



The Carolina Women's Center

20 YEARS OF HERSTORY

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University-owned house at the corner of Cameron Avenue and Wilson Street where the Carolina Women's Center was moved to in 2008.

Political, Legal, and Social Context

Established in 1997, the Carolina Women’s Center resulted from student and faculty activism to come up with a solution to the gender discrimination they faced at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). The founding of the Center occurred in the context of broader political, legal, and social issues affecting women across the country. These trends included political and legal debate around the nature of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, and the gap between women’s legal access to the University and its resources as mandated by Title IX. Once established, each of the Center’s directors and staff worked tirelessly to outline effective strategies and implement programming that would create an equitable and discriminatory-free campus climate.

The 1990s in the United States marked a period of active political discussion and analysis of institutional sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Anita Hill’s testimony in the October 1991 televised hearings on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court incited a national conversation about sexual harassment. In the hearings, Hill said that Thomas had sexually harassed her while he was her supervisor at the Department of Education and at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and that his sexual advances made her work experience uncomfortable and intolerable. Hill’s testimony catalyzed a broader public debate about the nature of sexual harassment in the workplace. In response, the U.S. government enacted several policies and the courts set precedents that dealt with the issue of sexual harassment and gender discrimination. In 1993, for example, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the victim did not need to show that they suffered physical or serious psychological injury as a result of sexual harassment, but instead only needed to show that the harassment created an abusive work environment. In 1994 Congress adopted the Gender Equity in Education Act to train teachers in gender equity, promote math and science learning by girls, counsel pregnant teens, and prevent sexual harassment. In *United States v. Virginia*, 518 U.S. 515 (1996), the Supreme Court affirmed that the male-only admissions policy of the state-supported Virginia Military Institute violated the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1997, elaborating on Title IX, the Supreme Court ruled that college athletics programs must actively involve roughly equal numbers of men and women to qualify for federal support. Despite these judicial and political gains, sexual harassment and discrimination continued to disproportionately affect women including in academic institutions. By the 1990s, women no longer faced legal barriers to access an education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Nevertheless, women faculty and students at UNC at Chapel Hill identified a “chilly climate” that promoted sexual harassment and gender discrimination on campus.



Anita Hill testifying about the sexual harassment she experienced by Clarence Thomas at Thomas’ Supreme Court confirmation hearings, October 1991.

UNC-CH, along with other post-secondary institutions, evaluated its policies and practices toward women primarily in terms of legal issues and requirements, but failed to recognize the importance of the institutional atmosphere, or climate, in and outside the classroom in fostering women’s full personal, academic, and professional development. Both subtle and overt gender discrimination communicated different expectations for women than for men that interfered with their educational and work processes and opportunities. Thus, despite Title IX and other federal laws against gender discrimination, women continued to experience hidden barriers on campus. Differential treatment based on gender created a “chilly climate” for women students, staff, and faculty. This climate undermined women’s self-confidence in their academic and professional abilities, lowered their academic and occupational aspirations, and inhibited their learning and professional experiences.

Demanding Change and Action

In February of 1994, the student group Women's Issues Network (WIN) brought these issues to the attention of UNC-CH administration. WIN created a working proposal for a women's center at the University. This proposal highlighted the "chilly climate" women experienced on campus and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies at the University, specifically the Student Congress and Board of Trustees. These students contended that a women's center could serve as a central coordinating unit to better assist the campus community. A center would provide resources for women through advocacy, information, referrals, and programming. WIN suggested the formation of a task force composed of students, faculty, and administrators to assess campus needs and to determine the appropriate structure for a women's center at UNC-CH. They recommended temporary office space where WIN could facilitate networking among various women's groups, committees, and programs in an effort to assist the task force.

WIN approached Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Dr. Donald Boulton, with this working proposal. Although Boulton supported the idea of creating and charging a task force, he stepped down from the Vice Chancellorship role before the task force was implemented, and subsequently retired after another four years on the faculty in the School of Education. WIN then brought the idea of creating a task force to then-Provost Richard McCormick and to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Council. In January of 1995 then-Chancellor Paul Hardin wrote to both Barbara DeLon (director of Housekeeping Services and Dr. Noelle Granger (professor in the School of Medicine), inviting them to co-chair the Task Force on Women at Carolina. Chancellor Hardin asked the Task Force to produce an inventory and evaluation of existing programs and services that addressed the needs and concerns of women on campus and to suggest strategies for improving the quality, coordination, and effectiveness of

existing resources for women. The Task Force held its first meeting in March 1995 and delivered its final report one year later.

