has been able to fulfill the goals stated by the founding committee and the mission statement developed by Center staff. The Center looks forward to more years of expanding knowledge about women and the role of gender in our society.

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CRWG's Four Founding Objectives

The Center for Research on Women and Gender promotes collaborative, multidisciplinary research related to women and gender, with an emphasis on work, health, and culture. By bringing together a cadre of outstanding scholars, the Center strives to address the multitude of gender-related issues facing society today. The Center focuses its work according to the following objectives:

- o To stimulate and increase knowledge about women and about gender as an explanatory category of research;
- o To study and evaluate the impact of policies related to women and gender;
- o To improve dissemination and use of new scholarship on women and gender;
- o To create alliances with outside organizations sharing interests in women and gender-related issues.

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The CRWG Mission Statement

At the Center for Research on Women and Gender (CRWG) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), researchers, core staff, and researchers-in-training work together collaboratively with UIC faculty, community organizations, and others to produce improved understanding of the lives of women and of the role of gender in society. This work is done through facilitating the research and professional growth of UIC faculty, CRWG staff, and members of the community organizations in the greater Chicago area. The interdisciplinary and feminist research scholarship produced is not only useful to the Chicago community but to state, national, and international audiences. As CRWG staff and members conduct this work, they maintain core values respectful of CRWG staff, of the diversity of women, and of the actions needed to improve the lives of women and girls.

Original Committee for Research on Women & Gender, 1990

- Diana Biordi, College of Nursing
- Theresa Cordova, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Alice Dan, College of Nursing
- Judith Gardiner, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Aida Giachello, Jane Addams School of Social Work
- Darnell Hawkins, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

- Beverly McElmurry, College of Nursing
- Naomi Morris, College of Medicine and School of Public Health
- Margaret Strobel, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Tonda Hughes, College of Nursing

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CRWG Co-Sponsors Conference on Women and Girls in Science, Engineering and Technology

On July 27, 2001 the Center for Research on Women and Gender co-sponsored "Expanding the Pipeline: Women & Girls in Science, Engineering and Technology," a regional conference promoting career and educational opportunities for women and girls in technology. The one-day conference, held at the Illinois Institute of Technology, provided a forum to discuss ways to improve the pipeline. Conference topics included:

- o keeping girls interested in math, science and technology;
- o attracting and retaining college women students in science, engineering, and technology;
- o careers in science, engineering and technology;
- o academic women in science, engineering and technology.

A highlight of the conference was the lunch-time panel that included successful women working in science, engineering, and technology fields. Panelists represented corporate, government, and private non-profit organizations. Each panelist was selected as a star in her respective field. The panelists were Audrey Bielawa, Plant Industrial Engineer for Ford Motor Company; Sandra Reehorst, Chief of Power and Propulsion Office at the NASA Glenn Research Center; Deborah Sawyer, President and CEO of Environmental Design International; and Janet Voight, Associate Curator-Department of Zoology, Field Museum of Natural History.

The panelists described the most exciting aspects of their career

choices, as well as the major barriers they had to overcome in arriving at their current positions. All agreed that they are in male-dominated careers, but said that the next generation of female scientists and engineers should not find this intimidating: high-paying jobs in science, engineering and technology should be pursued by all people with the talent and inclination to succeed in those jobs.

The conference was free to all participants and was filled to capacity with representatives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Other sponsors of the conference were the Women's Bureau-Region V, U.S. Department of Labor, the Illinois Institute of Technology, and the IT Empowerment for Women and Girls Initiative.

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UIC's National Center of Excellence in Women's Health

CoE Appoints New Clinical Director

UIC's Center of Excellence in Women's Health welcomes Lee P. Shulman, M.D., as its new clinical director. Dr. Shulman is a Professor in the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Molecular Genetics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He also serves as Director of the Division of Reproductive Genetics and is the Deputy Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He is a diplomat of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the American Board of Medical Genetics as well as a Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and a Founding Fellow of the American College of Medical Genetics.

Dr. Shulman's major research focus is in the counseling and care of women considering prenatal diagnosis, pregnancy termination, reproductive genetics, contraception and medical education and includes the development of new contraceptive options and diagnostic methodologies. Among his editorial commitments, Dr.

