

**Meeting Notes**  
**Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education**  
**August 5, 2004**

Chair Dianne Mills McKay opened the meeting, welcomed everyone, and introductions were made.

Attending: Christine Amalfe, Eileen Appelbaum, Fleeta Barnes, Marie Barry, Angela Bethea, Terri Boyer, Laurel Brennan, Theresa Daniels, Mary Gatta, Alma Joseph, Senator Ellen Karcher, Dianne Mills McKay, Mary C. Murphree, Patricia Palmeri, Virginia Pasqualini, Henry Plotkin, Sherrie Preische, Tamara Thomas, Linda J. Wharton, and Diane Zompa.

Brief Overview and Opening Remarks: Henry Plotkin, Executive Director of the State Employment and Training Commission, began with an overview of the Council and the purpose of the Retreat. The Council is the only one of its kind in the nation established by legislation to make recommendations to the legislature on the role of women in education and the workplace. The Council brings together representatives from business, education, and government to address inequities that women face in education and the workforce. Since its inception, the Council has organized research, conducted formal and informal events, supported state and national initiatives to achieve equity for women and minorities, and established itself as a leader in gender equity issues.

Plotkin suggested that retreat discussions should build upon the Council's existing agenda to identify a strong research and policy agenda, and other goals and activities for the Council for the coming year.

Dr. Mary Gatta, Director of Workforce Policy and Research, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers University, provided a brief overview of the Council's mission, current research agenda, published reports, and conferences, and other events.

The New Jersey Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education was created by legislation in September 1999. Its mission is to

- Assess gender equity programs in education and training;
- Make recommendations for access and equity in labor, education & workforce training;
- Review legislation and make recommendations;
- Develop policies for data collection & integration to assess progress toward equity;
- Educate and inform the public on the issues; and
- Assess implementation of recommendations of SETC Gender Equity Task Force

Additionally, the Council is required to report annually to the Governor, the Legislature, the State Employment and Training Commission and the Division on Women on its accomplishments, initiatives, assessments, and recommendations.

Gatta said that since its formation, the Council has conducted research, published reports, and produced conferences and other events to identify barriers and make recommendations for programs, policies, and practices to remove gender-related biases in education and the workforce. The Council initially identified five high-wage, high-demand industries with gender equity challenges that were pivotal to New Jersey growth and focused its work on these industries. They are: buildings trades; financial services; healthcare; law; and science, engineering, and technology.

During the past five years, the Council focused its work on these industries and produced the following reports and public events:

**Reports:**

- ***Bridging the Gap: Gender Equity in Science, Engineering and Technology*** (2001)
- ***Women and Work: Prospects for Parity in the New Economy*** (May 2001);
- ***Women at Work: Achieving Parity on the Job*** (June 2002);
- ***Choosing a Career: Labor Market Inequalities in the New Jersey Labor Market*** (September 2002);
- ***Engineering Their Futures: The Educational and Workplace Experiences of Female Engineers*** (May 2003);
- ***Healthcare Workforce Outlook: Suggestions for Future Research and Policy*** (December 2003);
- ***Men in Nursing*** (Forthcoming); and
- ***Women in the Buildings Trades*** (Forthcoming)

**Conferences and Events:**

- ***Gender Equity and Technology in the NJ Workplace: Setting the Agenda*** (October 2000)
- ***A Women's Place: Her Role in the New Economy*** (May 2001)
- ***Working Women: Building for the Trades*** (at SETC Conference, "Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers" (December 2002)
- ***The Trust Company: Parity, Profits, and Partnerships*** (June 2002)
- ***Engineering Their Futures: The Educational and Workplace Experiences of Female Engineers*** (June 2003)

Additionally, the Council worked with the SETC and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to oversee research conducted on *Women in the 21st Century - Distance Learning Pilot Project*. The report, *Findings from the Field: Early Findings of the New Jersey Online Learning Project for Single Working-Poor Mothers*, was published in December 2003.