The twenty-one member Task Force included students, faculty, and staff. This Task Force designed and used the University's first electronic survey to gather information for their report. While the Task Force took inventory of all the services available to women, it had no way to know if women and men knew about these services, had access to or used them, and what programs were necessary but unavailable. This survey consisted of twenty questions customized for faculty, staff, and students, with sixteen questions common to all groups. The last question of the survey asked respondents their opinion on a specific possibility for improving women's experiences on campus. The question asked whether "The [U]niversity should establish a women's center to better address the needs of women on campus." Of the three groups surveyed, faculty seemed the most hesitant and students the most enthusiastic in their support for the establishment of a women's center. A minority thought that a women's center was a "frivolity" because, in the words of one employee, "women are a majority at UNC and therefore not marginalized and it "would promote division between women and men." Conversely, one student opined, "There is almost no communication between campus groups that affect women, so that information about these programs is hard to obtain and very minimal in content. Personally, I think the ONLY acceptable answer is [a] women's center that will address the issues of faculty, staff, and students and begin to give serious consideration on a full-time basis to generating new programs as well as providing a 'safe-space' for victims." In addition to this student's comment, respondents in favor of a women's center listed multiple issues they thought a center could help mitigate. These issues included helping minority women, combating sexual discrimination and

harassment, supporting personal and professional development, work-life issues, child care, and health needs.

After a year-long commitment to researching the status of resources available to and treatment of women on campus, the Task Force declared the need for a women's center at UNC-CH. The report stated: "We unanimously recommend the establishment of an initial center, reporting directly to the office of the Executive Vice Chancellor. Its mission and responsibilities should be shaped by the specific needs of our institution and community,

A center would provide resources for women through advocacy, information, referrals, and programming.

and it should serve students, staff and faculty." The report went on to suggest that the center should be fully developed within five years. The recommended mission and responsibilities of the center included gathering information on resources available to women on campus and a referral system. The center would provide educational programming with the objective to create an equitable University environment, and it would advocate for needed services. Further responsibilities included coordination with community services and campus activities with Women's Studies, as well as programming for African American women with the Sonya Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History.¹ Most importantly the center would advocate for systemic chang-

es to improve the lives of women and men of the University community. Due to the hard work and commitment of WIN and the Chancellor's Task Force on Women at Carolina, UNC-CH created the Carolina Women's Center (CWC) in 1997.

In the beginning, visibility was an issue for the Center, primarily a result of two factors: location and confusion of the CWC with The Women's Center, the local nonprofit in Chapel Hill. It took about three years for the CWC to find a physical home on campus. Their initial offices were located in the basement of Steele Building. Provost Richardson described their first offices as "a closet." The CWC's obscurity increased when it moved off campus to Airport Road (now known as Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard). Confusion between the campus Women's Center and the local community-based nonprofit Women's Center obscured the Center's visibility; although their resources, services, and constituencies differed, there was some overlap in mission and opportunities to partner. However, in a few years and under the guidance of CWC's first two successive part-time directors, the Center achieved a number of significant milestones. Marsha Collins, a faculty member in Romance Languages, was CWC's first part-time director. Along with Liz Lucas, a staff writer for the *University Gazette*, the two of them promoted the CWC and its mission, everywhere they went. Diane Kjervick, CWC's subsequent part-time director, also helped the Center garner support and interest. Collins and Kjervick are credited for finding CWC a home on campus, generating funding for several initiatives, hiring a small staff, and starting Women's Week (a week-long initiative focused on various women's issues), as well as other educational programs and events throughout the academic year. By the 2002-2003 academic year, the CWC had gained prominence around campus and was no longer an unknown entity.

¹ The difficult, but ultimately successful struggle to gain administrative approval for the Stone Center could have helped to pave the way for a Women's Center at UNC-CH.

Diane Kjervik

(2000-2005)

The Carolina Women's Center experienced tremendous growth under the directorship of Diane Kjervik (2000-2005). In addition to serving as the part-time director of the CWC, Kjervik worked as a faculty member in the School of Nursing to develop a model curriculum for undergraduate nursing programs, with a particular focus on patient-family advocacy. During her tenure the Center relocated to Franklin Street, and the staff roster grew from six to eleven people. The new staff included the first full-time employee and first volunteer coordinator. Support for the Center from the campus and larger community increased during this time, evidenced by a volunteer listserv with more than two hundred names. Holding true to the recommended objectives laid out in the Task Force report, the Center and Kjervik worked with existing units and committees on campus and in Chapel Hill. Kjervik sat on the Chancellor's Child Care Advisory Committee and helped conduct a study of child care needs on campus. The Center's staff worked with the Orange County Rape Crisis Center (OCRCC) to ensure that support services for survivors of sexual assault were available on campus. In addition to these joint efforts, the CWC addressed women's health by co-sponsoring talks on polycystic ovary syndrome and a body-mapping workshop. The Center focused on cross-cultural issues. The Center hosted the 3rd Annual Sisters Beneath the Skin Conference and participated in a roundtable discussion on women and public health. The Center's advocacy efforts also expanded during this period. For example, CWC staff worked with faculty women and men across the campus to discuss salary inequities.

Advocacy defined Kjervik's time as director at the Center. In the Spring 2003 CWC newsletter, Director Kjervik wrote, "Whenever a woman's voice is silenced, we lose the wisdom of women at all ages and stages of life. Women are silenced by their knowledge of the violence done to women, by others not acknowledging or supporting women's words, and ironically by the approval others give women for their silence." The Center gave space for women to voice their opinions and complaints, and when women did not feel like



they could do anything but remain silent Diane Kjervik and the Center, as a vocal and public advocate, gave voice to the issues affecting women on campus.

