

Erika Plascencia

Professor Mary

RHET 105

December 1, 2015

Bring on the Education: Supporting Women

The Illini Wise was a handbook, for freshman women, published in the 1940's. Later publications were still made, but the latest one was published from 1960 to 1961. The handbook has various information for women entering the University of Illinois. Female transfer students are even given information on how to adapt to life on campus. The handbook is essentially an informational booklet on what campus has to offer. The examined artifact was published for students entering Illinois from 1959-60. "Illini Wise: A Handbook For Freshman Women" is an interesting artifact that was written for freshman women to support and guide them through their life at Illinois.

The Illini Wise handbook provided freshman women with events to start off their life. A basic schedule for "New Student Week", or what is now called, "Welcome Week", was included in the booklet. Aside from that, there were events specific to female students, like meeting with the Dean of Women (University...Advisers). Meeting with Miriam A. Shelden, the Dean of Women at the time, may have been an event included in the schedule so the new female students could know who to turn to if they ever needed assistance. The event was an opportunity for freshman women to get to know the Dean of Women's staff. The handbook's claim could be found throughout the book, but the main point the author may be trying to get across is that there are women available on campus to help freshman women emotionally or academically. Since this is simply a handbook, the author did not include a rebuttal. A handbook is meant to be informative, so there would be nothing to counter within the handbook. Support was given to women entering the university the minute they entered campus.

The main reason for the publication of Illini Wise may have been to reassure freshman women

of their future at U of I, which was able to happen by appealing to the audience. “Illini Wise: A Handbook for Freshman women,” appeals to the ethos and logos of the audience: the freshman women. Since the book was written by the Student Committee of Freshman Advisers, a higher authority than the students, freshman women are more likely to pay attention to the contents of the handbook than if it were to be written by a student. The handbook also includes a note by the Assistant Dean of Women for Freshman Women, Ann J. McNamara. Miss McNamara is also of high authority, but she specializes with freshman women. Reading a note by McNamara made the contents of the handbook significant to their audience, allowing them to understand there are people who would support them. The handbook appeals to logos through the countless of information that is presented. A small guide on what is recommended for female students to wear, depending on the occasion, is included in the handbook. An explanation as to why a woman may want to wear the appropriate attire, depending on the event, is stated in the handbook; the main reason being that students may enjoy themselves more if dressed appropriately (University...Advisers).

The main warrant of Illini Wise may have been accessibility of help, since the small guide was written to account for the female population at the university. The position of Dean of Women was created in 1897, possibly to support a coed university (U of I Archives). Later, in the 1940's, Illini Wise got published to inform freshman women that human resources, ranging from resident advisers to deans, are accommodated for them. The increase of women attending universities between the 1800's and 1900's is not mentioned in the handbook, but that could be the reason for making the Illini Wise. The NWHM, National Women's History Museum, mentions that colleges began to allow coeducation in the late 1800's and into the mid 1960's. With that, 70% of women who did attend college transitioned into a coed college in the 1890's (NWHM). This may explain the reason for having female events included in the handbook. Women may have felt unsure about their surroundings, as it was common for men to attend higher education, which could have further pushed the establishment of a Dean of

Women, and more of a reason to lend a helping hand to freshman women through a handbook.

Further assistance provided for freshmen women is shown through the staff mentioned in the handbook. The backing may be the female advisers assigned to freshman women. The note at the end of the Illini Wise lists the adviser's names, all of which are female names. Though not directly stated in the handbook, all the advisers may be female to make freshman women feel at ease if they ever need to discuss a situation with someone. Today, as is known, women can speak to both male and female advisers: whomever makes them feel most comfortable. The advisers further include a note at the end of the handbook, stating, "We also hope you will keep this book for reference" (University...Advisers). The handbook itself serves as a reference to freshman women. The handbook provides various information such as who the advisers are, why one should wear the recommended clothing, and assured that freshman women will be able to communicate and meet with other freshman women. There were no qualifiers to the handbook. The freshman women are encouraged to keep the handbook as a reference, and since a reason for publishing the Illini Wise is to give women support, a possible qualifier may be "hope," as was used in the adviser's note. With that, there may be reason as to why freshman women would not keep the handbook.

In a time when there were not a lot women attending college as there is today, creating the Illini Wise was a great way to inform female students about the Illinois campus. The handbook was able to reassure women that there is support for them, if they ever need to speak about something. Forming an all female staff was another great transition for freshman woman to feel more welcome. Although some of the advice given seemed unnecessary, such as the clothing recommendation and maintaining manners, the Illini Wise seemed helpful in aiding women at the U of I.

Works Cited

"NWHM Exhibit: The History of Women and Education." *NWHM Exhibit: The History of Women and Education*. National Women's History Museum, 2007. Web. 7 Sept. 2015.

<https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/education/1800s_7.htm>.

"University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Office of Dean of Student Personnel and Dean of Women | University of Illinois Archives." *University of Illinois Archives*. University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign, n.d. Web. 7 Sept. 2015. <<http://archives.library.illinois.edu/archon/?p=creators%2Fcreator&id=400>>.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Student Committee of Freshman Advisers. *Illini Wise: A Handbook For Freshman Woman*. Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1959-60. Print. <http://archives.library.illinois.edu/slcold/researchguides/rhetoric/rhetoric_pdfs/Illini%20Wise-%20A%20Handbook%20for%20Freshman%20Women%20-%201959-60.pdf>.