

ACSA WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

FRANCES BRONET, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON AND JUDITH SHEINE, CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

The Women's Leadership Council (WLC) is a new organization that is beginning to define its mission. Beverly Willis, who has worked to promote scholarship of women architects through the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation, first organized a meeting of senior women architecture faculty and administrators at the 2007 ACSA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. She believed that if she could bring this group together that it might be possible to figure out what to do to promote women in architectural education and consequently in the profession as well. Several members of that group including Frances Bronet, Geraldine Forbes, Judith Sheine, and Christine Theodoropoulos have been holding meetings at the ACSA Annual and Administrators meetings since then.

So, what are the issues that the group wants to tackle? Well, primarily, there is the continuing issue of under-representation. In the *Design Intelligence* list of Most Admired Educators in 2009, of the 26 educators identified, only one, Denise Guerin is a woman (and she is in the field of interior design). Adèle Naudé Santos, the 2009 recipient of the AIA/ACSA Topaz Medallion for Excellence in Architectural Education, is only the second woman to receive this honor and ACSA Distinguished Professors have included only 13 women among the 102 awardees. These statistics are starting to change though, as Jane Ghaboury of DI notes:

"This year's Most Admired Educators list includes five women, so we see that as an improvement. And, in fact, we have recognized Adèle Santos with our highest designation as a Design Futures Council Senior Fellow (http://www.di.net/about/senior_fellows/).

In some ways, the demographics are stacked against us in terms of gender diversity in the architecture profession. According to NAAB's "2008 Report on Accreditation in Architecture Education," 41% of students and degree earners are female. However, only 26% of faculty are. And while I don't have data on the percentage of practicing architects who are female, I'm sure it's not anywhere near 41% and perhaps even lower than 26%. We expect that as the current student population begins to enter the professional pipeline, the number of women in architecture will become more balanced."

While the numbers are changing, the change is very, very slow. In the most recent AIA Large Firm Roundtable, not one of the partners of the LFRT at the meeting was female.

Clearly, the old girls' club is considerably smaller than the old boys' club and significantly less powerful. This means limited access to connections (why wasn't I invited to apply for that position/give a lecture/participate in a symposium?) and important information at the upper levels (what are Dean's salaries and how much should I ask for?) and at the lower levels (why does no one on the faculty ask me out to lunch/how much is an assistant professor's salary and how much should I ask for?). And there are other, more personal issues; while men are sharing more of the responsibilities for child-rearing these days, they cannot share the actual pregnancy, which brings up special problems of health insurance (it's a pre-existing condition). And more women faculty are adjuncts with no benefits at all. In addition, women find themselves frequently called to service roles early in their careers, which can limit their opportunities for professional and scholarly development. These are all issues that affect tenure and promotion, research and practice. The WLC believes that more diligent data collection and new studies from AIA, NAAB, NCARB and ACSA could further illuminate these issues.

After a number of discussions, several goals have emerged. One of our missions is to have more senior women mentor more junior ones; if the old girls' club is not very big, at least it can be organized. The group is offering mentoring sessions at the ACSA Annual Meetings and is working to develop a network so that junior faculty can seek advice and help at any time. At the senior level, the group is working to find a way to turn our extensive service and leadership experiences into scholarship, which would be a way of having this work recognized academically. The last WLC session at the 2009 ACSA Administrators Meeting in St. Louis focused on this issue. At the 2008 ACSA Administrators Meeting in Savannah, the WLC offered counseling to administrators about how to retain and hire women faculty. The session was very well attended by administrators, both male and female.

WLC meetings are open to anyone. We encourage all to come and work with us to advance women in architectural education. We are beginning to discover that the modes of leadership are not specific to women, that the models are good for all.

Celebrating 100 years in architectural education.

1912-2012

ACSA100.ORG

BOOK EDITED BY JOAN OCKMAN

EXHIBIT CURATED BY MAIA SMALL

JAE SPECIAL THEME ISSUE

MEETING 2012 IN BOSTON

MY STORY SHARE YOUR STORY