

**Committee for the Concerns of Women**  
**Assessment of the Ruthe Boyea Women's Center**  
**(updated Feb 5, 2020)**

**Written by Jessica Greenebaum, Ph.D.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Greenebaum", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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**Statement of Purpose**

This information is compiled by members of the Committee of the Concerns of Women (CCW) with assistance from the staff of the Ruthe Boyea Women's Center. This document begins by providing a history and mission of the Women's Center. We describe the current staffing and organizational structure and the obstacles facing the Center. We then feature the many, but not all, of the policy and programs initiated and implemented by the Women's Center. They are divided into three categories: (1) Policies, (2) Campaigns and Programs, (3) Support Groups and Professional Networking Activities. Next we list of the distinguished guest speakers organized and hosted by the Women's Center in coordination with other campus programs. We then highlight the work involved in training students that work in the Center. Finally, we introduce the future goals and visions of the Women's Center and provide recommendations for the committee to help the Women's Center achieve its mission. CCW is grateful for the opportunity to show you the impressive work conducted by the Women's Center over the past 20 years.

## **History and Mission**

### **History**

Central Connecticut State University opened the Women's Center in 1977. The Women's Center had two part-time coordinators, Ruthe Boyea and Doris Honig Guenter. The Women's Center began as a student focused center supporting the needs of female students enrolled in college in the 1970s. It was previously housed under Student Affairs. In 1989, with advocacy from the campus community, the Center was renamed the Ruthe Boyea Women's Center.

In 2000, under the Presidency of Dr. Richard Judd, the Center appointed its first full time Coordinator, Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin. She was tasked to expand the Women's Center to focus on the need of women's faculty, staff, as well as students.

In 2004, the Committee on the Concerns of Women advocated for a Program Assistant to provide services to the campus community and assisted with the supervision of the students. Monique Daley was the Program Assistant from 2007 until she resigned in 2011 and has not been replaced with another Program Assistant. Jacqueline was operating the Center alone for seven years until CCW successfully advocated for a University Assistant (part time) hired in 2018, which is currently occupied by Olga Fritho.

As the vision of the Women's Center expanded to align with the national focus on intersectionality in the women's movement, the CCW advocated for the Ruthe Boyea Women's Center to be moved from Student Affairs to the Office of Diversity and Equity in order to address campus climate issues and advocate for intersectional issues addressing women, such as race, class, and sexuality.

### **Mission**

The Ruthe Boyea Women's Center exists to provide resources, to advocate, to inform, and to support personal, academic, and professional development. The Center offers a variety of services for women about women. The Center sponsors educational and cultural programs designed to promote gender equity, knowledge of women's rights issues, leadership, and independence. The Center programming is designed to encourage understanding and cooperation among women of varied socio-economic groups, cultures, ethnic backgrounds, races and sexual orientations. All women and men are welcomed to the Center.

### **Purpose and Need of Women's Centers in Academic Settings**

Women's Centers across the nation serve as an advocacy role for women on campus to provide a safe working and learning conditions for the campus community. They endorse equity in education, work to end violence against women, enhance women's leadership abilities and promote various leadership styles. Women's advocacy and support to faculty, students, and staff and lead the university towards greater gender equity. Nationally and internationally Women's Center staff are recognized to be one of the lead voices of women's equality on college campuses. Women's Centers are identified as a safe space for students, faculty, and staff to address their needs, socialize and network and also serve as a resource center for the entire campus community. The Ruthe Boyea Women's Center collaborates with student organizations, Presidential Committees, academic programs, and campus wide organizations. They organize speakers and events on current issues affecting women in society. They also effectively link academia to community outreach by providing resources about community organizations and resources.

### **Programs, Activities, and Initiatives**

The Ruthe Boyea Women's Center developed, organized, and advocated for the following programs, activities, and initiatives on campus.

#### **Policies**

- Developed CCSU's Consensual Relationship Policy.
- Advocated for elimination of the Sexual Assault 90-Day Reporting Policy.
- Advocated for syllabus inclusion of the Sexual Misconduct Policy.
- Identified and advocated for the implementation of the online Sexual Harassment training for all campus members.
- Identified and advocated for implementation of the new Sexual Misconduct policy and the inclusion of sexual exploitation, consent, and definitions used by the BOR.
- Advocated for an online sexual assault reporting form.
- Identified, advocated for an implemented the need for sexual assault to be included under "rape" in the A to Z index.

