REPORT TO THE ESF COMMUNITY

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND FORESTRY COLLEGE
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

ON THE
THE CLIMATE FOR WOMEN INITIATIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN AGENDA FOR LEADERSHIP

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The SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry College, under the stewardship of the Executive Cabinet, has initiated a laudatory effort to assess and effect positive change regarding the climate for women on the campus. This has not been an easy or well-supported undertaking. Just as the panels in the President’s office must frequently be displayed to visiting alumni to assure them that the unique collection of wood samples on the walls has not been violated, so too must the cultural traditions frequently be displayed to show that the past is being honored. Such an expectation is central to administration and faculty practices, and widely accepted as appropriate.

The special mission of the institution, so rooted in the historically masculine sciences, makes change on behalf of the new students reaching for opportunities particularly difficult at ESF. While individual discriminatory actions by administration, faculty, and fellow students may not be recognized, over the long term such actions have a significant effect. These are the “micro-inequalities,” first described by Mary Rowe, the “ways in which individuals are either singled out, overlooked, ignored or otherwise discounted on the basis of unchangeable characteristics such as sex...Such behaviors are often so small that they go unnoticed when they occur, but they have cumulative impact.” ¹

There is no doubt that the leadership of the institution shares the vision for ESF that draws upon the knowledge, skills, and talents of each person. This vision is best voiced in the 1993-94 catalog:

"As the 21st century looms and society becomes increasingly concerned about the environment, members of the ESF family also have timing in their favor. The future of the world may be determined by those who have broad foresight and a balance of judgment in applying scientific, technical, and sociological knowledge to guide environmental and human forces. Modern civilization with its compelling demands from industry and government needs people who think objectively and constructively, and act creatively and responsibly."

To realize this vision, however, throughout the institution, both broad diversity among the faculty, staff, and student body, and the ability to draw the best from each person within that broad diversity are essential. Such a statement has broad implications for change within the institution. As noted in Educating the Majority,

"Equality of opportunity for women cannot be achieved by merely providing encouragement to move into non-traditional career areas and by eliminating barriers to various professions. Equality requires changes in educational preparation, changes in the ways in which work places are structured and changes in relationships between men and women." ²

An Agenda for Leadership, focused on the needed changes and built upon the President’s Action Plan already underway, can assure that the institution and each individual in the ESF community are strengthened.
THE INITIATION OF AN AGENDA FOR LEADERSHIP:
PRESIDENT'S ACTION PLAN REGARDING THE CLIMATE FOR WOMEN

As the stewards of the College, the Executive Cabinet developed an ambitious plan to address the climate for women, culminating in the President's Action Plan. This effort to fully involve women and persons of color in the vision of ESF is the natural successor to the work of several decades to achieve a more diverse student body:

- **Initial discussion.** In 1990, the Faculty of Forestry, as part of the SUNY-mandated Assessment Project, centered their assessment specifically on the experience of women students. They found that "College goals were not being realized. The 'academic and administrative climate' at ESF does not support women in their quest to acquire professional attributes and career skills.'

"Rather, the climate served to discourage many women educationally and professionally. This finding (of the Faculty of Forestry) stimulated discussions within Forestry, and, more importantly, prompted a broader assessment effort across the College to examine the nature of women students' experience in each of the other Faculties." ³

- **Campus-wide assessment.** Fostered by the Faculty of Forestry review of the experience of women at ESF, a review across the College to describe women's experience and the effects of that experience was undertaken. The resulting 1992 report provides a vivid description.

In the report, a synthesis of focus groups discussions conducted by each Faculty with both undergraduate and graduate women, notes a number of commonalities: "Common to all, for example, were concerns about personal safety, the absence of female role models and the male-centered culture at ESF." ⁴

While noting that most students, male and female, find "many beneficial educational and social experiences"... and "appreciate the high quality of the academic programs and the serious intellectual atmosphere of the (C)ollege", the report goes on to describe a number of areas in which the experience of women "demand attention and redress."

The most noteworthy observations include:

**A. Experiences with Faculty and Staff**

"Women students are not taken seriously by many male faculty. Many call on women students less often in class and minimize their responses." Yet, women do not often make complaints because they expect little support or they fear reprisals....

"The negative message is reinforced when male faculty openly belittle their female colleagues, making demeaning remarks about the accomplishments of women, criticize the usefulness of women's groups such as Association for Women in Science, and complain about having to hire women just to meet Affirmative Action quotas' and point out problems that women supposedly create in the job world."
B. Institutional Practices and Policies

"The women cited three important areas: personal safety, facilities and resources for dealing with gender-based issues and incidents." Pivotal to those experiences are the perception that "the campus (is) an unsafe place to be at night and on weekends...(that there is a) shortage of women's restrooms in several campus buildings...(and that) ESF does not provide adequate communication networks and support services...."

