The University of Washington
Special Committee on Faculty Women (SCFW)

The Special Committee on Faculty Women met Wednesday, February 21, 2001 in 36 Gerberding. Chair Barbara Krieger-Brockett presided.

PRESENT: Faculty Krieger-Brockett, Muecke, Waaland, Wilke. Ex officio Basu, Redalje, Remick.

ABSENT: Faculty DeWitt, Fligner, Frenkel, Kemp, Liu, Miller, Powell Ex officio Sengupta.

U-Week Article
SCFW Chair Barbara Krieger-Brockett announced that her article on the SCFW would be appearing in this week's issue of University Week (Thursday, Feb. 22, 2001). It is one of a series of U-Week articles on Faculty Councils and Committees of the Faculty Senate. She told the members that in the article she emphasized SCFW's major accomplishments, e.g. getting 'time off the tenure clock' for maternity leave, establishment of an e-mail list (facultyw@u.washington.edu) focusing on women's issues, and new resource links featured on the SCFW website (http://www.washington.edu/faculty/facsenate/councils/scfw/scfw.html). She felt that the Committee's efforts to serve as a source of information on the pending class-action lawsuit should not be a major focus of this article, and thus briefly mentioned it at the end of the article.

FCFA Issues
As SCFW is a sub-committee of the Faculty Council on Faculty Affairs (FCFA), Krieger-Brockett reported to the committee on issues of discussion at FCFA meetings. Two FCFA agenda items potentially important to faculty women are: 1.) Proposed changes to the University Copyright Policy (especially pertinent to those who use electronic media, are involved with distance learning, or post materials to the web) and 2.) Addressing the status of Lecturers and Senior Lecturers on campus. A large portion of this group is female (45%, vs. 28% for all faculty groups); therefore changes to the status of this group would affect women greatly. In particular, FCFA is addressing concerns that there is no clear promotion path from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and that Faculty members of this group are prohibited from receiving the Distinguished Teaching Award. Krieger-Brockett asked SCFW members to consider to what extent SCFW should be involved with these two issues; meanwhile, she will supply the members with draft copies of the proposed policy changes to review as they become available.

Continued Discussion of the Class-Action Suit--Possible Actions by SCFW
Krieger-Brockett reported that she attended a meeting at Harborview Medical Center (HMC) on Friday, January 19 regarding the class action discrimination suit filed against the University of Washington on behalf of five female Faculty members at UW. Prior to the meeting, Krieger-Brockett supplied SFCW's HMC contact Prof. Elinor Graham with the list of SCFW's questions regarding the suit (see January's minutes). The HMC women then added their own questions and presented them to Andrew Volk of Hagens Berman, the law firm representing the plaintiffs in the suit. Volk answered the questions at the meeting, but was only able to speak about the suit in general terms; thus the question and answer meeting turned into an informal, open discussion.

One big question that the HMC women had concerned participation (specifically, if a woman believed that she was well compensated relative to males in her specialty would her participation hurt the case?, and then, if she chose not to participate, would low numbers of participants hurt the case?). Volk's answer to this question was vague and left the decision to join up to an individual's own discretion according to their circumstances. HMC women, like SCFW members, were also concerned about possible publication of who joined the suit. Volk reminded them that their names would be part of the public record should
they decide to join the suit. Krieger-Brockett relayed to SCFW the message that HMC women do by-and-large feel that they are fairly treated by colleagues and superiors, but that treatment varies from unit-to-unit and is dependent on each Unit Leader's attitude.

It was pointed out that HMC women are not always privy to salary figures, as salary information is often not subject to public disclosure. On a related note, Krieger-Brockett mentioned that she recently had a conversation with Christine Surawicz, Chair of the UW Medical School's Committee on Faculty Women, in which she learned that a total salary survey of the Medical School had been conducted recently.

Regarding the status of the suit, Oda v. UW, Krieger-Brockett told the SCFW that the Faculty Women have been declared a "class", and that the suit is currently being reviewed by the State Court of Appeals (the District Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, a decision which the University appealed). Volk said that as long as the case is delayed in the appeals process, informational letters to Faculty women spelling out how they can participate in the suit cannot be sent out. As an alternative to a specific informational letter, Remick told the SCFW members that she has arranged to post the essential court documents (i.e. findings of the District Court, the University's response, the basis for appeal, expert testimonies, statistics, etc.) to the UW Faculty Senate's web-site.

Krieger-Brockett then asked the committee to decide on the nature of their future actions involving this suit. She asked the members to consider whether or not they wanted to sponsor a second question and answer session with Andrew Volk for Faculty women who did not attend the HMC meeting, and if so, what would be an ideal forum for that type of meeting. Krieger-Brockett emphasized that the meeting would be 'billed' as an important, useful, open, informational meeting and discussion session. There was a discussion about the importance of location and timing of such a meeting so as to take advantage of recent publicity, to ensure that the highest number of Faculty could attend, and to coincide with the University calendar. Also of consideration is the timing of this proposed meeting in relation to the timing of mailing a specific informational letter (if one were to be authorized). Krieger-Brockett expressed her desire to develop a strategy to deal with future events to ensure that the issues get 'out there' so people can consider possible individual suits they may want to file and so that the larger university community is forced to pay attention to this issue.

The committee members decided to sponsor a public, informational forum to be held sometime in early Spring Quarter 2001. Volk would be invited to answer questions. Wilke suggested that one email be sent to the Faculty announcing the meeting, notifying them of the posting of essential court documents to the Faculty Senate website, and supplying them with the list of SCFW's questions for review. The suggestion was approved by the members.

The meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m. Minutes by Katherine Wimble, Recorder.