Shulman is Associate Editor of The Female Patient, The International Journal of Fertility and Women's Medicine. In addition to his scholarly activities, Dr. Shulman maintains a busy clinical practice and is a member of numerous regional, national and international organizations that pertain to the health and care of women. The Center of Excellence directors and staff look forward to working with Dr. Shulman, and to the breadth of clinical experience he brings to the CoE.

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First Annual Regional Spirit of Women Awards: Dream Catchers

Spirit of Women, a nationwide consortium of health systems of which UIC is a member through the CoE, has developed an Awards Program which seeks to honor women who have had an impact on their communities and the lives of others through their contribution to issues women face in the areas of work, family and health. The Spirit of Women Awards were created to celebrate the energy and contributions of these extraordinary women. These are awards for "unsung" community heroines who, in addition to family and work commitments, take the extra step to make a difference in the lives of others and in the communities in which they live and work.

There are three categories of nomination for the awards: the Youth Category for living women only aged 14-21; the Community Category for living women only, aged 22 and over; and the Healthcare Provider Category with no age restrictions. The deadline for nominations is September 15, 2001. To receive a nomination form, call the CRWG at 312-413-1924.

There will be one regional winner per category announced November 1, 2001 at the UIC Women's Leadership Symposium. Regional winners then become eligible for the national awards. Each year the Spirit of Women Foundation, along with partners and members, join national corporate sponsors in a gala celebration recognizing the extraordinary spirit and energy of the regional winners. The National Spirit of Women Award Winners are announced from among the regional winners, all of whom will be flown to the gala in Scottsdale, Arizona in March 2002 as guests of

Spirit of Women.

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CoE Co-Sponsors Conference on Health and Aging Among Women

As part of the Spirit of Women Initiative, UIC's National Center of Excellence in Women's Health is working with the Brandeis University Center for Women & Aging to hold a one-day educational conference, "Taking Steps, Making Choices." The conference will bring together health experts, professionals in the areas of aging, health, and women's issues, as well as consumers to discuss the latest advances in research on the health of mid-life and older women and to examine the health trends and challenges that women face as they age. The day's events will include a keynote speaker, lunch, and three panels. Panel topics include: "What's a Woman to Do?: Assessing Risk"; "Mind, Mood, and Memory"; and "Future Visions." The topics are designed to involve the audience in discussions that cover a broad range of interrelated health subjects affecting women now and in the future.

The conference will be held November 19, 2001 at the Westin Hotel, 909 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago. For registration information, call Patricia Newton at 312-413-1924.

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Spirit of Women Continues its Breast Cancer Awareness Effort

The Spirit of Women Community Task Force is continuing its work with five beauty salons to increase awareness of breast cancer. Thus far, participants have been trained on the topic of breast care, have observed a mammogram, and have received materials on breast cancer for distribution in their salons. The training, entitled "Tell a Friend," was conducted by the American Cancer Society, and provided information on how to speak with someone about breast cancer. The next training session will take place in September at Gilda's Club, located at 537 N. Wells Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60610. Gilda's Club is a place for individuals to

come together to build social and emotional support as a supplement to medical care for those living with cancer. This training session will allow the individuals to learn what support services are available to cancer survivors and their families.

UIC Office of Women's Affairs Organizes Annual Women's Leadership Symposium

UIC's Eighth Annual Women's Leadership Symposium will take place Thursday, November 1, 2001. The program will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Illinois Room, Chicago Circle Center. The theme this year is "Women's Leadership Symposium 2001: Keeping You One Step Ahead." This Chancellor-endorsed event features workshops throughout the day focusing on leadership development and career advancement here. UIC faculty, support staff, academic professionals, alumni, and students as well as community members are welcome to attend.

The Keynote Address, entitled "A Personal Journey in a Social Context," will be provided by Charlotte "Toby" Tate, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UIC. Margaret Johnsson, CEO of the Johnsson Group and '85 CBA, will give the Luncheon Address on balancing work and family life. Workshops include such topics as leadership development, negotiation, conflict resolution, balancing work and family, and financial planning.

The registration deadline is Wednesday, October 24. A full listing of the symposium schedule, workshops, and costs will be posted on the OWA website at www.uic.edu/depts/owa; or call the Office of Women's Affairs at (312) 413-1025.

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