

## 2010 ATHENA NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY SUMMARY

Athena is a professional women's organization that has existed at the University of Idaho since 1987. It is an inclusive grassroots organization with the purpose of addressing the changing needs of all female staff and faculty on campus. Athena activities include co-hosting the biennial Women's Leadership Conference, informational brownbags, an annual fall welcome back social, an annual "Athena Woman of the Year Award" event and social, and social networking events off campus. In addition, the organization is able to provide an annual scholarship. For membership communication and on-going engagement, Athena hosts a listserv and website.

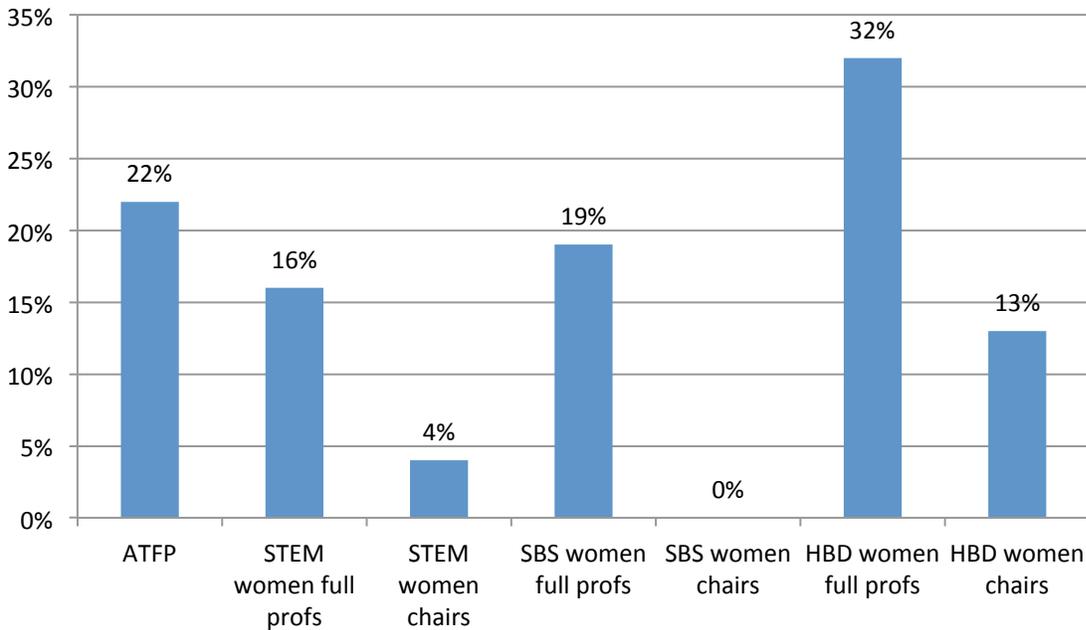
In September of 2010, an email survey was distributed to female staff and faculty in an effort to assess their needs and the role of Athena in serving its constituents. A total of 307 respondents participated in the survey. The survey assessed women's knowledge of and participation in Athena, what they thought the organization's priorities should be, workplace satisfaction, and it identified what respondents saw as a potential benefit to joining Athena. An open forum was held in mid November to discuss campus climate issues that emerged from the survey and to ask participants to further define the issues and help identify short and long term solutions. We first provide institutional context and then discuss the survey and forum findings.

### **Institutional Context**

A central aim of Athena is to assist the University of Idaho in meeting its culture and climate goals in regards to developing a respectful workplace in which a diverse staff and faculty are retained and provided with opportunities to grow and advance professionally. Institutional data suggest a need for action plans and resources to realize these goals.

The most recent campus wide climate survey was conducted in 2003 by scholars from the University of Michigan and the University of Connecticut. 1,711 employees responded to the Respectful Climate Survey. Approximately half (51%) of the respondents were female and had held their current position at the UI for an average of 10 years. Some of the key findings include: 1) While most employee participants had not experienced workplace exclusion (70%), most had experienced at least one instance of incivility (74%) though there were no gender differences found; 2) Irregular help and service maintenance employees were more likely to experience both sex-related and sexual minority hostility over all other university groups; 3) a correlation between experiences of incivility and job satisfaction existed; the higher the level of incivility, the less satisfied participants were with their job. More specifically, participants were asked, "What concerns you most about the climate for women at this university?" A third of respondents identified gender-related job issues including equal pay, job advancement, and the need for women in leadership roles. Another 13% identified sexual harassment, sexist attitudes, male favoritism, and male chauvinism as barriers.

Another source of data from Institutional Research and Assessment indicate women are greatly underrepresented as full professors and in departmental leadership positions.



