

UNCW takes part in national teleconference on women's Issues

by SOMER STAHL

Staff Writer

UNCW students, faculty and staff took part in the creation of a national agenda for women's issues last week. From Monday, March 27, through Wednesday, March 29, UNCW served as a local broadcast site for a national teleconference titled "Women's Lives, Voices, Solutions: Shaping a National Agenda for Women in Higher Education." The conference was broadcast to colleges and universities all across the United States.

Approximately 30 to 40 students attended the caucus, as well as about a dozen faculty and a dozen staff members. Three regional sites, one host, and 200 colleges and universities took part in the teleconference/caucus. The purpose of the conference was to establish plans at the local and national levels to advance opportunities in higher education for women.

"It was a very unique conference in several ways," said Dean Jo Ann Seiple of the UNCW College of Arts and Sciences. Seiple said that this was the first national conference she could recall that united stu-

dents, faculty and staff.

The program began Monday at 12:30p.m. and continued until Wednesday afternoon. During this time, caucus members discussed issues they believed were important to the topic of women in education and submitted their findings, via the internet, to a host site at the University of Minnesota. The issues will there be considered for a national agenda.

The first issue UNCW addressed and submitted to the agenda concerned the empowerment women on campus. Caucus members recognized that there are strong lines that separate university divisions and that these lines would be a challenge to overcome. They also recognized that there is no formal support group on campus.

"If we can get past divisional lines, we'll be stronger," Seiple said.

Caucus members came up with two strategies to alleviate this problem: to provide women with support systems and insure importance of women's work with recognition and reward. Seiple noted that, nationwide, less than fourteen percent of professors are woman and "that's not good."

The second issue UNCW submitted concerned improving campus environment. Caucus members noted a lack of space on campus and a shortage of funds from the North Carolina legislature. Within the next six months, the agenda calls for centralized office space to relate to women's issues. This office would include the Women's Studies Program and would have a special director with duties including designing a calendar of events and dealing with discrimination concerns. This issue also addressed the importance

of providing a more welcoming living space for non-traditional students.

The final issue addressed what Seiple called, "an improved campus climate for women." This refers to the comfort level for women in classes and in the workplace. The caucus suggested workshops to help faculty and supervisors become aware of gender differences and its affects.

"Overall we are optimistic that we will be able to take this agenda and do something with it," Seiple said.

What's your opinion?

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