

Women in STEM Affinity Group, Annual Report 2022

The Women in STEM Affinity Group carried out most of our meetings this year by Zoom, due to the ongoing Covid pandemic. These were open to both faculty and staff in the STEM areas. Director of the Women in STEM Affinity Group, Prof. Rebecca Braslau (Chemistry and Biochemistry), now has an updated and curated roster of 154 STEM women on campus (the vast majority are faculty members).

Our first Zoom meeting occurred late in Winter Quarter: November 12th. It was challenging to find an appropriate meeting time: we adopted the tool “When2Meet” for subsequent meetings. Following introductions, Jean Fox Tree introduced the group to the new *Equity Advocate Program* on campus. Opportunities for Leadership Coaching by Marie Logan were announced.

We then discussed the most pressing issues for our group, and distilled these down to three separate foci. Heads and shoulders above all other issues was the lack of childcare on campus. Multiple women expressed exasperation after years of campaigning on this issue, with absolutely no tangible results. After an extensive discussion, one woman asked “is this hopeless?” and another pleaded “Do something!” It was recognized that Student Housing West has planned spaces for both infants and toddler care, but that with the series of lawsuits delaying the construction of this project, there is no childcare plan in place for the foreseeable near future. A second concern voiced by many was the issue of unequal service by women in the university and professional fields, particularly undervalued or “invisible” service. The third issue of interest for women applying for grants to federal agencies, to brainstorm and collect together a number of resources for women to use in crafting strong *Broader Impacts* proposals. For Winter and Spring Quarters, subgroups met separately to discuss these specific issues.

1. Broader Impacts Resources

Over Winter, a subgroup met on February 15, 2022, where we began work on a list of UCSC outreach programs that can be used as a starting point to weave these ventures into our **Broader Impacts** statements when preparing grant proposals. By coincidence, Director Braslau had attended an NSF online workshop a year earlier (on February 22, 2021), entitled “Making Your Broader Impacts Shine.” After two months of work, we posted a list of “Broader Impacts Resources on the UCSC campus and Beyond.” This resource can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pOWw0DTOGhKyLIWicnSyPIEpQ9jSnLjhpobLkHC582Q/edit>

Some novel approaches were discussed, which we hope to re-visit and expanded upon next academic year.

2. Unrecognized Labor/ Invisible Work

A subgroup met on February 28, 2022 to discuss the unequal amount of service many women in STEM felt they provided compared to their male colleagues. They noted that often the work women faculty and lecturers do is to help students in distress, which is both invisible and unrecognized. However, some felt this was “tacitly recognized by colleagues, by them avoiding those teaching assignments.” Some felt that empathy to help students was an innate part of their world view; they wished they could simply “stop caring so much,” but were unable to do so. It was noted that men often take on service in which they play a

very visible leadership role, while women often work behind the scenes, spending hours of work with students that is never recognized. There was also a perceived vulnerability by lecturers as opposed to regular faculty members: “As a lecturer, I don’t feel like I can say no to requests from students or administrators.” We agreed that it is necessary to document our extra service in our personal statements during promotion evaluations, including extra office hours, advising of students on career and academic plans outside of the scope of our courses, advice and empathy in dealing with private crisis situations, etc. It was felt that the approachability of many women puts us in a position where students are more likely to request our time and energy in situations where some would hesitate or avoid doing so with our male colleagues. One piece of advice from the more senior members of our group to those less senior was to refuse (politely) to write letters of recommendations for mediocre students!

Coincidentally, the Center for Racial Justice presented a workshop on “Recognizing Invisible Labor in the University: Ways Forward” on May 6, 2022 (a recording is available at <https://crjucsc.com/news-and-events>). Much of the concerns touched in this workshop were immediately applicable to many women in STEM. Our subgroup met five days later to discuss the applicability of the concepts presented in the workshop to our concerns. Some of our newer faculty as well as more seasoned faculty reported that during the Covid pandemic, the students are particularly stressed out (as are many in our society), and are requesting special treatment, extra office hours, and that the volume of students requesting DRC accommodations is putting a huge burden on faculty with not enough administrative assistance to compensate for the extra efforts expanded by faculty. Director Braslau quoted from CAP chair Stefano Profumo from the May 6th workshop, where he advised to “use one’s Personal Statement to document Invisible Labor” during personal actions.

