Provost's Action Plan on Report of the Women Faculty Issues Committee

On December 12th I sent out as a broadcast message the Executive Summary of the report submitted to me by the *ad hoc* Women's Faculty Issues Committee (WFIC). In that message I thanked the committee members for their efforts and pledged to act on the report's recommendations. Here I wish to share with you actions which I have taken, and pledge to take, based on the committee's good work.

Stony Brook must be a community where everyone regardless of gender (or ethnicity) feels comfortable and engaged, and where contributions to the university's multiple missions are appropriately recognized. What we do to achieve this state should come to be regarded as amongst the best practices of peer universities across the country. The WFIC report presents data and also arguments that show our community has not achieved this state. We have relatively small numbers of women on the West Campus. Out of a total of 595 full-time tenure track faculty only 131 are women. Most women are in humanities, fine arts, or social science departments, with relatively few women in the sciences or engineering. Only in History, Theatre Arts and the Marine Sciences Research Center is the fraction of women faculty comparable to the fraction in the pool represented by recent Ph.D. recipients. Most other departments have only about half as many women as the disciplinary pool, some less. Because we have not been hiring large numbers of faculty in recent years, it is perhaps understandable that the fraction of women faculty at Stony Brook is less than in the recent Ph.D. pools, but we must strive to do better in the recruiting we do.

Our lack of gender diversity has a negative impact on both women faculty and on our students. Small numbers of women faculty translate into the fact that very few women are department chairs or senior administrators, and to the likelihood that women spend proportionally more time on university service and teaching activities (ironically, in part, because of well intentioned efforts to improve diversity).

We must recruit more women, but we must also do more to nurture successful careers for the women faculty we <u>do</u> have here. Stony Brook is by no means alone in realizing there is much to be done. The MIT studies almost two years ago about women faculty in their School of Science (SOS) were calls to action. Much has been written recently about these issues. As a primer for those who want to read more, I recommend these articles in the <u>Chronicle for Higher Education</u>: "MIT Acknowledges Bias Against Female Faculty Members" (April 2, 1999); "MIT and Gender Bias, Following Up on Victory" (June 11, 1999); "An MIT Professor's Suspicion of Bias Leads to a New Movement for Academic Women" (Dec. 3, 1999); "Support for a Rare Breed, Tenured Chemists" (Nov. 10, 2000); "What Stymies Women's Academic Careers? It's Personal" (Dec. 15, 2000). The "special reports" section of the MIT web site contains the original materials from their studies.

My sense, consistent with the MIT findings, is that the main problems aren't caused by overt discrimination, but instead may result from subtle biases, some grounded in societal norms, exacerbated by the huge imbalance in the numbers

of men compared to women. For example, from one of the Chronicle articles…" the (MIT) report found that discrimination 'consists of a pattern of powerful but unrecognized assumptions and attitudes that work systematically against women faculty even in the light of obvious good will.' It concluded: 'Like many discoveries, at first it is startling and unexpected. Once you 'get it', it seems almost obvious.'" Later in the same article… "In a statement he issued along with the report, Mr. Birgenau (dean of the SOS) declared that more needed to be done. While discrimination against women had been 'totally unconscious or unknowing,' he wrote, '… the effects were and are real.'"

The MIT School of Science is small and homogeneous, with only five natural science departments plus mathematics. Fewer than 9% of the faculty were women at the time of the first studies now there are still only about 12%. Gender related problems are surely experienced with different acuity by women at Stony Brook depending on the areas where they are employed. In the humanities, arts, and social sciences, for example, the percentage of full-time tenure-track faculty who are women is 36%, while in the physical sciences or engineering the percentage of women is less than 11%.

In the Fall of 1999 a group of senior faculty women in the College of Arts and Sciences delivered to me an interim report on the status of women faculty in the college. They urged me to form an *ad hoc* committee of senior women and men faculty to prepare a report for the entire West Campus. The WFIC created this report and the Executive Summary was distributed to all faculty via e-mail. I have discussed the committee report, and proposed actions, with President Kenny, the other vice presidents, the deans on the West Campus, and with the WFIC. While we need to act now to make improvements, it is obvious that we need to make systemic changes in the ways we think and operate. I am committed to taking corrective actions based on many of the recommendations in the report, as are the President and the West Campus deans with whom I work.

I will report regularly to the university community on progress in improving the numbers and working environment for women faculty and on the subject of improving faculty diversity in general.

What follows is a subject-by-subject discussion of the major points in the committee report and my proposals for change.

A. Salary Equity and Promotion Path

Salary Equity: The WFIC reported that the greatest concern was perceived salary inequities based on gender. We must act immediately to search for and remove any inequities that are found. Funds for this are available as part of a three-year base allocation that I received from the President beginning this year for improving faculty salaries in general. In disciplines where there are enough women to comprise a statistically significant sample, the WFIC found a systematic difference in average salaries of women compared to men when considered as a function of the time since the Ph.D.

