

# The History of the University Women's Commission at The University of Toledo



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## Introduction

The University of Toledo (UT) campus witnessed the formation of several groups dedicated to women's services and programs during the mid to late 1970s. The history of the University Women's Commission (UWC) at UT is intertwined with the histories of the Student Affairs Women's Commission (SAWC), the Community and Technical College Woman's Advisory Committee (Com Tech WAC) and the Catharine S. Eberly Center for Women.

The SAWC, originally called the Student Affairs Commission for Women's Programs and Services (SACWPS), was established in January 1976. The development of the Center for Women began almost simultaneously in February 1976. Establishment of the Center took two years; it opened in February 1978. The SAWC disbanded in May 1978 following the Center's opening. However, by late 1979, women who had served on the SAWC Steering Committee were disappointed with the direction the Center was taking. The SAWC was reestablished in January 1980 as the UWC. The UWC continues to this date.

## Student Affairs Women's Commission

The SACWPS was formed when Roger B. Ludeman, Dean of Student Affairs, charged a group of 11 men and women who had expressed an interest in developing programs and services for women with the development of the Commission. Ludeman proposed the following guidelines in a memo dated January 20, 1976:

1. Analyze the need for special women's programs and services currently and in the future at UT.
2. Determine what is currently being done on campus and in the vicinity.
3. Develop programs and services designed to meet the needs.
4. Incorporate into the group any and all interested persons from the University and the local community.
5. Upon approval by appropriate University officials, implement these programs and services as soon as possible.
6. Evaluate the outcomes of such services and programs and continually analyze the need for change.

The Division of Student Affairs, in its December 1976 newsletter, announced that the SACWPS was being reorganized. The reorganization was completed by March 1977 with that month's newsletter announcing the recently reorganized Commission; its name was changed to the SAWC. The reorganized SAWC was structured with five sub committees: (1) Needs Assessment/Evaluation, (2) Communications/ Publicity, (3) Career and Academic Support Programming, (4) Personal-Family/Recreational-Leisure Programming, and (5) Services.

Judith Wilkinson, a member of the SAWC Steering Committee, explained in a letter to new UT employees on October 11, 1977, that SAWC had surveyed UT women in 1976 to determine their needs and interests. SAWC found that the highest priorities for programs included personal growth and assertion training. For more than two years, the SAWC presented programs on those two priorities with additional programming on marriage, family, personal finance and career options. Additionally, the SAWC developed and produced a UT Resource Directory for Women in April 1978.

The SAWC disbanded in May 1978 following the February 1978 opening of the Center for Women. Wilkinson (J. Wilkinson, personal communication, December 1, 2006) stated that the disbanding was deliberate because the "sense was that the Center would do more in the advocacy arena. Because the Center's focus was community and not just UT, that advocacy didn't happen on campus. The University Women's Commission came to be for the advocacy piece."

#### The Center for Women

The Center for Women developed over a 2-year period from February 1976 through January 1978. Attorney Dee Peck, in a letter to R. Forrest Rosenberger of Management Leadtime, Inc. dated August 29, 1979, summarized the formation of the Center. Peck explained that 3 committees led to the Center:

1. Com Tech WAC was appointed in February 1976 by Dr. Frank Thomas, Dean of Com Tech. Thomas recommended the “establishment of an advising-outreach program designed specifically to act as liaison between women in the community and the college.”
2. A Joint Committee (Com Tech WAC, Continuing Education, Counseling, and SAWC) drafted a proposal stating, “The goal of the project is to more effectively establish communication between the University and women in the community who have been away from school or college.”
3. The Center for Women Advisory Committee, created by Mary Ann Heinrichs, Director of University College.

President Glen R. Driscoll named Heinrichs as Director of the Center for Women. The Center opened on February 1, 1978 in its first home, Scott House. In the 1978-79 budget approved by the UT Board of Trustees, \$9,800 of the president’s discretionary budget was set aside for the Center. The Center’s annual report for 1978-79 states the Center’s purpose as:

The purpose of The University of Toledo Center for Women is to utilize University and community resources to serve needs related to the educational, personal, and employment development of women in the community including women students whose needs are different from those of traditional students.