C. Experience with Fellow Students

For example, "male students make demeaning comments about the value of women's ideas in class or in group projects, and complain about being 'slowed down by the girls' in field work."

The two principal conclusions derived from this report were that: (1) in the context of contemporary social and legal policies, the College has a very real and pressing need to confront sexual discrimination and sexual harassment; and (2) there is a climate of disregard for women at ESF which operates in both overt and covert ways. These circumstances persist today.

Important to note is that even at the assessment stage, several Faculty Chairs had already begun to opt out: two Chairs never reviewed the report with their faculty/staff team and two more ended their review with the faculty/staff team meeting. "Only five Facultics held full faculty meetings on the topic."

- **Action recommendations.** The President's Task Force on the Climate for Women was charged, in response to the Task Force report on women students' experiences at ESF, with developing a strategy to achieve "the desired outcomes by which climate-improvement efforts are to be measured:

I. Students, faculty and staff understand the College's expectations and standards for a campus free of gender bias and the legal regulations regarding sexual harassment/discrimination.

II. Students, faculty and staff are sensitive and responsive to women's issues and needs.

III. The number and presence of women at the College are increased.

IV. Support systems for women are strengthened.

V. Mentoring networks for women are expanded."

The principles that undergird the recommendations are the most important part of the report and remain valid for continuing dialogue and actions:

"1. Senior College officials must exert consistent, visible leadership and support;"
2. Academic and administrative unit heads must be committed to climate improvement and be equipped with information and resources for unit-level activities;

3. First efforts should focus on individuals’ knowledge of appropriate behavior and expectations before efforts are made to affect specific behaviors or attitudes;

4. Reinforcing the positive, and appreciating the importance of incremental change will reduce reactions of resistance and backlash;

5. Efforts which are directed at students can communicate expectations and standards relatively quickly, and will result in ripple effects to faculty and staff, but these efforts will have to be repeated for succeeding classes (emphasis added).”

- **President’s Action Plan.** President Ross Whaley followed the recommendations of the Task Force with a seventeen point Action Plan, released to and discussed with the entire ESF community, which is directly responsive to the five desired outcomes identified.

- **1994 update.** The recent update on the President’s Action Plan (February 4, 1994) notes the efforts that have been undertaken:

These efforts include:

- a series of three facilitated discussion sessions for students and employees;
- a workshop on “Classroom Climate” for the campus community;
- Graduate Assistant and Freshman/Transfer Orientation Programs which include presentations on diversity and sexual harassment;
- the reinstituted Fall Convocation;
- a Provost’s dinner/panel discussion on mentoring with untenured faculty and Chairs of their Faculties; and
- enhanced faculty staff recruitment procedures.

Further, there are:

- a new sexual harassment poster with contact information for the Affirmative Action Officer;
- a new ESF Contact Network; and
- the formation of an advisory group to the Dean of Non-resident Programs to identify topics and available resources for annual conferences and seminars on women’s careers and accomplishments in environmental fields.
Pivotal, however, are two accomplishments: from January, 1993, to September, 1994, five of the eight appointments to the faculty were women, bringing the total number to faculty who are women to eight. Further, the College appointed a woman as Director of Physical Plant, bringing the number of women to four at the director level.

This continuing initiative is a credit to the vision and leadership of President Whaley and reflects his thoughtful, collaborative style in guiding the ESF community.

CONSULTING TEAM ASSIGNMENT

While much has been framed and considerable dialogue provoked within the ESF community, the Executive Cabinet remained concerned about the level of understanding of and commitment to improving the climate for women at ESF. Therefore, this Consulting Team (see professional biographies appended) was invited to work with the Executive Cabinet to provide an independent review of the progress achieved and frame productive approaches to extend the initiative.

The Consulting Team was asked to:

(1) clarify shared institutional expectations and standards regarding the climate for women;
(2) clarify the commitment and anticipated leadership roles of Executive Cabinet members;
(3) identify processes for organizational change at the College; and
(4) develop approaches and incentives for organizational sub-units.

In response to this charge, the Consulting Team completed an extensive review of all information and documents related to the initiative, and conducted meetings with:

- each member of the Executive Cabinet,
- the Climate for Women Task Force members,
- the Graduate Dean and five department chairs,
- women graduate and undergraduate students,
- women and male faculty and staff,
- student leaders, and
- faculty governance representatives.

