

**Commission for Women
Minutes
Thursday, November 6, 2008**

Attendance:

Pam Hindle (chair), Kathryn Ellis, George Hoemann, Tiffany Hedges, Fadia Alvic, Mary Papke, Joy DeSensi, Mary Evans, John Nolt, Jillian Keally, Margaret Crawford, Rosa Thomas, Wendy Syer, Deb Haines, Cheryl Travis, Tammi Brown, Brandice Green, Nancy Howell

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

- I. October Minutes**
- II. Report from the Faculty Senate – John Nolt**
- III. World AIDS Day – Pam Hindle**
- IV. Women in Math and Science – Tiffany Hedges**
- V. Campus Tension – Tammi Brown**
- VI. The University of Tennessee, Austin Final Report of the Gender Equity Task Force**
- VII. Report from the Commission for Blacks**
- VIII. Report from the Commission for LGBT People – George Hoemann**
- IX. Old Business/New Business**

The attendees exchanged brief greetings before settling in to cover the agenda.

- I. October Minutes** – The October minutes were presented for approval. Mary Papke, who had given Kathryn Ellis some editing suggestions prior to the start of the meeting, moved to approve the minutes. Joy DeSensi seconded the motion. The October minutes were approved unanimously.

II. Report from the Faculty Senate (John Nolt) –

John Nolt began his report by reminding the CFW members that at the October minutes he had mentioned that there were going to be reports from the Graduate and Undergraduate Councils about the department and program closures. Nolt said that both Councils had essentially reported that they had not had time to collect enough information yet.

Nolt reported that a big concern with the Senate right now is the anticipated budget cuts. The Senate has put together a task force, which is currently being called the Task Force for Procedures and is known as the “Ax Committee.” The task force is going to make some suggestions about the most important criteria to look at if we have to have additional program closures. Nolt said that he will insist that the gender balance on campus be considered.

Nolt also said that there is now a Faculty Senate Effectiveness Task Force, which Papke is a member of. This task force examines the role of the Faculty Senate in regards to the

administration. They are hoping to make the Faculty Senate more effective. The task force's first report will be given at the November 17 meeting of the Faculty Senate. The report will be based on information received from a questionnaire that was distributed to the faculty.

Nolt announced that Joan Cronin will be at the November 17 Faculty Senate meeting and that anyone is welcome to attend.

Finally, Nolt said that the Faculty Senate will continue the gender salary report started by Lou Gross. Cheryl Travis said that one of the traditional salary studies looked at salary by department, but did not include a breakdown by gender. Nolt said that that report has been updated and is on the Faculty Senate website. Nolt thinks you can find it under the minutes of the Senate's October 20 meeting. Nolt added that he will put a link to it in the electronic newsletter. Deb Haines said that she also put a pdf version on CFW's Blackboard site. Papke said that she knows the Faculty Senate is focusing on the academic and that she wants to know about the gender question related to staff layoffs. Papke says that is something the CFW needs to be aware of and keep an eye on. Nolt agreed that we will probably see a lot of staff layoffs before we see a loss of faculty.

III. World AIDS Day (Pam Hindle) –

Hindle presented information Amy Davidson had given her about AIDS Day on December 1 and events planned at UT. World AIDS Day is December 1. Hindle said that the CFW has been invited to have a presence at the event being held at UT and Hindle would like for us to do that. Hindle said that she plans to take to Rosa Thomas about information she has at her clinic that might deal with women and AIDS. Thomas said that the Health Center now charges a fee for testing; she thinks the fee is \$12. Thomas added that the Knox County Health Department still offers free testing. Thomas said that on World AIDS Day, the NAACP will be offering free AIDS testing at the Black Cultural Center. They will be administering the saliva test that gives results in twenty minutes. Also, she said that there will be groups on the UC Plaza with information. The Student Health Center will have a table there. Hindle said that she would like the CFW to also have a presence at the event.