Heinrichs announced, in a letter to the Center’s Advisory Committee on June 27, 1980, that the UT Board of Trustees had renamed the Center the Catharine S. Eberly Center for Women in memory of Katie Eberly, a UT Trustee. Eberly had been appointed by the Board to serve on the Center’s Advisory Committee and was later killed in a car accident. Heinrichs stated that Lois Kennedy would chair a dedication committee and Doris Hedler would serve as acting coordinator of the Center on an interim basis.

#### The University Women’s Commission

A gap existed—the SAWC had disbanded and the Center for Women was focusing on displaced homemakers and the women of the community, not on UT’s women. Ardenia Jones

Terry, in a memo dated January 8, 1980, invited 11 women to meet and establish the UWC. Terry's memo explained that, "Since the end of November, a few women in the Division of Student Affairs have been meeting and discussing our concerns as women and as University employees. After several meetings, it was generally felt that there was a need for a formalized group to support and address the concerns of the women (students and employees) on campus. The group's answer to fulfilling this need is the reestablishment of the Women's Commission which was the forerunner to the Center for Women." According to Wilkinson, Dr. Ron Estroff, Director of Veterans Affairs, who advocated for women, encouraged Terry and the formation of the UWC.

Trudy Thomas Bond served as the first chair of the newly formed UWC and Peggy Gifford trained the founders on how to set up a board. Kay Schaffer, at a board meeting on November 12, 1980, proposed the original constitution. Maribeth Ehasz seconded the motion and the constitution was adopted. The UWC constitution (see Appendix A) has undergone minor revisions four times: (1) October 1981, (2) May 1982, (3) May 1988 and (4) January 1996. Alice Skeens, who served as assistant to Presidents James McComas and Frank Horton, was instrumental in securing funding for the new UWC from McComas, funding which continues to this day.

Originally, UWC membership was only open to women faculty, and administrative and professional staff. There were no classified (hourly) women or student members. Interestingly, however, classified secretaries were hired to type the minutes of the UWC board meetings. Ester Shire was paid \$5 for typing in November 1981 and Michelle Hudson was paid \$1 per page to type minutes during 1982. Membership is now open to all UT employees and students, male and female, full- and part-time.

Wilkinson, a founding member, stated that UWC was originally a strong advocacy group for women. The board met regularly with University presidents, made recommendation of women who should sit on standing committees and even the University's Board of Trustees. They dialogued with politicians, fought for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), salary equity, pro-choice, and women's athletics.

Skeens (A. Skeens, personal communication, December 5, 2006) concurred that a group of women decided to bring back and formalize the UWC when the Center for Women focused on the community and not on women's issues on campus. According to Skeens, the women worked (unsuccessfully) to help a gay female basketball player keep her spot on the team and to save the women's hockey team. They fought for equality in women's sports, for a women's studies program, to put women into administrative positions on campus and to resolve women's pay inequities. Skeens was very knowledgeable on pay inequities because she wrote her dissertation on the topic.

Skeens also stated that in the early years, faculty women were afraid to join UWC for fear it would affect their tenure and promotion. UWC membership has ranged from 21 to 125. Membership is currently 75 for the 2006-07 academic year. Dues were \$10 during the 1980-81 academic year. Dues are \$20 for the 2006-07 academic year.

The original UWC Statement of Purpose, as expressed in a memo to all faculty and unclassified women on April 15, 1980, read as follows (the statement has been modified only slightly since 1980):

The University Women's Commission was established in the interest of providing a support system for professional women at the University of Toledo. UWC serves as a network of alliances for all professional women on campus.

Specifically, this organization offers professional women on campus a forum for providing and obtaining assistance in career advancement and serves as a locale where professional women on campus may meet to discuss and share information on issues and concerns of common interest.