Further, the Consulting Team considered similar experiences at other campuses, sought resources through the American Council on Education's Office for Women in Higher Education, and consulted with other leaders in higher education.
INSTITUTIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS
REGARDING THE CLIMATE FOR WOMEN

The Consulting Team's fundamental assessment of the institution's expectations and standards is that, as Gaul was divided into three parts during ancient times, so too has the ESF community divided into three parts in response to the "Climate for Women" agenda developed with the Executive Cabinet and, particularly, the President. Despite the estimable and dedicated efforts of many on campus, it was clear from the interviews that:

- Those women and men who sought change, or came to support ESF efforts as a matter of equity, remain committed but are reluctant to sustain their engagement due to the neutral or negative reaction of their colleagues:

  One faculty member noted about the President's Action Plan: "No reason has been shown for change to be necessary."

  Another noted: "Most (faculty and staff) don't see the consequences if they don't accept the policies...", the connotation being that no reproof has been shown to match expectations.

  A third faculty member concluded that, "(Campus leadership) is humane, but no organizational commitment and change has occurred."

  And, finally, "There has been astonishment and disappointment that nothing has occurred."

- Those who were uncommitted remain uncommitted, showing by words or actions that they consider this a trivial or unnecessary conversation for the ESF community. The comments the Consulting Team heard, each from separate individuals and in different meetings, included:

  "There is widespread acceptance of the need for diversification. But this isn't the way (emphasis added)."

  "There is a general wide perception that some have a social agenda that is in conflict" and that "some spokespersons just don't understand the classroom and the laboratory."

  The task force report resulted from a "biased survey." It is "overstated" and leads to "unreasonable censorship."

  "This is a male institution.... Some think the (scientific method and boot camp) aren't female."

- Most are indifferent, choosing to go on with their existing patterns and practices, giving no time or attention to the climate for women or minorities. In other words, the issue of "Climate for Women" has moved off-the-screen for most on the ESF campus, with the exception of those women directly affected. This was reflected in many discussions with such observations as:

  "There's not been much noise for quite some time."
"There has been a lull for some time. The report was filed, discussion held, and (everyone) moved on."

There has been substantial effort on the part of the Executive Cabinet and others to bring the ESF community together to discuss and act upon the "Climate for Women: President's Action Plan."

Further, in tandem with this initiative, it is noteworthy that five distinguished scientists who are women have joined the faculty in the past two academic years. They will play a significant role, if reinforced, as teachers, researchers, and role models, contributing new dimensions of excellence for colleagues and students.

Yet there is great concern on the part of a number of thoughtful people at ESF with whom the Consulting Team spoke -- a concern shared by the Consulting Team -- that change will remain limited unless new expectations and standards are put forth. The indication from the conversations with the Consulting Team is that most in the ESF community -- among faculty, staff and students alike -- have gone through the steps but made no commitment to change. Nor do they expect to do so. As one member of the Climate for Women Task Force observed, "We need to come together as men and women to talk about issues and actions." The immediate need is to reignite the issues at ESF and to frame the issues in a manner that suits the mission and vision of ESF.

Only one standard will suffice for this conversation: all in the ESF community, regardless of gender, color or ethnicity, must be fully recognized for their contributions and experiences. And they must have the opportunity to interact with other faculty, staff, and students who share and understand their contributions and experiences.

**COMMITMENT AND ANTICIPATED LEADERSHIP ROLES OF EXECUTIVE CABINET MEMBERS**

There is no doubt that the Executive Cabinet has a common commitment to improving the climate for women at ESF. Their successive development of the Climate for Women initiative and the Climate for Women: President's Action Plan attest to their commitment. Further, they invited a Consulting Team to assess the progress and results of the President's Action Plan. These steps were not without risks. They chose to take those risks.

Yet the Executive Cabinet faces a number of subtle challenges within the ESF community -- challenges not totally dissimilar from, although more pronounced than, many other institutions of higher learning -- which will not be surmounted without additional conversation and action. The challenges are complex.

Addressing the challenges for change must be at many levels and together constitute a renewed Agenda for Leadership:

--- Campuswide understanding regarding equity and diversity. There is no common agreement that diversity is important or advantageous for ESF. Rather, the discussions in which the Consulting Team participated included the full range of understandings of the goal of diversity, from denial to full acceptance. Additional, extended conversations must be undertaken to reach a common agreement regarding the role of diversity in science, in the ESF community, this nation, and the world.
Such a conversation could begin with a forum spearheaded by noted scientist and academic leader Linda S. Wilson. Wilson, a highly-regarded chemist and Radcliffe president puts forth four arguments for removing the barriers to the full participation of women and persons of color in science and engineering:

- equity for all citizens as a matter of law;

- "the economic base of this country presents a growing need for skilled workers, for knowledge workers, for intellectual talent, and for ingenuity";

- women and persons of color "represent an important source of renewal (since) they are not blinded by the familiar"; and

- all must be involved in the development of the "public will" to address "critically important policy matters" such as energy, education, health care, and the environment that "will (not) be solved just by rules or proclamations issued by a remote elite."  

