Executive Summary
Experiences and Perceptions of Campus Climate for Women Faculty at Colorado State University
Spring 2017

Introduction
Institutions across the country are engaging in research on campus climate, diversity and gender-specific challenges in higher education. From campus climate to pay equity issues, solutions focused on increasing the number of women faculty in administrative positions has not created the change expected. In our efforts toward making Colorado State University (CSU) a premier institution for all faculty, including women faculty, President Frank charged the Standing Committee on the Status of Women Faculty (SCSWF), a division of the Commission on Women and Gender, to consider these issues. A 2015 campus-wide survey and a 2016 pilot focus group study, both conducted by the SCSWF, pointed to the need for a more in-depth examination of campus climate and women faculty’s experiences at CSU. An outside consultant was hired to conduct the study and work with the SCSWF’s research subcommittee to provide an understanding of how women faculty’s experiences could inform institutional next steps. The methods, findings, and recommendations from the study, Experiences and Perceptions of Campus Climate for Women Faculty at CSU, are summarized below.

Methods
This comprehensive study integrated data collected through focus groups, individual interviews, and an online written survey to examine the experiences and perceptions of the culture and climate for women faculty at Colorado State University. The research team paired an external researcher with six CSU faculty researchers (tenured and non-tenure track women) to strengthen validity and internal consistency. Maximum variation sampling drew 76 participants who identified as women, representing 12% of all women faculty at CSU, including non-tenure track (40%) and tenure track women (≈60%) faculty across all ranks as well as chairs and administrators. Faculty from seven of the eight colleges were represented in the study. Participants included 70 white women (92%) and six women of color (≈8%). Ages reported for the focus group and individual interview participants ranged from mid-twenties to late sixties. Across all three formats, considerable care was taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, who were asked to discuss their perceptions of campus climate for women faculty at CSU and experiences of women faculty, what changes would facilitate more equity, and how women faculty thrive at CSU. The research team drew on modified Grounded Theory methods to analyze all data, incorporating steadfast criteria for judging quality research in constructivist inquiry (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability), including interrater reliability and triangulation of data sources (focus group, interview, written responses), multiple statuses of participants (rank and appointment type, administrator), and multiple researchers (external and internal). Data analysis was rigorous and systematic, including a two-phase coding process, constant comparative methods, memo writing, relational mapping, systems analysis, and self-reflexivity.
Findings

Fourteen themes were identified from the study and represent the major findings.

1. **Persistent Gender Based Inequities**: Participants consistently reported gender-based inequities at both inter-personal and institutional levels.
2. **Gender Bias Has Significant Impacts**: Gender significantly shapes faculty experiences and perceptions, and gender bias impacts the professional status, productivity, health, and work satisfaction of women faculty.
3. **Micro-Cultures of Gender Inequity**: The experience of gender inequity is most pronounced within “micro-cultures,” i.e., at the level of academic unit (e.g. department).
4. **Bias as a Self-Perpetuating System**: Participants consider institutional structures and policies part of self-perpetuating systems of gender bias.
5. **Professional Dissonance**: Participants expressed profound and multifaceted conflicts between their personal/professional values and those of the institution.
6. **Evaluation Processes Work to Reinforce Inequities**: Participants viewed evaluation processes as erratic, unfair, and inconsistently applied.
7. **Lack of Leadership to Create Real Change**: Participants conveyed disillusion, distrust and/or cynicism regarding the possibility of making CSU a premier institution for women.
8. **Barriers for Grievances and Complaints**: Participants who turned to institutional systems with grievances or complaints often reported dissatisfaction with procedures and systemic barriers to resolutions.
9. **Rank Matters**: Gender inequity disproportionately affects non-tenure track (NTT) faculty.
10. **Carrying the Load**: Women faculty accomplish a disproportionate percentage of service and non-research related work.
11. **Both Women and Men in Leadership Identified as Problematic**: Concerns were expressed about both women and men in leadership roles engaging in actions and decisions that perpetuate the status quo.
12. **Accumulation of Gender Inequity**: Women who had been in the university for a long time were exhausted by having to continually battle sexism and bias.
13. **Women of Color and LGBT Faculty at Increased Risk for Inequity**: Women Faculty of color and LGBT faculty may experience being institutionally silenced and/or face more severe consequences for expressing concerns about equity.
14. **Women Faculty Thriving at CSU**: When asked what helped them to thrive, many women pointed to their colleagues and mentors (within and outside their home units) and work within professional societies as significant sources of support.
Recommendations

To improve our campus climate and culture, these findings must be addressed on a systemic and structural level. To that end we generated recommendations that address the specific findings in this study. Various groups across campus are already working to address many of the recommendations from this project. We look forward to working with the campus community on priorities and processes for implementing recommendations. All of the recommendations are guided by the ACT Framework:

- **Accountability (A):** Effective accountability measures—should be implemented for leadership at all levels.
- **Consistency (C):** Within units and at the larger institutional level, leadership decisions that impact faculty should be consistently applied.
- **Transparency (T):** At all levels, significant leadership decisions (and rationale for those decisions) should be clearly articulated and made accessible to the CSU community.

The primary recommendation from this study is to bring in an outside consultant with an expertise in organizational change and gender equity in higher education. It is our hope that an expert in this area can assist us in prioritizing the specific recommendations to create the institutional changes needed at CSU.

Specific recommendations are provided to address the challenges identified from the research findings. These challenges include:

1. **Current Leadership Model Lacks Accountability and Training for Chairs, Heads, Deans and Upper Administration.**
2. **Current Complaint & Grievance Processes (OEO, Conflict Resolution, Faculty Council Grievance Committee, Ombuds etc.)** often do not Adequately Resolve Gender-Related Concerns or Protect Complainants.
3. **Unit and University Culture Fosters Policies and Procedures that Adversely Affect Women Faculty Across Rank and Appointment.**
4. **Evaluation Protocols Need to Better Account for Potential Gender-Bias.**
5. **NTT Faculty are Disproportionately Vulnerable to Gender Bias and Associated Inequities.**
6. **Parental Leave Policies are Inconsistently Applied and Require Further Development.**
7. **Salary Equity remains a Challenge at all Levels and Appointment Types.**
8. **Faculty Search Policies and Advancement Opportunities often Impede Hiring of Women and Diverse Faculty.**
9. **Women Faculty are Responsible for a Disproportionate Amount of Service and are not Adequately Credited for the Demands of Service Work.**