For almost thirty years, Penn State has been concerned with issues facing women in science and engineering fields. In 1981, several important issues affecting the success of women at Penn State were clearly identified: the lack of women in science and engineering fields; the low representation of women on the faculty, a chilly climate for women students, and the lack of role models for women students (Science of Women Report, 1981). Several University initiatives were developed in part to respond to these and other issues. These include the founding of the Commission for Women in 1981, the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Institute in 1994, and establishing the Women in Engineering Program (WEP) in 1989.

How far have we come in more than four decades of recognizing that challenges exist for women? We know that recent national reports, such as the Harvard Business Review (2008), by the National Science Foundation (2007), and elsewhere the presence of gender parity is not all broken down into science and engineering fields. It is also difficult to answer the question posed above because data on the progress of women at Penn State are not located in one convenient place. We know from the data presented in this report that we have increasing numbers of women in faculty and staff positions in science and engineering fields. However, these data do not tell the whole story. We need to look at Penn State in its entirety to understand the status of women.

The work of the commission is done through the committee listed below:

EXECUTIVE

Comprised of the commission’s leadership team and special liaisons, it oversees activities and policies of the commission.

ISSUES

Involves and collaborates with contacts at Penn State campuses to share best practices, strengthens working/learning environments for women at Penn State. The committees consult with the Assessment Committee on available/accessible data and study historical trends, best practices, other institutional resources and efforts. The committees report to the Commission for Women.

CAMPUS LIAISON PROGRAM

Aims to involve and collaborate with contacts at Penn State campuses to share best practices, strengthens working/learning environments for women at Penn State. The committees consult with the Assessment Committee on available/accessible data and study historical trends, best practices, other institutional resources and efforts. The committees report to the Commission for Women.

Data from these committees will be used to identify gaps in our understanding of gender equity at Penn State. It is a forum for exchanging ideas that can translate into improved policies and practices to improve conditions for women at Penn State. The Commission for Women was established by President John G.townsend in 1981 to serve as an advisory group to the President of the University on the status of women at Penn State, to serve as an advocate for women's concerns, and to recommend solutions. In the years since its inception, CFW has assumed women's status and sought solutions to improve women's status and to improve working/learning environments for women at Penn State.

This document presents a snapshot of key gender equity issues and challenges that face women at Penn State. This report was written to provide an overview of data that, in partnership with other Penn State offices and organizations, and using comparable data from other institutions, can get involved in the commission’s activities as allies.

From the 2007–08 Chair of the Commission for Women I present this report on women’s status at Penn State with optimism, and I look forward to the day when the words “women and science” will no longer be synonymous with “gender equity”.

2007–2008

A Report Prepared by The Commission for Women Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity www.equity.psu.edu/cfw

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of American Indian female faculty, there is an increase from tenure-path to tenured positions, 1997 to 2007 (the
across the racial and ethnic groups, there are some similarities in the data patterns. For example, for both male
For a more historical view of these data, including the years between 1997 and 2007, please visit the
This table presents the major categories representing full-time administrators, faculty, staff, and students at
For each faculty category and each year, the number of females compared to the total number of individuals
In comparing these two years, the operational definition of the term “female” has not changed. However, there is an area that could benefit from greater representation of women, such as tenure-positions, department heads, and senior faculty positions.
For more information on the website, please visit the
For the operational definition of the term “female”, see the website.
For a more historical view of these data, including the years between 1997 and 2007, please visit the 
For a more comprehensive report, see the website.
For more information, see the website.
For a more comprehensive view, see the website.
For a more comprehensive view, see the website.
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