

Grand Valley State University Women's Commission Mission

The mission of Grand Valley State University's (GVSU) Women's Commission, formed in 1996, is to advocate for all women on campus by acting on their issues and by promoting equity and social justice, ever conscious of the intersection of race, class, gender, and orientation.

Annual Summary

2017-18, the Women's Commission capitalized on our previous year of growth and strengthened our ties with several key constituents on campus. This included an updated Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Provost regarding the recruitment and selection of the MI-ACE Women's Network representatives for GVSU. The leadership team expanded to include official liaisons from the Center for Women and Gender Equity and the Division of Inclusion and Equity, as well as co-chairs and chair-elects to create sustainable leadership for moving the Commission forward. This year, the Fall Welcome received record attendance, the Mentoring Reception saw a new focus and name of *Reflections*, and the Celebrating Women Awards highlighted our collaboration with multiple offices on campus. We brought women together around engaging topics for two installments of our Conscious Conversations, as well as two installments of HerStory, including our first downtown offering. One of the most notable achievements for the Commission this year was the continued work and support in the campus-wide Family Leave Task Force. This includes the formation of a Family Friendliness Task Force. Finally, we launched our newsletter *Now More Than Ever* to inform our community about the activities of the Commission as well as events and news from the broader community that impact women.

2017-18 Commission Leadership Team and Core Membership

Leadership Team:

Commission Co-Chair: Kristen Evans, Housing and Residence Life

Commission Co-Chair: Jennifer Palm, The Graduate School

Treasurer: Keri Becker, Athletics

Advocacy Co-Chair: Casey Thelenwood, College of Education

Advocacy Co-Chair: Samantha Minnis, University Libraries

Events Co-Chair: Jenna Vainner, University Libraries

Events Co-Chair: Kelsey Martin, University Counseling Center

Center for Women and Gender Equity Liaison: Jessica Jennrich

Inclusion and Equity Liaison: Kathleen Vanderveen

Core Membership:

Katie Barnhart, Department of Public Health

Chelsea Brehm, Department of Movement Science

Wendy Burns-Ardolino, Department of Liberal Studies

Cassonya Carter, Kirkhof College of Nursing

Suzy Herman, Financial Aid Office

Anne Jbara, Legal, Compliance & Risk Management

Yumi Jakobcic, Office of Sustainability

Kelsey Martin, University Counseling Center

Lisa Miller, Center for Adult & Continuing Studies
Christine Rener, Pew Faculty Teaching & Learning Center
Carol Sanchez, Seidman College of Business
Alexis Schewe, Student Academic Success Center

Amanda Syers, College of Education
Meagan Treadway, Registrar's Office
Kellie Zachman, Housing & Residence
Meghan Veltri, Career Center

MI-ACE Representatives 2017-18:

Faculty: Wendy Burns-Ardolino

Staff: Jessica Jennrich

2017-18 Meeting Schedule

- 9/17/17—KC 1142
- 10/12/17—302E Devos
- 11/9/17—KC 1142
- 12/14/17—302E Devos
- 1/11/18—KC 1142
- 2/8/18—302E Devos
- 3/8/18—KC 1142
- 4/12/18—302E Devos

2017-18 Events & Programs

Annual Fall Welcome

The 20th annual fall welcome, held on September 19, 2017 allowed the Women's Commission to recognize the past successes of the group and look toward the future. The luncheon, attended by approximately 200 faculty and staff members, featured a keynote address by **Maria Cimitile**, University Provost, who shared an inspiring address about the future of women leaders. She encouraged the audience to help create opportunities for academic excellence and to address inequities at GVSU. This annual kickoff event offers the campus community a reminder that there is an avenue for discussion and advocacy around issues faced by faculty and staff on campus.

