

To Whom It

The issue at stake is basic. It involves the right of women to be accepted as equals to men in their ability to think, reason and achieve — whether in the social or professional realms.

An organized effort to improve the status of women began at OU with the establishment of a committee to study inequalities of women in the University structure and present means to implement constructive action. The committee was established by the Student Congress September 15, 1970, but its members were not appointed until March 20, 1971.

The committee's establishment was preceded by and possibly encouraged through a 1969 report made by the local American Association of University Women (AAUW) to the OU Human Relations Committee. The report showed that women were being discriminated against in their upward mobility at OU and that more women were attaining higher degrees, thereby qualifying for the same positions as men.

As stated in the 1969 report, the student ratio in 1949 was 4 male students to 1 female. In 1969 it was 1.7 males to 1 female. Although the student ratio somewhat equalized, the faculty ratio had shown an alarming reverse. In 1949 the faculty ratio was 4 men to 1 woman, but by 1969 there were 6.2 men to 1 female.

In other words, the number of women graduating from OU increased, but the number hired as faculty decreased.

Upon selection of the women's inequalities committee, Dr. Dorothy Truex, research director for the University community and professor of education, was appointed chairwoman. The remaining members of the committee included three faculty, three staff members, one alumna and two students.

The first action of the committee was a comparison study of faculty salaries, the number of women at various faculty levels and the number



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Women at the University of Oklahoma — those who teach and those who serve the teaching function — are speaking out as a minority group. They are pointing to the critical inequities which they feel exist.

of academic departments which had no women.

Their study, completed June 21, 1971, revealed:

- Of the 51 academic departments at OU, 26 had no women faculty members.
- Only 1 department (home economics) was headed by a woman.
- There were no women assistant directors of departments.
- 14 of 364 full professors in the University were women.
- 15 of 168 associate professors were women.
- 24 of 158 assistant professors were women.
- There had been a decrease in women professors and associate professors since 1969.

The committee also documented several cases of women faculty members with equal or superior educational training and teaching experience who were receiving thousands of dollars less per year

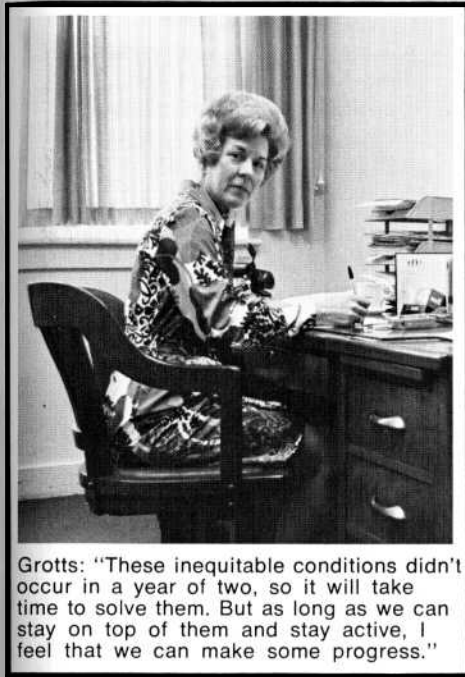
than their male colleagues. According to a more recent study, it would take \$110,000 to equalize the 43 documented cases of inequitable salaries.

But these inequities are not past tense. Although a few problems have been somewhat alleviated, those mentioned previously have not, nor have many other inequities within the University structure.

Of the 58 administrative officers on the Norman campus, 2¼ are women. (Administrative officers are the people who make the decisions — vice presidents, academic deans and administrative department heads.) The "¼" administrator is Dr. Dorothy Truex, who in addition to serving as a professor of education, spends 25 per cent of her time as research director for the University community. The other two are Barbara James, secretary of the University and of the Board of Regents, and Anona Adair, director of student activities.

May Concern:

BY EMILY BAKER



Grotts: "These inequitable conditions didn't occur in a year of two, so it will take time to solve them. But as long as we can stay on top of them and stay active, I feel that we can make some progress."

As chairwoman of the committee, Truex has become the leading advocate of women's equality on the OU campus. "The situation at the University has been most difficult. Although there is a special assistant to the president for minority affairs, women's grievances have been channeled elsewhere with little results. I think it is absolutely disgraceful that there is no one to represent the woman's viewpoint in an institution of this size," asserted Truex.

"It's as if their grievances fell over the edge of the world. I've decided that maybe the world is flat where women are concerned — everything is falling over the edge.

"Talk to any woman who has been in a career situation, and you will find how really frustrated and angry they are underneath. I think this dissatisfaction has surfaced just recently. Women are realizing that they have been suppressed and restricted in their careers; they just

haven't known what to do about it," she added.

In an attempt to provide an administrative officer or body to which women may present grievances, President Sharp is establishing special assistants in the University community area for all substantial minorities. This is so minority groups on campus, including women, will have an officer with the designated responsibility of administering to the problems of particular minorities.

At present the OU Human Relations Committee, designed to handle grievances of minority groups, has devoted the majority of the past year to women's grievances. Three cases of discrimination against women were presented to them. Of these three, two were rectified and one was helped to some degree.

