

February 4, 2016, Meeting of the Commission for Women

28 in attendance: Colleen Ryan (representing SEAT), Misty Bailey, Ashley Blamey, Rachel Chen, Margaret Lazarus Dean, Jennifer Dobbins, Teresa Fisher, Hillary Fouts, Mallory Ladd, Kierstyn Lamour, Mary Lucal, Amanda Cofer (with CHEW), Thura Mack, Lisa Reyes Mason, Bruce MacLennan, Johanna Owenby, Mary Papke, Jennifer Richter, Rickey Hall, Marla Roberts, Rita Smith, Wendy Syer, Stephanie TerMaath, Barbara Thayer-Bacon, Dixie Thompson, Jennifer Ward Cornwell (GSS), Bethany Vanhooser (SGA), Breanna Andreu

- I. Minutes for December (Virtual Meeting): approved.
- II. Reports from Co-Chairs
 - a. Update: Co-Chair Hillary Fouts has returned full-time.
 - b. Two Commissioners will be attending the HERS Institute this year: Jennifer Richter to Bryn Mawr; Hillary Fouts will go to Wellesley.
 - c. Call for CFW Awards (Angie Warren Perkins for junior faculty this year and Notable Woman Award to an administrator).
 - i. Applications reviewed at March meeting.
 - d. Women with Big Ideas has a new publication, featuring CFW members, including Rachel Chen, Margaret Lazarus, and Mallory Ladd.
 - e. Comments on ongoing turmoil on campus and outside campus:
 - i. As the Commission for Women, we are a part of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The attacks on diversity at the University are appalling.
 - ii. Concern over the language that "Rickey Hall was counseled." Why was the language not "consulted?" ODI cast as doing the wrong thing.
 - iii. Students have grouped together to support ODI and are hosting rallies. The legislature needs to be educated as to these issues and address the conscious misunderstanding to manufacture issues.
 - iv. We are in whole-hearted support of Vice Chancellor Hall.
 - f. Hillary Fouts: update as to Commission Chairs' meeting with the Chancellor
 - i. Many bills and legislation that affect UTK. To stay informed, use UT Advocacy.
 - ii. Chancellor has two top priorities concerning legislation: diversity education *and* governance.
 1. Bill to restructure the Board of Trustees so it is appointed by this legislature.
 2. Second priority is diversity and inclusion budget cuts. Chancellor has discussed that he realizes that his office has hurt many with the gender-neutral pronoun reaction.
 - iii. Legislature is aware that faculty and staff are unhappy, so it is important to use personal non-UTK email and contact your legislator as a citizen, not necessarily an employee. There is no issue with being fired or your employment with using an @utk.edu email address, but the legislators are more likely to listen to a message from @gmail.com (or other personal) email address, with your residential address included, so it is clear that you vote for them.

- iv. This doesn't mean that the Commissions don't have power, but we have influence at University level, keeping a pulse as to what's going on at the University
 - 1. What is the role of the Commissions and Council?
 - a. We have a direct line to the Chancellor and administrators. They want recommendations from us on how the University can be more inclusive.
 - b. Perhaps we could form a Task Force to describe issues around diversity – we take these issues very seriously.
- g. Update from Vice Chancellor Hall:
 - i. Thank you for your support in this challenging and trying time.
 - ii. What is going on is part of a larger agenda to exercise more political control over higher education.
 - 1. Playing out nationally, in North Carolina and Wisconsin, Centers being closed, cutting funding to faculty, and gaining control of governance of universities.
 - iii. We need to educate others that diversity is broader than gender, race, etc., and includes veterans' issues, first-generation college students, low-income students.
 - iv. If you are interested in trying to help, use your own personal email, phone, or stationary, and contact your legislator.
- h. The Vol Vision 20/20 refresh still plans to add diversity and inclusion as a priority, and this is supported by both the Provost and the Chancellor.
- i. Are alumni coordinating responses?
 - i. Difficult to coordinate a response, but working with business and employers who want prepared and diverse students to employ.

III. Sexual Awareness and Education at Tennessee (SEAT) Update

- a. Request for \$550 funding, and Knoxville PrideFest has expressed interest as to helping fundraise. More information will be provided for next meeting for a funding vote.

IV. Women in STEM Update

- a. Now an official student organization with 75 members, multiple subcommittees.
- b. The Symposium Subcommittee is the largest.
 - i. A few symposium details: on Friday, April 15, in the Min Kao Building, from 8:30-5:30, will include poster presentations, panel, career fair, and keynote speaker.

V. Faculty Senate Update

- a. Called an emergency meeting in December:
 - i. Support of diversity and inclusion efforts, calling on trustees to protect faculty from influence in relation to Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and accreditation.
 - ii. Creation of ad hoc committee focused on Diversity and Inclusion by President-Elect Bonnie Ownley.
- b. Faculty Senate also met this week and voted to co-sponsor the student rally on Friday.

- VI. SGA update: Day on the Hill, met with 25 representative and senators.
 - a. The key emphasis was supporting diversity.
 - i. SGA met with the diversity funding cuts bill sponsors, who were steadfast in their beliefs, as well as the Chair of the Education Committee and local Senator Briggs, neither of whom are happy with the diversity cuts bill.

- VII. Adjourn