GVSU Strategic Plan and Inclusion & Equity Strategic Plan, Framework & Funding Priority Connections:

- Inclusion & Campus Climate – Student, Faculty, Staff Achievement & Success
- Learning & Development – Leadership Development
- Intersectional Approach – Gender, Age, First Generation Status

Collaborations & Co-Sponsorships:

- N/A

Reflections Mentoring Reception

The sixth annual Mentoring Reception, held on November 16, 2017, was attended by approximately 50 GVSU faculty and staff members and featured the powerful stories of **Shontaye Witcher, Betty Schaner, Annie Belanger, and Jody Vogelzang** who so generously shared stories of their personal and professional journeys. This year, we used the theme Reflections to provide a focus on the changing landscape of our campus culture and the current climate in our communities. This event offers a space for people to connect professionally and personally. It also allows for accomplished women at GVSU to share insight and advice for newer professionals. Attendees were encouraged to continue conversations and develop relationships with the mentors featured in the panel.

GVSU Strategic Plan and Inclusion & Equity Strategic Plan, Framework & Funding Priority Connections:

- Inclusion & Campus Climate – Student, Faculty, Staff Achievement & Success

- Learning & Development – Leadership Development
- Intersectional Approach – Gender, Age, First Generation Status, Race and Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Veteran/Military Status, Religion and Faith/Spirituality

Collaborations & Co-Sponsorships:

- N/A

Celebrating Women Awards

Continuing the tradition which began with the Maxine Swanson award in 1998, the Women's Commission hosted the Celebrating Women Awards ceremony on March 29, 2018. This event included contributions from Positive Black Women, the Center for Women and Gender Equity, and the Department of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies as well as a poetry reading by a student member of Voices of GVSU. The event focused on recognizing the outstanding impact of faculty, staff, and students promoting positive social change on campus and in their communities. Once again the "Littlest Lakers" at the Children's Enrichment Center provided handmade centerpieces. 100 faculty, staff, and students attended to celebrate the award winners including:

- **Unsung Hero Award** – Jeffrey Rollins, College of Education and Sarah Clark, Chemistry Success Center
Presented to an individual who may not be well known by the general public but who goes above and beyond to improve the lives of faculty, staff and students
- **Maxine Swanson Award** – Melissa Peraino, Center for Adult and Continuing Studies
Presented to an individual who has provided leadership in support of the rights of women at Grand Valley State University
- **Emerging Professional Award** - Jessica Tuzinowski, Club Sports
This annual award, established in 2016, is presented to an emerging professional who has already made significant contributions toward leadership in support of the rights of women at Grand Valley State University.
- **Women's Community Impact Award** – Casey Thelenwood, College of Education
Presented to an individual who has made outstanding contributions for the advancement of women at GVSU and in the community via contributions as a professional, volunteer, or agent of change

GVSU Strategic Plan and Inclusion & Equity Strategic Plan, Framework & Funding Priority Connections:

- Inclusion & Campus Climate – Student, Faculty, Staff Achievement & Success
- Learning & Development – Leadership Development
- Intersectional Approach – Gender

Collaborations & Co-Sponsorships:

- Positive Black Women
- Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Center for Women and Gender Equity
- Children's Enrichment Center
- Voices of GVSU

HerStory

The HerStory series, a tradition created by the Women's Center and now facilitated by the Women's Commission, offers an opportunity for the GVSU community to hear the authentic stories of women in leadership positions and the

experiences that motivated them to success. More than 50 women have shared their stories via the HerStory series since it began in 2003.

In 2017-18, the Commission hosted two installments of HerStory:

- **Cynthia McCurren**, Kirkhof College of Nursing (October 18, 2017)
- **V'Lecea Hunter**, Enrollment Development (January 24, 2018)

GVSU Strategic Plan and Inclusion & Equity Strategic Plan, Framework & Funding Priority Connections:

- Inclusion & Campus Climate – Student, Faculty, Staff Achievement & Success
- Learning & Development – Leadership Development
- Intersectional Approach – Gender, Age, First Generation Status, Race and Ethnicity, Religion and Faith/Spirituality

Collaborations & Co-Sponsorships:

- N/A

Conscious Conversations

The Commission continued the Conscious Conversation series, started in 2014-2015. These well-attended interactive lunchtime discussions around topics related to women's issues promote the oneness of women from all cultures and provides a safe environment for diverse women from across campus to better understand each other in an attempt to foster new meaningful relationships.

