SIROW Hosts Annual Regional Partner Summit

SIROW started out 2018 by hosting our annual Regional Partner Summit Meeting on January 26th and 27th at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Program and department heads from our partnering universities in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas attended the meeting. We are grateful to all of the attending partners for their time, enthusiasm and insight. SIROW sends our deepest thanks to Texas Tech Gender and Women’s Studies Program Head Dr. Charlotte Dunham, Program Coordinator Patricia Earl, and their team for being excellent hosts.

Over the weekend, the partners enjoyed social dinners, an invited panel discussion on teaching, and a campus walk filled with sculpture art. Another special part of the weekend was a visit with some of Lubbock’s influential resident women artists, including Robin Germany, Carol Flueckiger, Shannon Cannings, and Corina Cormona. These artists shared examples of their work, which varied from oil painting and photography to textile art and public murals. They each spoke about what feminist art meant to them.

The Regional Partner Summit Meeting included program updates, small group dialogue, and brainstorming on best practices in light of recent successes and challenges in the field of Gender and Women’s Studies. Partners shared strategies for transformative teaching, recruiting and retaining students, navigating administrative climates, supporting feminist scholars, and connecting to contemporary social activism. Partners iterated how useful the annual meeting has been to them. Alicia ReCruz, director of Women’s and Gender Studies at University of North Texas said it best, "I want to express my deep, deep gratitude for sharing your wisdom and experience... I brought back a metaphorical backpack filled with creative ideas, strategies, discourses and expectations. I am excited for the conversations and exchanges until our next meeting in 2019."

At the end of the meeting, partners already had the beginning of an agenda for next year. We’re looking forward to our continued collaboration with these fantastic colleagues!

For more information, please contact Regional Network Coordinator Stephanie Murphy at sumurphy@email.arizona.edu.

Photo caption: Pictured here, Back row L-R: Celeste Medina (TTU), Claudia Powell (SIROW), Jen Hill (UNR), Laura Anh Williams (NMSU), Jo Korchmaros (SIROW), Valerie Hegstrom (BYU), Lorraine Bayard de Volo (UC Boulder), Alicia Re Cruz (UNT), Kristi Ross (NMHU), Patricia Earl (TTU); Front Row L-R: Chris Talbot (UNC), Erika Derkas (NMHU), Arlene Sgoutas (MSUD), Agatha Beins (TWU), Stephanie Murphy (SIROW), Lydia Huerta (WNMU), Gina Núñez-Mchiri (UTEP), Charlotte Dunham (TTU)
Addressing the Need for Effective Substance Use Programs for Adolescents

The need for effective substance use programs for adolescents is a national concern and a serious public health issue in the U.S. About 5% of U.S. youth aged 12 to 17 have substance use disorders, including drug and alcohol abuse. Compounding this public health concern is the deficient availability and use of evidence-based treatment programs and the fact that the majority of youth with SUDs have co-occurring mental health disorders. Despite this critical need, only 6.3% of these youth received formal substance abuse treatment. Furthermore, less than half of those who received treatment received evidenced-based treatment, completed treatment positively, stayed in treatment the 90 days recommended by research, or made it 90 days post-discharge without relapse. To help address this critical need, Josephine D. Korchmaros, Director of SIROW, recently completed a study that examined the effectiveness of The Seven Challenges with adolescents.

The Seven Challenges is a comprehensive counseling program that addresses substance use issues in addition to mental health and relationship issues. The Seven Challenges Program is based on the cognitive/emotional public health model of decision making, in which individuals weigh the benefits of particular behaviors against the associated costs. The program uses a non-judgmental approach that encourages self-evaluation and focuses on the decision-making process rather than insisting upon a particular behavior, such as abstinence. Once clients decide to change their drug use behavior, it provides individualized support on a session-to-session basis to promote success. It also teaches and motivates individuals to cope with co-occurring mental health problems in positive ways without drugs.

This study examined the effectiveness of The Seven Challenges Program by examining change over time in adolescents’ substance use and related problems, mental health, criminality, and health-promoting behavior. This study examined change over time in these problems and behaviors before and after adolescents received The Seven Challenges. Dr. Korchmaros examined this change over time in 392 adolescent clients enrolled in seven different substance abuse treatment agencies providing The Seven Challenges.

Results indicated that adolescents who received The Seven Challenges showed reduced substance use and related problems. Notably, adolescent clients of The Seven Challenges reported being drunk or high for most of the day during 12 fewer days after they received The Seven Challenges compared to before they received it. Adolescents who received The Seven Challenges also showed improvements in mental health and reductions in criminal activity after The Seven Challenges. Furthermore, adolescents who received The Seven Challenges were involved in more self-help activities after they received The Seven Challenges compared to prior to the program.

The findings of the present study strengthen the existing evidence base regarding the effectiveness of The Seven Challenges Program as a comprehensive counseling program. This additional research is vital to effectively addressing adolescent substance use and co-occurring problems, streamlining the work of service providers, and simplifying service coordination. SIROW is honored to continue our work studying effective substance use treatment and promoting realistic, feasible, and effective treatment solutions. The article detailing this study is soon to be published in the Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions. For more information or a copy of the article, contact Josephine Korchmaros at jkorch@email.arizona.edu. To learn more about the Seven Challenges, visit www.sevenchallenges.com.