

Women's
Center for Ethics in Action

in alliance with men

REPORT
WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN RESEARCH FUND CONSULTANCY
Anne B. Zill July, 2003 – April 2004

The goal was to redesign the mission of the Research Fund based upon some preliminary ideas promulgated by members of the Board and the Executive Director nearly a year ago, and to put in place some programs and fundraising strategies for a healthy future for the 501 (c) 3 educational entity. I was paid \$1,000 a month for nine months' work (30 hours @ \$33). The original arrangement for payment on a complete contingency fee basis was discouraged by the Washington D.C. Association of fundraising professionals.

The Research Fund has been an under-utilized arm of the PAC since its inception. PAC Directors, Board members and staff have focused primarily on the PAC because those hard political dollars go to women candidates, WCF's first and most basic mission. The educational entity has had inconsistent attention, its high point in terms of fundraising and training visibility occurring in the early 1990's under Amy Conroy's direction.

The challenges were the following:

Fifteen years ago, this educational entity was the only training game in town for women leaders in politics. Now there are a plethora of them both on the national and regional/local levels. WCRF needs to distinguish itself from the pack.

WCRF has had mandates other than a Training Program from time to time, but it has not had an energized Board of Directors to grow the educational arm in a manner that would contribute to rather than detract from the WCF PAC. New program goals were needed. New WCRF Board members would also help. New donors could then be found – individuals, foundations, and corporations.

I first consulted individually with each of the WCRF Board members to ascertain their views on WCRF, its past and future. Each was sounded out about suggested new directions. By September 15, there was substantial agreement among Board members on two areas of focus for the long-term.

1) A series of substantive issue seminars within the Training Programs to provide women candidates with a practical knowledge base in order to deal with major issues facing our society – emphasizing a program that protects the environment, and builds healthy communities with attention to economy, healthcare, education and security.

2) An extension of our Training Program with outreach visits to alumnae groups of women graduates of law, business and other professional graduate schools. Young women leaders need to

be targeted and nurtured to choose political careers in this era of disaffection in which young women have been disinclined to choose political careers.

Both these program elements are designed to distinguish ourselves from other Training Programs and to position WCRF to be more important in the future both in order to raise funds from new sources, and to build renewed interest on the part of previous donors if possible.

Short-term, I also helped the office to raise monies for WCRF's 20th anniversary event in NYC last fall by sending letters and following up with calls to a universe of potential donors. I prepared for distribution at the event a one-page description of WCRF's new direction goals.

Next a fundraising proposal was drafted and circulated among Board members. After a conference phone call, suggestions were incorporated into a new draft. A universe of foundations was researched and prioritized. As many as 90 calls, and many more Internet searches were conducted to determine interest or lack thereof. A budget for 2004-2005 was prepared. Several of these proposals have now been submitted.

In addition, for the February 2004 WCRF Training Program in Washington, D.C., I reviewed business and labor contacts approached for sponsorships in the past and culled together a list for this year's Training. I wrote the letter that was sent to potential sponsors. I also compiled a substantial list of individuals with addresses to be invited to the Networking Reception for WCRF increased visibility and donor cultivation. Another task was to identify and secure the substantive experts for panels and keynote addresses at the February Training. During January, follow-up faxes and calls for sponsorships of this Training Program were conducted. Following this Training, I prepared a lengthy review of our first attempt at fulfilling the new mandate to add some substantive elements to our educational program.

Concrete achievements:

- 1) Agreement on two future directions for WCRF;
- 2) Short-term fundraising amounting to approximately what I was paid over the nine-month period;
- 3) A generic fundraising proposal that can be tailored to individual requirements along with a budget;
- 4) A folder of prioritized potential funding sources.

What was not achieved was a large infusion of grants from newly identified funding sources. In my opinion, this was a personal failure on my part, in large measure because I didn't have the hundreds/thousands of hours required to shepherd the proposals through the system properly.

I have some recommendations for our future.

- 1) The Board of the WCRF can have a little more overlap with the PAC and this might be useful.
- 2) New energetic Board members who are savvy about politics are needed. I am not sure what happened with the suggestion of Kathleen Carr for the Board, but in my view, younger and more involved individuals can help us with our mission at this juncture.

- 3) An Advisory Board could lend credibility and depth to our mission and fundraising ability. My efforts to initiate one went nowhere – primarily because a face-to-face meeting over several hours is probably necessary for this kind of task.
- 4) Soon after the new Director is chosen we might plan an all-day briefing session for both Boards. One component of this Briefing would be to bring members up to speed on what a PAC can and cannot do, on what a (c)3 can and cannot do, on what a (c)4 is used for, and how entities such as NARAL and the League of Conservation Voters use one to enhance the other. Another good speaker would be Nan Aron of the Alliance for Justice who has produced a number of materials addressing educational advocacy by non profit organizations, and what is allowable under IRS regulations.
- 5) WCRF will only get large foundation dollars when we go in teams to likely sources and talk about our vision and what we want to accomplish, capitalizing on such facts as:
 - these polarized times when the numbers of independents are increasing;
 - one half of the people in Congress ran for political office before the age of 35, 81% of them white males; thus we have a need to reach young women leaders;
 - the contributors to the White House Project should be interested in our mission as well;
 - Collaborations are important to our future health;
 - Celinda Lake’s polling shows issues matter hugely to women – and the reaction, for example, to most of the substantive elements I inserted into the “pilot” Training in February were very well received indeed, bearing out her conclusions.
 - Many of the PAC Board members are interested in greater visibility and a more concerted public relations effort. Most know next to nothing about the “Women Leaders for a Change” Ford-funded program, and this could be part of the Briefing Session, and an early example of the way the educational entity can enhance the PAC.

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