Present: Nyla Khan, Darleen Mitchell, Janice Fronzcak, Trudy de Goede, Amy German, Amber Lewis (student rep), Linda Van Ingen (chair, recorder).

Absent: Beth Wiersma, Diane Wysocki, Patricia Cuzeiro, Marlene Kuskie, Tami Moore, Deb Murray, Abby Kovanda (Women’s Center), Deb Bridges (ex-officio).

MINUTES:

I. Minutes of February 13, 2008 were approved by email on 2-20-08.

II. General Studies Roundtable Plan and the Impact on Women’s Studies Program: We discussed the proposed GS Roundtable Plan and the Alternative Plan B. Van Ingen gave some background and led discussion. Comments included the following:

1. WS is currently under the “Personal Development (PD)” section of the current GS program. This is of minimal help to WS as students rarely if ever need elective PD credit. Most students take a PD credit to meet their major requirements (i.e. PE 160 for education majors). In the past, WS220 enrollment came from students needing to meet WI requirements. This is no longer the case due to reductions in WI from 12 to 6 credit hours. Efforts in the past to put WS in the Social & Behavioral Sciences category were unsuccessful, as this category is tightly designed for major department requirements. WS therefore has few -- if any -- stakes in the current GS program and suffers the consequences of low enrollment.

2. The new GS Roundtable Plan does not have a clear place for WS either. The category “Modes of Inquiry” is too vague and does not give students a sense of continuity in a discipline. The “Disciplinary Exploration” section is already too crowded with major department requirements and the problems inherent in the current “Social & Behavioral Sciences” category still exist in the Roundtable plan.

3. One member noted that when recently asked specifically about Women’s Studies’ place in the Roundtable Plan, Rick Miller (Faculty Senate President and advocate of the Roundtable Plan) said it would go in the “Social Science” category. Other members expressed concern about this answer given past experience with this category being limited to major dept. requirements. It was also noted that Ethnic Studies was recently rejected a place in the current “Social & Behavior Sciences” category. It’s not clear what would change to allow both Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies into this competitive category in the Roundtable Plan.
4. Another member noted that when asked in November 2006 at a GS Forum whether WS could be in the “Wellness” category, Rick Miller answered “no.” Another Forum leader followed-up with “nothing’s for certain.”

5. In addition to a lack of certainty about WS’s place in the Roundtable Plan, members noted that the lack of transfer credit was a big problem, that the changing course content in the “Modes of Inquiry” every year or every semester would prevent students who Fail from retaking the course for a better grade, and that a lack of specific departments assigned to the various categories leaves unsolved many of the competitive tensions that currently exist amongst departments/programs for GS courses. Members also noted the lack of focus on disciplines detracts from a department/program’s ability to recruit GS/undecided students into their majors.

6. The portal and capstone courses were discussed, with members noting that the Portal, if so named, should be first, before “Wellness” and other fundamentals. The “Capstone” was considered a good idea, with several members noting that they are scheduled to teach such a course next academic year. The interdisciplinary aspect of Women’s Studies lends itself well to the Capstone.

7. Another member noted that given the vagueness of the Roundtable courses and the interdisciplinary nature of WS, WS should aim to be in all categories of Modes of Inquiry and Discipline Explorations.

8. Women’s Studies Affiliated Faculty who could not come to the meeting emailed comments, including:

* getting Dr. Finnie Murray and the Deans involved if the Roundtable Plan means the demise of WS.
* a sense that the “roundtable proposal is extremely unlikely to pass.”
* a strong sense of worry about the ambiguity of the Roundtable Plan and not only how it affects WS but their own major departments.
* a call to make the new GS plan more open to diversity and the examination of gender because “there has never been a time when [diversity and gender] and its social impact has been so important.” If the new GS Roundtable plan means losing Women’s Studies, it is a “step backward for UNK, not forward.”

* One faculty member hoped that Women’s Studies and Ethnic Studies “would have the same opportunity other courses across campus would have to propose courses for inclusion in the new format.”
* another faculty member suggested that WS work to get into all categories, even offering case study assignments as a lab course.