- Role of the President and Provost. The President and the Provost, as the academic leaders, are well-regarded in the ESF community. Their leadership is widely accepted and applauded. Yet, their commitment to improving the climate for women has not been fully recognized or accepted as a stimulus to individual action. As the new Agenda for Leadership unfolds, the President and the Provost will be called upon to take an even more visible role to demonstrate the extent of their commitment. This means establishing ownership and clear expectations for faculty, staff, and students to address the Agenda for Leadership.

- Responsibility of the Deans and Chairs. The Deans and Chairs must also be prepared to take a far more visible role, not just in appearance but in fact. Nowhere in the institution was the contrast in understanding and commitment regarding inclusion of women and persons of color more vividly demonstrated than among the Deans and Chairs. While several of the Deans and Chairs have stepped forward and taken leadership, others openly share their discomfort and disagreement with the initiative. Yet their leadership is pivotal, especially at an institution as departmentalized as ESF. The challenge has been described by others:

"(N)early all intervention strategies to date have been focused on increasing the nontraditional student's skills at surviving the existing undergraduate educational system. They have rarely focused on changing the system itself...It should be emphasized that this type of climate change involves the participation of both male and female faculty members (and chairs) acting in their roles as educators, researchers, advisers, mentors, administrators, and role models. If the burden of change lies only with women faculty, then the chances for systemwide change are limited."  

Thus, the Deans and Chairs -- every one of them -- have a major responsibility to set the tone and to act accordingly.

- Institutional communication channels. Communication channels across the Faculties are needed to bridge the compartmentalization at ESF. For a small campus, the attachment to one's department is exceptional, aligning Faculty loyalty and exchange within the departments rather
than across the institution. Additionally, with over 80% of the Faculty tenured, more than half at full professor level, communication on new ideas and issues is more complicated than on most campuses.

Thus, the need to establish cross-department collaboration, all-faculty forums, and other efforts. As one administrative staff member concluded: "The faculty live in their own worlds and have set patterns. They lack outside experience and exposure." Strategies are need to share national issues and new knowledge which have institutional significance. Without means for the exchange of these issues and knowledge, generating first from "Climate for Women" issues, but surely expanding, there is unlikely to be campuswide commitment to any institutional plan touching all facets of the college.

- Support of Faculty members who are women and persons of color. There is no doubt that the addition of six faculty who are women can, over the long term, have a positive impact on the climate for women. But without further support, that action will have limited impact. As one member of the Executive Cabinet remarked, "Two years ago ESF had two women faculty and now there are eight (out of 110). We need to give them the opportunity to succeed."

This will not be easy. A Faculty Chair suggested, "Women on the Faculty are expected to be role models. It is difficult to reach tenure with this." And another chair worried, that ESF is "moving effectively on women graduate students...but I am concerned about the message and expectations of women faculty candidates."

In addition to the related experiences of the Consulting Team, there is considerable research to document that without recognition of the inordinate pressure placed on Faculty members who are women, they are likely to leave the institution. Two cites provide a framework for this challenge:

"Two-thirds of women on S&E faculties do not have tenure versus forty percent of male faculty members. Furthermore, women progress up the academic ladder at a slower pace than do their male peers, even when matched for educational background, years of professional experience, and research productivity." 12

"Brush alludes to a network of expectations, conceptual dogmas, and social interventions that may underlie the functioning of academic departments on a daily basis and to which allegiance is required in order that a faculty member achieve success. These unwritten 'rules of the game' must become known to the aspiring assistant professor very soon after appointment to ensure a smooth passage to tenure... With few exceptions women in science are but a small minority in their peer groups, and their proportion drops sharply as they advance through their careers. The resulting isolation impedes research, increases stress, and may lead to abandonment of a scientific career." 13

The challenge is to support women on the Faculty, providing them with the resources needed to succeed, without isolating them in the academic community. This requires sophistication and commitment from the Executive Cabinet, the Deans, and, particularly the chairs. Turning again to Wilson for perspective, she asks:

"Do we intend for women (and minorities) to become full participants or just to remain as 'guests'? If we intend their full participation, then the enterprise must change to be
hospitable operationally and psychologically for both women and men and for minorities and the majority...What we need to do is to move on to a much more sophisticated plane and have a portfolio or repertoire of strategies that includes competition, complementarity, cooperation, and collaboration -- each selectively used at its most effective juncture." 14

- Providing an appropriate environment for students who are women and persons of color. Expectations of student performance are, in some cases, suspended in an earlier model. One faculty member reflected, "I am surprised that the women students are willing accept and cope with the affronts." And women students repeated the indicators of second-class status,

"We are always aware that most faculty are male" and that without women in leadership "an important perspective is lost." Further, they all noted that, "the administration is all male."

