

In the Company of Scholars: Yale Women in a Changing World
Spring 2004 Participant Survey

Executive Summary

Carolyn Clafin, Director for Administration, Association of Yale Alumni
July 12, 2004

Survey period: E-mail sent May 7; response deadline June 4.
Total respondents: 128, representing nearly 43% of the survey population of 298.

Section 1. Introduction

Questions 1 and 2 asked for name (optional) and graduation year(s) and degree(s).

Of the total 128 respondents, 101 included their name; 127 provided graduation year(s) and degree(s).

Question 3. Before you begin your evaluation of the conference, we wanted to express our appreciation to the Women Faculty Forum and Women's Health Research at Yale for their work on this conference. We also wanted to provide you with an opportunity to indicate below whether you wished to stay in touch with one or both of these campus organizations. Note: If you check any of the boxes below, please be sure you have provided us with your name in the optional "Name" box above.

Total respondents: 88
Skipped this question: 40

Of the above, some 78 respondents (88.6%) asked to be added to the regular mailing list for the Women Faculty Forum and 58 (65.9%) wished to be added to the regular mailing list for Women's Health Research at Yale. Further, 29.5% (26) indicated that they would be happy to have the Women Faculty Forum contact them directly to talk about ways they could be involved and 19.3% (17) indicated the same for Women's Health Research at Yale.

In reviewing the data in the following sections, it is important to note that survey respondents consistently “graded” sessions or aspects of the program with relative ratings of excellent or very good. Each question had combined responses in these two categories above 70%, with many combined responses above 80% or 90%. Perhaps most notable is the 93.3% who rated their assessment of the overall quality of the program as excellent or very good.

Section 2. Overall Quality of the Program

1. How would you rate the conference overall with respect to your personal interest and enjoyment?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	70.2%	85
Very good	23.1%	28
Good	5.8%	7
Fair	0.8%	1
Poor	0%	0
	Total respondents	121
	Skipped this question	7

2. *What did you like best about the program?*

Total respondents: 119

Skipped this question: 9

Inspiring, fantastic, uplifting, and invigorating were all used to describe the conference. A great number of respondents commented very positively on the opportunity to meet women from across graduating years and schools. Many appreciated and emphasized the importance of the opportunity to meet in small groups. A sampling of the specific comments follows.

- The opportunities to meet/reconnect with amazing and powerful women across different age groups, and to share our experiences, especially with respect to balancing home life/work life and dealing with sexism in the workplace.
- I thought it was wonderful! I liked that everyone was so open to meeting and sharing. I liked the bios, the lectures, the choice of medical topics, the forums for discussion around graduation years (interesting that graduate students and undergraduates met together for a mix of ages) and the shared interest forums. The arts forum is continuing as a yahoo group. I enjoyed the doctor in her 70's giving her life perspective and would have loved to hear from more of the earlier alumnae about their experiences. I was completely WOWed by the singing groups.
- I thought -- much to my surprise -- that the globalism session on Friday morning was excellent. It presented a wide range of scholarship without feeling heavy-handed. I also liked the fact that there were women from several generations at the program, which lead to a diversity of views.
- Women in health/women and health was a great unifying concept and was what drew me to the program. I liked the parts that focused on that best. The presentations on overall research at Yale, and on heart disease and diabetes were excellent. Overall, I'd say the program was a good start, with great potential. If channeled and defined more in the future it could be a very powerful vehicle for vision, leadership, and change.
- The chance to be welcomed as a co-alumna with other grad and professionals as well as Yale college alumnae. it is the first time that I felt embraced by the institution at the same level as the undergrads. In fact, the biggest surprise was really enjoying the breakout session on Saturday that encompassed other grad/undergrads that were at Yale at the same time.
- The opportunity to discuss with other women issues that are pressing to us all but not often discussed. It was wonderful to hear how many other women have balanced work and personal lives. More discussion needs to happen (and with men!) so that we can realize that we're all in this together and so true societal improvements can take place. Every woman heard speak at the conference faces challenges daily, and I felt empowered by being in a community of such strong women with great ideas that past injustices might be overcome and future gains made.

3. *What did you like least or find least interesting or helpful?*

Total respondents: 105

Skipped this question: 23

Some commented that the program was overly ambitious. Many wished for more time for assimilation, reflection, and small group/informal discussion on the presentations. One respondent noted: "Our schedule was a bit aggressive and did not allow us enough time to interact with everyone, or give us enough down time to assimilate all we were learning." Anticipating a question we might ask on the content, another commented: "I wouldn't sacrifice any part of the program to make more time, I would extend the conference." Others mentioned the length of the singing performances, noting that while they enjoyed them, they would have preferred a shorter entertainment program and more opportunity to talk.

Some participants felt the Friday morning plenary was too long and others found some of the health presentations too technical. For example, "Although I really enjoyed the topics for the women's health research, I feel that the science was a little over my head. I wish that the presenter's had taken into account the audience and used more lay language to explain certain things." Other shied away from the health sessions because of their age, imagining them as sessions for older alums. Several suggested that it would have been nice for the arts focus to be part of the program, rather than an optional, post-conference activity.

