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ASUO President Geneva Wortman was one of four speakers talking about women's issues on campus Wednesday in the EMU Fir Room.

Town hall meeting covers gender

The challenges facing women in a college setting were presented

By James Scripps
Oregon Daily Emerald

Gender was the topic discussed at Wednesday's town hall meeting, "Gender in Higher Education," to about 30 students in the EMU Fir Room.

The panel discussion, sponsored by the Multicultural Center, included four female members of the campus community who discussed the challenges facing women in a college setting.

A range of issues, including curriculum, student activism, gender stereotypes and single parenting were addressed during the discussion.

Despite the University's child care subsidy program, one audience member told of the struggles that she has had to endure as a single parent trying to pay for school and deal with the setbacks that affect many student parents.

Jenny Phillips, a member of the Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Alliance also agreed that student parents should have more support.

"I feel like it is discrimination when there is a lack of child care

for single parents," she said.

Audience members and panelists also discussed their feelings about the depth to which the University's classes and curriculum meet the needs of students who want to learn about the changing identity of women in society.

"What are the core values of our educational system?" asked Lisa Foisey, director of the Women's Center. "We must question the male European philosophies that have shaped our educational system."

"What would it look like to have an educational system that teaches relationships, the physical, the mental and the emotional, as opposed to simply the intellectual."

ASUO Outreach Director Jessica Billingslea, a moderator of the event, hopes that the town hall forums facilitate greater diversity at the university level.

"By making the campus a more diverse atmosphere, it allows higher education to produce graduates who are well-rounded, and can interact better with people who come from different backgrounds," Billingslea said.

"I think, demographically, that the University should strive to represent the population of the United States."

The mental health of women at

the University was also discussed when Robin Holmes, a psychologist at University Counseling, spoke to the issue. She said that women constitute 65 percent of the counseling center clientele. She added that this number does not reflect the weakness of women on campus, but the willingness of women to seek help with their problems.

"Sometimes when you have to deal with negative influences all of the time, there is a mental breakdown," Holmes said. "Women are part of an oppressed group. When you are part of an oppressed group bad things seem to happen all the time."

The Multicultural Center is tentatively planning another panel discussion for the end of February, although they have not yet decided on a topic.

"Gender in Higher Education" is the second in a series of three town hall meetings that will prepare a curriculum for a conference in May titled: "Education 2000: Race and Gender in the New Millennium," said Diarmuid Houston, director of the Black Student Union.

"In May we will be able to take some topics from each of these town hall meetings and present them for discussion," said Billingslea. "Hopefully, the things that we discuss now will be fresh in people's minds."

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