3. Lack of Infant and Toddler Childcare on Campus

The critical lack of on-campus childcare was by far the most prominent concern among Women in STEM, even among women without children, and women with adult or older children, as the consequences of no on-campus childcare for younger faculty has a severe impact on the recruitment, success and retention of our newer faculty. The burden is particularly challenging to women faculty, however we recognize that this problem also inhibits the career successes of male faculty with young children. The similar issue of elder care by faculty members was also recognized, however eldercare was not the focus of our discussions. As director Braslau has not been formally engaged in this issue in the past, she consulted widely with UCSC Mammias, as well as Prof. Su-Hua Wang, and Prof. Catherine Cooper, both of whom have been very engaged in this issue for over a decade. Background reading included the Granary Project Report 2014, the 2017-child-care-workgroup-report, the May 3, 2018 statement by Professor Cooper entitled “In Support of the UCSC Child and Family Center at the Student Housing,” and the Child Care and Family Services Report 2020.

The lack of on-campus infant and toddler care has been a critical and unmet emergency for years at UC Santa Cruz. Many committees have studied this issue extensively, yet no substantive action has resulted. Ironically, those women in STEM who are most interested in this issue tend to have the least amount of time, given their overwhelming Research/Teaching/Service and family obligations. On March 15, 2022, we were pleased to see that the campus announced the re-opening of an infant care program for fall 2022 **FOR STUDENT PARENTS** (see: https://news.ucsc.edu/2022/03/ees-infant-care-hours.html?utm_source=03-15-2022&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tuesday-newsday), yet on-campus childcare for

FACULTY and STAFF is bogged down in conjunction with the plans for building Student Housing West, which is mired in lawsuits. Concurrently, with the push to hire a more diverse inclusive group of faculty and staff, it is unclear how we will recruit and retain talented young additions to our campus from underrepresented groups if we do not have this problem solved. With the announcement of the ambitious plan to hire 100 additional faculty over the next decade (<https://news.ucsc.edu/2022/02/faculty-expansion.html>), this lack of childcare on campus will become even more dire. There is a dearth of commercial childcare options for UCSC faculty and staff who work in person on campus, which is even more exacerbated by the even more scarce options for infant care (ages 6 months to 24 months). A subcommittee of three (including Director Braslau) met with EVC Lori Kletzer on June 22, 2022, to request formulation of an emergency program for infant care for faculty and staff, with the understanding that a toddler care program is also desperately needed, to bridge the gap between the current situation to that time when Student Housing West is built, with the long-promised infant and childcare facilities in place.

Related to these concerns, we were pleased to learn that **Academic Mothers** (formerly UCSC Mamas) will become an official Faculty Affinity networking group.

The academic year ended with our one **IN PERSON social networking luncheon** on June 15, 2022 (this was held at Kerr 307 which importantly has an outdoor balcony option, which was utilized by the entire group). Major topics of discussion centered on mentoring of early-stage faculty, infant and childcare, and the affordable housing crisis in Santa Cruz. It is clear that affordable housing as well as the lack of childcare has become an extreme liability in effectively recruiting women and underrepresented minorities into new faculty positions. One of the senior faculty reported that in their most recent search, their department's first choice truly excellent candidate (who was female) turned down their offer due to housing and childcare issues. They did successfully recruit an excellent white male in her place, but the chance for excellence and diversity in this one hire was lost. The newest faculty at the luncheon expressed deep concern that they may never be able to enter the super-inflated local housing market. Lastly, everyone at the end of the year in-person meeting was thrilled to be able to network in person. This was particularly important for the newer faculty: who gained some advice on how to negotiate little and big administrative hurdles in the day-to-day operations involved in teaching and research at UCSC, especially in departments where a majority of faculty are still working remotely.

Other achievements:

The Center for Racial Justice organized a workshop on February 18, 2022: Enacting Solidarities: Affinity Groups Report. Director Rebecca Braslau took part in this event, representing Women in STEM.

Webpage:

As part of the Faculty Community Networking Program, technical assistance to set up a webpage for the Women in STEM affinity group was utilized to establish this webpage:

<https://sites.google.com/ucsc.edu/woman-in-stem/home>

Importantly, links to the Campus Advisory Committee on the Status of Womxn, our local WISE group (Women in Science and Engineering), the new UCSC Equity Advocate Program as well as the outside COACH program (a grassroots organization of mainly women scientists and engineers, founded 25 years ago as the Committee on the Advancement of Women Chemists) are included.