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1996 General Correspondence

Chris Rasche

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COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
*Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice***MEMORANDUM****DATE:** October 1, 1996**TO:** Officers, Executive Counselors, and Committee Chairs of
the Division on Women and Crime:

Lynne Goodstein, Past Chair	Lynn Chancer, Outreach Comm.
Nicky Rafter, Vice Chair	Susan Caringella-MacDonald,
JoAnne Belknap, Secretary	ASC Awards & Fellows
Susan Caulfield, Exec. Counselor	Carole Thompson, Nominations
Phoebe Stambaugh, Exec. Counselor	Helen Eigenberg, Student Affairs
Brenda Miller, Special Events	Nicky Rafter, Mentoring Comm.
Susan Krumholz, DWC Constitution Revision Committee	Nanci Koser Wilson, Archives
Nancy Jurik, Division Programming	Kay Scarborough, DWC Student Paper Competition Comm.
Nancy Wonders, Task Force on the Role of Men in the Division	Evelyn Gilbert, Task Force on Women in Prison

FROM: Chris Rasche, Chairperson **RE:** Upcoming Executive Board Meeting and Division Meetings in Chicago

In just six weeks we will be gathering together in Chicago for the annual ASC meetings and our two annual Business Meetings. It is extremely difficult for me to believe that a whole year has gone by so quickly!

³This is to remind you that the DWC Executive Board will meet on Wednesday, November 20 from 2:15 to 4:45 pm in the O'Hare Room on the 10th floor. All DWC officers and Executive Counselors are expected to attend if at all possible. Committee chairs are also welcome and encouraged to attend. Our special Plenary Session on "25 Years of Women in Criminology" will follow at 5:00 pm, which will be followed, in turn, by our annual Social Hour which will also celebrate 25 years of women's participation in criminology. I certainly hope you have all made your reservations for the Social Hour!

The main purpose of the Executive Board meeting is to set the agenda for the two DWC Business Meetings which will occur on Thursday and Friday mornings, November 21 and 22, from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. While there is a general agenda which we always follow, in accordance with parliamentary procedure, the specifics of the business to come before the Division in our meetings

needs to be reviewed and any problems anticipated. This is an opportunity for the leadership of the Division to raise and discuss issues which need to be presented to the larger membership--or which might be otherwise resolved. It is very important for Division officers and Executive Counselors to attend, but all Division leaders are invited and welcome.

Committee Chairs, it is requested that you be prepared at the Division Meetings to submit your report (or at least a summary thereof) in writing to the DWC Secretary. If your committee has something on which the membership needs to vote, it is advisable to have it also in writing, with at least 40 copies to pass out to the membership during the meeting. This is particularly true for resolutions or other items in which the specific language is important. Having items in writing, with copies enough to pass around, merely facilitates the membership considering and voting on matters.

If you are not going to be able to be in attendance in Chicago, please send me your written committee report and any action items at least one full week in advance of the ASC meetings. You may also ask another member of your committee to make your report for you, but your written report sent to me in advance will still be appreciated. If your committee has been inactive, or there is some other problem, just let me know.

You can contact me at the University (904-646-2758/2850), at home [REDACTED] or by e-mail (crasche@unf.edu). Let me know how things are going! I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you in Chicago.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 24, 1996

TO: Dr. Majorie Zatz

FROM: Dr. Christine E. Rasche, Chair *CR*
Division on Women and Crime

RE: Responses to Questions About the Future of ASC

Sorry for the delay in getting these to you. I hope they are still of value to the work of the ASC leadership.

- 1. Regarding the role and advantages/disadvantages of divisions within ASC:**
Sociologists know that sub-units within organizations tend to naturally form when those organizations get big, and/or when some members find they have interests which are not fully addressed by the larger organization. To some degree it is inevitable that sub-units--whether formal or informal--will form within the ASC now that its members number in the thousands and several of those thousands show up for annual meetings. It is easy to feel lost in such a crowd.

The Division on Women and Crime was the first division created within the ASC. Its formation was the result (at least in part) of some ASC members believing that they needed a specific sub-unit within the larger organization to serve as a focus for those members (mostly those who were female or interested in gender issues) who otherwise felt somewhat lost or alienated within--or just ignored by--the larger organization. The Division replaced an informal Women's Caucus which was created initially to meet these needs. The Division has given many members interested in gender issues and many members who are women a "home" within the larger organization. It has also probably attracted to the larger organization some researchers or educators who sought such a "home" within the field of criminology and criminal justice.

Since the Division on Women and Crime was the first division, ASC was (as I recall) unclear about what rules should apply to the creation of such sub-units. I do not know if clear rules and policies were subsequently formulated prior to the approval of the formation of the other three divisions. If some members of the ASC leadership are now concerned about the possible proliferation of divisions, perhaps it is time to reconsider both the overall mission of the ASC (is it still serving all its members?) and

the policies and procedures by which official sub-units may be formed. I am sure no one wants dozens of sub-units within ASC if they are forming out of disenchantment with the larger organization--the life of ASC itself might be threatened under those conditions. On the other hand, recognizing the existence of subspecialties and unique focii within the highly diverse discipline of criminology/criminal justice may be necessary to prevent break-away efforts which could also threaten the existence of the larger organization. Clearer policies and more stringent procedures for the formation of divisions might be needed, however, to ensure that divisions are only created when they can be demonstrated to serve a special need of a significant portion of the membership or potential membership.