- Developed the start of the Sexual Harassment Online Training.
- Advocated for the implementation of CCSU campus climate survey to address campus mobbing.
- Advocated for the implementation of the campus safety walk.
- Identified and advocated for visible lactation spaces on campus.
- Defended the Mildred Barrows Residence Hall to remain all female.
- Identified and advocated for the need for condom machines in residence halls.
- Working on anti-Bullying policy and continue to work towards an anti-mobbing policy.
- Created the Women of Color subcommittee for the Committee on the Concern of Women.
- Identified and advocated for the inclusion of people of color into the Student Center Graduate Program Internship.

### **Campaigns and Programs**

- Implemented the “CCSU Red Flag” Campaign.
- Created the “We Believe You” Campaign.
- Implemented the “I Don’t Owe You” Campaign.
- Created the “RESIGN” campaign as a response to the #METOO and Times UP movement and rising claims of sexual assault, harassment, and misconduct at CCSU.
- Organized the “Walk of No Shame,” a movement to end slut shaming and a rally to end sexual harassment (annual event).
- Lead the “White Ribbon Campaign,” An international campaign where men take the pledge to end violence against women.
- Created and implemented the White Rose/Cord Women of Color Graduation Ceremony.
- Lead the ElectHer campaign to train and organize women to run for student government.
- Hold the Vagina Monologues annually.
- Initiated the “Sweet Start” program that provides first-year students with the tools needed to become a university leader.
- Hosts the “Start Smart” workshops that teaches students how to negotiate salaries.
- Hosts “Telling HerStory,” a monthly brown bag lunch series highlighting female faculty and staff on campus.
- Identified and implemented the “I Am Title IX”: a celebration for women athletes at CCSU for three years in a row.
- Established the “Girls and Stem Expo”, an annual event that supports women in STEM.
- Hosts Latina Talks, an event that highlights CCSU Latina alumni.
- Hosts the “Love Jones” Poetry Slam and Open Mic Night.
- Hosts the Women’s Night In -a social event that highlights friendship and self-love.

### **Student Support Groups and Professional Networking Activities**

- United Sisters Support group for African American and Caribbean women

- Latina Leadership and Personal Development support group
- Student Parent Support group
- Women’s Happy Hour- a networking social hour where women can gather in unity, release and provide support for one another in a safe space.
- Identified and implemented Women of Color Luncheon and keynote speaker for women of color faculty and staff.
- YMCA outreach Middle and high school female students participating in YWCA program

### **Distinguished Guest Speakers**

In addition to these programs, the Women’s Center, alone and in coordination with other campus departments and organizations, coordinated many inspirational talks from distinguished leaders, including but not limited to:

- Gloria Steinem, women’s rights activists and author
- Robin Morgan, women’s rights activists and author
- Sarah Weddington, the attorney who argued the landmark Supreme Court case Roe v. Wade
- Peggy McIntosh, anti-racist scholar
- Jane Elliot, anti-racist scholar and creator of the “Brown Eye, Blue Eye Experiment”
- Judy Norseiagn, former executive director of “Our Body, Ourselves”
- Bernie Sandler, driving force and “godmother” of Title IX
- Elaine Brown, activist, author and former Black Panther Party chairwomen
- Alina Fernandez, Cuban anti-communist activist and Fidel Castro’s daughter
- Lilly Ledbetter, Equal Pay activists, namesake of Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, first bill signed into office by President Barack Obama
- Esmeralda Santiago, Puerto Rican author
- Carol Mosley-Braun, US Congressman, Former Democratic Candidate for President
- Mildred Muhammed, DC Sniper’s wife
- Hydeia Broadbent, AIDS activist, First Child Born HIV+
- Martine Rothblatt: Inventor and founder of Sirius XM radio
- Amy Richards, women’s rights activists, author, and producer and co-founder of Third Wave Foundation
- Judy Richardson, author, film director, “Eyes on the Prize”
- Gwen Harworth, Transgender activists, film director “She’s a Boy I know”
- Senator Richard Blumenthal, US Senator
- Zerlina Maxwell, CNN news reporter, TV host, and political analyst