It is not clear to me what factors have caused systematic salary gender differences. The pattern at Stony Brook (and most institutions) has been that the most significant faculty salary adjustments are driven by promotion and/or retention efforts. The report showed that the modal dwell time at the rank of associate professor rank for women and men is different (about 6 years for men, about 10 years for women). It is well known that societal factors often make women less likely than men to move from one institution to another (for example, the Dec. 15th Chronicle article listed above discusses how both reduced mobility and added family care responsibilities lessen the chance that women move into senior positions at top institutions.) Outside offers leading to retention efforts are most often stimulated by research/scholarship productivity, and not so often by the whole set of activities related to the overall mission of the university. The Fall 1999 interim report stated that a majority of senior women faculty survey respondents felt that they did considerably more university and/or departmental service work than their male colleagues. The WFIC report finds no evidence for systematically larger teaching obligations for women faculty at Stony Brook, but like the interim report does find differentials in service activities. These, and other factors, may all have contributed to the systematic differences found by the WFIC.

Stony Brook has teaching, scholarship/research and service missions. As a forward-looking research university, it is more clear than in the past that all of these mission components are important and must be rewarded. Our operating principle for salaries must be that faculty in a given discipline have salaries based on the same total contribution to our university mission. While I state this as a general principle, the application may impact salary gender differences as indicated above. Therefore I am directing that there be a case-by-case check for salary discrepancies between women and men in the same discipline who have made similar total contributions to the university's mission. Criteria for this review and the specific details of the process will be developed shortly in consultation with various constituencies and Human Resource Services. Generally, the following principles should guide the process.

The most important comparisons are likely to be between faculty at approximately the same elapsed time since receiving the Ph.D., but the other factors above suggest this will not be the sole relevant variable. In order to make the task expedient while having effective oversight, I propose a process where chairs first examine salaries for equity and make recommendations for adjustments as needed. The process must take into account that there are significant salary differences between disciplines and even between sub-disciplines, as is evident in national salary databases. Recommendations from chairs will then be reviewed by small oversight committees made up of senior female and male faculty drawn from the "division" in which a given department resides. The Provost in consultation with the deans will then make the salary adjustments. Average salary systematics given in the WFIC report will be used wherever possible as a benchmark in this work. This task will begin immediately.

The deans will be reminded to review discretionary recommendations and appointment offers in general to ensure equity, and they will provide an annual report to the Provost's office on their results.

Promotion Path: In order to ensure that women are considered for promotion at the earliest appropriate time, I have asked the deans to ensure that all department chairs establish a regular cycle for meeting with faculty to discuss progress towards promotion. I have also asked the deans to begin to review annually the status of women faculty in the associate professor rank, discussing with chairs the files of women who have been in the rank for a longer than normal period.

The process for nominating faculty to be SUNY Distinguished Professors was regularized beginning two years ago when a committee of distinguished professors was formed to recommend to the Provost files ready to be submitted to SUNY. Information concerning procedures for promotion to the Distinguished Professor ranks will be better disseminated via posting on the Provost's website and campus-wide solicitations. The deans have been asked to review the files of senior women faculty within their divisions and to make appropriate recommendations to selection committees. Considering the outstanding records of our faculty, more nominations for SUNY Distinguished Teaching and Service Professorships (women and men) are merited. The President's office is working with my office and the present campus selection committees to improve the process.

B. Parental/family leaves

Leave options and care giving: Although there already exist a variety of leave options for care-givers, including reduction to part-time and suspending the tenure clock, the availability is poorly publicized. The Provost's office staff will work with Human Resources to add to the Faculty/Staff Digest a section on the various leaves with links to the appropriate websites for guidance in how to apply for them. My staff will also work to standardize the process in requesting leave for faculty with significant care-giving responsibilities, and disseminate the information to department chairs. The target completion date for these efforts is the end of this Spring 2001 semester.

Child care: Increased child care capacity is clearly very important. My understanding is that, for example, doubling the number of infant slots in Stony Brook's Child Care Centers would make a qualitative improvement in shortening the waiting list for the infants of faculty, staff and students. The Provostial area already subsidizes the childcare operations, and it remains to be determined whether additional costs associated with the new child care center building presently under construction will by themselves necessitate additional support. Support provided by the Provost's office to Stony Brook Child Care Services will be reviewed when the new building is completed and the Center's needs are better known.

