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Beckwith, Cynthia, "Task force finds women in lesser roles at UMaine" (1988). *Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion*. 634.

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The Daily Maine Campus

THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE NEWSPAPER SINCE 1875

Wednesday, September 7, 1988

vol. 103, no. 1

Task force finds women in lesser roles at UMaine

by Cynthia Beckwith
Staff Writer

Many women at the university find themselves in inferior roles in both the workplace and the classroom, according to a report that has received much attention since its release last month.

The Task Force on the Status of Women studied the roles of females at the university for more than six months. The group concluded that the university parallels society when it comes to the treatment of women, said Marisue Pickering, executive assistant to UMaine President Dale Lick.

Women faculty at the university are paid less on the average than their male counterparts and there are considerably fewer women in higher faculty and administrative positions according to the Task Force report.

The Task Force was appointed by President Lick on Dec. 2, 1987. The president was

concerned that women were being treated unfairly in many situations and he wished to document the facts so that changes could be made, Pickering said.

When Lick began searching for vice presidents last year, he was determined to fill at least one of the four vacancies with a female, Pickering said. But for various reasons he was not able to: This may be one of the reasons he wanted to make the problems surrounding women in today's society more noticeable to the university community, she said.

The pay discrepancy is an issue that is extremely complicated, said Sharon Jackiw, chair of the Task Force. She explained that many women accept lower salaries when negotiating a contract.

"Women are less likely than men to insist upon a higher salary," Jackiw said.

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● Women

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The reasons for this may be associated with the fact that many women are not as well prepared to bargain with college deans.

"Women as graduate students don't get the socialization to negotiate salaries," she said.

Both Jackiw and Pickering believe that the university lacks female professors to act as mentors to students.

Pickering said the university needs to be more aggressive in hiring women to these positions.

"We can certainly do better recruiting," Pickering said.

Jackiw believes than one way to make

salaries more equitable is to include salary ranges when advertising faculty openings. She admitted that advertising salaries has its drawbacks, but she feels it is important to decrease pay inequities.

In July the university used money from an administrators' discretionary fund to increase 700 faculty members' salaries by approximately 2 percent. These raises given to both males and females helped to narrow the gender gap.

Before the raises, females received on the average \$1,600 less than their male counterparts. After the increases this

number was reduced to about \$1,140.

Pickering said Lick will be meeting with his staff to discuss the recommendations made by the Task Force who will review it and make further recommendations.

Pickering said it is going to be very difficult to decide which issues are the most important. She said feasibility and the cost of the recommendations will play a big part in deciding which will be addressed first.

"Some of the recommendations that are inexpensive may get done first," she said.

Sexist language, inadequate child care, the lack of women in typically male-dominated fields, and the lack of value given to most female-dominated fields were several other areas addressed by the Task Force.

The report also indicated that female students often feel discriminated against in the classroom. One female student who had previously received straight A's in science courses told the Task Force she had been informed by a professor that women often do poorly in science and was advised to major in literature.

(see REPORT page 3)

● Report

(continued from page 2)

The Task Force held several open forums last semester which brought out several distressing stories. The Task Force report cites stories of students heckling a student who announced the open forums in class.

In addition, the report stresses the problem of date rape on campus and recommends that students be made more aware of the problem.

According to Pickering, awareness is one thing the Task Force report is achieving.

"The report raises the awareness of issues of value and what the status quo has been. The normative way of doing things tends to make it harder for women," Pickering said.

Jackiw said she has also noticed a great interest in the report. She said she has been approached by many people of the university community who are interested in reading the report and understanding how the information was collected.

Both Pickering and Jackiw hope that the report generates many changes at the university.

"Anything (that implies inequities) has got to change," said Jackiw.