"Sexism permeates everywhere, even more so than at (SUNY) Albany."

"The faculty is paternal toward women." They "don't recognize women's contributions." And, "we are led to believe that they shouldn't speak or be adamant."

These comments are consistent with the earlier ESF Task Force conclusions and underscore that these behaviors persist.

Across the country, similar concerns are being addressed aggressively. Harris, Silverstein, and Andrews document:

"Today women are redefining and enlarging our place within the world of science, but many of us still meet barriers which prevent us from reaching the degree of participation equal to our aspirations and qualifications." 15

And a University of Michigan task force 16, in an extensive review of women in science, concludes,

"Self-confidence and sex-role congruency are intertwined in their effects. Women students do not easily venture into a sex-role inappropriate realm and must have unusually strong confidence in their abilities to counter societal definitions of appropriate gender roles."

"Direct encouragement, getting information about opportunities, being taken seriously by teachers and counselors, and having a comfortable relationship with an advisor are all important to both men and women. But according to the published literature and our own studies, women students report receiving fewer of these positive experiences."

In the most blatant example at ESF, faculty and women students point to the summer camp, comparing it with "boot camp". Each person who raised the topic expressed concerns about discrimination and sexual harassment. While the Consulting Team had no way to verify these allegations, if such practices have not been corrected (Note: the Executive Cabinet believes that
corrections have been occurred) their continuation leaves ESF vulnerable to substantial criticism and possible legal action. Further, procedures and requirements should be instituted based on expectations of what the camp should accomplish for the education of all students.

- **Awareness of the subtleties of discriminatory language and definitions.** Language appears to be compounding a difficult conversation. In the simplest example, it is common at ESF, according to a number of women and observed by the Consulting Team, to refer to professional women by their first name and to refer to professional men by their academic titles. Another observation was the assessment by one Faculty Chair that ESF used to be devoted to the "hard sciences" but now has "softened some." This assessment was offered in tandem with another observation that the women faculty are concentrated in landscape architecture, biology, and environmental sciences, the newer disciplines at ESF.

Research suggests a whole range of cross-gender communication issues which are magnified in an institution such as ESF with its tradition in the "hard" sciences. Drawing on the research of Gilligan and others, Harris, Silverstein and Andrews note that,

"Women students in today's educational system must attempt to fit into the male scientific subculture as well as learn about the nature of the physical universe." 17

"The split between these two points of view, which has become genderized into 'male' and 'female' has allowed a situation to develop in which there is a 'public sphere' dominated by 'male' values of individualism, separation, and justice, and a less prestigious 'private sphere' to which 'female' values of cooperation, interaction, and caring have been relegated... Our science, which is part of this public sphere, is also underdeveloped in the area of interrelationships and is unable to explain complex interactive phenomena or to foresee many of the results of technology." 18

In addition, the women on the administrative staff recount treatment that consigns them to anonymity, their presence disregarded, their contributions infrequently acknowledged, and their input seldom sought. Such diminishment of a major element of the ESF community not only reflects gender bias, but also overlooks a critical partnership in accomplishing the goals of ESF.

- **Designation of an ombudsman/advocate who will work with faculty, students and staff in all areas related to bias and discrimination.** The person designated to have this responsibility could be a senior administrator or faculty member. The Affirmative Action Officer has responsibilities that are too broad and demanding to assume this function also. As the ACE Commission on Women in Higher Education, on which Dr. Nester served, noted in a similar recommendation:

"Advocacy for women needs to be part of the formal institutional structure. It is not sufficient to make the monitoring of policies and programs the responsibility of volunteers and task forces that come and go, or to assign total responsibility to the human relations office or affirmative action officer." 19

ESF has made strides in the inclusion of women on campus. The increasing student and faculty numbers have expanded the concept of quality and opportunity. Diversifying the student body and the faculty have, and will surely continue to show, noticeable advantages both on the campus and in the achievements of
ESF graduates. However, the strides have not been institutionalized. Rather, many may perceive that this is a layering upon the college that is neither celebrated nor accepted.