UWC is committed to improving the status and assisting with the career advancement of women at the University of Toledo. In order to accomplish this goal UWC attempts to reduce role conflicts, furnish women with role models and mentors and increase the visibility of women at the University of Toledo.

Wilkinson, at a board meeting on November 12, 1980, proposed that UWC join the Women's Interorganizational Taskforce (WIT). Carolyn Garrison-Miller seconded the motion. UWC was among 23 organizations admitted and could therefore select a representative with full voting privileges to sit on the WIT appointments committee. The purpose of the appointments committee was to make an effort to have women placed on boards and to assist university women in being appointed to boards and committees.

The June 1981 UWC Newsletter reported that Laura Osborne, a 1981 UT graduate, created the UWC logo. "Laura, an art major, is gaining a reputation as a fine portrait artist. She has been commissioned by the University Facilities Office to do drawings of visiting entertainers including Peter, Paul, and Mary; Crystal Gayle; and Kenny Rogers." The UWC logo:



Terry made a motion, at a meeting on March 29, 1982, that the role of the UWC will be one of advocacy for women. Peggy Piper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Bond was chosen to draft a letter to University women stating that the UWC was an advocacy group. An Advocacy Statement (see Appendix B) was developed and remains virtually the same today with one major exception. In March 1996, the following sentence was removed: "Endorse a pro-women's rights platform on campus, local and national issues."



*Sample Programming from UWC's Early Years:*

- October 8, 1980—Lois Kennedy, Manager of Government Relations at Dana Corporation and a member of the UT Board of Trustees, spoke on her success, the role of women at UT and future developments that may affect professional staff at UT.
- May 16, 1981—Gloria Steinem, Toledo native and founder of Ms. Magazine, spoke. (UWC co-sponsored Steinem with Peppers Honor Society and the Student Union Board.)
- June 24, 1981—First Annual UWC Summer Retreat was held. Members set the calendar for 1981-82; reviewed their purpose, goals and objectives; and formed committees.
- December 8, 1983—A Holiday Auction featured homemade candy, baked goods, crafts, and odds and end. Members could bring their own lunch or purchase a box lunch for \$5.

*Samples of Current UWC programming:*

- September 2006—UWC held 3 Membership Mixers including one on the campus of the former Medical University of Ohio, now the UT Health Science Campus (HSC).
- 2006-07—A Brown Bag Lecture Series will feature 3 speakers.
- March 29, 2007—The Holiday Bazaar will have a spring/summer theme.
- April 19, 2007—UWC Board Retreats continue.

*Sample Advocacy from UWC's Early Years:*

- April 9, 1981—Bond sent a memo to Dr. Lancelot Thompson, Vice President of Student Affairs, recommending the appointment of women to the search committees for Director of Financial Aid and Director of Intramurals and Recreation.
- November 30, 1981—Bond supported establishment of a sexual harassment policy in a memo to Driscoll and offered “to provide assistance in the education of the university community regarding this policy.” The UT Board of Trustees passed a policy on March 10, 1982 and forwarded a copy to Bond on March 15, 1982.

- January 7, 1982—UWC sent notes of congratulations to two women elected to public office: Mary Connell, Maumee School Board, and Linda Furney, Toledo School Board.
- January 13, 1982—Wilkinson sent a memo to Gardy VanSoest, Chairperson of the Personnel Committee of the Division of Student Affairs. The memo stated, “The board of UWC is concerned about the lack of a grievance procedure for the unclassified/ administrative staff at the University of Toledo. We would like to encourage your committee to make the establishment of a grievance procedure a priority project.”
- February 15, 1982—UWC distributed a handout to board members on Title IX
- March 31, 1982—UWC held an ERA fundraiser. Furney was the keynote speaker. Attendees who made a donation of \$5 or more to ERAmerica received buttons stating either “Support Your Campus Feminists” or “Woman Power: Much Too Good To Waste.” The event was featured in *The Blade* on April 5, 1982. Bond sent the \$350 that was raised to ERAmerica in Washington, D.C. on May 6, 1982. The cover letter stated that the donation was to be used in the “campaign for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment...along with this donation, the women of the UWC offer their personal support and commitment to the battle for equality.”