Director Kjervik wrote a number of "Letters to the Editor" and op-eds in local newspapers to promote women's rights on an array of topics and to highlight gender discrimination. On January 31st, 2003, Kjervik published a letter to the editor in *The Daily Tar Heel* expressing the vital need for the Faculty Council to endorse gender equity in salaries among faculty. Kjervik and the Center also showed great support for the third ever elected woman University Student Body President—Jen Daum. In a series of articles, Director Kjervik spoke to Daum's qualifications and also responded to one journalist's gendered depiction of Daum's leadership style. In a profile, journalist Karey Wutkowski focused on Daum's personality and looks and suggested Daum's focus on the issue of child care resulted from a more feminine mode of leadership. Kjervik responded to this article in an effort to highlight

how seemingly complimentary observations undercut the legitimacy of women's leadership through gendered interpretations. Kjervik stated, "Daum's attention to certain topics such as child care and campus safety cannot be characterized accurately as more emotion-based or less difficult than fiscal matters. Anyone who has seriously tried to reduce levels of violence in our society or provide adequate and affordable child care knows the difficulty in addressing these problems. And anyone who is trying to resolve the fiscal crisis in Raleigh at the present time is not unemotional about the gravity of the situation." In this article Kjervik brought attention to how leadership styles are gendered and the different criteria women leaders confront. She asked the student body to consider Daum as a good leader based on her platform instead of someone who "puts femininity to good use."

Women's Week programming also helped raise the Center from obscurity. The Center's staff organized the inaugural Women's Week in 1997. This series brought in speakers from across the nation and from various fields. Some speakers included Magdalen Hsu-Li, an Asian-American music artist; former editor of *Essence* and *Ms. Magazine*, Marcia Ann Gillespie; feminist poet Alix Olson; Nomy Lamm, a writer and performance artist fighting fat oppression; and Fern Marx, a Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Research on Women. The array of speakers showed the diverse population the Center tried to serve and engage during its earliest years. Always mindful of the various identities constituting the University student and faculty populations, the Center strived to help them all.

The Center's initiatives during this stage of development included mentorship and leadership. The Center created the BOLD project in response to a lack of women in leadership positions. BOLD (Providing Women Better Options for Leadership and Development) assessed the leadership development needs of undergraduate women at the University and established a program to address the identified needs of students and faculty. This project endeavored to strengthen women's experiences through innovative programs outside the classroom, to provide a solid academic base for the study of women's lives, and to develop women's professional skills in internship settings. The Center assessed the needs of women on campus through surveys, interviews, and focus groups; an examination of existing University resources and programs; literature on leadership

development; and consideration of similar programs at other institutions.

Another CWC initiative focused on child care advocacy. Child care in Chapel Hill in the early 2000s was expensive and options limited. Members of the CWC advisory board raised the need for more available and affordable child care options. At the time, several campus organizations worked on child care issues and the CWC brought these groups together in order to more effectively address these needs. After less than a year, this new coalition successfully supported a student referendum for a student activity fee that subsidized child care at the UNC-CH Child Care Center, now Victory Village, for students and faculty. While this certainly helped some students and faculty, not all who needed child care would have access to this one facility.

The Center also prioritized campus safety for women. Campus women continued to express concern about their safety and asked the CWC to serve as a safe haven for women recovering from sexual assault. Beginning in the summer of 2002, the Center provided group and individual support for women who requested assistance. In addition to working with the community-based nonprofit OCRCC, the CWC put together a network of services from campus groups to community organizations and applied for grants to support violence prevention activities.

The CWC also created the Carolina Women's Center Mentorship Program. This program responded to the growing demand for career mentorship at the undergraduate level. The Center selected sophomore, junior, and senior women as mentees through an interview and application process. These women worked with alumni in their chosen career fields to gain experience in their occupation of interest by spending time with their mentors.

With all of the successful initiatives that occurred, the Center needed a new space, as well as a full-time director. In 2004 the CWC moved from its Airport Road location to a newly remodeled building owned by the University on East Franklin Street. The Center's initiative and programming demanded the energy of a full-time director. Plans were laid for a search and in 2006, Dr. Donna Bickford was hired as the first full-time director of the CWC. Diane Kjervik continued on as a faculty member in the School of Nursing until she retired in 2012.

Donna Bickford

(2006-2011)

Hired in June of 2006, Dr. Donna Bickford served as the first full-time director of the Carolina Women's Center. With the help of associate director Chimi Boyd, Boyd's successor Dr. Ashley Fogle and other CWC staff, Bickford grew many ongoing CWC initiatives and developed new ones. Bickford's appointment as the first full-time director coincided with the Center's ten year anniversary, marking a new stage of development for the Center. Bickford remarked that it was a nice connection of two important milestones for the Center and recognized the importance of paying homage to her predecessors. When asked about her appointment in an interview, Bickford said, "I do really want to honor the accomplishments that have happened and to have a goal for the future ... I am constantly relying on the women who came before me, who know the history of this organization and the campus, to share with me our legacy and traditions." The Center commemorated the tenth anniversary with an exclusive luncheon. At this event, the CWC honored the individuals who were especially influential in the organization's establishment. Held at Chapel Hill's Carolina Inn, it assembled an intimate group of the Center's founders, the tenth Anniversary Planning Committee, the Program Advisory Council, and the Advisory Board. The year-long commemoration also included various celebratory receptions, a keynote lecture, and a t-shirt and essay contest targeted to the University student body.



