

**Commission for Women
Minutes
Thursday, February 7, 2008**

Attendance:

Pam Hindle (Chair), Kathryn Ellis, Fadia Alvic, Kasey Baker, David Patterson, Mary Evans, Margaret Crawford, Tammi Brown, P.J. Snodgrass, Deb Glenn, Urmila Seshagiri, Alan Chesney, Mary Papke, Brandice Green, Joy DeSensi, Wendy Syer, Noriko Horiguchi

Pam Hindle called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. The agenda was as follows:

- I. Review/approval of December minutes.**
- II. Graduate Research: Femicide in Juarez - Merriellyn Jo Rennard**
- III. Notable UT Woman**
- IV. Report from the Faculty Senate**
- V. Angie Warren Perkins Award**
- VI. Women of Achievement Awards**
- VII. Chancellor Search**
- VIII. Old Business/New Business**

Before moving to the points on the agenda, Pam Hindle recognized Black History Month by reading a quotation by Martin Luther King, Jr. Hindle then remarked that she believes in the power of language, such that we can be propelled into action or into mindful non-action, 'mindful' being a critical word.

Hindle next asked everyone present to welcome Urmila Seshagiri to the group. Dr. Seshagiri was not able to be at meetings last semester.

I. Approval of December 2007 Minutes – The December 2007 minutes were presented for approval. Mary Papke and Deb Glenn gave Kathryn Ellis some minor corrections. Alan Chesney motioned to approve and the motion was seconded. The minutes were approved.

II. Graduate Research: Femicide in Juarez (Merriellyn Jo Rennard) – Hindle introduced Merri Rennard, graduate student in Social Work who is doing research on femicide. Rennard is conducting her research at the College of Vet Med as part of a collaborative effort between Vet Med and Social Work examining violence in a holistic manner. Rennard explained that right now she is simply presenting a research proposal because she has only been here since last semester. She does have a research team that is very interested in the project.

Rennard presented background information on Juarez, Mexico. She explained that there are documented cases of women being killed in Juarez for about fifteen years. Juarez is a border town (on the other side of the border from El Paso). Rennard explained that the violence is especially profound because the number of women killed is astounding. According to Amnesty International, a conservative estimate is that as many as 370 women were killed between 1993 and 2003. There has not been a noticeable decrease in violence since 2003. Sexual assault is also involved in a large number of cases – many people in the community believe that many cases involve intimate partner violence or known assailment violence. Although there is an

estimate of how many women have been killed, there has been no documented effective political response. There have only been limited investigations and have been reports that confessions are often coerced by local law enforcement. Rennard sees this as very concerning and very troubling. Human rights organizations and governments have contacted officials in Mexico in an effort to get them to look carefully at this problem, but to date, the problem has not been addressed.

Rennard has identified four factors contributing to violence against women in Juarez:

- Role of Sexism – Juarez is very dependent on industry where many women work
- Lack of perpetrator accountability
- Rapid growth of free trade industry
- Maquillas – women are hired over men; easier to keep a workforce of women under control

Chesney noted that one of the issues appears to be the “macho” cultural aspect of Juarez’s community. He asked if that had been tied into the issue. Rennard responded that sexism and the rapid growth of free trade have combined. She says that when there was a shift to women becoming the preferred hires, those same women were viewed in disdain and became threats. She believes that there is a very interesting “macho” undercurrent to the whole issue.

P.J. Snodgrass followed up asking whether there is any sexism or discrimination going on *in* the workplace. Rennard said that is another whole issue. She thinks it is interesting because women are “preferred” as hires because they demand lower wages and work longer hours, but once they are in the workplace there is definite sexism. This, however, is an area that Rennard has not looked into that much.

Wendy Syer asked whether these are U.S. companies. Rennard said that many of the people on site are not Americans, but that the upper management is often Americans. Syer asked how accountable the companies are. Rennard responded that this violence is not unique to Juarez, but that there is more documented violence there.

Syer then asked where these murders are taking place. Rennard explained that they are happening within the city, but not in the workplace. She said that many occur in homes, but that those are categorized differently. Many of the unsolved murders are occurring in the city where the bodies are left and there is not way to identify them. The murders that occur in homes are that ones that seem to have the most “coerced confessions.” The murders that can be linked to someone are not included in the Amnesty International numbers – thus, it is a conservative estimation.

Hindle stated that she suspects the suicide rate is pretty high as well. Mary Papke does not think so because many of these women are Catholics.

Fadia Alvic asked if the study only looks at the Juarez side of the border, or if it also includes El Paso. Rennard responded that because some of the bodies are “dropped” it is difficult to know where the violence is occurring, but most the issue with political inaction has been on the Juarez side.

Brandice Green asked about the demographic of the women. Rennard said that most of them are between the ages of 18 and 25, but not all of them. That age range is when many women work for the maquilas. Rennard's proposed research is looking at the grassroots effort in Juarez against the violence and doing interviews. She has noticed that many researchers go in, collect info, write a report, and leave. She wants to utilize art done by actual community members to help raise community awareness. She is interested in looking specifically at photojournalism because it can empower the community and inform people outside the community. Under her research plan, data and information would be gathered in a collaborative way. For the photojournalism, the local participants would be provided with technology to document their experiences with their confidentiality and privacy protected. She would hope to be available to the participants as a consultant.