PROCESSES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AT THE COLLEGE

Over the next year, specific attention is needed, through a number of activities, to provide further focus on two outcomes from the President's Action Plan:

"Students, faculty and staff understand the College's expectations and standards for a campus free of gender bias, and the legal regulations regarding sexual harassment/discrimination,"

and

"Students, faculty and staff are sensitive and responsive to women's issues and needs."

We suggest that to realize these outcomes a far wider focus must be taken. While the initial reports and actions regarding the "Climate for Women" caught the attention of the campus, little conversation has been sustained. It is now time to shift to a new level of conversation. There are realms of new knowledge to explore regarding women in science and the role of science in society. Therefore, we recommend that these realms of new knowledge be explored through:

1. A series of forums focusing on women in science, both as subjects and as researchers. This could be followed with on-going groups to discuss the issues put forward. Resources for such a series could include:

   - Shirley Malcolm, Office of Opportunities in Science, AAAS;
   - Evelyn Fox Keller, noted researcher on women in science;
   - Sue Rosser, a zoologist and Director, Center for Women's Studies, University of South Carolina;
   - Carol Hollenshead, expert on both sexual harassment and women in science, Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan;
   - Margaret Wheatley, author, Leadership and the New Science (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler, 1992);

2. Establish a special Council on Science to stimulate a dialog about new work force, gender and race issues as they relate to students, faculty, and staff in the coming decades. This would be a preeminent, diverse body of 5-10 noted scientists, with faculty recommendations for membership. Such a Council could be established through a campus event and then evolve through E-mail and other technology.

3. Establish a Women's Faculty Development Caucus, to provide collaborative strategies for designing research and securing support. Such funding sources as the NSF Career Advancement Awards (to support activities that can expand a promising applicant's research career and limited to women scientist and engineers) would be sought.

4. Foster a three part conversation on the campus on essential gender issues through a series of seminars, small groups, and writings regarding:
lowering gender bias in employment, both at ESF and in the future work place and communities of ESF students. 20 Adelman's study describes the educational careers and labor market experience of women in the high school class of 1972 through the time they were 32 years old. "The paradox of this story -- that women's educational achievements were superior to those of men, but that their rewards in the labor market were thin by comparison...(Consequently), if we take women's knowledge contributions for granted or ignore them at the same time we treat men's knowledge as proprietary and rewardable, we have a half-economy." 21

This pattern is, in all likelihood, repeated each year by the ESF graduates.

In considering new realms of knowledge, it is incumbent on the ESF community to also consider the profound new realities of the work place and the world economy, and the impact of those realities for both the institution and the future of each student.

recognizing gender bias and gender differences in conversation and attainment of knowledge. 22 In the best seller You Just Don't Understand, Georgetown University linguistics professor Deborah Tannen relates a telling story:

"...I suddenly understood what happens to me when I talk to women and men about language. I am assuming that my acknowledged expertise will mean I am automatically accorded authority in the conversation, and with women that is generally the case. But when I talk to men, revealing that I have acknowledged expertise in this area often invites challenges...(T)he inequality of the treatment results not simply from the men's behavior alone but from the differences in men's and women's styles: Most women lack experience in defending themselves against challenges, which they misinterpret as personal attacks to their credibility." 23

There are substantial implications from the research undertaken in the last decade on "women's ways of knowing" and gender differences in conversation. The Agenda for Leadership at the college will be substantially enriched by considering this research and the implications for all in the ESF community.

creating a new social contract between men and women. 24 Much attention has been focused on sexual harassment. ESF has recognized, also, the need to address this serious problem. In fact, the problem can be exacerbated at a historically-male institution such as ESF:

"Women and girls who may be especially vulnerable to sexual harassment (include)...females in non-traditional fields, because they may be seen as barging into an area where they do not belong such as science, computer and athletics." 25

Further, this practice may not be effectively acknowledged since many believe that failure to report incidents means that sexual harassment is not occurring. However,
"The fact is, most incidents are not reported. At a study at Harvard, for example, only 5 percent of students who had an experience they would label as sexual harassment reported it to a college official." 24

While the policies regarding sexual harassment should continue 27, there is a broader context around which future discussions can emerge. Donna Shavlik, ACE's Director of the Office for Women in Higher Education, calls this new context "a new social contract." In her discussion paper she suggests:

"The task is to begin ... a dialogue on how we might conceive a new social contract between men and women. This contract must be based on mutual respect, civil interactions and appropriate boundaries. Some questions or ideas...:

--If you were beginning a new campus, how would you create an atmosphere of support, encouragement, and mutual respect, between women and men of different backgrounds?