The UWC established its Outstanding University Woman awards in 1987. A total of 130 women have been honored in 20 years (see Appendix C). Originally awards were given in up to 12 categories with 8-10 awards given annually. The categories were eliminated in 1995 with 5-6 awards given annually. Only one change has been made in the award criteria in 20 years:

Original Award Criteria:

1. Exceptional contribution/achievement
2. Involvement with the UT community
3. Positive attitude toward responsibilities
4. Reputation within the UT community
5. Active support of Women’s issues

Current Award Criteria:

1. Exceptional contribution/achievement
2. Involvement with the UT community
3. Positive attitude toward responsibilities
4. Active support of Women’s issues
5. Longevity (minimum of five years)

UWC is noted for bringing childcare to the University's main campus. Outgoing UWC presidents took an at-large seat on the board and took on a special project. Wilkinson, who served as UWC chair from 1982 to 1984, took on the expansion of childcare for the children of faculty, staff and students as her special project. At that time, Apple Tree Nursery School was a parent cooperative that had been established in 1974 on the Scott Park campus. Apple Tree had no infant or toddler care so there was an interest in expanding services. The UWC conducted two campus surveys and found both a need for and support of expanded childcare services.

According to Wilkinson, even though the surveys were researched based, bias was perceived.

Therefore, Dr. Rob Sheehan, a consultant from Cleveland State University with a statewide reputation as an expert in both research and childcare, was hired to conduct a third survey.

Sheehan's report supported the UWC surveys. Still, it took ten years and the hiring of President

Horton for the current day Apple Tree to become a reality. Wilkinson recalls that one of

Horton's four daughters was in Early Childhood Education and he supported the establishment

of Apple Tree. A building committee was established and wrote and received two grants totaling

\$350,000 from the State of Ohio. Dr. David Meabon, Vice President of Student Affairs,

appointed Ed Willis, Director of the Student Union, to chair the construction of Apple Tree.

Apple Tree opened on the main campus in November 1996 and recently celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup>

anniversary. The Scott Park facility closed in 1998.

Christine Smallman (C. Smallman, personal communication, December 6, 2006) said she never saw any political activism from the time she joined UWC in 1989. She sees UWC as a strictly service and philanthropic organization. Smallman has served in numerous roles; she is currently the Programming Chair. Smallman's goals when she served as UWC Chair were to increase scholarship dollars and membership (especially faculty and male membership).

According to Smallman, the focus now is fundraising for scholarships for female undergraduate

students and professional development stipends for female faculty and staff. The professional development stipends were established in 2005.

#### The Future of the University Women's Commission

The UWC opened doors for women on the UT campus in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the Athletic Board of Control was once comprised entirely of men and now has about equal numbers of men and women. Women on the campus today have benefited from the actions of the women who established the UWC and worked for a voice, equality, and representation for UT women. As leadership has changed over the years, the focus has moved from political activism and advocacy to service and philanthropy. Although UWC has changed its focus and purpose over its 26-year history, it continues to be an active organization that supports and promotes women through scholarships, professional development stipends, collegiality and its award program.

It is unlikely that UWC will return to its role of activism any time in the near future. A Senior Women's Leadership Council was recently created on campus and is, according to Smallman, Skeens, and Wilkinson, focusing on women's issues on campus. The new Council has picked up where the UWC left off in the 1980s.

The UWC currently has 12 members on its Board including representatives from the HSC. The Board will be reviewing the constitution and advocacy statement in January 2007 and will recommend changes to reflect the current focus of UWC. The recommendations will be presented to the general membership on January 24, 2007. As UWC 2006-07 Chairwoman I can confidently say that the UWC Board has every intention of continuing the organization into the foreseeable future.