9. The Plan B Alternative was discussed. Members liked that it kept the Portal and Capstone from the Roundtable Plan, and agreed that WS makes a good fit for the Capstone requirement. The lack of subcategories eliminates departmental/program disputes over required courses, and removes the problem of ambiguity that exists in the Roundtable plan. No problems were identified with this Plan B.
9. Van Ingen noted that the Faculty Senate will be addressing the GS Roundtable Plan at its April meeting. She will attend that meeting, as will Amber Lewis, for the student perspective. Van Ingen noted that Rick Miller announced at the March Faculty Senate that an online discussion forum will be opened up for discussion by all faculty campus wide. She urged Women’s Studies members to partake in that forum when it is up.

10. An additional idea of making “gender” a GS requirement was raised. This would help resolve many of WS issues in terms of its place in the GS curriculum, and would make all WS courses qualify for “gender” credit. It may also help solve the WEBeasy problem of identifying WS elective courses. Van Ingen noted that UNO has a “gender” requirement and they can offer 4 or 5 WS220 courses a semester. Van Ingen will look into this possibility for UNK.

III. No Limits 2008 Conference: Debriefing

Overall, WSAC was pleased with the conference, its keynote, musical performance and faculty roundtable. Student sessions were well attended and the general sense was that participants had a good experience. The info fair was good, and members expressed appreciation for the artwork that was on display. We were also very pleased with the facilities -- the Ponderosa Rooms served the conference very well.

Constructive comments included:

1. exclude breaks between sessions, since there seemed to be plenty of time. Some sessions ended earlier and the jaunt between one session and another was short.
2. technology: assign a computer person, or hire one of the tech experts from one of the colleges to be sure all computers are functioning well and that the needs/particulars for each presentation are addressed.
3. have a list of cell #s for all involved faculty so that we can easily contact each other once the conference is in progress.
4. coordination with Sharon Pelc’s office: in order to put up posters in the Union to let people know the conference is in session, they have to be stamped by Sharon Pelc’s office. This should be done in advance.
5. Meals – the separate dining area for meals worked well in terms of keeping track of those who paid for meals etc. The Mexican Buffet was the best. Don’t do pizza next time.
6. Plan further ahead for registration packets so that name tags/goodies are not a last minute rush.
7. Van Ingen noted that advanced registration went well but that she ran out of time to make the paper abstracts available in the program. Future registration requirements should include a uniform abstract format (MS Word attachment for example) to facilitate their compilation into a program.
8. Get more goodies and get tote bags or bags from Antelope so that people have something in which to put info/flyers from organizations.
9. Questions were raised regarding adequate support from WSAC faculty. Van Ingen noted that most of those who signed up for sub-committee work did their part. In the future, we should be sure we have all bases covered and that faculty are prepped for their responsibilities.
10. The quality of student presentations was good. Requiring specifics for abstracts in advance (including thesis and methodology) may have helped. Faculty moderators worked well, especially for discussion purposes.

Ideas for the Future:
1. Link the program with the Cranes Migration, as it is a timely marvel for those who travel to Kearney. Alison Hedge Coke’s conference work is a great example.
2. Connect the program to events at MONA and possibly other campus events such as theater productions. Is there a way we can use the Frank House?
3. Consider revising the time schedule – shorten Saturday or make the event all in one day (but would have to be a school day so that classes can attend)? Given the Ponderosa room space now available, we can run 3 sessions at once (or even 4) if necessary for part of the day, or on Saturday morning if we go for a shortened second day.
4. Other ideas for the future?

IV. Reports:
A. Women’s Center: Van Ingen reported that the WC eliminated its two Graduate Assistant positions due to budget cuts. Amber Lewis reported on the ideas raised at the last WC meeting to meet the new needs of the Center, including developing a volunteer program for students in a Service Learning project tied to WS220, work and projects by Triota, and other student networking/club opportunities. WSAC members noted the great work done by GAs Abby Kovanda and Laurel McKellips and expressed their appreciation for their efforts.

B. V-Day and the “Vagina Monologues” will be held again next year with Demeris Grant agreeing to direct it. The WSAC expressed its appreciation to Annie Weaver for her hard work directing the show for the past two years.

V. Announcements:
A. The Women’s Center is sponsoring a Women’s History Month forum, “Women’s Art: Women’s Vision,” with WSAC and WSAF members Janice Fronczak, Darleen Mitchell, Michelle Lang and Allison Hedge Coke on the panel. This event is being held at our regular meeting day on Wed, March 12.

Meeting adjourned at 5pm.

The next meeting (and the last one for this academic year!) is APRIL 9 (Wednesday) at 3:30 in Jennings Room (Library).