LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

ACTING DIRECTOR: Priscilla P. Ferguson
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR: Elizabeth Blackmar

First, just to notify one and all that Martha Howell's well deserved leave this semester means that Betsy Blackmar and I shall be managing the Institute this spring. The division of labor that will be in effect has me in charge of the office, publications, and events, which means that anyone involved with those matters should contact me. Under publications I include the Women's Studies Course Guide, so if you are teaching a course next year that you would like to list, let me know by April.

Betsy will be in charge of the undergraduate program and will advise graduate students. Students with concerns or questions about their programs should see Betsy. My regular office hours will be Tuesdays 2:30-4:30 and Betsy's from 11-1 on Wednesdays, but you can also leave a message and one of us (we assume, the relevant one) will get back to you.

After the shining success of last semester's Halloween luncheon for Women's Studies majors and prospective majors, the Institute is planning another such meeting on February 25th from 4-5. And, to help our seniors celebrate the completion of their theses, Betsy, Tally Kampen and Kathryn Gravdal are planning a special event for late April. In addition, there will be a meeting just for majors (without faculty) on January 29th from 7-8 pm (see page 4 for details).

An update on issues raised in the fall 1991 Newsletter. The Parental Leave Policy Proposal, submitted to the Civility Committee last April by the Gender Issues Subcommittee and the Senate Commission on the Status of Women, was revised this fall by the Senate Commission on the Status of Women. Essentially, the provisions of parental Work Load Relief were amended to include all Officers (Administration, Library, and Research as well as Instruction).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FACULTY WOMEN'S CAUCUS

In response to the events surrounding the Thomas-Hill hearings - the harassment itself, the Senate proceedings, and the public's response - a number of Columbia women faculty members decided to form a group called the Faculty Women's Caucus On Gender, Sex and Real Politics. Members were struck, in the words of Martha Howell, by how neatly these events played out a long-running national drama of sex, gender, race, and politics. The group has, and will continue to try and intervene in the culture that produces these events.

One of their first activities was to circulate a letter from a group of African-American women seeking to raise money for a full page ad in the New York Times protesting the insult to them, and to all women, made by Thomas, the Senate, and much of the public. The caucus was also responsible for orchestrating the candlelight vigil on November 18th, also in response to the Thomas hearings and inauguration.

Public events dealing with gender issues like the Thomas-Hill matter, the Central Park jogger rape case, the Miami Beach rape case, etc. often generate phone calls to the Institute from the press and individuals looking for our informed responses. However, often people are unavailable or do not feel equipped to address the particular question. Thus, the group has organized a speakers' bureau to offer coherent opinions that will hopefully inform and redirect public debate. Members have agreed to address specific topics they feel reasonably comfortable with, i.e. abortion (laws, history, etc.); sexuality; women's work; and so on. It is up to us to use the media to keep from being used by the media!

If anyone is interested in being a part of this group, or needs further information, please contact Betsy Blackmar at the Institute (854-3275).

COMPILED AND EDITED BY
MELISSA CLARK
What’s New at the Institute

Note to the Resourceful...

For the benefit of our immediate community, the Institute has put together a resource file located at our office in 763 Schermerhorn Extension. This file contains information on a wide variety of subjects related to women and gender studies, and it is open to students and faculty at Columbia University.

The files vary greatly. Some topics covered include sources for grants and fellowships for women; internships and job opportunities, and then more general information about research institutions such as the Center for Women’s Policy Studies and the Japan Society.

The files were established as an immediate and readily available source of information that directly pertains to women and gender studies. All are welcome to use this information.

PROCEDURAL CHANGES
Aloka Dalal

New faces bring new ideas and change. This is true for our office procedures too. Below I give details about our new office procedures, and how they will work for all the faculty and students involved with the Institute.

THE SEMINAR ROOM:

When the seminar room is required for an event, the confirmation of the request is given in writing. The request itself need not be written, but more details are taken than before, such as telephone number and contact address. This information is necessary in case of a sudden cancellation on our part. (which is very rare) To plan is to help organize and, hence, requests must be made at least 1-2 weeks in advance of the event. Please remember we will try to help accommodate our dear colleagues but there are times when fate will not allow accommodation!

VCR EQUIPMENT:

VCR equipment is available, but use requires a procedure as for the seminar room (i.e. reservations etc.). Set up and clean up are to be taken care of by the person requesting the equipment.

XEROXING:

We will be happy to help put together course packets for both the graduate "Paradigms" course, and for the Senior Seminar. However, in order to maintain our sanity and that of our work-study employees, we must have the complete reading list (citations of exact articles and pages) by July 15 for Fall courses and October 15 for Spring courses.

If the packet has already been prepared, then only a form with clear photocopying instructions needs to be filled out. This particular procedure will take 2 weeks.

MAILBOXES:

Those who hold Women’s Studies classes in the Seminar Room will be allocated a mailbox at the Institute.

We hope that these new procedures will help us to work with you in a more efficient and effective way. We are, of course, always open to any suggestions.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The proposal was presented to the Senate Executive Committee in December and remanded to the Academic Affairs Committee (of the Senate). In the hope that the proposal will reach the floor of the Senate for a vote by mid semester at the latest, I would ask faculty to lobby your senators. Call me if you would like a copy of the proposal.

Another project that the Institute is proud to have helped nurture is the Undergraduate Women’s Handbook. A vote of thanks is certainly in order to Carla Richmond and Hilary Rubenstein and the women from Barnard and Columbia who worked very hard on this project for over a year. Not the least of their accomplishments was securing funding from an impressive roster of University sources! We will celebrate its publication at the Institute on February 25th from 5-7.

Finally, from the very specific policy concerns of last year (the parental leave) the Gender Issues Subcommittee of the Civility Committee will be moving this semester to discuss the very broad questions that we – women at Columbia – should focus energies on in the next one to five years. I hope that we would come up with something of a Statement of Purposes and Programs and that the Institute would sponsor a forum for discussion of these, if not by the end of the Spring, then certainly next Fall.