### **Training Student Leaders**

The coordinator of the Women's Center supervises approximately 12-15 students each year. These students compose of interns, student workers, and volunteers. Students arrive to the Center with little to no experience organizing and promoting events on campus. They also have limited knowledge on women's issues and effective advocacy. The Women's Center prides itself on providing student staff with the skills they need for academic success and professional leadership. Worker training includes, but is not limited to:

- All University Policies
- Sexual Assault Training
- Sexual Harassment Training
- Domestic Violence Training
- Event Expectation (step by step guide)
- Calendars (step by step guide)
- Postering (step by step guide)
- Event Dates
- Copy Center Policies
- Time Management Tips
- Mentor/Mentee Roles
- Office Etiquette
- Emergency Procedures
- Cultural Resource Centers Information
- Women's Issues
- Study Skills
- Resume Building
- Mentorship Program training

### **Established Relationships with Connecticut based Organizations and other Higher Education Institutions**

The Ruthe Boyea Women's Center affirms the mission of the Carnegie Foundation for Community Engagement. The Center currently have established relationship with the following organizations based in Connecticut and higher education institutions, and hope to create new affiliations with additional organizations that empower women. CCW would like to highlight a recent collaboration with faculty at Capitol Community College (CCC). Two faculty members from the Social and Behavioral Sciences Department at CCC acquired assistance from Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin with the establishment of a women's center. They were impressed with the modality used at the CCSU Women's Center to engage student workers and develop and implement diverse programming to meet the needs of campus women. This consultation included planning to facilitate the transition of the female CCC students to Central through engagement in the Women's Center. This collaboration is a project in progress that the parties involved seek to be able to concretize soon.

- Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
- American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- United States of Women
- YWCA
- CT Alliance
- CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)
- Planned Parenthood
- Prudence Crandall Center
- Capital Community College

### **Obstacles Faced at the Women’s Center**

The Ruthe Boyea Women’s Center faces similar challenges and obstacles as Women’s Centers across the country. Three primary issues faced by the Women’s Center are lack of staffing, lack of funding, and lack of institutional support.

#### **Lack of Staffing**

As stated earlier, Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin was hired in 2000 under the Presidency of Dr. Richard Judd. She was the first full time Coordinator of the Women’s Center. In 2004, the Committee on the Concerns of Women advocated for a Program Assistant to provide services to the campus community and assisted with the supervision of the students. Monique Daley was the Program Assistant from 2007-2011 and has not been replaced with another Program Assistant.

Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin operated the Center alone for seven years until CCW successfully advocated for a part time University Assistant hire in 2018, which is currently occupied by Olga Fritho. They supervise fifteen student workers (interns, work study, volunteers).

The current staffing situation is:

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1) one Full time Coordinator                            | 40+ hours a week (flex) |
| 2) one Part-Time University Assistant                   | 19 hours a week (flex)  |
| 3) 15 Student Workers (Interns, Work Study, Volunteers) | 5-6 hours a week (flex) |

It is important that the Assessment Committee understands that internships last for one-semester and the staff is required to train a new group of students each semester (see pg. 5 for more info) which is labor intensive and time consuming. Unlike many offices on campus, the Women’s Center does not close its doors at 4:30. Events and events planning occur in the morning, afternoon, and evening and the hours interfere with work-life balance.

#### **Lack of funding:**

Similar to many offices and programs on campus, the Women's Center's budget has not been increased since 2000 and is not on par with the needs of the center to operate at its capacity. It is CCW's understanding that the Women's Center has had difficulty obtaining additional funds for programming. In the past, the Women's Center has received money from SGA but their new bylaw no longer allows the Women's Center to seek funding as a department. In addition, the past leadership of the Office of Diversity and Equity (now known as the Office of Diversity and Inclusion) has refused to fund programs, such as the Jane Elliot lecture on Power, Perception, and Prejudice on March 20, 2016. The lack of funding has reduced the ability to bring legendary speakers on campus (see past speakers pg. 5-7). Furthermore, the increase in catering costs had made it more difficult to host the many activities and events that support students, faculty, and staff.

### **Lack of Collaboration and Institutional Support:**

Women's Centers on college campuses act as a tool of empowerment, development, improvement and social agents of positive change. As stated earlier, the role of a Women's Center director is to be a leading voice of women's equality on college. This is often difficult due to unconscious bias that people have towards women in leadership positions (Filut, Kaatz, and Carnes 2017). CCW recognizes this challenge and believes problems have occurred due to a lack of understanding of the work that Women's Centers do to advocate for gender equity. In fact, CCW has noticed a decline in campus community working with the Women's Center under the direction of the former Chief Diversity Officer Rosa Rodriguez. For example, the Center no longer receives Campus Duty Reports, its programs and events are rarely posted on CCSU's main website, and it is no longer included in the Resident Life or RA orientations and first year student orientations.

