DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 236 JC 760 317

AUTHOR Maymi, Carmen R.
TITLE Career Education: Projecting Into the 21st Century.
PUB DATE 18 Mar 76
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (Washington, D. C., March 17-19, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Affirmative Action; *Career Education; *College Role; Community Colleges; Futures (of Society); *Junior Colleges; Occupational Aspiration; *Sex Discrimination; Sex Stereotypes; Vocational Education; *Womens Education; Working Women

ABSTRACT

Community and junior colleges can play an important role in helping women exercise their options in life without discrimination, as equal partners with men in fulfilling national economic and social needs. The responsibility of junior and community colleges goes beyond providing career education for women. They must also create an awareness among young women of their future role in society, and provide encouragement and insight for those oolder women who are seeking to enter or reenter the work force. Unfortunately, even in community colleges which are primarily committed to career preparation, women continue to be poorly motivated and limited in their career aspirations. The core of the problem is sex stereotyping--in textbooks, in counseling, and in the attitudes of society toward the social, political, and economic roles of women. The rights of women to equal educational opportunity have been well established by law. Community colleges must see that these laws are enforced by examining their curricula, their staffing patterns, and the kinds of guidance they offer to students. The community college must seek innovative approaches to the problem of preparing a knowledgeable, trained women's work force to meet the challenge of a growing economy and an ever increasing demand for skilled workers. (Author/NHM)

CAREER EDUCATION: PROJECTING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Remarks by

Honorable Carmen R. Maymi
Director, Women's Bureau
Employment Standards Administration
U.S. Department of Labor

Forum 12

Annual Convention of the
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
March 18, 1976
Washington, D.C.

Sponsored by

American Association of Women in Community and Junior Colleges

Remarks by
Honorable Carmen R. Maymi
Director, Women's Bureau
Employment Standards Administration
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
to the
Annual Convention of American Association of Community
and Junior Colleges Forum on Career Education
Washington, D.C.
March 18, 1976

I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this forum on "Career Education: Projecting Into the 21st Century," because I believe nothing is more important to the shaping of our future than the preparation of women and girls for the varied roles they will fill in our society.

For centuries women were the core of the family, making the home, bearing and raising the children and fulfilling a role supportive to their husbands who were the acknowledged breadwinners.

But as home-making functions were moved out of the home to become business enterprises; as new, more satisfactory methods of birth control led to smaller families, and as women's life span expanded well beyond the child nurturing years, women found their energies were needed more often in the work place than in the home and that for the most part their contribution to the wellbeing of the family could be made more effectively and more profitable through paid employment which would permit them to buy the goods and services needed by their families.

As women's role in the work force became more permanent and a real need for their skills and abilities developed, women became aware of their own potential and of their importance to the economy.

But they also found that as a group they occupied a disadvantaged position in the economy. They found that women were concentrated in low-paying dead-end jobs, their skills underutilized and their potential underdeveloped.

By the mid 1960's many women had become dissatisfied with the secondary roles assigned them and with the limits placed upon them by discriminatory practices, by sex stereotyping of jobs, and by social attitudes, concerning the role of women, which lagged far behind the realities of life.

Women began to protest the inequalities and discrimination that denied them full participation in the economic, social, and political development of the nation. And out of their dissatisfactions and protests grew the women's movement as we know it today. Of particular concern is women's lack of economic independence which is basic to equality.

At the insistence of women's groups, laws have been enacted to prohibit sex discrimination in employment and to ensure that affirmative action is taken to recruit, hire and train women for all kinds of jobs, even those formerly held by men.

But progress has been slow and women continue to be at a disadvantage in the Labor Force. Because they still have difficulty in breaking the barriers to nontraditional jobs, most of them still work in the poorly paid jobs tagged "women's work." Nearly 36 percent of all women workers were in clerical jobs in January 1976. Some 18 percent were service workers and of the 16 percent who were professional and technical workers, the majority were teachers and nurses. Only 5 percent were managers and administrators and less than 2 percent were craft and kindred workers. As a result of this uneven distribution of jobs, women's median earnings are only about 57 percent of the median earnings of men.

In view of these data, women's demands are indeed valid. What women want has been voiced in many forums, especially during the past year which we observed as International Women's Year. Women made their wants known at the International Women's Year World Conference in Mexico City last summer. Their needs were detailed by

delegates to the International Labour Organization meeting last June and at the United Nations General Assembly during the winter. The demands of women are stated in the National Women's Agenda and in the findings of the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year. The same needs, hopes, and aspirations were voiced at the Women's Bureau Conference marking our 55th Anniversary and IWY, last September.

What women want was highlighted in most countries of the world during IWY and women found a new understanding among themselves in expressing their needs.

Women want to be treated as full, equal, and responsible members of society. They want underutilization of half our human resources to cease.

Women want the right to make their contribution to economic and social development on an equal basis with men. They want to share equally in its rewards.

Women want equal access to education and to vocational guidance and training in order to widen their choice of employment opportunities.

Women want removal of the age-old stereotyped concepts of their role; they want freedom of choice to enter occupations from which they have been excluded in the past.

Women want the same opportunities as men for promotion to decision-making and policy making positions within all spheres of economic, social and political activity.

Women want a narrowing of the wide gap in earnings between women and men and they want equal pay for work of equal value.

Women want assurance that their childbearing capacity will not be used as an excuse to limit their role in society and force on them, alone, child rearing responsibilities. They want men to share actively in the responsibilities of child rearing and in family life.