In addition to the Center's celebratory events, the initiatives during Dr. Bickford's first year as director included the annual Women's Week series in March, the Eat & Explore series, the P.R.O.U.D. mentorship program, the diversity-promoting Sisters Beneath the Skin Conference, and an undergraduate student conference on sex trafficking. While some of these initiatives continued throughout the entirety of Bickford's time as director, others did not, and certain topics and issues took precedence over others.

Sex Trafficking

Under Bickford's leadership, the Center prioritized sex and human trafficking. With the help of donor funding, the Center worked to bring attention to the topic locally and globally. In April 2006, the Carolina Women's Center hosted "Sexual Trafficking: Breaking the Crisis of Silence," an in-

ternational conference. Following this the CWC convened a campus-based working group to build on the momentum of the conference and to explore ways to increase sex trafficking awareness and contribute to efforts to eradicate it. In a CWC newsletter the Center declared, "The Carolina Women's Center is taking a proactive stance against this form of modern day slavery that especially targets women and children, both in our own backyard and across the globe." The Center's efforts to raise awareness and eradicate sex and human trafficking took on various forms.

The Center held biennial international conferences. These conferences offered a chance to delve into topics including the issues of demand, childhood sexual exploitation, specific impacts on communities of color, and legal advocacy. They also designed work sessions to concentrate on developing action items and initiatives for North Carolina. These conferences were not merely focused on intellectual and academic pursuits. The second conference, "Combating Sex Trafficking," was designed to create action. The Center brought together an impressive array of international, national, and local experts to talk about a wide variety of subjects: shutting down the demand for commercial sexual exploitation and government and corporate prevention models. In addition to inspiring attendees to action, the conference offered formal training, such as providing resources for journalists and members of the media interested in learning how to cover the sensitive issue of sex trafficking in a thoughtful, respectful, and accurate manner.

In addition to international conferences on the subject, the Center coordinated Carolina Organized Against Sex Trafficking (COAST), an undergraduate conference, in Spring 2007. This student-focused event provided an interdisciplinary introduction to sex trafficking as well as strategies for taking action and ending demand. Robert Goff, founder and director of Restore International (now known as Love Does), a nonprofit organization committed to the fight for freedom and human rights, gave the keynote address about his organization's efforts to combat trafficking and provide victim support in India and Uganda. Other expert presenters included representatives from governmental agencies and international nonprofits, as well as leading researchers from within the UNC community.

The CWC was also a member of RIPPLE, the North Carolina anti-trafficking coalition, and the Center ef-

fectively took on a role as advocates and educators. The Center worked with Chapel Hill Town Council Member Sally Greene to pass Town Council Resolution R-II: *A Resolution Supporting Efforts to End Human Trafficking in North Carolina*. This was the first anti-trafficking resolution passed by a municipality in North Carolina. Bickford also participated in a meeting with North Carolina State Senator Ellie Kinnaird and other government officials to discuss the implementation of recent state legislation on trafficking.

The Center reached out to the larger Triangle community to make real strides in sex-trafficking awareness and policy change. It served on two state-wide anti-trafficking groups: RIPPLE and NC Stop Human Trafficking, a recently reconstituted coalition of volunteers, advocates, activists, and concerned community members who share ideas and help raise awareness. With the support and diligent work of the CWC, RIPPLE was successful in its efforts to have human trafficking training adopted as a departmental topic of choice for the 2011 law enforcement in-service training. Bickford worked with two task force members to provide six train-the-trainer sessions during 2010-2011, so that law enforcement trainers would be prepared to offer the in-service human trafficking curriculum to their colleagues. Additionally, the Center visited classrooms and Triangle area working groups. Staff members organized a brown bag film series on sex trafficking and presented films like the PBS Frontline Documentary *Sex Slaves*. In order to sustain student interest in the topic, the Center worked with the student group CAST (Coalition Against Sex Trafficking), formed with the support of the Campus Y. With funds from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Center hired a human trafficking coordinator that diversified the CWC's outreach. For instance, the Center facilitated an inter-institutional working group for researchers interested in this topic. The Center transitioned its focus towards efforts to combat sex trafficking by conducting work that focused on long-term solutions.