Thomas added that there has been a big increase in cases of syphilis in Knox County. She said the health department is trying to get additional educational information out to the public. She said that if those rates increase you will almost definitely see increases in other STDs. Thomas said

Hindle asked Travis if the Women's Studies department has any information on women and AIDS. Travis said that they don't have pieces of information, but that some of their students may be able to staff a CFW table at the event.

Thomas suggested that next year an information sheet about AIDS be included with November paychecks.

Hindle asked Jillian Keally if the library is doing anything for World AIDS Day. Keally said not that she knows of.

Hindle asked Wendy Syer if the International program is doing anything. Syer said not that she knows of.

IV. Women in Math and Science (Tiffany Hedges) –

Tiffany Hedges, Assistant Director of the Student Success Center, is involved with data for the Center. She said that Hindle asked her if she had numbers on women in math and science and on the Center's mentoring efforts related to that. Hedges said that they really have not looked at this topic as something of interest before, but that it is something they would like to do. Hedges said she thought that at today's meeting she would try to get an idea of what is already being done on campus and what the CFW would like to see happen.

Hedges said that one of the reasons a lot of women do not already go into the science, math, and engineering fields is because of a lack of role-modeling. She said that she would come back at a later date to report what she finds based on what the CFW wants. Hindle asked what information the Student Success Center has about data collected on these areas that Hedges could share with the CFW. Hedges responded that they have not yet broken the data down based on gender. She added that they have data from the past three years – Hindle said that she would like to have that data.

Hindle said that in terms of the CFW's interests, we are interested in hearing about areas where women are underrepresented. Hedges noted that being represented in those areas is not unique to UT.

Hindle asked if Hedges was aware of any general problems that students have when they come to the Success Center. Hedges responded that she did not know of any specific problems that are related to gender.

Travis asked whether Hedges has a general sense of the issues students raise and if any of these issues could be identified as problems related to gender. Hedges said that she think her office could definitely pull information on that for a future report. Travis added that she knows of some research that suggests changing the curriculum in certain classes and said she wonders if there had been any study of course curricula descriptions to suggest that the courses might help students to learn something that would be beneficial to the community. She said that this, benefits for the community, seems to be something that female students are interested in. Mary Papke pointed out that it might be helpful to invite Chuck Collins from the Math department to address programs because getting students from the Success Center might be already biasing the information because these are students who are already seeking help. Papke wonders if the Success Center would attract the women who have already chose to work in those fields. Hindle shared that Chuck Collins has already asked her to help him with a major study that will include gender. Fadia Alvic said that from her personal experience it was a matter of exposure – she

worked at ORNL as a graduate students and did see any women there as a part of any of the research.

Hindle said that she wonders if there are Ready for the World initiatives that consider gender as one of the areas of diversity to be infused in the classroom. Papke said that gender is included. She also said that Ready for the World held a session a while ago about intro math sections with international graduate teaching assistants. She said that students often said that they were not feeling prepared for these classes. Haines asked whether we need to be doing outreach to high schools.

Haines said that she would be interested to know the percentage of students going to the Success Center versus the entire student population. She would also like to know what percentages of those students are coming related to math/science issues. Haines said that she almost wonders if it is an environmental attitude – that we may not realize that there is a type of bias and, therefore, women do not see it as a viable option. She thinks that the Success Center is a point at which we can really encourage women to take these types of courses.

Margaret Crawford asked Hedges if she had any data showing the numbers of women/men who come to the Student Success Center. Hedges said that those numbers are available, but that she did not have them with her.

Travis mentioned Suzanne Linhart who has run a program for women and has won awards for her role in fostering women in mathematics. Hindle agreed that she is a valuable resource.

V. Campus Tensions (Tammi Brown) –

Tammi Brown spoke briefly about campus tension at UT. She said that tension has increased following the recent article in the Daily Beacon that raised questions about the needs for the Chancellor's Commissions. She noted that students of color and LGBT students are increasingly concerned. She mentioned that twice (recently) cotton has been left outside the Black Cultural Center. Rosa Thomas said that there had also been a confrontation at The Rock on election night. She said that some students painted "KKK" on The Rock and others showed up to paint something else. She thinks this may have sparked Chancellor Simek's campus e-mail. Denise Harvey added that there have also been some events in the dorms and on other parts of campus since the election. She said that black students and white students are not getting along so well as neighbors.

Hindle said she wanted us to have a general conversation about what role the CFW can take on campus to help deal with these tensions.

Hoemann said he thinks we need to *know* about some of the incidents that are happening on campus. He does not think people on campus know about the cotton incident, The Rock incident, etc. He wonders if the campus leaders are concerned about giving credence to these actions or if they are just hoping to sweep things under the rug. Papke said she thinks another

possibility is that you won't reach the people who really need to be reached. Haines thinks people need to learn how to present viewpoints without being derogatory – they need to learn how to “discuss” issues instead of just name-calling. Hoemann said that this country has just gone through an incredibly nasty discourse with the election and that we should not be surprised by Anna Parker's article in the Beacon. He said, however, that her article was mean and vicious and that she is close-minded.

Harvey added that this campus has never been particularly welcoming to students of color. She said that these issues are coming to the forefront now, but that they have been here much longer. She said that now, with the incidents at the Black Cultural Center, these students cannot go to the one place on campus where they have typically felt safe.

Mary Evans asked who should be responsible for pulling together the students to make it socially unacceptable to behave this way. Syer said that maybe Joseph Anderson could go to small group meetings sponsored by organizations. Haines asked if it could be part of a colloquial discussion for freshmen. Harvey said that there are discussions in the dorms led by the hall directors. Papke said she does not think that would be an effective use of the power of the university. She is always surprised at how little is done on this campus. She asked why we aren't having a whole week of events and discussions about the recent election. She said we should ask the Chancellor why there isn't someone who can immediately hit the ground running after something like this – Obama's acceptance, McCain's concession, problems with the campaigns, Palin, etc. She said we are supposed to educate people “at the moment.” Hindle agreed that we almost need to have a SWAT team. DeSensi said that in each classroom the professors should take the initiative to spark discussion and Haines said that we need to focus on how to move the country forward – discussion.

Harvey passed around information on a Black Issues Conference in February. She wants CFW members to consider holding a session that might be of use for black students on campus. Papke added that the three commissions could hold three forums and look at the recent election from different perspectives. Hindle and Hoemann agreed to talk to Jane Redmond about that idea.

VI. The University of Tennessee, Austin Final Report of the Gender Equity Task Force

Hindle passed around the University of Texas, Austin Final Report of Gender Equity Task Force. She encouraged everyone to read it and said that it would be posted on the CFW website. Travis said she wonders if we will have the report that CFW and Women's Studies produced in October 2000 on the CFW website. The response was that we will try to get it up on the website as well. Hoemann mentioned that his commission plans to do an annual “State of the Campus” from their own perspective and that will be posted on their website. Travis said that the UTK report was generated following a forum with recommendations and included some information on gender salary differences. Hindle said that the report (Austin) just passed around is rich and that she was impressed with it so she wanted to share it with us.

VII. Report from the Commission for Blacks –

No report.

VIII. Report from the Commission for LGBT People (George Hoemann) –

George Hoemann presented a brief report from the Commission for LGBT People. He said that October was LGBT History Month and they had held several events. Unfortunately, the poorest attendance was at the Courting Equality event.

Hoemann then said that his joy about the election was tempered because of the passage of the anti-gay marriage in California. He said this is the only time they know of that a civil right has been taken away from a group of people.

John Nolt asked Hoemann if he has had any contact with Simek about the Safe Places initiative. Hoemann said they have an ongoing initiative for an LGBT Resource Center that is aligned with Safe Places, but is viewed as much larger. He said that as soon as they can get on the new chancellor's calendar he does plan to meet with him.

Hindle asked if anyone knows the new chancellor. Nolt said that he has talked with him and has mixed feelings – Cheek has spent his entire time at an ag campus and being at an academic campus like this will be a big learning curve.

IX. Old Business/New Business –

None

Pam Hindle adjourned the meeting at 1:04 p.m.

Submitted by Kathryn Ellis