According to the Women's Center, they no longer receive Campus Duty Reports, their programs and events are rarely posted on CCSU's main website, and they now lack a presence at RA orientations and first year orientations.

### **Goals and Visions**

The Ruthe Boyea Women's Center advocates for all women on campus. The Women's Center will provide annual events and campaigns, and work with the campus community to bring in speakers, conferences, events, and workshops. In addition, the Women's Center hopes to extend their operation to:

- Assist with recruitment and retention of female faculty, staff and students
- Maintaining alumni relationships and work with Alumni Affairs to provide networking and mentorship opportunities between students and alumni
- To help promote CCSU within the local community and on a national level as pertained to women's issues and event coordination
- Restart women's leadership weekend retreats

- Provide funding for various conference opportunities to support female students on campus
- Continue to provide workshops and trainings on various women's issues and concerns for the entire campus community and surrounding areas
- To be a key stakeholder on campus community discussions pertaining to the campus climate, recruitment strategies, retentions strategies, and policy development.
- To serve as a model to other higher education institutions that seek to establish women's centers.

### **CCW Recommendations**

Research has shown that Women's Centers work best when they work in collaboration with other organizations and programs on campus (Bonebright, et al, p. 92). Therefore, CCW recommends the following to address the lack of staffing, funding, and the collaboration and institutional support

#### **CCW Recommendations to Address Lack of Staffing**

- 1) We recommend promoting Jacqueline Cobbina Boivin from the position of full time Coordinator to full time Director to follow the national trend of staffing in women's Centers.
- 2) Hire one additional full time Assistant Director, (once again following national trend) to help with program development and implementation, operational support, student supervision, and crisis support at 40 hours a week
- 3) Hire one part-time University office assistant at 19 hours a week to provide administrative support.
- 4) Hire 10-15 Student Workers: Consisting of Interns, Work-Study Students and Volunteers 5- 6 hours a week.

#### **CCW Recommendations to Address Lack of Funding**

CCW recommends a budget increase to help the Women's Center support the following objectives:

- Provide co-sponsorships with university-wide programs
- Honorarium for speakers
- Movies for educational purposes
- Leadership program licensing
- Student leadership workshops and conference
- Ceremonies, Awards, and Recognitions
- Promotional funds to bring awareness to the Center
- Student labor funds

## **CCW Recommendations to Address Lack of Collaboration and Institutional Support**

- 1) Reinstate Women's Center access to Campus Duty Reports.
- 2) Reinstate Women's Center and ResLife partnership.
- 3) Reinstate Women's Center and Department of Athletics partnership.
- 4) Women's Centers should be listed among digital and print support resources for students, faculty, and staff.
- 5) Full support with marketing events on programs on campus.
- 6) Support and appreciation for the diverse styles of women's leadership.

### **References**

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**Appendix**  
**Statements of Impact**  
**Ruthe Boyea Women's Center**

**Current Students\***

Trinitee W.  
Class of 2022  
Computer Science Major

To me the women's center represents a place of growth. From the perspective of an employee, it's similar to a job that someone would get post college. It prepares you for the work force with the skills you develop through your time at the women's center. It impacts the community around me because it's a place that is student oriented. Everything that the Women's Center does is for the benefit of the students on campus to help them be successful now and in the future.

Zoie O.  
Class of 2022  
Social Work Major

The women's center to me means another family, a group of people who will help me succeed and achieve my most important goals while improving my networking capabilities and continuing to be a female leader. The women's center has helped me have more confidence in myself and has helped me continue to be the best possible version of me.

Brandy S.  
Class of 2021  
Marriage and Family Therapy Graduate Program

The women center means a lot to me because it has helped me grow and learn. I feel more confident as I can enter an internship this semester because of the training and work I have accomplished at the women's center. It highly impacts the community with all the helpful information and programs we share with our active students to improve campus culture to foster to various women. Our work to promote positive growth and wellness on campus is amazing.

