



Upper Middlesex Commission on the Status of Women

Annual Report 2019 – 2020 (Submitted June 2020)

Mission

Uphold ideals and pursue actions consonant with the upward economic and social mobility of women and girls.

We do so by:

- Gathering empirical evidence to mobilize and amplify the voices of women and girls; and
- Generating transformational recommendations that create and sustain accountable systems that enable women and girls to thrive.

Commissioners

Jennifer Roecklein-Canfield (Littleton), Linda Rossetti (Winchester), Connie Chow (Newton), Anna Tse (Malden), Kaitie Chakoian (Waltham), Kristina Racek-Pachulis (Melrose), Tracy Reilly Ingersoll (Tewksbury), Donna Barry (Medford), and Mary Delorse Coleman (Cambridge)

Community Assessment

UMCSW in partnership with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and representatives from communities within our Region focused our community work in 2019-2020 on developing an Equity Audit Pilot, an initiative designed to increase the understanding of gender, along with other inequalities, and to serve as an important tool in improving the status and well-being of all women and girls in large part by informing data collection, contributing to management processes, and contributing to policy development and changes. A full description of these activities can be found in the Advocacy section below.

Hearings/Public Forums

The UMCSW did not hold any public forums outside of public discussions related to the Equity Audit Pilot described in the Advocacy section below.

Advocacy

The UMCSW's Advocacy work in 2019-2020 was dedicated entirely to initiating an Equity Audit Pilot in cooperation with leading institutions and two communities within our Region. The Upper Middlesex Regional and Massachusetts Commissions on the Status of Women have initiated a partnership with UMass Boston's *Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy* and UMass Lowell's *Center for Women and Work* to pilot an intersectional Equity Audit in two Massachusetts communities, with the broader goal of developing guidelines and tools for similar audits to be conducted across the state. The goal of the Equity Audit is to emphasize the importance of understanding gender in concert with other inequalities. Historically, audits such as this have served as important tools in improving the status and well-being of all women and girls by informing data collection, contributing to management processes, and contributing to policy development and changes.

The goal of the Equity Audit Pilot is to define the scope of an intersectional Equity Audit Model for Massachusetts. The Pilot will involve an in-depth exploration of existing models, analysis of data availability, and identification of issues most important to the community. The group secured a UMass Boston FY21 Public

Service Grant and plans to use the proceeds to support preparatory activities for audits to be conducted in Lowell and Arlington and set the stage for obtaining external funds to carry out the audits in these two target communities.

The Equity Audit Pilot's specific objectives are to:

- Identify partners in appropriate government agencies and community organizations in the local context and outline a generalizable model regarding key stakeholders to include in any community that will participate in such an Equity Audit once launched;
- Determine populations and topics of focus as well as inequity measures to include, based on available data; and
- Develop a detailed research design and funding proposal to conduct a full Equity Audit in Lowell and Arlington.

The team determined that Lowell and Arlington – largely due to their varied population sizes and compositions, economic drivers, governmental structures, and elected leadership trends – will serve as appropriate municipal partners for this collaborative project and for launching an Equity Audit Model that can be replicated in other cities and towns. In collaboration with members of the UMCSW, The UMass Boston team will focus on the Arlington context and UMass Lowell will focus on Lowell. All team members working collaboratively to design a process that will fit both communities and serve as a model for others.

The UMCSW is honored to collaborate with the following individuals and organizations on this exciting work:

Randy Albelda, Department of Economics (UMass Boston)
Darcie Boyer, Center for Women and Work (UMass Lowell)
Connie Chow, Upper Middlesex Commission on the Status of Women
Mignon Duffy, Department of Sociology (UMass Lowell)
Monica Galizzi, Department of Economics (UMass Lowell)
Christa Kelleher, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (UMass Boston)
Cheryl Llewellyn, Department of Sociology (UMass Lowell)
Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (UMass Boston)

Jenifer Whitten-Woodring, Department of Political Science (UMass Lowell)

Priorities for 2020-2021

The UMCSW priorities for the upcoming year are as follows:

1. Launch the Equity Audit Pilot with a special emphasis on establishing broader community relationships in support of the Pilot's objectives (see Advocacy section above);
2. Continue to utilize a standing Agenda for our bi-monthly meetings. This Agenda includes but is no limited to:
 - a. Legislative/Advocacy and Bill Sponsorship/Endorsements;
 - b. Hearing/Listening Event Updates.
 - c. Community Spotlights, e.g. guests from organizations active in serving our constituents;
3. Create "Listening Tours" in specific towns to capture a larger audience than from a single Hearing; and
4. Craft a discussion agenda for "Listening Tours" that specifically addresses the impact of the pandemic on women, as they hold a disproportionately large share of jobs in the fields most at risk.
5. Build upon the UMCSW's use of social media (e.g. visit our Facebook page [here](#)) to extend its reach and continue to build relationships within the communities we serve.