--What are the perceptions, values and goals we want to guide our relationships and institutions? And how do we begin talking about them in ways that will really engage people?

--What are effective ways of communicating that make relationship building less conflictual?

--How can we use research on gender roles and barriers to equality to increase our awareness of what needs to be altered before full partnership between men and women in the work place is possible?

--How can we break the socialization processes for men and women which contribute to the persistence of sexual harassment...?

5. Charge a broad-based team, led by the Provost, with organizing the discussion of the new realms of knowledge, serving as a catalyst for the Agenda for Leadership. Such a campuswide exploration should stimulate considerable new teaching, research and scholarship -- a striking ripple effect resulting from the particular discussion of gender bias.

The goal of the Agenda for Leadership in combination is to enliven the conversation regarding the "Climate for Women," both as members of the ESF community and as scientists, over a sufficient period that attitude and behavior changes will occur and the intellectual exploration will extend each individual. Such attitude and behavior changes are unlikely without sustained attention and visible leadership.
APPROACHES AND INCENTIVES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUBUNITS

In a community with 1,200 undergraduates, 800 graduate students, and 119 faculty, a sustained dialogue regarding the new realms of knowledge among those committed to the future of the college is possible and necessary to achieve organizational change. Pivotal to this are, as recommended by the ACE Commission on Women in Higher Education, on which as we noted earlier Dr. Nester served, the academic departments:

"Academic departments (should be involved) in the comprehensive review of how women students and faculty view their participation and how their participation is viewed by their colleagues. Much of the campus climate is established in the classroom. The expectations of success communicated, the learning atmosphere established, the levels of respect accorded different ideas, and the standards set for relationships between women and men are areas that need attention." 28

Implementation, however, is part of a larger question: How can the ESF community pull more closely together to understand the future of the institution? The response to the "Climate for Women" initiative suggests that today those horizons may be limited. It is our recommendation, therefore, that the campus dialogue focus on the environment of ESF into the 21st century.

The most effective way to coalesce within the subunits as they grapple with the Agenda for Leadership is to initiate a departmental values inventory. ACE's Office for Women in Higher Education is engaged in the refinement of a values assessment tool in collaboration with the Society for Values in Higher Education. This tool can be very effective in clarifying the values that continue to support exclusion. As the ACE Commission on Women in Higher Education noted,

"The norms, customs, and beliefs we live by constitute a complex web of interconnections and assumptions we call values. Much of what we value in higher education is either stated in broad, generalized terms or assumed...We recommend that campuses (and departments) undertake a values inventory that could help clarify what the (department) values ... and how these values affect the goals for improving the status of majority women and minority women and men." 29

Yet a campus inventory is only a vehicle for a broader discussion of the philosophical framework regarding the treatment of women in which each department must engage. We will only touch on an important perspective being advanced. But examination of the ideas and implications of this perspective is encouraged within the departments. Such an examination could be supported by roundtables, dramatizations, and other forums.

The philosophical framework from which the department discussion should generate is best articulated by Cornell psychologist Sandra Lipsitz Bem:

"(H)idden assumptions about sex and gender remain embedded in cultural discourses, social institutions, and individual psyches that invisibly and systematically reproduce male power in generation after generation. I call these assumptions the lenses of gender...The first is the lens of androcentrism, or male centeredness...a definition of males and male experience as a neutral standard or norm, and females and female experience as a sex-specific deviation from that norm, It is thus not that man is treated as superior and woman as inferior but that man is treated as human and woman as 'other'...."
"What the woman-centered discourse of the 1980s has made clear is that men in power androcentrically defined more than (a social world); they androcentrically defined science, morality, mental health, work, politics, law, and every other institution of society as well...

"More specifically, whereas males see themselves and other males as both competent and deserving until proven otherwise (at least if they are white), the burden of proof is on every individual female to demonstrate to herself and to others why she in particular should be seen as either competent or deserving...This includes such things as requesting a merit raise from an employer, submitting an article for publication, competing head on head, or, for that matter, taking one's talents and interests seriously enough in the first place to embark on an important personal project...

"(Androcentrism) disguises a male standard as gender neutrality." 30

And by Michigan law professor Catherine McKinnon:

"Virtually every quality that distinguishes men from women is...affirmatively compensates in this society. Men's physiology defines most sports, their needs define auto and health insurance coverage, their socially designed biographies define work place expectations and successful career patterns, their perspectives and concerns define quality in scholarship, their experiences and obsessions define merit, their objectification of life defines art, their military service defines citizenship, their presence defines family, their inability to get along with each other -- their wars and rulerships -- defines history, their image defines god..." 31

Such an approach to the philosophical framework regarding gender in our society and at ESF will surely spark an extended debate within the departments. In the end, the only incentive is intellectual engagement followed by professional and social change. Equity is the reward.

