



Convention shots: Mary Peterson stands behind Title IX panelists, from left, Queen Thompson, Molly Perdue, and Sharon Rouse. Shelia Lea, center photo left, a Student Leadership Conference participant and Louise Thompson, Charlotte Branch president, talk during a meal. Pat Abell, left and Lou Dean Howard listen to a speaker. Abell is out-going secretary and Howard is parliamentarian.

PHOTOS BY JOANNE HILL AND ESTHER LUMSDON

## Convention in Charlotte Features First Leadership Conference, Much More

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### "Have a passion for what you do!"

The convention was kicked off a day early with the first Student Leadership Conference sponsored by AAUW NC and two groups from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte: Diversity in Information Technology Institute (DITI) and Charlotte Research Institute (CRI). Nearly 40 students and AAUW members gathered on the UNCC campus to hear a dynamic panel speak on *Lead to Succeed: Challenging the Stereotypes*.

It was coordinated by Mary Peterson, AAUW NC program vice-president; Dr. Teresa Dahlberg, professor of computer science and DITI director; Dr. Susan Winter, professor of business; Marty Folsom, Tar Heel News editor, and students Cecelia Doman, Marguerite Doman, Shari Armstrong, and Prathiba Bhasin.

Dahlberg began the session by encouraging the audience, "Have a passion for what you do." She said it is true women must try harder and be better to succeed, but in challenging the stereotypes, "It's fine to ask for help from those who have been there." Networking works

because it helps women see the big picture; they are not alone in their endeavors and difficulties.

### Title IX compliance revisited

Molly Perdue, Sharon Rouse, and Queen Thompson gave very different perspectives on Title IX issues. Perdue sued Brooklyn College in New York several years ago—and won. She was a gym teacher who, among other things, was told she had to "clean the gym so it would be nice for the boys." Her salary was \$5,000 a year. Her male counterpart was paid \$40,000.

Rouse, the only female program coordinator/

machine shop teacher in the N.C. community college system, came to her position through several factors—jobs she held, along with training and education. She likes what she does. She said, "Litigation, though important, could do more damage than good. A person thinking about going into court has to weigh the emotional and financial cost that she will have to pay whether she wins or not. My personal working life has not been easy, however, my skills and work ethic have helped tremendously in my nontraditional field. Many times, I could have brought a suit against someone and would have won. However, these problems usually took care of themselves." She advises choosing battles carefully.

Thompson worked for many years as a Title IX compliance officer for special populations in three states, as well as a social worker and serving other roles in education. Her message was that many schools are out of compliance due to budget limitations and politics. She said equal access is an important issue and we need to continue to address it.

## Panelists Tell Their Stories to Encourage Students

Notes from three students who helped coordinate the Student Leadership Conference at UNCC and the AAUW NC program vice-president.

### Nancy Sykora

Time-Warner Cable Company  
Vice-President Customer Operations

By Marguerite Doman, UNCC Student

NANCY SYKORA recently moved to Charlotte from Minneapolis. She is used to change. Without changing jobs, she's worked for 13 different companies, because the cable industry has a history of company acquisitions and mergers.

Sykora said that she learned to be flexible and adjust to various managers and management styles by sharing a problem resulting from different communications styles. Her colleagues discussed and decided business strategies at venues of their common interest—sports events. Sykora expressed her need to be part of all relevant business discussions, but what her colleagues heard was that Sykora wanted to go to a hockey game. The problem was fixed and she got to go to a hockey game, too.

When confronted with a person who shows uncompromising disagreement and has stopped listening by sitting back in the chair with arms crossed and face tightened, Sykora suggested if you won't achieve your goal, you can walk away. I think implied was to re-evaluate, re-group and perhaps find another avenue to achieve the goal.

Sykora expressed the benefit of both a mentor and an advocate, someone who watches out for you and helps you understand the subtleties of organizational style differences. She also explained that as a leader, "You don't always have to be right...trust the knowledge and experience of the people who work with you. Approach challenges with humor and courage," but

remember business relationships and communications do need deliberate management.

### Beth Messersmith, MPA

Democracy North Carolina  
Co-Director

By Cecelia Doman, UNCC Student

AN ARTICULATE, ENTHUSIASTIC, energetic woman, Beth Messersmith is deeply passionate in all she does. She had dreams and followed them, lived them, and found she wanted more. She spoke of trust, humor, spirituality, and self-reflection.

Messersmith went after what she wanted by seeking others who were already there and volunteering to help. She went abroad to know more of life in an area of the world unfamiliar to her. When she came home, she learned more.

When Messersmith meets or reads articles by someone catches her attention, she calls and asks "Will you talk to me?" She said she hasn't been refused yet, and by talking to others about their passions, she broadens her network. It helped her move up the leadership ladder rapidly and competently. She is well-respected in her field and as a successful professional woman.

What I remember about Messersmith's talk, though, are not all her qualifications or accomplishments, of which she has many, rather it was the presenter herself. She knows. She knows democracy, hard work, determination, and that to know more you've got to ask the question "Will you talk to me?" of others who know. Hearing her talk of accomplishments shows that she lives the 'talk.' It was an honor to have heard her story.

### Catrelia Hunter

Livingstone College  
Vice President for Advancement

By Mary Peterson, AAUW NC

TO INSPIRE STUDENTS to overcome stereotypes and barriers to become leaders, Dr. Catrelia Hunter told how her mentor, the Barber Scotia College president, encouraged her to go to the University of Illinois to earn her master's degree. There they kept asking Hunter why she insisted on returning to Barber Scotia College, but she knew that was where she wanted to work. But it wasn't enough. An AAUW grant helped her study for her Ed.D. at Fayetteville State University. Now she enjoys working at Livingstone College and was recently appointed vice-president for advancement. She encouraged young leaders to stand up for what they believe in and to pursue their dreams and life goals. She told the students to give back of themselves to their communities, as this is how you grow as a person and a leader.

### Deborah Clayton

Charlotte Research Institute  
Executive Director

By Prathiba Bhasin, UNCC Student

Deborah Clayton, the first speaker on the morning panel, is a tall, charming woman. She enthused a new spirit in everyone who listened to her. Her talk, interlaced with humor in the right places, was quite inspiring. Having changed jobs many times, like many others, she stressed the importance of following your intuition. All

### Workshops offer variety of topics

Women attending the Convention were able to attend two of several workshops.

Michelle Groce, winner of the 2003 AAUW NC Juvenile Literature Award, presented a workshop called, "All About Writing."

Tips on getting out the vote were offered in a workshop featuring two areas—"Planning, Promoting, and Holding a Candidates Forum" with June Kimmel; and "Planning, Preparing, and Distributing a Voter Guide" led by Karla Atkinson, Barbara Wright, Ladene Newton, and Katie Thompson of Brevard Branch.

Other workshops were about the Legal Advocacy Fund and how to plan a student leadership conference.

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<http://www.rtpnet.org/aauwnc/03-04/Convention/index.htm>  
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through the good and rough patches of her life she never lost her self-confidence and remained true to what her heart said she should do.

"Leadership," Clayton said, "is not just speaking to people, instead it is listening genuinely to what others want to say." She encouraged the students to exploit all the resources they have to do what they want to do. "Don't be confined by social conventions."