Finally, women want the right to develop their potentialities and to exercise options in life without discrimination, as equal partners with men in fulfilling national economic and social needs.

Our concern here, today, is to consider the role of education as a means of improving the status of women so that they can enter into the 21st century confident in the knowledge that they can achieve the same success as men in

jobs, in political power, and in social recognition. Specifically, we want to know what junior and community colleges can do to help women achieve their goals.

The responsibility of junior and community colleges goes beyond providing career education for women. They must also create an awareness among young women of their future role in our society, which almost certainly includes paid employment outside the home, even if they marry and even if they have children. And they must provide encouragement and insight to those older women who have discovered the realities of life and are seeking to enter or reenter the work force.

What <u>are</u> the realities? First, that 90 percent of women work outside the home at sometime in their lives. That most of them work because of economic pressures. Many women workers are widowed, divorced, or separated from their husbands. Millions more are single. A majority of these women must support themselves and dependents as well. In 1974, about 3.7 million women workers were heads of families. Additionally, many women work because the earnings of their husbands are inadequate to support the family above the poverty line.

These data reveal the very real need women have for marketable skills that can command high wages and opportunities for advancement. Yet if we look at the kinds of training they are receiving in postsecondary schools we find that about half of the women enrollees are in homemaking or consumer education programs that are not job oriented. Most of the others are preparing for jobs traditionally classified as "women's work." Invariably, those jobs pay less than the occupations for which men train.

For instance, of the 70,000 associate and other awards below the bachelor's level received by women in 1970-71, most were in the health or medical fields--registered nurse, practical nurse, dental hygienist and dental assistant; in business and commerce--secretarial technology and marketing; in data processing and in public service fields.

It is ironic that in the educational institutions committed primarily to career preparation, women continue to be poorly motivated and limited in their career aspirations.

The core of the problem, of course, is sex stereotyping--in textbooks and other teaching materials, in guidance and counseling, and in the attitudes our society holds toward the social, political, and economic roles of women.

It begins, of course, in the home where girls and boys are given different values and different self images. Girls are taught to be submissive; intellectual curiosity is discouraged and aggressiveness frowned upon. Boys, on the other hand are expected to be independent, agressive achievers. Girls are oriented toward homemaking and traditionally women's occupations through their toys, books, household chores, and entertainment, while boys are directed toward sports, mechanical interests and high career aspirations.

In the schools the patterns continue. Girls are expected to be interested in literature, the arts, and domestic science. Boys are encouraged to achieve in mathematics, science, mechanics and crafts. All children receive the message, directly or indirectly, that some jobs are for men and others for women, and girls are given to understand that marriage and homemaking will be more important than paid employment in their lives.

Textbooks and other materials used in the class room perpetuate the stereotypes. Heroes are more prevalent and popular than heroines, the role of women in our history is ignored or neglected, and the ideal life style is portrayed as women in the home, provided for and subservient

to male breadwinners.

Efforts at vocational guidance still leave much to be desired. Too often counselors hold the same biases that prevail in society as a whole and their views of the future role of the woman student are unrealistic and shortsighted. The tendency to direct women toward jobs traditional thought suitable for women--teaching, nursing, clerical work, child care, and cosmetology--persists.

Why, some may ask, is this important; there is still a need for women in the traditional fields and many prefer them. This is true, of course. But the damage lies in the fact that in perpetuating the stereotypes and reinforcing them with social pressures, we are denying women the right to choose.

We don't know how many women might choose occupational fields that are more lucrative and more self fulfilling if they were aware of the options or if they were assured that no stigma is attached to women in nontraditional jobs.

Furthermore, the Nation needs the skills highly trained women can provide. During the decade 1964 to 1974, some 17 million additional jobs were developed in new or expanding industries. Women filled more than 10 million of those jobs.

Thus it become imperative that our vocational education system, and particularly the junior and community colleges, assume more responsibility for insuring that women have full opportunity to develop their highest potential, that they are informed about the many occupations open to them and that they are encouraged to go into fields having potential for advancement and adequate pay.

The rights of women to equal educational opportunity have been well established by law. Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 discrimination on the basis of sex is prohibited in any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Since most educational institutions do receive some Federal funds, the effects of this law is far reaching.

The Women's Educational Equity Act, part of the Education Amendments of 1974, authorizes development of nonsexist curriculums, new methods of training educational personnel, new techniques of guidance and counseling and career education, community and continuing education programs, and women's studies centers.

These and other laws provide tools for designing strategies for change. But it is imperative that the laws be enforced, and that the standards set forth in them be widely understood and practiced through affirmative action. The community and junior colleges can be effective agents for change. They can reach high school teachers, counselors, and students and give them some guidance in preparing young women for post-secondary education that will be relative to the demands a changing society will make upon them.

The junior and community colleges can also examine their curricula, their staffing patterns, and the kinds of guidance offered students to make sure women are given realistic advice and that they have equal access to all courses and programs.

Because these colleges are close to the community they can become involved in community activities and, in the process, educate parents, educators, employers, unions and civic leaders to the needs of women who must be prepared to earn a living.

Some significant progress can be seen in the many post-secondary institutions that are introducing women's studies courses to their curricula. Others have established

guidance centers for women, and still others sponsor special programs promoting careers for women. All of these activities are excellent means of creating an awareness, both on campus and in the community, of women's role as workers. They are important, particularly because they reflect a growing concern for women as workers and potential workers. We must continue to use them and to find additional innovative approaches to the problem of preparing a knowledgeable, trained women's work force to meet the challenge of a growing economy and an ever increasing demand for skilled workers.

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