As previously mentioned, from the beginning the Center participated in statewide collaborations to produce training materials and policy. In 2009 the CWC supported research to help state lawmakers write stronger, more effective anti-trafficking policies. In the Spring of 2009 the Center formed an inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary working group for research on sex trafficking, recogniz-

"I am constantly relying on the women who came before me ..."

ing that little research is conducted at the university level (locally and nationally) and that those engaged with this issue experience isolation in their departments and fields. The objective of this working group was to provide a home base for trafficking research projects. The Department of Public Policy, in collaboration with the Roosevelt Institute, created an undergraduate public policy clinic on sex trafficking. The CWC was selected as one of the clinic's clients. The Center organized a group of thirteen dedicated undergraduates who examined the links between prostitution and sex trafficking in Orange, Chatham, and Alamance Counties. Since most law enforcement agencies were untrained to identify trafficking victims, officers often mistook victims for criminals. The students' study of prosecutions of prostitution provided hard data that state lawmakers could use to inform public policy on trafficking. Bickford also made international connections through this issue. The British Embassy invited Dr. Bickford to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's International Migration and Human Trafficking Conference in 2009. Conference attendees included Members of Parliament from Commonwealth countries and several European Union nations. Bickford noted the presence of Swedish delegates because they were the first country to adopt an abolitionist approach to trafficking and prostitution, an approach the Center found useful for public policy change in North Carolina.

“Thinking globally, programming locally”

Beyond the sex trafficking initiative, the CWC's programming took on a global focus starting in the 2007-2008 academic year. In March the CWC co-sponsored the Institute for African American Research's 2008 International Scholars Conference, and in April the CWC began a partnership with the Center for Slavic East European and Eurasian Studies to present a global women's health luncheon series: multi-disciplinary dialogue with scholars whose work explored the state of women's health in the former Soviet Union. The success of the global women's health luncheon series inspired the CWC to announce a broader global women's issues series in 2009. The first talk in the new series, co-sponsored by the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations,

was given by Cemalnur Sargut, Istanbul branch Chair of the Turkish Women's Cultural Association. She discussed women's societal roles through a Sufi interpretation. Several interesting lectures followed. Dr. Fariyal Ross-Sheriff visited and shared her work on Muslim women refugees in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Groundbreaking women's historian Dr. Joan Scott presented “Cover-Up: French Gender Equality and the Islamic Headscarf.” Co-sponsored by the CWC, Dr. Scott examined the politics of the veil and discussed the 2005 ban on Muslim headscarves in French public schools. The Center also helped bring Wahu Kaara, a parliamentary candidate in Kenya's tumultuous 2009 elections and a 2005 Nobel Peace Prize nominee, to campus in April to deliver the keynote address for Human Rights Week.

Women's Week

From its beginning, Women's Week was an important part of the CWC's programming, and the event thrived during Dr. Bickford's tenure. On average more than a thousand members of the campus and local community participated, and dozens of departments, student organizations, and community agencies served as co-sponsors of the events. Each Women's Week took on a different theme. Some of the themes explored during Bickford's directorship included women's activism and the future of feminism. The 2008 Women's Week focused on women's activism in all spheres of life, from art to politics to athletics. Women's Week 2009 dealt with the heterogeneous and theoretically diverse nature of feminism.

Violence Prevention

During this period, a new initiative focused on institutional change: the SARTVE Task Force. The CWC partnered with the Dean of Students Office and Campaign for a Safer Carolina, a student-led initiative, to create the Sexual and Relationship Violence Training and Education Task Force. This initiative focused on training and education on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus and how to best meet the needs of students, faculty, staff who experienced gender-based

violence. This endeavor created the HAVEN (Helping Advocate Violence Ending Now) program to train students, staff, and faculty as HAVEN advocates and thereby to increase support for survivors of sexual violence. The idea was to create multiple “safe spaces” around campus for students to go for information, discussion, and referral. Faculty and staff members who received training placed a sign on their doors indicating they are a safe space to discuss issues about sexual violence. By 2007, more than ninety faculty and staff were trained.

Several programs and initiatives focused on violence prevention. The CWC created a Project S.A.F.E. website that included information on violence prevention and how to help survivors of violence. The website included a prevention guide, resource listings, advice for family and friends, suggestions for getting involved in violence prevention, and more. The CWC also created a Parents Guide about relationship violence and sexual assault to help parents support survivors. The Center also worked with Theta Nu Xi, a multicultural sorority, to co-sponsor a screening of the film *Tough Guise*, which examined the relationship between pop culture images and the social construction of masculine identities in the U.S. They also screened the film *Provoked*, which focused on domestic violence in the South Asian community. The CWC co-sponsored the Project Dinah Speak Out! against sexual violence, where survivors and allies shared their personal stories of sexual assault, and it facilitated an interactive theatrical exploration of sexual assault and alcohol consumption at UNC.

The Center understood the fight against sexual violence required profound cultural shifts, including raising awareness about factors that contribute to a climate that condones violence. The Center's programming balanced systemic issues with personal responsibility and accountability needed to challenge sexism and dismantle rape culture. During this time, the Center increased its focus on bystander intervention. Bystander intervention focuses on developing practical skills to empower students to act when they hear rape-supportive statements or see the potential for violence. During Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October) in 2009, the CWC brought to campus a program that addressed domestic violence issues in a powerful and creative way. “Speaking without Tongues,” the latest Hidden Voices project at the time, explored violence and survival in the lives of women from diverse eth-

The success of the global women's health luncheon series inspired the CWC to announce a broader global women's issues series in 2009

nic backgrounds. This project used personal stories, written narratives, original music, and photography to give voice to the almost unspeakable truth of these women's lives. The ensemble cast included African American, Euro-American, Latina, Asian, and South Asian women who shared their survival stories in workshops across North Carolina. In addition to looking at violence from an intersectional perspective, the Center emphasized the need to engage men in violence prevention.

The CWC, Dean of Students Office, and Counseling and Wellness Services hosted a visit by John Foubert, founder of One in Four and author of *The Men's Program: A Peer Education Guide to Rape Prevention*. Following this talk, the CWC developed a new workshop called “Masculinity Matters.” This workshop encapsulated a new approach to programming, one which favored ongoing interrelated events that built off of each other (as opposed to one-time speakers and stand-alone events). This new series tackled interlocking issues related to masculinity, including how gender constructions contribute to violence, particularly in interpersonal relationships. This workshop also looked at issues that might not immediately seem relevant to masculinity, such as equitable relationships, the family, and reproductive justice. The Center contended that devoting time to “nontraditional” men's issues would help facilitate a better understanding of how masculinity is constructed.

Child Care Advocacy

The Carolina Women's Center committed its time and resources to supporting student parents and increasing access to quality, affordable child care. Dr. Bickford served as Committee Chair for the Chancellor's Child Care Advisory Board. Bickford and the CCAC fought tirelessly for lactation rooms and paid parental leave for employees. She also fought for adequate and inexpensive child care, which included the reconstitution of the Carolina Kids Camp. The CWC pledged to advocate for affordable child care rates because monthly prices in Chapel Hill were (and remain) among the highest in the state. And while the scholarship helped around twenty students, it did not help all of them. In 2008 there were eighty-one eligible students on the waiting list for the scholarship.

Recession and Reevaluation

The greatest challenge the Carolina Women's Center faced during Bickford's tenure was state budget cuts in response to the economic recession. Beginning in 2008, Dr. Bickford started addressing the economic climate. She stated, "It has been extremely interesting to be on campus during this historic election season—as well as through the unprecedented economic meltdown and subsequent state budget cuts. I imagine the economic downturn has affected many of you in equally challenging ways. Here at the Carolina Women's Center we will continue to do everything possible with the resources available to us to promote women's equity and empowerment while serving the faculty, staff, postdoctoral scholars, graduate and professional students, and undergraduate students on the Carolina campus." Given the economic downturn, the CWC proactively undertook a strategic planning process to reflect on its goals and establish its vision for the next three to five years. In order to come up with this plan the CWC created a strategic planning committee with the assistance of the Executive Service Corps, a local nonprofit. In 2008, the Center moved to another University owned location at the the corner of Cameron Avenue and Wilson Street. This space currently houses the Unified Business Cluster (UBC) for Academic Initiatives, which handles CWC's business transactions.

By 2009 the Carolina Women's Center had a detailed planning approach and shared it with the community in an effort to raise donations. The Center's first priority was to redefine gender norms by raising awareness of the consequences of socially created roles and expectations and by encouraging the social and political change necessary to achieve gender equity. The second focus was violence prevention. The Center continued to partner with campus and community task forces to coordinate anti-violence education and awareness efforts focusing on sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. Family advocacy was the third objective, as the CWC continued to engage in policy and advocacy work on behalf of all families at UNC-Chapel Hill. The fourth gender equity issue the Center took on was closing gender gaps. The staff worked to create an educational and work environment where disparate treatment based on gender no longer existed. The final priority was to combat sex trafficking. The Center's goal of eradicating sex trafficking meant generating research and facilitating knowledge about trafficking practices, while simultaneously raising awareness about the consequences of trafficking for individuals and communities. For the duration of Dr. Bickford's time as director the Center would focus on these five gender equity issues. Despite the reevaluation of the Center's motivations and priorities, the Center's lack of financial resources proved too challenging and Dr. Bickford resigned in 2011.

Christi Hurt

(2012-2016)

In January 2012 when Christi Hurt assumed the role of part-time interim director, the Center had zero full-time staff, and its programming depended on a graduate student's part-time efforts. Recruited by Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives Carol Tresolini, Hurt contemplated freezing the Center until the focus and budgetary restriction were clearly outlined, but Dr. Tresolini wanted to keep the pulse of the Center going and to show that Carolina was committed to gender equity issues. This assurance convinced Hurt to take the job. By accepting this position, Hurt understood her primary task was to keep the doors of the Center open. With the assistance of Maggie Grant, an interim part-time program coordinator, the pair tried to figure out what it meant to be "a women's center with a limited budget."

During Spring 2012 Hurt and Grant conducted programs the previous staff designed, including Women's Week, the Faculty Scholars Program, and the University Awards for the Advancement of Women. At the same time, Hurt tried to figure out, "What should the Carolina Women's Center be?" Carolina students provided the answer to this question when they started showing up at the Center in January 2012. The students' increased involvement,



in part, resulted from the Center's location change. The CWC moved from its Cameron Avenue and Wilson Street, where there was very little student foot traffic, to a central location in the Stone Center. Hurt asked these students what they expected to see when coming to the Center and listened to their answers. Students hoped the center could provide interesting ways to get involved in the community on gender equity work. They wanted a lending library that could help them explore feminism. Students looked for a place with programming on body image. Christi Hurt found a pulse in these students and invited them to help make their expectations of the Center a reality. Hurt stated, "We became a place in that year where it was choose your own adventure for student organizing." The following fall semester, students who were involved in the Center returned with an interest in long-term work with the Center. This created an opportunity to re-implement student programming from the previous semester. The commitment from these students also meant the possibility for new initiatives like the Alterna-

Christi Hurt found a pulse in these students and invited them to help make their expectations of the Center a reality.

tive Break Experience. According to Hurt, these students and their hard work made her love her job. With this new life force and a clear commitment from the University towards the success of the Center, Hurt applied for the full-time director position.

In January 2013 the federal Office for Civil Rights opened an investigation into UNC-CH's response to and handling of instances of campus sexual assault. The complaint received national media coverage, as a result of students' activism and advocacy. Students, staff, and faculty advocates pushed for a better and more transparent policy for and response to Title IX complaints from the University. All groups expressed their frustrations to staff at the Center. The University's Title IX crisis marked a turning point for Hurt and the Center. Hurt's background in anti-violence against women positioned her to lead the University's response, and in April Chancellor Holden Thorp invited her to chair the University's Title IX Policy Development Committee and serve as the University's interim Title IX Coordinator. After only serving as a full-time director of the Center for a few months, Hurt was pulled out of the Center entirely with the promise that she could return in the fall.

Hurt's position between the Title IX Task Force and the Center enabled her to position the Center to complement the emerging Title IX structure. This opportunity plugged the CWC into the University structure in a new way. To this point, the Center did not have mission critical work: no one was required to seek out assistance from the Center unless individuals took the initiative themselves. Hurt remembers having to leverage the Center's organizational charisma because the Center did not have delegated authority from the University, so she sought to create a role for the Center in the campus sexual assault crisis taking place. She realized there was no advocacy service for survivors of sexual assault on campus. Through grant money from the Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women, the University had the means to create an advocacy position. For multiple reasons, Hurt suggested the Center was the right place for the position: it had the space and the expertise to take on the responsibility. Just as importantly, the Center had no other role in the Title IX process that presented a conflict of interest. The University agreed and used the grant money to create the Gender Violence Services Coordinator position within the CWC. The GVSC position anchored the Cen-

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ter to the conversation on Title IX and highlighted the Center's unique lens on sexual assault

The new institutional role of the CWC also enabled an increase in staff. Cassidy Johnson started working at the CWC in Spring 2014 as the Gender Violence Services Coordinator. Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Brenda Malone, who oversaw Title IX in 2014, suggested that if the University had a stronger women's center, the Center could have helped prevent some of the Title IX issues the University faced. Part of making the Center stronger included adequate staffing. Vice Chancellor Malone advised Hurt to ask the University for more money to hire staff. The Center advocated and secured funds for another program coordinator, and Dr. Clare Counihan was hired in 2014. Dr. Counihan's appointment allowed the Center to have a designated staff member focused specifically on staff and faculty issues. She initiated programming that made sense for staff and faculty and the specific challeng-

es they faced within their own work environments. Shelley Gist was also hired in 2014 as a program coordinator and focused on student programming. Some of the new student programming included alternative fall and spring breaks, The Naked Truth Series which discussed issues regarding gender in media, and the Moxie Project. In a two-year period, the Center went from a staff of two part-time workers to a staff of four full-time employees.

The greatest challenge during Hurt's tenure at the CWC occurred in 2014. Starting in 2014 the UNC's Board of Governors (BoG) started scrutinizing centers and institutes at universities throughout the North Carolina system. Hurt met with Carol Tresolini bi-weekly as part of the Center's regular supervision, and during this time the meetings turned into Q&A sessions regarding the validity of the Center. Hurt felt each set of questions would mark the end of the BoG's scrutiny of the Center, but the questions continued. Questions included, who did the Center serve? How is it funded? What kind of work do staff conduct? The BoG review included an extensive evaluation of the CWC's mission, spending, and role on campus.

The Board of Governors' inspection of the Center threatened the Center's future. As a result, UNC froze the search for a new full-time director, following Hurt's move to a position in the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Since the Center had to freeze the search, Hurt continued as interim director because she did not want to leave the Center without leadership while its very existence was being challenged by the Board of Governors. This review process culminated with the Board of Governors' Centers and Institutes Review Committee summoning Christi Hurt towards the end of 2014. She testified to the board about why there should be a CWC at all. Hurt presented an overview of what the Center is and does, the actual advocacy work they do, and the literal line of students at the Center daily who had been harmed and needed trauma support. Based on Hurt's presentation, the Board of Governors recommended (without funding) that the Center needed more gender and violence coordinators to serve the campus community. They also recommended an early internal review, following University policy.

The University conducted the Carolina Women's Center review in 2015, and the review committee submitted its report in July of that year. Chaired by the Carolina Center

for Public Service's Director Lynn Blanchard, the committee reviewed the Center based on several different criteria, including the feasibility of the Center's mission, the Center's unique goals, adequacy of initiatives and programming to meet the needs of the people it serves, effectiveness of leadership and organizational structure, quality of institutional relationships, adequacy of funding and facilities, and feasibility of the Center's future plans. Based on their findings the committee recommended an increase in staff—in particular the need for a new gender-based violence services coordinator and a full-time director. When asked, Hurt identified the increase from two part-time staff members to a full-time staff of five as her proudest accomplishment during her tenure at the CWC.

Gloria Thomas

(2016-)

Dr. Gloria Thomas came on board in August 2016 as the new director of CWC. Having served as the director of the women's center (Center for the Education of Women or CEW) at the University of Michigan (UM) for over seven years, she took on the role of CWC's leader as a professional challenge. CEW had a long-running history as one of the country's first campus-based women's centers, established in the early 1960s. Over the decades, it had achieved a solid reputation on the UM campus and in the local community, along with a dependable donor base that helped to insure the Center's sustainability.

To meet this professional challenge, Thomas came to this role with three major goals in mind: First, to continue to build on the great work and programs that the Center conducts as a way to heighten CWC's reputation and name recognition on the campus and in the local community. She believes this will ultimately help with friend- and fund-raising efforts and contribute to increased relevance and viability. Secondly, she is working to expand CWC's programming and partnerships through existing and



new collaborations with campus and community groups on various issues of gender equity and all of its intersections. These intersections include but are not limited to, race/ethnicity, class/socioeconomic status, age, gender identity and expression, ability, parent/caregiver status, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation. Examples of this increased intersectional work include CWC's support for and co-sponsorship of the newly established Womxn of Worth. Womxn of Worth supports a community of self-identified womxn of color that engages in opportunities to promote academic preparedness, holistic student success, identity development, and sisterhood at UNC-Chapel Hill. Additionally, the Center expanded co-sponsorships of campus and community groups and their events, including support for the Muslim Student Association, the Black Student Movement, the Center for Global Initiatives Opening Access Program, and the Raleigh-based Annual Summit sponsored by Women Ad-

vaNCe, just to name a few. Third, Thomas is striving to implement documentation of CWC's impact on the campus community for *all* of its programs and services. CWC will be better prepared to make a case for institutional relevance and long-term sustainability if armed with data about how the Center makes a difference toward the academic, educational and career success of all who avail themselves of CWC's support, services and resources.

Many programs and services continue, most notably, CWC's support for campus caregivers, workshops to encourage gender equity in salaries, campus safety, and educational, personal, professional, and extra-curricular opportunities. More specifically these services include: negotiation workshops targeted to female audiences, sexual harassment workshops, and Rock the Risers to increase turnout at women's athletics events. The CWC's Alternative Break service programs and Moxie Project continue to grow in popularity and interest. The Center continues to celebrate the achievements of campus community members through its administration of the University Awards for the Advancement of Women and the scholarly advances of faculty in their gender-based research through the Faculty Scholars Award. The CWC's Gender Violence Service Coordinators are highly regarded as resources for survivors of gender and sexual violence; they support survivors in processing their experiences and in moving forward in healing.

Other programs and outreach are evolving under Thomas' leadership. In the 2017-2018 academic year, CWC was awarded funding to host a series of Carolina Seminars on gender equity. The first two of these sessions were on the topics of The Modern-Day Women's Movement and Human Trafficking, respectively. The final session focused on Gender and Politics. These events bring more attention to persistent gender inequities while encouraging diverse audiences—students, faculty, staff, postdocs, and local community members—to get involved in helping to address these issues. In the year ahead and beyond, Thomas will continue to seek funding for special collaborative initiatives that help CWC achieve its three-part mission of contributing to a more inclusive campus environment, celebrating achievements toward gender equity, and by ensuring there are no barriers to success based on gender and its multiple intersections.

Examples of [the] increased intersectional work include CWC's support for and co-sponsorship of the newly established Womxn of Worth.



CWC Staff 2018 (from left to right): Clare Counihan, Program Coordinator for Faculty and Staff; Shelley Gist Kennedy, Student Program Coordinator; Gloria Thomas, Director; Cassidy Johnson, Gender Violence Service Coordinator; Holly Lovern, Gender Violence Service Coordinator.

Conclusion

Over the past twenty years the Carolina Women's Center established itself as a valued and respected campus and community resource. The Center's accomplishments throughout the years are even more impressive given its limited resources. Each director and staff contributed to the success of the Center by taking organization, funding, and programming to the next level. Those who worked at the Center throughout the years demonstrated commitment and passion for the Center's varying missions, as well as the staff, students, postdocs and faculty they served. This twenty-year history revealed how influential the Center has been in challenging gender discrimination and inequities in their various forms, creating a more equitable climate on campus, and providing support to those who face barriers to success based on their gender.

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About the Author

Ansev Demirhan is a Ph.D Candidate in Global History at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on the Muslim Woman Question and how intellectuals constructed and debated modern Muslim womanhood.



Steele Building, where the Carolina Women's Center was initially housed in the basement upon its establishment.



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COVER IMAGE

*Square from a quilt made by 2015 CWC's Moxie Scholars
representing the impact of their summer internship experience.*