ATFP = All women tenured full professors

STEM women full profs = out of all STEM tenured full profs

SBS women full profs = Social and behavioral sciences women full profs out of all SBS full profs

HBD women full profs = humanities, business, design, and other department out of all HBD full profs

This institutional data suggests three key themes that require further attention: incivility, sex-related hostility, and workplace gender inequality including the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, unequal pay, and challenges with advancement. Improvements and continued assessment of the campus climate for women is warranted to ensure the University of Idaho meets its culture and climate goals. However, since 2003 the University of Idaho has not conducted a follow up campus wide climate survey which makes it difficult to assess progress and change. The 2010 Athena Assessment Survey, while not a representative sample, provides an important source of data to understand the status of women and the campus climate.

### **Athena Survey Demographics**

Respondents (n=307) worked in various positions across campus and UI locations; more respondents identified as staff (61%) with the remainder identifying as faculty or instructors (39%). Of the staff and faculty who participated, 27% identified as tenure track faculty, 6.8% identified as instructor, 5.5% identified as temporary faculty, and 6.2% identified as a department chair or other administrator. The majority of respondents were longtime UI employees with 43.3% of women reporting working at the UI for ten years or more.

### **Athena Knowledge and Benefits**

Over three-fourths of respondents had heard of Athena. However, only a third had attended an Athena event or had been asked to join Athena. The majority of respondents (79.6%) are not

members of Athena. Respondents viewed three main benefits to joining Athena: professional development 34.6%, networking 32.9%, and helping to create organizational change 24.6%.

### **Workplace Satisfaction & Challenges**

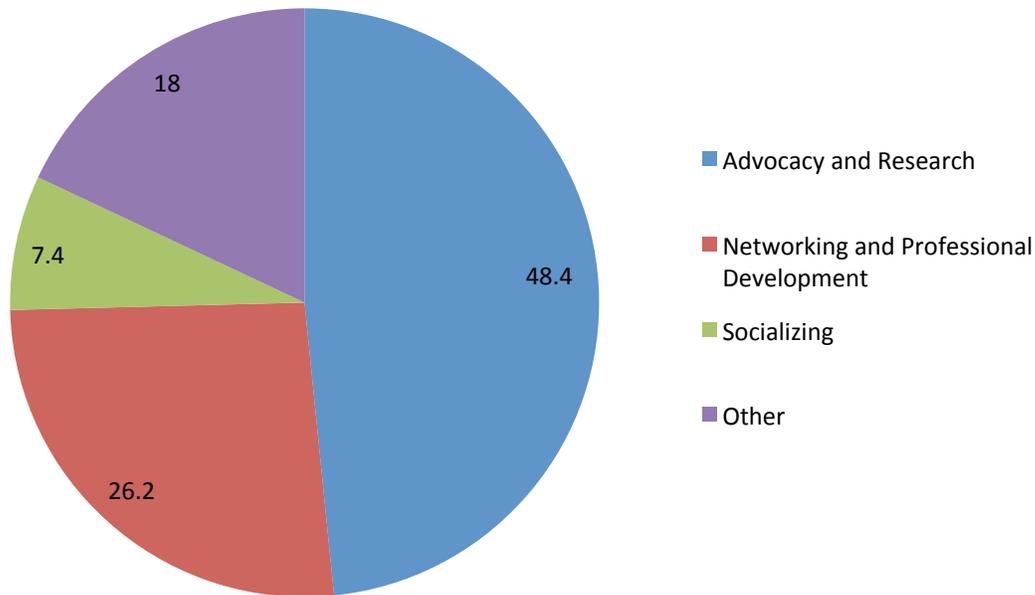
The survey also asked respondents to rate their workplace satisfaction and to identify potential areas of improvement that Athena could facilitate. In general, women are satisfied with their work experience at the University of Idaho. On a scale of 1 (least satisfied) to 5 (most satisfied), the mean was 3.61 in terms of work satisfaction. The majority of respondents (59.9%) are satisfied with interactions with colleagues in their work units. However, over a third (35.8%) are not satisfied with their access to professional development opportunities. In addition, a quarter of respondents (24.1%) are not satisfied with work-family balance. In terms of satisfaction with work evaluation processes, the mean was 3.16. However, over a fourth (27.2%) are not satisfied with the recognition they receive from their supervisor.

