

PA5690, section 2
Board Service in Women and Public Policy
Time: arranged
Fall 2006 and Spring 2007
1 credit S/N

Sally J. Kenney
263 Humphrey Center
612-625-3409
email: kenne030@umn.edu
Office hours: Mondays 4-5

Course Description

Not willing to wait until you have acquired your first fortune or have twenty years of experience in the women's movement to serve on a board of a women's movement organization? Then this is the class for you! Many feminist organizations lament the fact that younger women are allegedly not interested in their organizations. Yet many younger women are frustrated that their talents, experiences, and enthusiasm remain untapped until they have "paid their dues" (or perhaps, rather, have dues to pay). Minnesota can seem especially closed to outsiders when many organizations seem knitted together by friendship networks of private school graduates, particular neighborhoods, or generations of philanthropic families.

This course invites students and organizations to participate in a unique experience by earning academic credit while serving on a board of directors. Graduate students concentrating in women and public policy, broadly defined, are invited to enroll in a year-long, one credit class to integrate students more closely with the community. The Center on Women and Public Policy has cultivated a series of organizations interested in participating in this program. I am happy, too, to pursue your additional ideas so you get a good match with your interests and expertise.

Interested students should sign up for one credit of S/N credit for which they will need a special permission number from me. You will get one hour of credit for an academic year's worth of work.

Course Objectives:

1. To learn about an organization, particularly its governance, from the inside.
2. To learn how to be an effective board member.
3. To pool the information of the class to learn about feminist non-profits in the Twin Cities.
4. To gain entrée into organizational leadership and access networks of feminists.
5. To enhance the reputation of the Humphrey Institute and the Center on Women and

Public Policy by offering your skills and expertise to the community.

Grading and Performance Requirements

- 1) Attend all board meetings and other events required of board members.
- 2) Serve on a committee or meet any other requirements of board membership. (I have asked boards to waive any financial contribution that is a requirement of board members. They may, however, reasonably expect for you to make a significant financial contribution to the organization and define that for yourself.)
- 3) Attend a training session on Friday, September 8th from 9-1.
- 4) Attend whatever orientation may be required for new members of your particular board.
- 5) Meet once a month for two hours with the group of other board members in this program. For fall semester these are:
 - Friday, October 6th from 11-1
 - Friday, November 10th from 11-1
 - Friday, December 8th from 11-1
- 6) Write a memorandum for Sally's eyes only about your organization, your experience, and what you accomplished.

Threats and Opportunities: carpe diem

I have prevailed upon friendships to secure you this opportunity. Not only is my reputation on the line, but so is the reputation of the Center on Women and Public Policy, the Humphrey Institute, and the University of Minnesota. I cannot afford to have any bad apples. If I believe that your poor performance as a board member might be jeopardizing the future of this program I will ask you to withdraw immediately. There will be no second chances, or second warnings. Students have the reputation of being unreliable. Your job is to work against this stereotype. You need to be the most reliable member of the board! This is an incredible opportunity for you to begin to make a name for yourself in this community and to cultivate important contacts with fellow board members and staff members. I am teaching this course as an overload and thus have no patience for the normal quota of whining, babysitting, and cajoling that is the sorry lot of the educator. If you are not really excited about this opportunity drop the class now. That is not to say that you may not express frustrations or disappointments, but I will be especially intolerant of laziness or apathy. Carpe diem will be our motto!

Reading Assignments

For September meeting:

(All available as a packet outside of my door in 146 HC. Stop by and Pick One Up.)

Read carefully the case, “East Coast Orchestra’s Board of Trustees.” We will run this case on September 8th.

Minnesota Attorney General’s office, “Fiduciary Duties of Directors of Charitable Organizations”

Minnesota Council on Nonprofits, “Board Member Do’s and Don’ts”

Brudney and Dautel Nobbie, “Training Policy Governance in Nonprofit Boards of Directors.”

John Carver, “Policy as Leadership Tool.”

Spend some time reading about boards in MN: http://www.mncn.org/info_mn_np2.htm.

Know the different kinds of boards: <http://www.managementhelp.org/boards/boards.htm>

Peruse <http://www.boardsource.org/clientfiles/EBooks/history.pdf>

By our September 8th meeting you should have made contact with your board contact (the chair, president, or executive director as appropriate), found out when the meetings are, chosen a committee, and found out what, if any, new board orientation there might be. I’ll ask each person to give a little report about where they are in this process.

For October 6th meeting:

Describe your organization. As a group, develop a form to fill out about all of your organizations. What is the budget? What is the legal status of the organization? How many employees? How many board members? What kind of work does your organization do? What kinds of things do you need to know?

By now you will hopefully have attended a board meeting and committee meeting and participated in an orientation. If you have had one meeting already, I would like you to identify a “board buddy” someone whom you think seems friendly, open to you, and whom you might like to get to know better. Ask him or her to meet you for lunch or coffee. Think of yourself as an anthropologist and your board buddy as a guide to this strange new culture.

For November 10th meeting:

What is the culture of your organization? What kinds of continua should you place feminist boards on? Radical to liberal? Formal to collectivist? How should we characterize the variety of boards?

For December 8th meeting:

Check in on the work you are doing with the organization. How are we doing on the form?

What are you learning about how boards work? What problems do newcomers face in integrating themselves in the organization?