Hindle said that she thinks Rennard's research plan sounds great. She thinks this is a devastating situation and wonders if the same thing is happening in Hispanic communities in the U.S. as well. Rennard said not to this extent. Some immigrant communities have a lack of knowing what is really going on, a lack of understanding or trusting the system, and different cultural norms. It is important to target community organizations that target specific groups in languages and by people who really understand the community. She does not think, however, that there is the same issue here – but there is violence against women in general.

Margaret Crawford asked whether that had been any retribution against the active groups in Juarez. Rennard said there has not been retribution, just general inaction by officials. Chesney said it sounds like there has been a “conspiracy of silence.”

III. Notable UT Woman – Margaret Crawford presented a brief report from the Notable UT Woman committee. She said that there would be online voting for the award. All Commission members will vote for one of three nominees. The nominees were announced [names not included according to rules].

IV. Report from Faculty Senate – (Presented prior to Item II on the agenda for time reasons) David Patterson presented the Faculty Senate report. He said, “There has been turbulence.” Patterson explained that there are questions of how to respond and how to represent the faculty and students in a system of shared governance.

Following Crabtree's dismissal, the Faculty Senate held a reception in his honor. Between eight hundred and a thousand people attended, many standing in line for over an hour to shake his hand.

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee conducted a survey of the faculty regarding a number of issues. The committee took some heat for this – they were critiqued for bias in the survey – but Patterson believes the survey was sent to an informed, intelligent group capable of considering what they may or may not view as biased. He acknowledged that the survey could have been done better, but the bottom line is that there was limited confidence in the president.

There was a special meeting of the Faculty Senate that President Peterson attended to answer questions. In the middle of the meeting, Patterson thought the president would do well, but by the end of the meeting he no longer felt this way and thought the president was being dismissive.

At its last meeting, the Faculty Senate discussed the possibility of a vote of no confidence. A resolution to this end was suggested. There was also a suggestion to hold a meeting with the president to discuss Cherokee campus, facilities, the president's ignoring the faculty, etc. There is a tentative meeting scheduled for a small group of faculty. The ground rules for the meeting (record of the content, sharing of content, etc.) have not been set yet. The list of meeting participants has tentatively been agreed upon: Nancy Howell, Candice White, Otis Stephens, John Lonsberry, Lou Gross, David Patterson, and John Nolt.

On Monday, the Faculty Senate will be considering a resolution for recognition of Crabtree for his service to the university.

On another issue, the Faculty Senate is considering changes to the structure of the ombudsperson position on campus. They are trying to restructure it to have a single rep for the faculty and staff. Patterson expressed his continued awe for Joan Heminway.

Alan Chesney asked what he identified as a "purely self-interested question." He said that Lou Gross has been quoted as saying that Human Resources is "fixed." Chesney said that if it has been resolved, no one has communicated that to him. He would say the perception on campus is that if it has been resolved, that resolution has not been communicated to the campus. The committees to discuss Human Resources that Crabtree and Peterson agreed upon were never convened. Patterson agreed that there is much that is articulated, but little that is delivered.

Hindle asked if there were any other questions – Patterson asked for comments as well. Patterson said that the Faculty Senate is supposed to represent the faculty, so if there are any reactions to please tell him.

Mary Evans stated that the staff does have a stake in what happens at this university and that they are not pleased with what has happened so far. Hindle added that we appreciate Patterson's leadership and encourage him to continue it. Snodgrass said that the staff is just as frustrated and looks forward to the day with a new chief information office. Patterson and Snodgrass had a brief discussion about the transition to the new e-mail system. Papke mentioned that there are a lot of larger issues – servers are not accessible, the whole thing is just an overwhelming burden on IT – and that she is very sympathetic to IT.

Chesney said that he does not think Peterson understands the level of frustration staff members have in being able to accomplish their jobs. There is a level of fatigue that is inherent in this institution because of our leadership.

Snodgrass added that there are still some people in her department dealing with the emotions of layoffs, so every time we are without leadership there is a level of stress and concern that emerges. Her department has been organized, reorganized, organized, and is now being moved – it seems like every time there is a new administration they are up for grabs. They just want good leadership. She added that Peterson does not realize that Crabtree was, for many people, the first

person really to try to get a dialog going and to try to make this a first-class university. For him to leave is a real blow to morale.

Evans mentioned that there is a system-wide board of staff that is supposed to meet with Peterson twice a year. The last time he met with the board was in December 2006. A meeting is currently on the books for mid-March. This makes the non-exempt staff feel like Peterson does not value that commitment. Faculty members are not the only ones to have these feelings.

V. Angie Perkins Award – No report or discussion.

VI. Women of Achievement Award – No report or discussion.

VII. Chancellor Search – Hindle handed out an information sheet regarding the current search for new Chancellor. She said that this list of criteria was not an absolute list, but should be used as a guideline.

Evans expressed concerns about the lack of a non-exempt staff representative on the Chancellor search committee. She said this was just another indication that non-exempt staff members do not have a say in this. Snodgrass said she had similar concerns and had success e-mailing Hap McSween.

Hindle would like us to get responses from everyone who is interested in the position. She has already received to women nominations and will put together a “spreadsheet” of our nominees to highlight their strengths and as a handy tool for the search committee.

If anyone knows of women who would be qualified candidates, they should send that information to Hindle. She would like to get a slate of qualified female candidates to Hap McSween as soon as possible.

VIII. Old Business/New Business

Hindle quickly reminded everyone about the Pearl Fryar event on February 27 and showed the flyer for the event.

Pam Hindle adjourned the meeting at 1:08 p.m.

Submitted by Kathryn Ellis