In response to the open-ended question, “What challenges do you face or needs do you have as a UI female staff or faculty member that Athena could address?,” a few women cited challenges that were shaped by broader institutional problems including diminishing resources, increased workload, or general incivility. For example, one woman said, “my frustrations aren’t ones that can be addressed by Athena as I have to deal with incompetency in my unit. This is not a female staff issue but a general staff issue.” Most respondents, however, reported significant challenges related to gender which led to a “chilly campus climate.” A large number of respondents believed Athena should serve as an advocate for their professional needs because of the gendered climate. Many respondents characterized the University of Idaho as a “good ol’ boys network” with a need for more women in leadership positions, equitable pay, and improved interactions with male colleagues. Women cited “gender bias in the workplace” as well as sexist attitudes from male colleagues. For example, one respondent said, “some male faculty fail to take women seriously as colleagues. There is still too much of the good old boy network around.” Another woman said, “I am asked or expected to do work because I am female that is not rewarded and recognized in my annual evaluations.” Similarly, many respondents discussed the need for more work-family balance. Many women cited a need for access to quality and lower-cost daycare. Many also discussed the unreasonable work hours of faculty and staff that made it difficult to enjoy family life.

### **Suggested Athena Priorities**

Respondents prioritized the role of Athena with advocacy (including researching workplace needs and publicizing findings) at the top. Other desired priorities are shown in the chart below.

## Athena Priorities



### **Fall Forum**

Athena hosted a November 16<sup>th</sup> forum to further explore the results of the needs assessment with a particular focus on workplace satisfaction. Participants were invited to form groups to discuss the following items that emerged from the needs assessment:

- Professional Development and Advancement (Staff)
- Professional Development and Advancement (Faculty)
- Work/Life Balance
- Recognition and Rewards (Staff)
- Recognition and Rewards (Faculty)
- Culture and Climate
- Open Issues

Groups were asked to discuss the issue in more depth, identify long and short term strategies to address the issues, articulate challenges to implementing strategies, and discuss how strategies might benefit women and the University of Idaho.

Among faculty, the discussions regarding professional development/advancement and recognition and rewards revealed common concerns including the lack of faculty mentoring, a need for better balance in teaching, research, and service demands, challenges in recognizing

interdisciplinary research and teaching, and problems with the current policy regarding tenure clock extensions.

Staff discussion concerning professional development/advancement and recognition/rewards revealed common concerns about limited opportunities for professional development, a devaluation of external (non-UI) work experience, limited staff cross-training, limited staff rewards and recognitions, inaccessible flex time for staff, salary equity, and the lack of respect and valuing of staff. Classified staff in particular felt that they were viewed in a quasi-servant capacity and not respected as professionals nor equal partners in the mission and goals of their unit and the university.

Both faculty and staff discussed culture and climate and work/life balance and shared the following concerns: poor ongoing assessment of UI culture and climate, inadequate maternity leave and inaccessible child care support, inflexible work structures, the “one deep” situation around the university, incivility, and sexism.

### **Summary Points**

The 2003 campus wide climate survey provides a historical snapshot of the overall campus climate. Three salient themes were incivility, sex-related hostility, and workplace gender inequality, which include the underrepresentation of women in leadership, unequal pay, and challenges with advancement. The data from the current Athena survey, while not generalizable, echo these same thematic concerns. Further, the Athena fall forum allowed women to provide more details on their experience. Clearly, the campus climate continues to feel chilly to many women, but the discussion also revealed broader campus climate issues regarding workload, civility, and appreciation.

While both reports show a general satisfaction with work at UI, concerns about workplace culture and climate are salient. These concerns are clearly linked to respondents’ desire for Athena to serve as an advocate on their behalf.

While Athena is pleased that three-fourths of the respondents had heard of Athena, it is uncertain how many women on campus have heard of the group. In addition, of those responding, only approximately 100 women reported attending an Athena event. This leaves a large number of women on our campuses without a voice in this data.

Our summary of institutional data, including the Athena survey, leads to potential action items Athena could embrace as a grassroots organization. Such actions will help us move forward in collaboration with the UI towards achieving its culture and climate goals.

### **Athena Action Items**

- Developing a public relations effort including increasing website presence, creating an Athena Facebook page, inviting all faculty and staff to events, and reaching out to new faculty and staff hires.

- Broadening our mission and activities to be more inclusive of the diversity of women on campus (and in our different UI locations). While Athena is a joint organization of staff and faculty, these constituents face different realities in terms of promotion and professional demands. Given this, it may be useful to have committees that address unique challenges faced by each group and to continue to work collaboratively on shared concerns.
- Continuing with advocacy on behalf of female staff and faculty. One suggestion to improve our advocacy capacities is to ensure Athena representatives are members on faculty senate and staff affairs committees. Another suggestion is to request that those bodies name an official liaison to Athena.
- Communicating more effectively with Athena members and non-members--publicizing advocacy efforts and other initiatives.
- Communicating our findings with President Nellis and developing a collaborative relationship towards improving the campus climate and gender equity.

Submitted on December 2, 2010 by the Athena Board Members: Shauna Corry, President; Debbie Storrs, Vice President; Carmen Suarez, Secretary; Emma Grindley, Treasurer; Julie Lang, Member-at-Large; Jodie Nicotra, Member-at-Large; Lynn Baird, Past President.