Xandria B.  
Class of 2020  
Biology Major:

To me the Women's Center means growth. I am challenged in ways that my formal education doesn't, and this means I am able to grow as an academic and a student of life. The center teaches me how to fight for injustice in ways that actually make a difference. To me it is also femininity and strength, a stronghold to bring awareness to inequities while a force that assist combating those inequities to reach equity for ALL. When I come to work ready to complete the

task at hand, I feel bold and the accountability we face makes me feel like a woman being prepared for the real world.

Juliana S.  
Class of 2021  
Elementary Education Major:

The Women's Center to me is a safe place. A place to feel empowered, accepted, inspired, and beautiful. The women's center has made me the woman I am today; a confident, strong and determined woman. Throughout all the mentors, role models and workshops I came across, I became so much more knowledgeable. I am knowledgeable on topics that affect our climate and people on a daily basis such as racism, equal rights, sexual assault, body shaming, gender gap wage, and mental health. The paths u discover from the women's center is endless and the community can always find an answer they need at the Women's center.

Paola Z.  
Class of 2022  
Airbridge Student/Psychology Major:

To me, Women's center means an opportunity to start over. This place gives me hope and makes me feel like I can succeed in my field of study, develop lifelong friendships, network and grow personally/professionally. The women's center is all about fearlessness, empowerment, community and opportunity. This center has impacted me, not only by what they do, but by what they stand for. The amount of love and support I have received since I first started being a part of their team has been immensely fulfilling. I am really happy to be a part of their family and hope to keep working with them for many years to come. ❤️

Jason A.  
Class of 2020  
Engineering Major

During my tenure at the Women Center, I was a Senior Event Coordinator Volunteer where I assisted with the planning and running of various events and campaigns. The Women's Center not only provided me with support but also exposing me to various issues that I would have otherwise overlooked. These issues include maternity leave, mental health awareness, intersectionality, and biases that one may hold without even noticing. The greatest memories I have of the women center involve the laughs and struggles I shared whether it was prepping for an event or a late-night studying for finals in the women's center lounge. I encountered about the Women's Center during my first semester at the club drive. The Women's Center made me reevaluate myself and push for continuous growth as an individual and professional.

Tess A.  
Class of 2021  
Psychology Major

The Women's Center has impacted me by being a place that has been very welcoming and passionate about our representation on campus. I love how everyone in the center has their own personality and style yet can still all come together to make such a difference in our community. I think the center has done a great job influencing people on campus to get more involved and allow people to express themselves. The Women's Center supports all women on campus and has helped improve female athletes marketing. It has also been a place that is accepting of everyone no matter what. It is an amazing environment to work in and has helped me develop professionally and socially. Can't wait for the upcoming events!

**Student Alumni**

Olutayo A. Sogunro  
General Surgeon

My experience at the Ruthe Boyea Women's Center definitely contributed to the woman I have become. I was very involved with Women's Health at the Women's Center as I believe knowledge is power, especially in healthcare. Under the directorship of Jackie Cobbina-Bovin, I was empowered to learn about women's health issues and provide education to the CCSU community. I am honored to be a part of the Women's Center family.

Aeisha Lewis  
Clinician with the Caregiver Support Team, Community Health Resources

As the graduate assistant at the Women's Center for 2.5 years, along with the planning and organizing of events, I was also able to serve a defacto mentor for the younger undergraduate student who worked in the office. This experience provided me with a chance to gain familiarity with working with young adults dealing with the stressors of college life and being on their own for the first time. As a Marriage and Family Therapist, this has been invaluable to my post-graduate work with families.

Ryan Milan  
Graphic Designer/Communications Coordinator, Pace University

Working at the Women's Center help me land a job after graduation. As a student employee at the WOMEN'S CENTER I received professional work experience equal to an internship. I built my design portfolio, creating pieces for center's distinguished guest speakers, whom I also got to meet and learn from. I transferred the skills I learned at the WOMEN'S CENTER to my current career in higher education and I am forever grateful for all that the Women's Center provided me.

Joanne Gaillard

Project Manager, Haiti

The time that I spent as the Women's Center has shaped who I am today. I became and advocate over the years for many women stateside and abroad with skills that I obtained at the Women's Center. During the time there I learned that my role as a woman is not only to stand up for myself but for the many women in my life, and the communities that I serve. I encourage other young women to get involved in their local Women's Center as I did many years ago as it will be a life changing experience.

\*These have not been edited. Please see attached documents for more testimonials