The OU women have at least one influential ally, President Paul Sharp: "I do believe there are inequalities in the University structure. These are historical and, consequently, very hard to reach. Correcting these inequities presents a very real challenge for the University — one that we need to work on extensively and intensively."

Sharp feels, as do faculty members, that one the greatest problems is far too few women employees are on the faculty. "Our procedures of recruitment do not encourage the recruitment of women or other minorities. In fact, they encourage the perpetuation of the status quo because the search committees carry on as they have always have, with a certain inertia. However, it's not a matter of hostility. We need a challenge and symbol to the University which I believe the administration can make over the next two or three years," Sharp explained.

A central clearing house for applications and providing for public notice of available positions exists for non-academic positions, thus insuring somewhat less discriminatory

hiring and salary practices.

But academic department hiring is a different matter. A three-member committee, elected by the department's teaching staff, makes formal recommendations to the administration on matters of budget, salaries and promotions. The entire teaching staff of the department considers new staff members and recommends tenure for departmental colleagues.

According to Truex, this perpetuates the cronies system in hiring practices. Frequently the first time the names of persons being considered for a position are made public is as a recommendation to the University Regents.

Gayle Grotts, associate director of placement services explained, "We have no way of knowing how many women actually submit an application since they apply directly to the departments. Nor do we know how many of them do anything more than get pushed to the bottom of a box."

Sharp emphasized, "I think that we must hold feet to the fire on this and be sure that women are interviewed and considered as active candidates. Recruitment is so decentralized that it is hard to apply central pressure. We have even gone so far as to consider sending recommendations to departments that they employ in their replacements representatives of minorities and no others. What I am saying is that the administration regards this as a critical matter.

"I'm taking the personal step next year of bringing a woman into the president's office as an executive intern. This is partially because I want to symbolize to the entire University the importance of recruiting women, particularly at top levels," he continued.

Dissatisfaction with OU's employment practices concerning women has also extended to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). In October

1971 HEW began negotiations with the University concerning its hiring practices. Last spring the University submitted an Affirmative Action Plan on the University's hirings of minority group members. However, HEW felt the plan did not adequately address the matter of hiring women, and the University was instructed to formulate an Affirmative Action Plan for women.

Sharp expressed the opinion that an Affirmative Action Plan for women was a problem of high priority and one that merits presidential concern. The question is how to make it effective.

"It is an extensive plan which calls for scaled acquisition in employment, not only in hires but also in replacements. It calls for evidence that people in the minority groups, including women, have been interviewed for positions, and that qualifications were placed in context of the role itself," he explained.

"However, for the plan to mean anything, it needs a push from this office," Sharp further stated. "And that is exactly what we are trying to do. We must start with administrative roles and work through the entire University."

Failure to comply with HEW specifications for employment is met with a cancellation of all federal contracts including all research contracts from federal agencies.

"It is unfortunate that university women aren't now in prominent roles," says Truex. "As a result, coeds don't have a role model. This is particularly bad because in the next few years women will be moving into many fields and into higher positions — partially due to pressure from HEW. Women need to see other women who are happy with their jobs and who enjoy what they are doing. If the college campus doesn't provide this role image, then where will a coed attain it?"

Truex feels that women's responsibility in the development of



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equality in professional areas lies in voicing their opinions and dissatisfactions. But first women must prepare for advancement in the professional world and gain the legal right to be considered. If they are then by-passed or discriminated against, Truex says women have the responsibility to complain and to stand behind one another.

In short, the secret is to keep one's education up-to-date, to become actively involved in local and state affairs; and, if setback does occur, go on needling until accomplishments are made.

Some progress has been made at OU. Two areas of vast dissatisfaction were the tenure and nepotism policies. In the past, the condition was such that:

- A woman in the Department of English was a visiting assistant professor for over 20 years without promotion due to the nepotism rule.
- Another woman in the College of Pharmacy was unable to attain rank until her brother-in-law, who was associated with the School of Geology and

Geophysics, retired.

- A woman business instructor was denied tenure because her husband was an administrative officer for the University.

The nepotism policy has been abolished on recommendation of the faculty senate and the tenure policy changed. Historically, a woman who was in the same field as her husband couldn't be hired in the same department. Now they can. Not only was it more difficult for a woman to obtain tenure, but if a husband had tenure, a wife could not. This also has been changed.

Fortunately, the women's inequalities committee has seen some small strides made from their work. The College of Law is now accepting more women. This year the percentage of women accepted was the same as the percentage of men. Almarian Hollingsworth, El Reno alumna member of the committee, was instrumental in raising the female medical school enrollment. Last year 11 women were admitted to medical school; whereas, this coming year 26 have been admitted. In addition, there is now a woman on the interviewing committee.

"These inequitable conditions didn't occur in a year of two, so it will take time to solve them. But as long as we can stay on top of them and stay active, I feel that we can make some progress," Grotts said.

Women professors are just like men professors. They teach, they write, and they attend endless committee meetings. They are diverse, intense and always busy. The same can be said for women staff members. They can certainly make the same contributions as men.

"Any university that doesn't regard this as a major problem and a major concern and approach it now with sensitivity and imagination through the entire institution is a university that is not fulfilling its obligation," Sharp emphasized.