2. Regarding our growth goals, the recruitment of students, and enhancing diversity:

Growth is not, in itself, a necessary good. Growth only becomes valuable when it makes possible some goal of the organization. I do not have before me the mission statement or goals of the ASC, but it seems to me that the first question to be answered is whether some of our goals are made more possible by enhancing growth. And are any of our goals threatened by continued growth?

If the answer to the first question is yes, then recruitment of students--especially graduate students interested in entering the ranks of the professorate or research--is one way to enhance that growth. However, I work at a university with a graduate program whose students are NOT predominantly likely to go on to doctoral programs or seek careers in the professorate/research. Right now, ASC offers little of interest to those students. The only students I have been able to encourage to attend annual meetings or join the organization are those interested in one of the existing divisions or those who anticipate entering the teaching or research job markets soon. Going to annual meetings is an expensive proposition (for ALL of us!) and most students (like most of us) CANNOT expect their universities to offset those costs in any meaningful way. Perhaps some efforts should be directed at concrete ways in which to offset the high costs of attending conferences for students. Or are there other services we can provide to students?

After that, perhaps we need to ask ourselves: who do we wish to serve in the future? Right now we serve the professorate and research ranks better than we serve the ranks of ordinary working criminal justice professionals. I am NOT urging us to try to be all things to all people, but to the degree that we are less valuable to the working CJ professionals we will continue to only attract those graduate students interested in becoming educators and researchers. And those are probably NOT ever going to be the bulk of the graduate students out there in the world.

As to the question of diversity, I would argue that ASC has already come a long way in enhancing the diversity of its membership and its leadership. We need to continue the kinds of critical questioning about our traditions and our current practices which has led to change in the past. For example, I would argue that we need to examine the tradition of awarding "Fellows" status to some members. Aside from the gendered name of this award, it clear from an examination of the list of our Fellows that, until

the last few years, virtually all of them have been white males. Perhaps this is an accurate reflection of what the membership of ASC--and the discipline--has been in the past; it is no longer accurate. Perhaps we need to re-examine this award, both its purpose and its name, and question whether it still recognizes something valuable within the organization--and what message about the organization it sends to our members and prospective members.

3. Regarding new services, dues, and annual meetings:

By comparison to many professional organizations, the dues and registration fees of the ASC are very modest. This is not necessarily a bad thing. It is not clear to me that my colleagues who belong to more expensive organizations in other disciplines receive a lot more valuable services than we do at the present time.

For me to decide whether or not it was time to raise dues and expand services would require my being able to consider a list of services which the ASC could provide to a substantial proportion of its members if there were additional funds. Frankly, I belong to the ASC and I attend the annual meetings for the collegial visiting, the intellectual discussions, the new research, and the networking they provide. I do not need a bigger newsletter or more journal subscriptions or fancier meeting portfolios. Similarly, and perhaps because I am now acclimated to them, the ASC meetings seem largely OK to me. There is not enough time for everything, but I doubt we want to meet for a full week. There is too much going on at the same time, but I doubt we want to cut most of it out. We could institute a procedure of true refereed papers for the annual meeting, which would cut down on the numbers, but I am not sure whether I would want to do that. I rather like the idea that some people are working on their research right up until they leave for the conference! On the other hand, I have listened to some trash which probably should have been weeded out beforehand. If we change we will gain something and lose something, so I recommend that we assess carefully the value of what we might gain and might lose in any changes we make to the format of the annual meetings.

4. Regarding the role of the ASC in public policy debates:

I am one of those members who has thought for a long time that ASC had something to offer the public, our politicians, our legislators, and our working criminal justice professionals in the form of policy statements. I know that the very nature of the field of criminology/criminal justice, and the existing diversity of the membership, makes adopting any policy statements more difficult than it might be in some other organizations. And I am not proposing that we stand up and issue policy statements every year--or even every five years. But there ARE some facts and/or findings which appear to be fairly well established scientifically within our body of knowledge and it is difficult to understand why we don't proclaim these to the world. Yes, it is true that science can make new discoveries tomorrow which changes those facts/findings; but when that happens true scientists stand up and say "New evidence causes us to change our minds!"

If policy statements are done with great deliberation and relatively infrequently, then

our word will come to mean something and our body of knowledge can have a direct impact on public policy.

Now it is true that adopting any policy might disenchant those members who disagree with that policy. There is always the risk of losing members who disagree. But we might also gain members who want to be involved in an organization which stands for something. And the process of policy consideration and evaluation might lend a new spirit of dialogue to the ASC which sometimes seems to be lacking. I would urge the leadership to set up a committee or task force charged to: (1) assess the experience of other organizations who DO make policy statements; (2) gather some suggested procedures by which the ASC could consider proposed policy statements; (3) gather procedures for the re-evaluation of past policy statements in the light of new knowledge; and (4) make a proposal on this matter for the leadership/membership to consider. I do not think that acceptance or rejection of a policy about making policy statements should be derived in the absence of more knowledge than we presently have.

Thank you for soliciting my opinion on these matters. I have tried to answer on behalf of the Division on Women and Crime, but I believe my responses should be regarded more accurately as being only my own. Should the ASC leadership decide to pursue any of these questions more thoroughly, I will be glad to assess the opinions of the Division members more scientifically.