

New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education

A Decade of Progress: Key Events in the History of the Gender Parity Council

Gender parity is about ensuring every individual the opportunity for education and training that leads to high-demand, high-skill careers regardless of one's gender. Since its inception, the New Jersey Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education has worked to recommend programs and policies to break down gender-based barriers and encourage equal participation of students and workers in education, training, and employment.

2000

In 1999, the **Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education** was legislatively established within the New Jersey **State Employment and Training Commission** (SETC). The Council is the only one of its kind in the nation established by legislation, and brings together representatives from business, education, and government to address barriers to full and gender-equitable participation in the workforce. The impetus for the creation of a joint council linking labor and education came from two SETC reports: a workforce system report titled, ***Leveling the Playing Field: Removing Barriers for Women in New Jersey's Employment and Training Programs (1994)***, and an educational system report titled, ***Balancing the Equation: $a2 + b2 = c2$: A Report on Gender Equity in Education (1997)***.

Gender Equity and Technology in the New Jersey Workplace: Setting the Agenda. With technology driving New Jersey's increasingly global, knowledge-based economy, the Council initially focused its attention on gender-based barriers in technical education and high-tech and high-demand industries. The resulting ***Gender Equity and Technology*** report summarized the input of education, business, and government experts on gender-aware educational policy and recruitment and retention strategies.

2001 ~ 2005

Bridging the Gap: Gender Equity in Science, Engineering, and Technology. This Council-issued report synthesized existing literature on women in the science, engineering, and technology workforce.

Women and Work: Prospects for Parity in the New Economy. The Council reported on the primary causes of under-representation of women in the fields of science, engineering, and technology (SET), highlighting the increasing gap between the SET occupation demands of NJ's labor market and the skills of its labor force.

Women at Work: Achieving Parity on the Job. This Council-commissioned report examined the experiences of women in five growing occupational areas in New Jersey – building trades, financial

services, healthcare, law, and technology. These same issues were explored further in a one-day conference, **The Trust Company: Parity, Profits, and Partnerships**, sponsored by the Council.

Choosing a Career: Labor Market Inequalities in the New Jersey Labor Market. A second 2002 report examined how aspects such as family, peers, education, and job characteristics factor into occupational decisions in varying ways for men and women, particularly in the New Jersey workforce.

Sustainable Earnings for New Jersey's Newest Immigrants. To explore the challenges of integrating immigrant workers into the New Jersey labor force, the Council brought together educators, policymakers, service providers and government officials to discuss effective strategies for placing immigrant workers in demand jobs, ensuring access to training and job opportunities, and connecting immigrant workers with New Jersey State resources.

Engineering Their Futures: The Educational and Workplace Experiences of Female Engineers. This Council-commissioned report documented career barriers for women in engineering, and highlighted a number of strategies to address these challenges. These issues were explored further in a one-day conference.

The Nontraditional Career Resource Center, funded by the New Jersey Department of Education, became the practice arm of the Council, bridging the education and workforce development communities in New Jersey to increase awareness and opportunities for 7th through 12th grade students interested in nontraditional careers.

Healthcare Workforce Outlook: The Nursing Shortage in New Jersey and the United States: Suggestions for Future Research and Policy and ***Finding a Healthy Balance: A Study of Gender Equity in New Jersey's Healthcare Workforce.*** This two-part report series investigated the healthcare workforce, studying the shortage of nurses and problems of recruitment and retention. It then focused on the experiences of male nurses, highlighting stereotypes and obstacles and offering recommendations to attract more men into the field of nursing.

Online Learning as Training Policy: Increasing Access to Education and Skills Training for Low-Income Workers. As a supplement to a Center for Women and Work report, *Findings from the Field: Early Findings of the New Jersey On-line Learning Project for Single Working-Poor Mothers*, the Council issued this policy paper, outlining the policy implications of the success of the online distance learning project. The paper documented the use of online learning to enhance women's skill levels and broaden access to credentials, preparing them for higher-level occupations with higher wages. The Council has continued to provide oversight to the online learning project, as the New Jersey distance learning model is being expanded both within the State and across the nation.

"Toward Parity:" Five Years of the Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education. The Council held a panel discussion at the State Employment and Training Commission's annual conference. Session panelists discussed the work of the Council over the past five years, highlighting its research, reports, and the projects and programs for which it was a catalyst.

2006 ~ 2010

Tools of the Trade: Using Law to Address Sex Segregation in Career and Technical Education. The Nontraditional Career Resource Center collaborated with the National Women's Law Center to sponsor this one-day conference. The event profiled ways that government and schools can utilize New Jersey's existing strong legislation in areas related to gender equity, including the legislation that created the Gender Parity Council.

New Jersey Women in the Law. Following up on one of the sectors profiled in *Women at Work: Achieving Parity on the Job*, the Council commissioned the Center for Women and Work to research the current climate for New Jersey women lawyers. Components of the research included an online survey and focus groups of women lawyers from across the state, as well as interviews with firm leaders, managers, and successful women lawyers. Research findings were reported in *Legal Talent at the Crossroads: Why New Jersey Women Lawyers Leave Their Law Firms and Why They Choose to Stay (2009)*, providing the foundation for a blueprint of best practice recommendations, *Legal Talent at the Crossroads: A Blueprint for Action (2009)*. The Blueprint has been disseminated to both law firms and women lawyers, and the research itself has received both state and national media attention.

Annual Women in New Jersey's Science and Technology Workforce Summits. In a series of four annual Summits (2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010), the Council brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to share perspectives and develop comprehensive and integrated recommendations for addressing gender issues in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and employment. Findings and recommendations from each Summit were summarized in a series of full-length reports.

2007 Summit. This first Summit focused on current state policy initiatives relevant to the science and technology workforce, industry issues including work life balance, and successes and challenges in recruitment and retention programs. One outcome of this initial Summit was the creation of a subcommittee for women in the science and technology workforce, which has remained active in Summit planning.

2008 Summit. The Council focused this year's summit on the dissemination of best practices and recent research in STEM education and employment. At the close of the Summit, participants from five distinct break-out sessions were consistent in their recognition of the importance of mentorship and the need for improved promotion, support, and recognition of mentors.

2009 Summit: *Green Now! Women Leading the Way in Science and Technology.* The Council focused the 2009 conference on roles women are playing and can play in the emerging green workforce.

2010 Summit: *Taking Initiative: Re-Tooling for an Economy that can Handle Curves.* The agenda for the 2010 Summit developed in response to challenging economic times, both in the State of New Jersey and nationally. Speakers representing a variety of STEM industries and careers presented on topics including developing a "circle of advisors," handling change, self-

marketing, and entrepreneurship. Summit attendees formed a *LinkedIn* group to continue networking and generating program and policy ideas.

Economic Recovery: What Women Need to Know. With the support of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Council organized a regional forum to provide resources and information to women who are unemployed or facing work or educational transitions. Forum presenters represented local, state, and national resources, and discussed a range of topics including housing, employment, education and training, minority and women business development, and workforce services. By the spring of 2010, the event was held in four workforce regions in the state of New Jersey.

Women and Employment. A study, *Focusing a Gender Lens on New Jersey Employment in Challenging Economic Times*, was done to examine the gender differences that occurred during the economic downturn from 2008-2010. It focused on services and training received, wages and employment outcomes, and the impact on families.

2010 and Beyond

The Council continues its work on the most prominent gender parity issues in the State of New Jersey. Key employment sectors will be identified and examined through a gender lens in the context of a dramatic period of economic and workforce change. For more information, copies of recent publications, and a listing of current Council members, please refer to www.njsetc.net.