C. Recruitment and Retention of Women Faculty

Hire and retain more women faculty: As discussed above, Stony Brook must recruit and retain more women faculty. New actions taken this year by the offices of the deans, for example by the Associate Dean for Faculty in CAS, to help departmental search committees identify candidates and to get involved in the early stages of recruiting, before candidates are brought to campus, will be helpful. I

will also insist that the appropriate area EEO committees be more proactive with search committees in the initial stages of the search process.

The deans and I will consider on a case-by-case basis opportunities to appoint women in departments where women are significantly underrepresented and funding is not available through the normal recruitment process. The Provost's office can lend support in the form of special actions, such as bridge funding, or special contributions to startup costs, to hire additional women. Faculty hiring will be reviewed annually to judge whether or not our goal of increasing faculty diversity is being met, and efforts specifically targeted to fields in which women are significantly underrepresented will be stepped up until significant progress has been made.

Establish a family resource center: The Provost's Office will take the lead in developing easily accessible information useful for making a life at Stony Brook. We will also work collaboratively with the Vice Presidents for Economic Development and the Health Sciences Center to establish contacts with major employers in our region in order to make it easier for spouses or partners to find suitable employment outside the university. Information on housing, school districts, and services such as child care will be complied and provided to faculty who are being considered by the University early in the recruitment process. These efforts should be in place by the beginning of the next academic year to help new faculty in acclimating to the area and assist departments in future recruitment efforts.

Establish a variety of partner hiring stratagems: The WFIC proposed a model similar to the one employed at the University of Wisconsin - Madison in which the spouse/partner of a new faculty member is employed in another department on campus, with the costs being shared equally by both departments and the Provost for five years. The spouse/partner's department picks up the full cost after that time. I am not prepared to set up such a program at this time, but my office is eager to work with the deans and chairs to find creative ways to recruit women in areas where they are underrepresented. I note that we need to improve faculty diversity with respect to both women and under-represented minorities. Free standing programs for spousal/partner hiring may tend to reduce our ability overall to do this. Our goal should be to improve our attractiveness as potential employers by making it easy to have suitable employment for spouses/partners, whether on campus or off. Developing an employment network and database with regional employers as mentioned above is key to this.

The WFIC report also recommended developing more part-time or shared faculty positions. While it is possible for positions to be shared as part time positions, part-time faculty may not receive tenure under the Policies of the SUNY Trustees.

D. Resource distribution

Ensure gender equity in faculty support funds: Deans have been asked to monitor gender equity in startup packages, availability of office and lab space, research development funds, travel funds and computer funds. My office will provide annual oversight to ensure gender equity. The WFIC surveyed chairs on

these aspects of resource support for faculty. Because data were supplied by only 15 departments, the statistical accuracy of the data is limited. The report analysis indicated a reasonable level of equality for the first three categories, but found women appeared to receive 10-15% less funds for travel and computers, thus regular and careful monitoring of the allocation of these funds needs to occur.

Mentoring: The situation in mentoring new faculty has improved in the last few years. For example, new faculty in CAS are invited to have two mentors: one from within and one outside the department. In the sciences, where grant getting is a matter of survival, techniques for garnering outside support are part of mentoring. In the humanities, fine arts, and social sciences much greater support for faculty in grant getting needs to be provided. This is a problem to be solved jointly by the Provost, the Vice President for Research and the deans. It is a problem highlighted in the President's recent Five-Year Plan. As the committee's report suggests, this lack of support especially impacts women because there are more women faculty in these areas of the academic sector.

E. University Service and Administration

Reserve women faculty's service for critical committees and recognize and reward service: The WFIC reported a perception that women bear a proportionally larger burden of committee service than their male colleagues. Deans will alert chairs that they should monitor committee composition and appoint women to critical committees, being sensitive to service workloads. Service will be recognized when making discretionary salary increases as described above.

Offer incentives to directors of undergraduate and graduate studies: I have asked my newly-formed Taskforce on Faculty Recruitment, Retention and Development to consider this proposal. A set of recommendations from the group is expected by mid-semester, and they will be reviewed and implemented as quickly as possible. The WFIC proposal is also included in the President's Five-Year Plan.

Promote more women to high administrative positions: The senior administration understands the need for women to hold positions at the level of department chair and above. The situation needs dramatic improvement. While 22% of our full-time tenure track faculty are women on West Campus, women are chairs of only two of 35 departments. The deans are paying special attention to the need to have better balance as they work with departments to nominate future chairs.

Increase faculty lines, funding and space for programs focusing on women in the University: This is being done currently for Women's Studies. The Wo/Men's Center has been established in the Union, where extensive space rehabilitation has been completed, and the director and staff hired. The very successful WISE program has been institutionalized, and Professor Susan Larson is the new director of the program. The success of these programs is vitally important to our campus and program accomplishments, needs, and funding levels will be reviewed annually.