

## **Commission for Women Year End Report 2009-2010**

The Commission for Women – Knoxville is a body appointed by the Chancellor to extend advice on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of university programs, policies, and services designed to improve the status of women on the Knoxville campus. This year's Commission has been busy. We have accomplished our goals this year, thanks in great measure to the generous support of the Chancellor, and have laid the groundwork for an important campus initiative which will be described later in this report.

### **Campus and Community Programs**

In November the Commission for Women and Women's Studies Department co-sponsored a colloquium entitled 'Psychological Practice with Girls and Women'. Dr. Dawn Szymanski of the university's Department of Psychology reviewed common issues in psychological practice with girls and women. Dr. Szymanski was a member of the resource and consulting group involved in establishing professional guidelines for the American Psychological Association. She highlighted the Association's most contemporary understanding of gender issues. The colloquium, very well attended, was open to students, faculty, and staff.

In February the Commission hosted Kay Ryan, the Poet Laureate of the United States. On Tuesday February 16 2010 Ms. Ryan attended a private (by invitation only) evening reception in her honor, followed by her public presentation of her work. This event was extremely well attended: the UC auditorium seats 532 and roughly 95% of the seats were occupied. The next day Ms. Ryan attended a poetry class which was studying her work during the semester. Ms. Ryan, the instructor, and the students discussed poetry in general and her work in particular. Student attendance was excellent. A highlight of Ms. Ryan's visit was that the two-day event was co-sponsored by segments of the campus-wide community: the Department of English, the Commission for LGBT People, the Ready for the World initiative, the Office of Equity and Diversity and the University Libraries. Planning for this event, and obtaining financial support, encouraged the cooperative involvement of many folks so that the event was truly a campus celebration.

### **Advocacy for Women**

The Commission for Women and Chancellor Jimmy Cheek are again this year sponsoring outstanding women to apply for and attend a Higher Education Resource Services Institute. HERS Summer Institutes have earned long-standing reputations for preparing women for campus administration. Past participants include Dr. Cynthia Peterson, Professor, Department of Biochemical, Cellular, and Molecular Biology; Dr. Joan Heminway, Professor, College of Law; Dr. Maxine Thompson Davis, Dean of Students; Dr. Sarah Gardial, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Dr. Carolyn Hodges, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School; and Dr. Dixie Thompson, Professor and Department head, Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies. Participation in HERS Summer Institutes obviously works!

The Commission is committed to monitoring gender-related equity issues through the collection and analysis of data. The Commission is further committed to utilizing data to generate positive changes for women. Each year the Commission for Women requests that the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provide an annual Study of Faculty Salaries.

The study, since 1971, ascertains whether female and male faculty are paid comparably, considering tenure status, years of experience, rank, and earned degrees. The most recently published study, for 2008-2009, indicates once again that the variable 'sex' is statistically significant for full-time faculty and all instructional faculty. In addition to gender-related salary equity issues, the Commission is concerned that women teach in all academic areas, including areas where women are historically under-represented, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Widely available on the OIRA website (click on Statistical Reports) several individuals are specifically notified of the completed edition: the Chancellor, the Provost, the Director of the Office of Equity and Diversity, and the Chairperson of the Commission for Women.

The Commission for Women has this year commenced a co-operative engagement with the University Libraries to digitize Commission papers, newsletters, minutes of meetings, and research projects. We are together utilizing the Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange (Trace) archiving process to create a central repository of information that will serve the campus, the state, and beyond as an invaluable collection of data for feminist research, social studies, and investigations into campus history and development.

This Spring semester two female students approached the Commission for Women, asking for our support in founding a campus sorority. Beta Beta Sorority will support women students who are academically motivated and who are interested in different cultures and/or who are artistically inclined. The proposed group will encourage young women to pursue academic excellence regardless of societal stereotypes and norms. The Commission is working with the students to formalize their status as a University-sanctioned organization, with a constitution and bylaws.

## **Advocacy for the Campus**

A member of the Commission for Women co-edited a ground-breaking book entitled 'Establishing the Family-Friendly Campus, Insights on Success'. The book explores ways in which campuses can enhance the lives of faculty, staff, and students by creating policies and implementing practices that encourage balance between work and personal (and family) lives.

The Commission has embraced work-life balance as a meritorious initiative for our campus community. We understand that work-life balance promotes healthy, happy campus citizens, and increases the retention of faculty, staff, and students. A Work-Life Balance committee of the Commission was created in Summer 2009 with the goal of formulating action plans designed to make work-life balance happen on this campus. Information about work-life balance policies and practices on other campuses was collected. Of course, the committee wanted to know about our own campus, so a work-life climate survey was designed

and sent to all Knoxville faculty and staff. The survey gauged perceptions of campus and department climates, life concerns such as child care and eldercare, usage of current UT Knoxville policies, and policy wants. Faculty and staff response rates were quite good. The data is being analyzed and will be shared with the campus. The Commission expects that the analysis will provide leverage and impetus for effecting change toward balance.

## **Concerns**

### **Comparable pay for women and men faculty.**

We want to be included in the design and implementation of an assessment process that is supported by top administrators and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The Commission is concerned that the current assessment is not regarded as statistically valid.

The March 29, 2010 edition of *Newsweek* carries an article entitled ‘Are We There yet?’ which questions supposed advances in women’s earning power. This quotation is startling: ‘But consider this: U.S. Department of Education data show that a year out of school, despite having earned higher college GPAs in every subject, young women will take home, on average across all professions, just 80 percent of what their male colleagues do.’

### **Comparable pay for women and men staff.**

Greater representation of women faculty in academic areas where women are underrepresented. The Commission is concerned that some academic areas do not rigorously seek and hire qualified women faculty.

### **Top administrators who are women of color.**

The Commission is concerned about the lack of women of color in top leadership positions in college and university administration.

### **Instances of incivility on campus.**

The Commission is appalled by recent instances of incivility on campus. We appreciate VERY much the Chancellor’s strongly worded message to the campus that we will not tolerate such acts. The Commission wishes to work with campus citizens on the Chancellor’s campus project on civility and respect.

### **Funding for higher education.**

The Commission is very concerned about the potential loss of gender balance among faculty, staff, and students as we face continued economic difficulty. We ask that gender balance be carefully considered as academic programs and faculty and staff positions are reviewed for reduction-in-force actions.