Why a Women's Center?

The Women's Programs:

The Office of Women's Programs (OWP) at the University of Illinois is responsible for improving the campus climate for women and developing and implementing programs that address women's issues and gender-related concerns. Working in collaboration with other UIUC units and community organizations, our office provides advocacy and support for women's concerns; initiates and sponsors educational and professional development programs for and about women; provides information, counsel, and advice to women seeking assistance; assists committees, departments, and offices seeking to enhance opportunities for women students, makes recommendations on policies of concern to women; increases sensitivity in the campus community to gender-based issues; and works to correct gender-based inequities.

- http://www.oros.uiuc.edu/women/about/history.asp

THE ISSUE

The University of Illinois offers a wide variety of services to the women’s student body through the Office of Women's Programs. Patricia Morey, Assistance Dean of Students and Director of the Women's Program, estimates the number of students that take the initiative to report Dating Abuse (one of the greater concerns the office focuses on) at less than ten percent. This low number of students seeking counseling brings up the broader question whether the UIUC student body is aware of the services that are offered to them by the program.

THE PROBLEM

As the Women's Program is looking into opening a new center in order to do further outreach and promote awareness about these compelling issues, the question remains whether resources, staff, and need exists for this expansion. By looking at the promotional work, the resources available, and the space provided, we want to discover how these aspects lack in efficiency, how this may influence the awareness students might have about the existing office, and finally whether they agree with the need for a new Women's Center.

GOAL

Perhaps by answering these questions we can improve upon the original intentions and visions of the Office of Women's Programs. Through our research we may provide a backbone for further insight into women's needs on campus, and the need for a facility to address women's issues.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Micro-level:

- What on-campus services are offered by the Women's Programs and what do these services entail?
- How, and to what group of people are these particular services targeted? Where does the Women's Programs distribute their brochures? Do they provide workshops/group counseling/individual counseling?
- Where does the Women's Programs receive their funding from? (UIUC, outside funding, etc.)
- Is their enough staff for the work demand? Is the office spacious enough and is it situated in a convenient /accessible location on campus?
- Are their demographic similarities between students who seek counseling? (Gender, age, family background, etc.)
- What kind of promotional activities do these institutions engage in? (i.e. advertising, awareness campaigns, etc.)
- What are the incentives and motivations students report when they first seek counseling? Was the decision an individual choice?
- What are potential reasons why students refuse to seek counseling?
- Is the general UIUC student body aware of the existence of the Women's Programs?
- How does the UIUC student body feel about the Women's Programs? Do they feel like there is a need for such a program?
- Are their differences about the ideas/feelings about the Women's Programs between female and male students?
- Are there differences in awareness about the Women's Programs with regards to academic year? (Example: Does the time you have been a student affect knowledge/awareness?)

Macro-level:

- Compared to the Office of Women's Programs, how could a potential Women's Center resolve problems (e.g. promotional work, financial resources, staff and space limitations) they are currently facing?
• To what extent is student safety, health and general wellbeing an issue the campus administration should be involved in, and to what extent is it a private concern?

• How do campuses in other states deal with the issues at stake and what forms of awareness and promotion take place at these institutions?

RESEARCH

Interviewing

• With regards to qualitative research we would like to interview individuals that are working at the Office of Women’s Programs.

• Further we would like to design a short (quantitative) questionnaire for the UIUC student body, concerning awareness about the Office for Women's Programs and the need for it. The questionnaire will be handed out to a representative sample of students.

• If possible, we wish to do interviews/design a questionnaire (depending on approval of the office) with students that use the Office of Women’s Programs in order to get a better understanding of their feeling about the space provided to them.

Library/Archives

We wish to get a better understanding about how women's issues have evolved over time and how the campus responded to the issues/wishes expressed by women. We plan on looking at the role feminist publications played in bringing about change in women's needs, as well as their possible role in eventually bringing about the Office for Women's Programs. Also we want to look at the history of the office itself and changes that have been done throughout its existence. (e.g. When was it established? Why?, etc.)