Many liked the small group breakouts on Saturday, but wished they had been longer. Often the time allotment only allowed for the round of introductions. Others would have liked the chance to participate in more than one of the career/interest area breakouts. A number wished they could have received the bios in advance of the conference.

4. *Did we have the right balance of presentation vs. networking/discussion time?*

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes, the balance was just right	77.6%	90
No, too much time was spent on presentations	19.8%	23
No, too much time was spent on networking	2.6%	3
	Total respondents:	116
	Skipped this question:	10

Section 3. Specific Program Elements

1. *The Gender of Globalization Plenary (Friday morning)*

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	61.5%	67
Very good	27.5%	30
Good	9.2%	10
Fair	1.8%	2
Poor	0%	0
	Total respondents:	109
	Skipped this question:	19

2. *Faculty and Administrator Roundtable Luncheon (Friday)*

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	43.1%	47
Very good	31.2%	34
Good	16.5%	18
Fair	8.3%	9
Poor	0.9%	1
	Total respondents:	109
	Skipped this question:	19

3. *Women's Health Research Plenary (Friday afternoon)*

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	31.1%	33
Very good	47.2%	50
Good	18.9%	20
Fair	2.8%	3
Poor	0%	0
	Total respondents:	106
	Skipped this question:	22

4. Women's Health Research Breakout Sessions (Friday afternoon)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	35.6%	36
Very good	35.6%	36
Good	22.8%	23
Fair	5.9%	6
Poor	0%	0
	Total respondents:	101
	Skipped this question:	27

5. Keynote by Hilary Pennington (Saturday morning)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	79.1%	72
Very good	17.6%	16
Good	3.3%	3
Fair	0%	0
Poor	0%	0
	Total respondents:	91
	Skipped this question:	35

6. Yale Women and Leadership Breakouts (Saturday morning)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	49.5%	46
Very good	30.1%	28
Good	11.8%	11
Fair	7.5%	7
Poor	1.1%	1
	Total respondents:	93
	Skipped this question:	33

7. Views from the Women of Yale's Administration (Saturday luncheon)

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	30.9%	25
Very good	42%	34
Good	14.8%	12
Fair	8.6%	7
Poor	3.7%	3
	Total respondents:	81
	Skipped this question:	42

Section 4. Logistics and...

1. How would you rate the meals and the Friday evening After Glow?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	36.1%	39
Very good	41.7%	45
Good	17.6%	19
Fair	4.6%	5
Poor	0%	0
	Total respondents:	108
	Skipped this question:	20

2. How would you rate the promotions, communications, registration, and general logistics for the conference?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Excellent	52.9%	63
Very good	35.3%	42
Good	9.2%	11
Fair	2.5%	3
Poor	0%	0
	Total respondents:	119
	Skipped this question:	9

3. We invite you to use the space provided below, if you wish, to offer additional comments about the conference.

Total respondents: 90
Skipped this question: 38

A significant majority of survey respondents took the time to make additional comments in this section. Most comments offered very strongly worded positive assessments of the conference, program content, and logistics and expressed a strong desire for future such events. Although longer than most, the comment provided below captures a sense of this feeling.

- I left New Haven greatly inspired, enlightened, and deeply moved by the women I met during the past two days. Every woman I spoke with agreed that the occasion met a long-held and deeply felt hunger among alumnae to share our stories, concerns, and interests with one another; in the telling, I believe we redefined the meaning of "Yalie" in distinctly women-centered terms. How empowering to sing along with Whim 'n Rhythm the lyrics to "Bright College Years" -- a song I had always regarded as a relic of the centuries of an exclusively male Yale -- and claim it as our own! I am a Yalie who has never paid much interest in writing into the class notes or attending reunions. In contrast I experienced the Yale Women in a Changing World conference as truly relevant and transforming. I very much hope the AYA will continue this newly inaugurated Yale tradition and help foster the long-overdue establishment of an "Old Broads' Network" of our very own.

Often responses to this question mirrored those raised in the Questions 2 and 3 of Section 2 (what did you like most/least). Perhaps most notable of the suggestions for improvement was a recommendation that the biographical material be distributed in advance of the conference, perhaps with a graduation year/professional area index. In another area, a number of participants were somewhat dissatisfied with the Friday lunch discussion roundtables and wished they might have had a chance for advance notice of the specific topic possibilities (which can be challenging from a planning perspective). It is important to note that many of the suggestions for improvement were relatively minor and focused on issues such as menu choices and parking.

Section 5. Next Steps

1. We would like to obtain a sense of whether and how often Yale should invite you to conferences with a specific focus on women. Please indicate below the answer that best describes your view.

Total respondents: 117
 Skipped this question: 11

A total of 71.8% of respondents (84) indicated that they would like to attend another such conference within the next two years. Another 28.2% (33) responded that they would like to attend such conferences every few years, like the five-year reunion cycle. No respondents indicated that they would probably not seek to attend another conference such as this one.

