Dear Friend,

On October 21, 2011, less than one month after I became executive director of the Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls, the Business Journal Serving Greater Milwaukee featured me in the “People on the Move” section. When asked for my thoughts on the new position I replied, “I see my role as creating an environment that allows the [Research] Center to showcase Alverno College’s expert faculty knowledge regarding important issues impacting the lives of women and girls.” I am happy to report that is exactly what we have done. Today we have faculty representing all four schools of the college providing their expertise and supporting the Research Center’s mission. That mission is to generate and apply scholarly research, develop curricula, prepare program evaluations and participate in outreach efforts for the purpose of supporting, transforming, and inspiring initiatives to improve the lives of women and girls locally and nationally.

By tapping Alverno faculty as a resource, the Research Center has been able to produce impactful publications, including Teen Dating Violence: A Resource and Prevention Toolkit and Generational Diversity: Characteristics and Values of Millennials in the U.S. In addition, through the engagement of faculty, we have been able to facilitate the training of middle and high school educators from southeastern Wisconsin on ways to identify, prevent, and confront bullying behavior in their schools; develop a discussion guide for the film Sleepovers; and partner with PEARLS for Teen Girls, Inc., to reinvigorate its Self-Development Curriculum to coincide with its 10,000 Girls Initiative. Further, I am excited to report that we have assembled a faculty research team to author our Status of Girls 2014 Update!

The Research Center team is proud that we have been able to use our knowledge and expertise to shine a light on issues that impact women and girls locally and nationally. We are committed to continue to expand our research, curriculum, evaluation, and outreach efforts in the coming months and years and hope that you will join us on our journey forward.

Rhonda M. Ware, Executive Director

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: Adolescent Girls’ College Aspirations: Precollege Expectations and Goal Setting of Adolescent Girls and Women

Author: Sandra E. Graham, Ph.D.

This paper looks at key issues about the aspirations for college held by adolescent girls. It raises issues about potential and perceived barriers to girls’ aspirations, especially as girls seek to enter nontraditional fields such as science, technology, engineering and math (“STEM”). Author Sandra E. Graham, Ph.D., joins us in a conversation about this paper.

Question: Why was it important for you to look at this topic?
Sandra: The Status of Girls in Wisconsin report points to the need for more study regarding girls’ educational aspirations, especially in the STEM fields. The importance of a college education for women cannot be overemphasized. I wanted to see what the influences on girls’ college aspirations were and what should be done to best address girls’ aspirational needs.

Question: What surprised you most about your findings?
Sandra: While there were no big surprises, I was impressed by how influences in middle school can really affect the ways that girls make decisions about college. I was also impressed by the ways that economically challenged neighborhoods, when working together at personal, family, and organizational levels, can enhance the expectations of girls to go to college and be successful. I was also impressed by the importance of personal relationships to girls’ aspirations, whether that relationship is with a parent, a teacher, a school counselor, or an after-school program worker.

Question: How can the information in this paper be used to make an impact in this community and beyond?
Sandra: I think the information in this paper supports some of the very important work that is already going on in the community. For example, the work that PEARLS for Teen Girls is doing to influence girls to go to college and beyond is very impressive. Programs such as those at Carmen High School of Science and Technology and at the United Community Center are also good examples. At some point follow-up interviews with these programs could provide more rich information.
Upcoming events:

October 24, 2013
IOU Sports, “One on One with Sue Black,” Owner and CEO of the Milwaukee Wave, and Rhonda M. Ware. For more information, visit www.iousports.org/

November 13, 2013
Rhonda M. Ware will present at the Professional Dimensions luncheon.

CURRICULUM SPOTLIGHT: PEARLS for Teen Girls, Inc., Self-Development Curriculum

At the Research Center, we pride ourselves on reaching out to the community and contributing to the growth and development of our youth. Recently, we worked with PEARLS for Teen Girls, Inc., a non-profit organization that provides at-risk girls with a safe space to feel empowered and to develop their leadership skills, to reinvent the organization’s Self-Development Curriculum. The Research Center’s PEARLS curriculum team worked closely with PEARLS program staff and PEARLS alums to reinvigorate the curriculum in order to enable the organization to expand its work with at-risk girls in the Milwaukee community. This collaboration coincides with PEARLS’ 10,000 Girls Initiative.

If you are interested in creating or developing a curriculum for your organization, please contact us at Research.Center@alverno.edu

EVALUATION: The Women’s Tree Power2Thrive
Author: Nancy Athanasiou, Ed.D.

Power2Thrive, a program created by the Women’s Tree, pairs up women and girls with the objective of creating natural mentoring relationships and developing future leaders. The Research Center is developing pre- and post-program assessments to evaluate the impact of the program on its participants.

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