References

Records of the University Women's Commission, The University of Toledo Archives, The Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, The University of Toledo Libraries

<http://utuwc.utoledo.edu>

## Appendix A

## University Women's Commission

CONSTITUTION  
AS AMENDED JANUARY 1996

## I. Name

The official name of the organization will be University Women's Commission.

## II. Purpose

The University Women's Commission (UWC) was established in the interest of providing a support system for all women at The University of Toledo. UWC serves as a network of alliances for all women on campus.

Specifically, this organization offers women a forum for providing and obtaining assistance in career advancement and serves as a locale where women may meet to discuss and share information on issues and concerns of common interest.

UWC is committed to improving the status of women at The University of Toledo. In order to accomplish this goal, UWC attempts to reduce role conflicts, furnish women with role models and mentors, and increase the visibility of women at The University of Toledo.

## III. Membership

A. Membership is open to all University of Toledo employees and students, full and part-time.

B. Voting membership will include those people as stated in III-A who have paid current dues to the UWC.

C. The membership shall have power to levy dues. Any alteration of dues shall be voted on by the membership. The vote shall be taken at a regularly scheduled meeting, passage constituted by a majority vote of those present. Any member failing to pay dues one month after dues are payable is deemed to no longer have voting privileges.

## IV. Officers and Duties

A. Chairperson: Shall preside at the general membership meetings, Board of Directors meetings, and serve as spokesperson for UWC.

B. Vice-Chairperson/Treasurer: Assumes the responsibilities of the Chairperson in the absence of the elected Chairperson and serves as a representative of the Chairperson when called upon to do so; operates in the role of treasurer in financial transactions.

C. Secretary: Prepares and circulates minutes of general membership meetings and Board of Directors meetings, and is responsible for social correspondence of UWC.

D. Members of the Board of Directors: Shall be the governing board of UWC which coordinates activities, disseminates information, and makes recommendations and appointments.

1. Chairperson
2. Vice-Chairperson/Treasurer
3. Secretary
4. Communications and Public Relations Committee Chairperson
5. Membership Committee Chairperson
6. Personnel Policies Committee Chairperson
7. Programming Committee Chairperson
8. Women's Issues Committee Chairperson
9. Members-at-Large (explained in next item)

E. The Chairperson and at least one other member of the Board of Directors as designated by the existing Board of Directors will serve on the Board the year following their term of office as members-at-large, for the purpose of continuity. If two or more current members of the Board are returning, the second member-at-large may be selected from the membership.

F. Elections will be held at the general membership meeting during the month of May. Officers will be elected by plurality of votes cast. Absentee ballots will be accepted. Term of office will be from June 1 through May 31. Vacancies on the Board will be filled by an appointment of the Board, subject to approval of the general membership. Each office will be a term of one year. No person may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

#### V. Meetings

A. General membership shall be held at least twice a quarter.

B. Board of Director's meetings may be called by the Chairperson or upon request of a majority of the Committee Board meetings are open to the membership with 24 hours notification to the Chairperson. Agenda items must be presented in writing to the Chairperson one week in advance. Quorum will be defined as a majority of Board members present

C. Standing committee meetings may be called by the committee chairperson in response to the needs of the committee.

D. Special meetings of the Board of Directors or the general membership may be called by the Chairperson.

E. Committees will meet a minimum of once a month.

#### VI. Committees

A. Membership Committee shall recruit members, maintain a current mailing list, and establish a mentors program.

B. Communications and Public Relations Committee shall be responsible for the collection and dissemination of information to the membership and the establishment of a communications network.

C. Programming Committee shall be responsible for planning and coordinating programs for membership meetings and special meetings, i.e., workshops, retreats, seminars, and professional lecturers.

D. Women's Issues Committee shall address issues and policies affecting women employed at the University.

E. Ad Hoc Committee shall be established by the Chairperson in response to the needs of the organization.

F. Personnel Policies Committee shall examine personnel policies, procedures and practices at The University of Toledo.

G. Nominations Committee shall be composed of four members of the membership committee and three members from the Board. The purpose of the Nominations Committee will be to present a slate of candidates to the general membership.

