

Gender imbizo 2007

Final session

It was agreed at this session that a gender steering committee consisting of the committee that organised the imbizo, co-opted members and students would take the issues raised in the imbizo forward. Their first task would be to put together a document speaking to how the task team could operate together with a budget. Issues to be spoken to would be the construction of a gender framework and the insertion of gender issues into the university structures. Issues that could be given immediate attention (e.g. child care being made available in the early evening and in the early morning) should form part of the initial document to be presented to the VC.

A number of core issues were identified in this session. I have taken the liberty of grouping these into various categories

Long term goal

Construction of a gender framework (in relation to the equity policy). This could include:

- Re-visiting the vision and mission;
- The question of whether gender should form a core course or be integrated into all courses;
- The issue of a specialised unit tasked with overseeing gender issues both in the academic sphere and in the running/culture etc. of the university;
- Mechanisms by which a critical consciousness regarding gender issues (in relation to race and class) is engendered across all sectors of the university;
- Mechanisms to ensure that women are promoted and appointed to senior positions (one example would be an oversight committee that oversees selections).
- Ensuring there are visible actions around gender issues;
- Having senior 'activist' women who are visible and audible within the university;
- The development of pro-active policies concerning issues such as parental leave, promotion, job sharing and part-time work;
- Ongoing support for women to obtain PhDs and conduct research – this should be mainstreamed and should not be WASA's job.
- Ongoing support for child care through the Rhodes day care centre but also via other mechanisms such as extended hours care.
- Visible follow up on transgressions in terms of any gender related issues (harassment, hate speech, abuse etc.)
- The creation of enabling environments through networks, mentorship, and other support mechanisms;
- Ensuring that decision-making mechanisms are transparent and gender friendly;
- An acknowledgement that many women have interrupted careers and/or research time in order to give birth and do early child care. Mechanisms to accommodate this (e.g. obtaining funding for families to accompany staff

member to conferences; a differential age limit for men and women for the various research awards);

- Leadership programmes for women and assisting women with career management;
- Keeping track of the promotion, development and representation of women at various levels in the university;
- Ensuring fair promotion procedures and guidelines are constructed.
- Understanding the extent of sexual harassment, termination of pregnancy, assault and etc.
- Creation of a policy on hate speech and homophobia;
- Following up on gendered language within the university, especially in official documents and communication;
- Gendered issues in the media and posters put up on campus;
- The access of women from DET schools and in the ESP programme to Rhodes.
- The role, function and chairing of GenAct.
- The connection of gender issues with heteronormativity in general and in residences.
- Implementation of various policies that do have a gender aspect.
- Women's collective bargaining issues as part of bargaining with management.
- Ensuring an environment free of violence against women.

Immediate issues that could be supported

- Support for women to obtain PhDs and conduct research.
- Extending the Rhodes day care hours to 07h30 and providing services for those parents who need to conduct university business after hours (e.g. 17h00 to 19h00).
- Differential age limit for men and women for the various research awards (note from me: what if a man declares that he was/is the primary care-giver of small children? And what about women who have not had children? Should the differentiation be around primary care-givers?)
- Information from the imbizo to appear on the web-site.