Legal News: SUNY/Stony Brook

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YOUR AUDIENCE MAY BE GREATER THAN YOU THINK

To the Women's Studies Newsletter:

The National Institute of Education, which commissioned a series of eight monographs on women's studies as well as the Women's Studies Evaluation Handbook, has, since March 1980, been in the publishing and distribution business, mailing the 2,500 copies of the monograph series and handbook both to preset mailing lists (e.g., all women's studies programs, centers for research on women, libraries subscribing to this Newsletter, women's caucuses and commissions on the status of women in the professions, and higher education associations) and to those who have responded to various solicited and unsolicited notices in newsletters and journals. As the Project Officer on this work and senior author of the evaluation handbook, I have been keenly interested in who has asked for copies of the monograph series and the handbook. I have been pleasantly surprised both by the amount of interest and by the diversity of organizations and individuals who have requested copies. For those of you administering women's studies programs, your audience may be greater than you think.

Within colleges and universities, requests have come from deans of academic affairs, of undergraduate studies, of extension and continuing studies, of innovative programs, of women, and of students, as well as from student financial aid officers, student placement officers, affirmative action officers, and equal opportunity counselors. Requests have come, as well, from chairs and faculty in departments as diverse as English, sociology, psychology, history, math and computer science, agricultural education, and speech communication, and from schools of education, business, and criminal justice. State departments of education, state advisory councils for vocational education, sex desegregation centers, and sex equity coordinators for vocational education are also well represented, as are a surprising number of school districts. Superintendents, assistant superintendents for curriculum and instruction, elementary and secondary school principals, and career counselors were among those writing in, some wanting multiple copies for district-wide special projects.

Diversity in organizations requesting the women's studies monographs does not end here. Also represented are several city and county commissions for women, the Urban League, the Urban Indian Council, the Department of Defense schools abroad, Educational Testing Service, the American Medical Women's Association, the YMCA, Packard Electric (a division of General Motors), the National Council on Aging, the Defense Logistics Agency, the women's program coordinator in a social security office, the women's program in the postal service, the alcohol rehabilitation unit of the Veterans Administration, the North Carolina Department of Corrections, the Farmers Home Administration, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, the South Dakota Association of School Administrators, and several college and university alumnæ associations.

Requests have been postmarked from every state in the Union (including Alaska and Hawaii) and from several foreign countries (including Thailand, Japan, Canada, England, France, Germany, and India). About fifty requests have come from individual women, usually handwritten (sometimes shakily), with no organizational affiliation. Some of the women identify themselves as graduate students or as prospective grant applicants, while others are volunteers within community groups who have retired from their professions.

The hundreds of letters in my office support the claim that women's studies can be more integrated both with other college and university offerings, especially in continuing education, and with other organizations and levels of education. While requesting copies of free monographs is admittedly removed from active financial support, directors of women's studies should note that a diverse and interested world exists outside their doors, both on- and off-campus.

Single copies of the monograph series and the evaluation handbook are still available. To receive copies, please send your name and address to me, Mary Ann Millsap, Program on Testing, Assessment, and Evaluation, National Institute of Education, Room 822, 1200 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20208.

Mary Ann Millsap
Senior Associate
National Institute of Education

LEGAL NEWS:
SUNY/STONY BROOK

To the Editor:

After nearly five years of litigation, the class action suit charging the State University of New York at Stony Brook with sex discrimination (Coser vs. Moore) is about to go to trial. The suit, scheduled for the Winter 1980 calendar of the First Eastern District Federal Court, includes twenty-eight academic and professional women who are name plaintiffs, among them several members of the nursing faculty at the Health

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Science Center. The University is charged with discrimination against women in hiring, promotion, tenure award, and salaries. In addition, the suit includes cases of women professionals who were given the duties of higher-level positions without commensurate titles and salaries.

Since it is a class action suit, there will be three parts to the judicial process. First, the Court will rule on the main charge of discrimination against the Stony Brook women as a class. If this is so ruled, each of the name plaintiffs will file individual claims. Then, any woman belonging to the class who feels that she was a victim of discrimination, whether she is among those who are presently employed, those who are no longer employed, or those who were denied employment, may file claims.

The case, based to a large extent on a statistical analysis which documents a consistent pattern of discrimination in employment and salaries, is very strong, and the plaintiffs are confident of victory. The University, fearing similar action on other campuses in the SUNY system, has used numerous delaying tactics and has spent enormous sums of money, far more than it would have cost to settle with the plaintiffs, in order to fight the case. The Stony Brook women, on the other hand, who initiated the case not for personal gain but in an effort to end sex discrimination on their campus, have been paying their legal fees by donating one percent of their salaries and by raising funds from other University employees. Although their lawyers are not charging for their services, the cost of statisticians, computers, depositions, and other legal fees is considerable. Twenty-five thousand dollars has already been collected and spent. The union representing SUNY academics and professionals, United University Professionals (UUP) has just given the plaintiffs $20,000, but an additional $8,000 in outstanding bills must be paid before the trial. The Stony Brook women would be grateful for any financial aid. Checks should be made out to WEAL Fund—Stony Brook Women, and sent to Box 704, Stony Brook, NY 11790. Contributions are considered charitable donations for federal income-tax purposes.

A victory for Stony Brook women will be an important precedent for all university women.

Judy Wishnia
SUNY/Stony Brook
Stony Brook, NY

LEGAL NEWS:
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Friends:

I am writing to ask your support for the Cornell Eleven, a group of present and former members of the faculty who are filing a class action suit against Cornell University alleging sex discrimination in hiring, promotion, equal compensation, and other personnel practices.

We (the Friends of the Cornell Eleven) believe they have three of the four vital components of a successful suit: (1) strong cases, (2) good legal assistance, and (3) courage. What they lack is the fourth component: (4) enough money to carry this through by themselves.

Professor Mary Beth Norton or one of the “Friends” may have been in touch with you about this effort. If, however, this is the first you have heard of our support group and our campaign, there are some aspects of it which may be news to you.

First, a gift to the Cornell Eleven will not only help finance the class action suit but will also help support various educational activities which we are sure you will favor. For instance, on November 8, 1980, the Friends of the Cornell Eleven cooperated with Cornell’s Industrial and Labor Relations Extension Division in offering a conference on the theme, “Creative Approaches to Ending Sex Discrimination in Higher Education.” The speakers were Dr. Bernice Sandler, Director of the Project on the Status and Education of Women; Professors Helen and Robert Davies (University of Pennsylvania), who presented a definitive paper on mechanisms for the resolution of sex-based employment grievances; and attorney Judith Vladeck, who reviewed recent court decisions affecting academic women. Dr. Mary Rowe of MIT, an institution with an impressive record for attracting and retaining women faculty, contributed an important paper on mentoring and networks.

Please make out your check to “Friends of the Cornell Eleven” and send it to me at P.O. Box 67, Lansing, NY 14882. If you want to add an encouraging note to the grievants, we'll read it aloud at our next weekly meeting. And we will send you news from time to time about the progress the group is making.

We know you are fighting the good fight wherever you are. We intend to do the same here. And we will be grateful for your help.

Alice H. Cook
Professor Emerita
Industrial and Labor Relations
Cornell University