

March 16, 1979

Jane Gould, Director  
Women's Center  
Barnard College  
Columbia University  
New York, N.Y. 10027

Dear Jane,

Thought I'd get down my report before it all faded, so here it is, from second series of Workshops, number V:

### I. Problems identified

#### A. Housing

Women's programs are often "out of place" and undigested by the larger institution; they are physically and administratively in awkward places. Some are marginal and act as entrepreneurs, piloting courses which, if they succeed, are then absorbed by another part of the university. Some move from place to place, e.g. from "Education" to "Services." Some are housed in more than one unit due to their interdisciplinary nature and become a stepchild of each branch. The location becomes an obstacle in self-governance and in the program's relationship to decision-making. in ~~xxx~~ the institution, including on matters which affect it directly.

#### B. Contemporary student body

This student generation appears to be more conservative than previous ones and requires a different approach. There is far less consciousness about woman as sex object, as revealed in the return of such phenomena as beauty contests, wet tee-shirt exhibitions, formal dances, and so on.

More feminist students tend to assume that progress for women this past decade has been greater than is the case. Closer scrutiny of the data tends to depress rather than energize them to action.

Homophobia continues to be a problem, keeping some women away from women's programs and especially women's centers, which often get labeled lesbian as a scare tactic by those hostile to women's programming.

#### C. Other problems

Much overlap with reports from other workshops: funding, lack of legitimacy, staffing for lack of tenured faculty, etc.

## II. Strategies

### A. Concrete proposals

1. Establish alumnae associations, as
  - a) support group for graduates of women's programs to help them cope with their new situations.
  - b) orientation for current women's studies students
  - c) support by alumnae of program
2. In-house publications for
  - a) public relations
  - b) information exchange
  - c) forum for relevant issues
3. Catalogue funding resources, to avoid duplicating some of the effort of grantspersonship.
4. Broaden research goals to include low-income and Third World Women and questions of health and sexuality.
5. Develop an evaluation instrument that would assess the effect of women's programming on students, measuring, e.g. its impact on their self-image and self-esteem.

### B. General suggestions

1. Develop strategies for dealing with administrators. E.g. move in teams of at least two, use "good-guy/tough-guy" approach, don't be intimidated. Carrot-and-stick tactics work well; remind administrators of the benefits they reap from women's programming and of the penalties they might pay if they don't cooperate (law suits, protests, loss of valuable programming).

2. **THING BIG!** move off the defensive onto the offensive again. Move off survival to beyond survival, to demanding MORE. We are here at this conference because the institutions have made some space for us; we got it out of struggle, but they support it out of gain; they have a good thing cheaply. We have become unduly grateful, following a traditional woman's image, forgetting our own worth to the constituency we serve and which administrations claim they wish to serve. We should remind them that they and we are aligned in this respect and we should proceed ~~ix~~ to enlarge our arena out of that shared work. This means moving beyond mere maintenance of our hard-won womanspace to participation in the policy-making bodies that decide the fate of that womanspace. We should demand entry to university governance and to public and private educational policy-making bodies.

(see resolution # 5)

Respectfully submitted,

*Renate Bridenthal*  
Renate Bridenthal

P.S. And I had a wonderful time at the conference! Thanks again!