- **Kin-Keeping, The Second Shift and Invisible Work** - November 28, 2017, Facilitated by Jenn Palm and Koleta Moore
This discussion focused on the “busy-work” and “worry-work” that silently saps your time and energy, exploring the concept of kin-keeping and other invisible work often completed by women in relationships. This session also included information about work-life balance, stress management, self-care, and the glorification of “busy.”
- **Your Story is Your Power: Appreciating Narratives in the Wake of #MeToo** - April 19, 2018, Facilitated by Kristen Evans, Jenn Palm, and Theresa Rowland
This discussion focused on narrative building for women, particularly in higher education. We examined the #MeToo movement, the Larry Nassar court case, and other pivotal moments for women in the current political climate. Theresa Rowland also gave a brief overview of Title IX.

GVSU Strategic Plan and Inclusion & Equity Strategic Plan, Framework & Funding Priority Connections:

- Inclusion & Campus Climate – Student, Faculty, Staff Achievement & Success
- Intersectional Approach – Gender, Age, Sexual orientation, Disability status/varying abilities, Socio-economic status

Collaborations & Co-Sponsorships:

- N/A

2017-18 Projects and Initiatives

Teach-In Fall 2017: The Commission participated in the Fall 2017 Teach-In with the presentation “Ew, That’s Gross: Myths, Stigmas, Taboos and Why Women’s Health Conversations are so Messy.” The session was attended by 65 students, staff, and faculty members. The evaluations and comments were overwhelmingly positive. This is the third successful Teach-In session for the Commission.

“Now More Than Ever: Newsletter: The Commission began distributing a monthly electronic newsletter in September 2017. The Commission listserv reaches over 500 employees at GVSU.

Assessment Committee: Utilizing attendance numbers, website analytics, program evaluations, and newsletter reach, the Commission created a new committee focused on assessment. This committee will continue on in 2018-19 to look at dashboard numbers for female-identifying individuals on campus in all staff categories and types.

Family Leave Task Force: The Commission’s Family Leave Taskforce, comprised of approximately 15 faculty and staff with a variety of appointment types, met bi-weekly throughout the 2017-18 academic year to review GVSU’s current maternity leave policies, research best practices, and develop a set of recommendations for improved family leave policies. The goal of the Family Leave Taskforce was to identify policy changes that would support GVSU employees and empower them to care for the people they care about.

In order to ensure that the recommendations developed by the Taskforce were inclusive and addressed the range of lived experiences and needs, the Advocacy Co-Chairs actively sought feedback from as faculty and staff governance and affinity groups. Data from the 2015 GVSU Climate Study was analyzed for themes and individuals were invited to submit their stories and suggestions to the Women’s Commission via email or a link on the Women’s Commission website.

At this time, much of the research has been done and the almost-final policy recommendations have been developed. Feedback from Inclusion & Equity is currently being incorporated into the recommendations. We aim to have a final set of policy recommendations ready for distribution by Fall 2018.

In the meantime, a branch of the Family Leave Taskforce, the Family Friendliness Taskforce began meeting in March 2018 and typically meets bi-monthly. The goal of the Family Friendliness Taskforce is to develop a set of non-policy recommendations to provide the university, which if implemented will aid students and employees who are parents, have ailing parents, or are experiencing other family-related changes, improving family friendliness on campus.

2017-18 Partnerships & Collaborations

Children’s Enrichment Center (CEC): The Commission continued the tradition of featuring centerpieces made by students at the Children’s Enrichment Center at the annual Celebrating Women Awards. The Commission maintains a strong partnership with the Children’s Enrichment Center and continues to advocate for the development, growth, and expansion of the offerings of the Enrichment Center.

Inclusion & Equity: The Commission continued participation on the Affinity Group Council and also had representation on the student, staff, and faculty Climate Study Action Teams. Additionally, the Commission formalized the role of the Inclusion & Equity liaison in an update to the Commission Bylaws.

