

National Council for Research on Women

Interim Reports from the NCRW Ford Foundation Grantees

Strategies to incorporate women of color into NCRW Member Centers are underway in the 2-year Ford Foundation-funded project, “Diversifying the Leadership of Research, Policy and Advocacy Centers.” The project focuses particularly on women of color from historically underrepresented groups.

In implementing their projects, aimed at providing access to diverse leaders as well as programs and activities that reflect diverse interests, the grantees are finding that their efforts are generating unique, often intense discussion around issues of race, gender and inclusion.

The six grantees were asked to submit a progress report at this interim stage of the projects which ends in the summer of 2009. In order to identify, sustain and disseminate model strategies throughout the NCRW network, the grantees seek to work collaboratively with the Council to obtain re-funding of this important initiative.

The work of the centers will be highlighted in the Annual Conference to be held on June 10-12, 2009 at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City.

Following is a brief synopsis of the six grantees’ projects based on their interim reports submitted in October, 2008:

1. **The Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO)** has invited five African American women and one Latina to serve on a Women of Color Steering Committee. To date they have begun implementing plans to boost the number of women of color who will serve as external speakers to organizations; lead or participate in consulting and research teams; and submit writings for publication by CGO. The Women of Color Steering Committee is also in the process of deciding on the selection criteria for soliciting and selecting three younger scholars of color from historically underrepresented groups. As Patricia Deyton notes, “all of these activities will expand the engagement and visibility of the women of color Affiliates nationally and internationally.”
2. **The Southwest Women’s Law Center** has scheduled a daylong retreat in early December for its Board members to “develop strategies for integrating diversity into every aspect of the Board’s work,” according to Jane Wishner. The Center is also cultivating relationships with the University of New Mexico that eventually will lead to opportunities for engaging diverse students in research and community-based advocacy.
3. **The Center for the Study of Women in Society** whose primary goal according to Lynn Fujiwara is to establish a space within the University of Oregon’s CSWS “that prioritizes the mentorship and leadership development of junior faculty women of color” has used part of its funding to offer mini-grants to ten junior

scholars of color, most of whom fit within the designated underrepresented groups. The ten scholars convened an all-day retreat in May 2008 to identify several key areas of concern with regard to the advancement of women of color, including institutional marginalization (especially lack of mentoring); devaluation of interdisciplinary publications; service overload (especially on 'diversity efforts'); and teaching challenges (especially students' racial biases). To address some of these concerns, the Center has scheduled mentorship workshops for the junior scholars that began in October, 2008 and other forums to take place in late fall and spring of 2009.

4. **The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy** formed a committee including the directors of 'Ethnic Institutes' on the University of Massachusetts, Boston campus who focus on the Latino and Black communities. In addition, the CWPPP has formed a working relationship with the CGO, at Simmons, another grantee. A fellowship application to obtain women of color research scholars has been created and a preliminary plan has been drafted outlining the types of research, workshops and trainings in which the fellows will be engaged. Donna Stewartson anticipates that "the CWPPP Research Leadership Initiative for Women of Color will have a long-lasting impact on the university by providing leadership opportunities to historically underrepresented women."
5. **The Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality** (mini-grant) is working with San Francisco State University's College of Ethnic Studies on a self-assessment "exploring opportunities for and barriers to women of color faculty, staff and students assuming leadership positions in the CRGS. Our strategies promise to yield important insight while improving the relationship between CRGS faculty and the women of color students and faculty at SFSU, particularly the College of Ethnic Studies," according to Jessica Fields. The project directors are currently conducting one-on-one interviews with selected faculty and administrators to assess experiences, perceptions, potential collaborations and leadership opportunities at CRGS. Focus groups are also being conducted with Sexuality Studies and Ethnic Studies graduate students and research assistants to determine how such collaborations might result in greater leadership roles.
6. **The Women's Studies Program, Miami University of Ohio** has identified the three research scholars to fill the Nellie Craig (African American); Native American and Las Mujeres positions. The coordinators are working with students from their affinity groups to engage them in the Women's Studies Program. In close collaboration with the Women's Center at Miami, the Women's Studies Program will feature the project in the Race, Class and Gender symposium in February, 2009. In April, 2009, women from the Miami tribe from Ohio and other parts of the country will host a Women's Gathering as the culminating event for the project. Despite "severe budget cuts across the University and a grim outlook regarding private fundraising," Mary E. Frederickson also notes, "there are several internal and external funding sources that we will pursue in order to continue these valuable new initiatives made possible by the NCRW."