#### VII. Amendments

A. Amendments to the constitution may be proposed in writing by any voting member.

B. This constitution may be amended by an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the voting membership

C. Amendments to the constitution shall be presented in writing to the Board two weeks prior to the general membership meetings.



## Appendix B

**University Women's Commission  
ADVOCACY STATEMENT - AS AMENDED MARCH 1996**

The University Women's Commission was organized in the interest of providing a support system for all women at The University of Toledo. The Constitution of the University Women's Commission states that the UWC is committed to improving the status of women at The University of Toledo."

More specifically, UWC is an advocacy group for women at the University. *Advocate* is defined as *one who works for cause*, and the status of women at the University constitutes our cause.

The role of UWC as an advocacy group includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Support qualified women for jobs, promotions, appointments, and recognition at the University.
- Confront administrative policies and procedures which do not work to improve the status of women.
- Initiate policies which will improve the quality of campus life for women.
- Create a system of communication whereby all persons will be aware of issues which affect the rights of women.
- Provide a strong network of alliances to offer emotional and professional support to women on campus.

The University of Toledo / Toledo, Ohio 43606-3390

## Appendix C

The University of Toledo  
 University Women's Commission  
 "Outstanding University Woman"  
 Award Recipients 1987 - 2006

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Mildred Allred Sydney Condray Helen Cortes Michelle Hayden Mary Jo Henning Janet Northrup Corrine Sherman Haru Thompson	Maria Babula Joann Dixon Lori Edgeworth Rose Helper Lois Hodgson Erma Jean Hughes Debra Logan Alice Skeens	Lisa Anne Grise Helen Hatcher Chris Henderson Violet Meyer Tessie Seaman Ardenia Terry Beverly Thompson Millie Tipton	Patsy Komuniecki Amy Lagger Judy Mausser Deborah Pierce Marjorie Romanoff Kathleen Skurzewski Julie Smoragiewicz	Donna Amstutz Jacqueline Battalora Maryann Heinrichs Julie Moher Pat Orosz Cynthia Price Nadine Schenher Ethel Wilcox
1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Fran Campbell Christine Hinko Amy Kaylor Carolyn McCue Karen Miller Shantel Ransom Christine Spengler Rosalie Szczublewski Kathleen Voigt Judith Wilkinson	Shelley Applebaum Jamie Barlow Janie Boerner-Brown Mary Sue Dave Janet Green Jennifer Mercle Holly Monsos Beverly More Kay Schaffer Christine Smallman	Carolyn Baumgartner Cheryl Bell Carol Bresnahan Agnes Caldwell Eve Colman Susan Flynn Luanne Momenee Jacqueline O'Neil Pasty Scott	Carol Golder Lynne Hudson Kay McGowan Regena VanPelt Margaret Wheelock	Harriet Adams Cora Allen Selina Griswold Renee Martin Barbara Minor Mary Jo Waldock
1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Susan Andrews Rhoda Berkowitz Carol Nelson-Burns Ruth Hottell Angela Stuber	Amy Gerlach Lisa Puszczewicz Ellen Page Brandy Sylvester Nancy Wellman	Shamila Chaudhary Brandy Fuller Barbara Rondelli Perry Barbara Sayers Karen Slater	Peggy Colombo Deb Driscoll Sandra Manton Barb Mason Joyce Mathis Karen Rhoda	Dale James Dwyer Joyce Garber Patricia Groves Pat Murphy Donna Rostetter
2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Karen Bell Jill Guy Jackie Rome Barb Scouten Sheila Shaffer	Sandra Kosmyna Ruthie Kucharewski Henrietta Mister Patricia Padilla Maria Schwartz	Barbara Floyd Brenda Lee Barbara Mann Diane Marker Roxanne Ring-Spears	Marcia McInerney Mary Morrison Nancy Morrison Madeline Muntersbjorn Sherry Tripepi	Eileen Burg B. Jean Haefner Carol Holton Laurie Jenkins Janet Krzyminski