**Nontraditional Career Resource Center:** The Council also oversees the work of the Nontraditional Career Resource Center (NCRC) which is funded by the NJ Department of Education, housed in the Center for Women and Work, Rutgers University, and directed by Dr. Teresa M. Boyer. Its advisory committee is chaired by Dianne Mills McKay.

Dr. Boyer provided a brief update on the NCRC activities which included an overview of the Center's structure. The NCRC is the practice arm of the research and policy pieces that come

out of the Gender Parity Council and works to provide resources on gender equity and career development in nontraditional fields. Recent activities of the NCRC included two Summer Nontraditional Career Weeks where a total of 33 students from grades 7-12 attended week long sessions in July 2004 to gain a wider understanding of opportunities in nontraditional fields and to visit to many employers and industries that represent nontraditional occupations. Programs and plans for the upcoming academic year include forming stronger partnerships with employers to increase awareness and opportunities for students interested in nontraditional careers. The NCRC also recently completed a video of women in the buildings trades for students to learn more about this workforce; and just completed an interactive web-based game for students to learn how much it will cost to support a family, and how much they will have to earn to be self-sufficient in New Jersey.

Roundtable Discussion: To introduce a discussion of future goals and activities, Gender Parity Council members and guests were asked the following:

- *What are the most critical challenges to gender equity in the areas of labor and education today?*
- *What should comprise the council's agenda in order to address these challenges effectively in New Jersey?*

Summary of the results of these discussions:

- Workplace/Workforce Issues (Labor): New Jersey employers have made great strides over the past five years in addressing gender equity concerns in the workplace but there is a great deal of work still to be done. As a first step, employers need to update mature and outdated policies to keep best practices for workplace diversity up to date and effective. Additionally, the Council needs to continue to identify high-demand jobs where a diverse workforce is necessary to meet employers' needs (equity = economic growth). Lastly, the Council will continue with its original goal to conduct research on women in finance and in law but will look into combining the research with an emphasis on "best practices" in these industries.
- Education: Women continue to face obstacles in education and training to compete for high-wage, high-demand jobs. These obstacles which include discrimination that students face that affect their life and career choices – sexual harassment, discrimination against female athletes, and in STEM courses – exist both in and out of the classroom. As a first step, the Council felt that teachers need to be better prepared to handle gender equity issues in the classroom. One way to accomplish this is to recommend that teachers' training and certification include three courses on gender equity courses. The Council will add to its agenda a campaign to legislate a recommendation that New Jersey schools include college-credited gender equity courses as a requirement for a teaching certificate in New Jersey. The Council plans to publicize this work on this issue through briefings with deans, NJEA, PSA, school boards, and other entities. The Council also plans to follow up with the schools to encourage them to adopt the recommendation.

- Outreach & Marketing: The Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education has worked diligently over the past five years to alleviate the bias in gender equity in education and training and in the labor force in New Jersey. The Council believes that a heightened outreach and marketing strategy should be implemented to publicize its research and programs and to increase its allies of employers, educators, policy-makers, and to better inform the media, students, workers, and job changers. The Council will begin work to establish an outreach and marketing strategy and to make its work more accessible to all.

Other goals established at the retreat include:

1. Periodically revisit and update original research and identifies needs for future research
2. Establish a committee structure for the Council. Possible committees include: law and finance; K-12 education; publicity.
3. Establish relationships and partnerships with other groups to support and coordinate, and disseminate work – e.g., Society for Human Resource Management, unions, NJAWBO. Prepare and disseminate progress reports to these and other potential partners.
  - Utilize legislative partnerships to full advantage.
  - Increase funding for Council.
4. Career and/or job issues – continue work to address career and/or job issues, including:
  - Changing jobs or careers
  - Balancing work and family, including childcare and eldercare, and
  - Self-employment; entrepreneurship, consulting.

Closing: Dianne Mills McKay thanked the Council members for attending the meeting and closed the meeting at 3:00 p.m.