2. If you indicated above that you might want to attend future Yale women's conferences, please let us know which of the following topics/topic areas might be of interest to you. You may check as many as you like. We also invite you to provide additional topics not included on the list below.

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Women and Science	41.7%	48
Women and the Arts	51.3%	59
Women and Health	52.2%	60
Women and Religion	21.7%	25
Career and Life Balance	69.6%	80
Women and Public Service	64.3%	74
Women and Leadership	75.7%	87
Globalization and Gender	42.6%	49
Women in Higher Education	33.9%	39
Other (please specify)*	27.8%	32
	Total respondents:	115
	Skipped this question:	13

*Other suggested topics included:

Women and aging

- Women and retirement
- Viability of Volunteering
- Staying active after officially retiring
- Living alternatives in advanced age
- Finances-early retirement or other ways of doing more pro-bono work once big expenses are out of the way
- Women and Careers Over the Life Course: Aging Well

Women and athletics

Women as authors

- Promoting a career in writing
- How to get started writing
- How to get publishing support

Women in Business

- Women working in International Trade or International Businesses

Women and Careers

- Career Transitions/Career Change
- Career and Life Balance
- Women and Careers Over the Life Course: Aging Well (also above in the Women and aging category)

Women and Economic Development

Women in Education (not just higher education)

- Educational issues affecting women and girls

Women and entrepreneurship

Women and Finance

Yale and Gender (how the University is faring for women)

Women and the Law

Women and Money (not Finance, but the relationship between women and financial development, independence, growth, entrepreneurship, and the health of a society)

Women and Philanthropy

Women and Politics

Changing face of the family and the roles of women and men

Other religions (particularly Islam) and the cultural implications of the religion for women

Women re-creating themselves through their lifetimes

Yale Alumni/ae and Parenting

Other related comments:

- Is there a way that we can make my sister-in-law, a Yalie who gave up work to have her kids, feel that she wants to come and would not be judged or intimidated? (Personally, I liked the "can-do" energy.)
- Instead of just one area as it relates to women, why not try several. The mix would attract individuals from many different fields and create a vibrant crosscurrent of exchanges.
- I do not necessarily think that the above topics should be limited to women.
- Need some break out groups for single women without kids.
- How to deal with degree/professional jealousy (how the Yale degree can make one a target rather than simply be a benefit)
- I would also like to meet and hear more from Yale women professors - I enjoyed meeting a few profs at this conference and would love the opportunity to meet more.
- Networking with current Yale women students
- I don't particularly care the topic; it's so fascinating to find this groups of highly talented women and find out what they're doing but, even more, share responses with them - all those "aha" moments when you realize that you're all having the same reaction in the same timeframe, which I simply don't get in my current life. Discussions about the women's movement, how women are confronting and acting in society, staying in the workforce vs. staying at home. As Hillary Pennington said, any one of us could have shared our reflections with the audience; and that's what we got the opportunity to do.
- I think it is important that the topics not revert to "Women and _____," in the sense of talking about outstanding women in a particular field. What marked this conference was, on the whole, a look at how women's experience is qualitatively different, and how that difference affects the outcome in various disciplines.

3. *Would you be more or less likely to attend another conference if it were held in the major metropolitan area that is closest to you, rather than on campus in New Haven? (In answering this question, take into account that the conference would of necessity involve fewer Yale faculty and administrators, but could focus more time on alumnae presenters, networking, and discussion.)*

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total</u>
Much more likely	7.8%	9
Somewhat more likely	13%	15
About as likely	45.2%	52
Somewhat less likely	26.1%	30
Much less likely	7.8%	9
	Total respondents:	115
	Skipped this question:	13

4. *The AYA would like to build on this experience and would welcome your thoughts on ways -- in addition to future conferences -- we might continue to engage with Yale's women graduates. Please use the space below for your response.*

Total respondents: 73

Skipped this question: 55

More than 50% of the survey respondents offered suggestions for follow-up. In some cases, the AYA has already launched initiatives that address the suggestions (e.g., career networking with the new Yale Career Network) or is considering the possibilities (e.g., experimenting with local/regional programming).

Ideas included:

- Local/regional events/networking. Lunchtime events. Leverage the Yale Clubs. Have evening or weekend events - some being purely social, others being discussion groups on various topics of either special interest to women or on which women's thoughts are not normally considered.
- Involving alumnae in fundraising for the research being done at Yale on women's health issues
- Online book club for women graduates to post their views on books written by Yale faculty, like *World on Fire*
- Interactive website for conference attendees to follow up on conversations begun there
- Detailed coverage in the *Yale Alumni Magazine*
- I would like to have this network of women be accessible to undergraduate women, especially those from lower income households, who may not yet have been exposed to the value of mentorship and networking. I am willing to volunteer my time to make this happen.
- Yale women's newsletter featuring news on women's studies, developments in women's research, features on female students, announcements of new books/publications written by Yale alumnae/female faculty...
- Promote next such conference to new graduates/graduating seniors
- Listservs on topics of shared interest to alums (male & female)
- Alumnae mentoring programs