REIGNITING THE CONVERSATION REGARDING
THE CLIMATE FOR WOMEN AT ESF

The ACE Commission on Women in Higher Education concluded their report with an appropriate observation:

There are no cookbooks, prescriptions, or magic formulas for the changes that must occur. If there were, we would have used them already... What is essential is to recognize that each person has a role to play and that collectively we can reshape and redirect our institutions (to bring all people into their rightful place and to improve our teaching and scholarship)."

This is an appropriate admonition for the ESF Agenda for Leadership as well.

We have delineated an Agenda for Leadership through which the SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry College can address the needs of the future for faculty, students, staff, and the people of New York. It is an ambitious plan, but one that is achievable. We look forward to working with you to develop the actions and debates which will lead ESF forward.


4. Ibid., p. 4.

5. Ibid., p. 3.


7. Ibid., p. 3.


10. One of the continuing themes in the Consulting Team conversations was departmentalization. A ranking administrator, for example, noted, "At ESF there are small units of faculty embedded in their disciplines." And one of the chairs commented: "There is no formal communication between faculties. They depend on informal networks."


17. Ibid., p. 299.


21. Ibid., p. 31.


26. Ibid., Tab 100, p. 13.


"CLIMATE FOR WOMEN" CONSULTING TEAM
PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. William Nester, Project Consultant. Dr. Nester is Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Nebraska at Kearney and is now affiliated with the Northern Kentucky University. Dr. Nester served ten years as the Chancellor of Kearney. His prior work in higher education included five years as Executive Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Student Affairs at The Ohio State University and 25 years at the University of Cincinnati, advancing from Director of the Student Union to Associate Vice Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Associate Provost. Dr. Nester’s academic work is in education: he holds a B.S. in Education-English/History, an M.Ed. in Counseling and Guidance, and an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Cincinnati. He has been tenured as Professor of Education at three institutions.

His list of leadership in professional and social organizations is extensive, including:

Chairman, Council of Presidents (Nebraska)
Member, ACE Commission on Women in Higher Education
Council of Presidents, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
Chairman, AASCU Committee on Conferences and Professional Development for College and University Presidents
Vice President and Executive Committee member, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
President, Metropolitan Collegiate Athletic Conference
President, Education Foundation, Pi Kappa Alpha

Dr. Nester is listed in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities.

Dr. Patricia Widmayer, Senior Consultant and Project Director. Dr. Widmayer has nearly three decades of experience in education policy and leadership and in the classroom. She is owner and senior consultant of Widmayer & Associates, Inc., and recently served on the Illinois Governor’s Task Force on Higher Education and as one of the committee chairs for the Governor’s Summit on Educational Technology.

Prior to the establishment of Widmayer & Associates, Dr. Widmayer was Executive Director of Michigan’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, and Director of Policy for the Governor (1982-85). Dr. Widmayer also served as Legislative and Policy Director for three State Superintendents of Public Instruction, as district staff director for a Member of Congress, and policy analyst for the Speaker of the House.

She was on the teacher education faculty at Oakland University and a teacher at Arlington High School, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. She holds a B.A. in political science and a Ph.D. in educational research from Michigan State University and was a year-long fellow with the Institute for Educational Leadership.

She has given extensive presentations including seminars for the National Women’s Education Fund, testimony before the U.S. Congress on Title IX and on school finance. Dr. Widmayer is list in Who’s Who of American Women and is on the National Leadership Group for the American Council on Education.
Clients of Widmayer & Associates, Inc., have include:

- DePaul University
- Northeastern Illinois University
- Pace University
- University of Illinois
- University of Texas System
- Wayne State University
- Metropolitan Community College (Omaha)
- University of Massachusetts at Amherst
- Governor's Task Force on Higher Education (Illinois)
- Higher Education Regional Consortium
  (serving Chicago's north and northwest suburbs)
- Associated Colleges of Illinois
- Colorado Commission on Higher Education
- Colorado Department of Education
- Michigan Community College Association
- Michigan Department of Public Health
- Nebraska State Legislature
- American Council on Education
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- Education Commission of the States
- National Women's Education Fund
- National Association of Women Business Owners
- National Education Association
- Foundation for Independent Higher Education
- American Association for the Advancement of Science

- Borg-Warner Foundation
- Sears-Roebuck Foundation
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation