

Center for Women's InterCultural Leadership Grant Report

Activity/Program Title: Breaking the Silence about Women's Sexuality: The Journey from Censorship to Institutional Support

Activity/Program Dates: National Women's Studies Association 25th Annual Conference, June 17-20, 2004,
Milwaukee, WI

Number of Attendants: 2

Which of the following CWIL goals do you think this activity/program met?

- Bringing Diverse People Together/Crossing Boundaries**
- Thinking in New Ways About Women's Leadership**
- Enriching SMC Environment for the Development of Women Leaders**
- Serving as a National Resource for Change**

How did this activity/program meet the goals you checked?

We presented an analysis of the process of cultural transformation at Saint Mary's from denial of the Alliance to inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the college's non-discrimination policy. Representatives from many other colleges and universities attended and expressed interest in how this was accomplished and how GLBT issues fit within the mission of conservative and/or religiously-sponsored schools. We shared strategies for building coalitions and working toward constructive change in the college environment.

Please describe any new collaborations (on or off campus) that resulted from this activity/program.

The program has been a source of several types of collaboration. We worked with Associate Professor Susan Alexander to develop a model for social movements. We also used our knowledge as members of the CoLT on Sexual Identity to further campus education and programming. In addition, we brought back information on reference materials that have been purchased for the Cushwa-Leighton Library. Beginning last summer, we have also used what we learned in writing the presentation to assist South Bend Equality, a local GLBT-rights organization that has been working within the city of South Bend to incorporate sexual orientation and gender identity into South Bend's Human Rights Coalition. South Bend Equality is composed of staff and faculty from Indiana University South Bend, Notre Dame, and a variety of citizens of diverse backgrounds. Information from this presentation has reached a broad audience.

What were the highlights of the activity/program?

Our presentation was the highlight because, although it was near the end of the conference, it was well attended and we answered a lot of questions. There was clearly a strong interest in this topic. Many individuals expressed an interest in our ideas and strategies, and took our material home to their own colleges and universities.

What would you do differently next time?

Attend the conference for two days, rather than one, to see a wider variety of presentations and to network.

What are the next steps for this activity/project?

We plan to modify and update this project for presentation at “Out There: First National Conference of Scholars and Student Affairs Personnel Involved in LGBTQ Issues on Catholic Campuses” at Santa Clara University, October 28-29, 2005, Santa Clara, CA

Please share any success stories that resulted from this experience:

We believe that Saint Mary’s College received positive national publicity concerning its stance on social responsibility, equality and justice issues. We also have received positive feedback from the local community about our efforts actually applying the model in the service of GLBT rights.

Submitted by: Catherine Pittman, PhD. and Elizabeth Karle, MLIS

Date Submitted: 5/2/05