MI-ACE: The Commission continued involvement with Michigan’s American Council on Education Network, an organization committed to identifying, developing the leadership of, advancing, and supporting the retention of women in higher education throughout the state. The Commission worked with the Office of the Provost to create a

process for the recruitment and selection of MI-ACE Institutional Representatives. Two new IRs were appointed through this process - Jessica Jennrich, Center for Women and Gender Equity, serving a three year term and Wendy Burns-Ardolino, Liberal Studies, serving a two year term.

Positive Black Women: The Women's Commission maintained regular communication with Positive Black Women and collaborated for the Celebrating Women Awards.

Gayle R. Davis Center for Women and Gender Equity: The Commission formalized the role of the Center for Women and Gender Equity liaison in an update to the Commission Bylaws. A dedicated Center for Women and Gender Equity representative will sit on the Commission and serve as the official liaison between the two. The liaison for 2017-18 is Jessica Jennrich.

Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies: The Commission sponsors the annual Celebrating Women Awards which honors the annual Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies award recipients. The Women's Commission will continue to work with the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies department in the recognition of outstanding faculty, staff, and students via the Celebrating Women Awards.

Inclusion & Equity: A dedicated Inclusion & Equity representative will sit on the Commission and serve as the official liaison between the two. A Commission representative will continue to participate in the Affinity Group Council and seek opportunities for collaboration with additional Affinity Groups. The liaison from Inclusion & Equity for the Commission In 2017-18 is Kathleen Vanderveen.

2017-18 Budget and Expenditures

Expense Type	Projected Amount	Actual Amount
16-17 Carry Over	1237.58	1237.58
17-18 Budget Allocation	4000.00	4000.00
Additional Funding Winter 2018		600.00
Fall Welcome	2200.00	3526.93
Mentoring Reception	1200.00	830.97
Celebrating Women Awards	900.00	888.05
Her Story	150.00	161.25
MI-ACE	500.00	425.00 projected
Misc. Meeting Expenses & Supplies	100.00	5.33
TOTAL EXPENSES	5050.00	5912.53

2018-19 Budget and Expenditure Projections

Annual Programs	
Fall Welcome	\$ 1200
Mentoring Reception	\$ 1000
Celebrating Women Awards	\$ 1200
Sponsorships	
Her Story	\$ 300
MI-ACE Conference	\$ 500
Total Projected Expenses	\$ 4200
Less 17-18 Carry-Over	\$ 0
TOTAL REQUEST	\$ 4200

2018-19 Projects and Initiatives

Assessment Committee: The Commission's Assessment Committee will continue to analyze and evaluate dashboard figures and provide a finalized report. The Assessment Committee will also evaluate the Commission events, including attendance and collaborations.

Extending Campuses: The Commission has worked slowly to offer more programing on the Grand Rapids campus. This will continue in 2018-19 as we prepare to host our first Fall Welcome in the Seidman Forum. Additional installments of HerStory and Conscious Conversations will be scheduled at the Grand Rapids campus as well.

Mentorship Committee: The Commission has established a Mentorship Committee to assess the interest of mentorship for women faculty and staff on campus. In 2018-19, this work will continue with the possible formation of a formal Mentorship program.

Sustainable Leadership: The Commission will implement a strategy to onboard new leadership team members through chair-elect positions, allowing new members to gain leadership experience in a low-pressure environment. This will also allow for those in leadership positions to cycle back to the general membership as needed.

2018-19 Partnerships and Collaborations

The Commission plans to continue our regular partnerships and collaborations across campus, maintaining current relationships and building new connections. The Commission will make specific and intentional efforts to connect with other Affinity Groups for programming or other event collaborations.

2018-19 Meeting Schedule

The Women's Commission will meet monthly from September through May, alternating between the Allendale and Pew campus. A virtual meeting option will be available for members to participate from offsite.

2018-19 Events and Programs

Fall Welcome: September 26, 2018 - Seidman Forum

Reflections Mentoring Reception: November 15, 2018 - Cook De-Witt

Celebrating Women Awards: March 27, 2019 - Grand River Room

Her Story: October 2018 and January 2019 - TBD

Conscious Conversation: Fall 2018 and Winter 2018 - TBD