

Commission for Women Year End Report 2010-2011

The Commission for Women at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is, according to its bylaws, 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 campus. This year the Commission has worked very hard on providing programming that highlights women's achievements and contributions, making stronger connections with the other Commissions as well as with various important offices on campus, such as Human Resources and the SEE Center, and addressing issues brought to the Commission for Women by its constituents, issues ranging from changes in health care for students to the closing of long-time programs at the university. The Commission has profited greatly from suggestions from both the Chancellor and the Provost on how the Commission might best serve the campus.

Campus and Community Programs

In October, the Commission helped to bring acclaimed feminist poet, teacher, and scholar Marge Piercy to the campus. A very well-attended public reading was held in the UC Auditorium on the evening of the 18th; the afternoon of the same day, Piercy met with a smaller audience for an open question and answer session. During Women's History month, the Commission supported the Diva Opals 2nd Annual Beauty Beyond Measure Scholarship Pageant held on March 4. On March 9, the Commission sponsored on its own a poetry reading by local women poets held in the Hodges Library Auditorium, another highly successful event. In addition, the Commission honored women in a display in the Library during that month, followed by a display honoring the Notable Woman Award recipient Jenny Moshak. The Commission plans to continue its practice of co-sponsoring events of particular interest to women and to draw upon faculty, staff, and students here to highlight the achievements and opportunities for women not only in the arts but also the sciences in the coming year.

Advocacy for Women and for the Campus

The Commission for Women and Chancellor Jimmy Cheek continue to sponsor outstanding women to apply for and to attend a Higher Education Resource Services Institute. HERS Summer Institutes have earned long-standing reputations for preparing women for campus administration. Past participants include Professor Dixie Thompson, Department of Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies; Professor Cynthia Peterson, Department of Biochemical, Cellular, and Molecular Biology; Professor Joan Heminway, College of Law; Dr. Maxine Thompson Davis, Dean of Students; Dr. Sarah Gardial, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; and Dr. Carolyn Hodges, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School. This year the Commission received multiple applications, an indication that the program is attracting positive attention and helping to prepare women for advancement into administrative and leadership positions. This year's recipients of support are Professor Rachel Chen, Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, and Professor J. Camille Hall, College of Social Work and Chair of the Commission for Blacks. In addition to the HERS scholarships, the Commission selected from

numerous nominations two women to honor at the Chancellor's Banquet: Candace White, Angie Warren Perkins Award, and Jenny Moshak, Notable Woman Award. The latter award was particularly noteworthy since, thanks to the Chancellor's support, this was the first NWA award designated specifically for staff.

The Commission for Women continues to work with the University Libraries to digitize Commission papers, newsletters, minutes of meetings, and research projects through the Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange (TRACE) archiving process. The Commission also began a thorough revision of its website and archives. This has been a difficult task since the Commission does not have a designated IT person and any work on the website or other electronic media must be accomplished from within the membership. We have been very lucky this year to have the considerable expertise and assistance of a member of Creative Services, and we hope to launch the new and much improved website soon. That website will also connect to TRACE. The Commission has made other advances in communicating with its constituents through the inauguration of a Facebook page and broadcasting through Twitter. We continue to utilize sources already available to us—such as *Tennessee Today*—to announce events and opportunities for women and the campus population as a whole. The Commission's newsletter, the *Networker*, was made accessible electronically in this way and highlighted pressing concerns of the Commission, as well as other groups on campus: the need for a civil community, promoting a positive work-life climate at UT, and news about the new student health center and its services.

Following on the release of the report generated from a campus survey sponsored by the Commission, the Commission distributed *Results of the 2010 Campus Work-Life Climate Survey* widely and met with the Chancellor in order to begin implementation of selected action suggestions. The Chancellor approved the securing of institutional membership in CUWFA (the College and University Work-Family Association), and the chair of the Work-Life Committee worked throughout the year with Betsey Creekmore to designate dedicated lactation rooms for nursing mothers across the campus. Despite the fact that the Commission member most instrumental in the making of the report and the implementation of its suggestions is leaving the campus for another academic appointment, the Commission will continue through its Work-Life Committee to address the issues raised in the report.

Concerns

The Commission has since 1971 monitored gender-related equity issues through an annual study of faculty salaries focusing on disparities between female and male faculty facilitated by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The Commission was informed this year that such a study would no longer be conducted by OIRA. The most recently published study, for 2008-2009, indicated, as did past studies, that the variable "sex" was statistically significant for full-time faculty and all instructional faculty. The Commission most strongly recommends the reinstatement of this particular study since it provides a historical record of the advancement and the need for further advancement in salary equity on this campus. In addition to gender-related salary equity issues, the Commission is concerned that women be recruited for faculty positions in all academic areas, including those in which women are historically underrepresented, such as the STEM fields, and that diversity be considered carefully in all hiring opportunities. The

Commission also advocated for comparable pay for women and men staff as well as careful consideration of the increasing costs of health insurance for staff personnel who are so crucial to the continued operation of the university. A university that hopes to attain Top 25 status needs to make sure the above issues are addressed in a consistent and positive manner.

The Commission for Women responded in detail to the *Final Report, Chancellor's Task Force on Civility and Community*. The Chair has spoken with Provost Susan Martin several times about the suggestions the Commission offered, but as yet no formal announcements have been made about implementation of these suggestions. In brief, the Commission emphasizes the need for a Campus Diversity Officer who can coordinate efforts across the campus and through its multiple organizations for the advancement of diversity in the broadest sense of the term and the promotion of a more civil community. The Commission also suggested that a statement about civility, to be taken from the *Report*, be included on the syllabi of every course offered at the university and that issues of civility and community be addressed on the first day of each class. In a related vein, the Commission continues to be concerned about addressing issues of safety for women—and for all members of the community—on campus. In response to student demand, the Commission through the aegis of Student Affairs hosted a Safety Forum on March 24th. While the Forum provided informative presentations on the services available to the campus community, the event should have attracted more participation from the community. With the Violence Against Women Committee and the SEE Center, the Commission will work this year on hosting more informal presentations that will provide the campus community with information and venues in which to voice concerns about safety on campus.

The Commission has long appreciated the outstanding successes of the [Women's Athletic program](#). The Commission is therefore concerned that with the merger of women's and men's athletics, the women's athletics program might be affected negatively. To help insure that this will not be the case, the Commission will invite Athletic Director Joan Cronan to address the Commission on the merger process and the effects on the Women's Athletics program.

In the coming year, the Commission looks forward to cooperating with the [Commission for Blacks](#) on the mentoring program that Commission will inaugurate through the September 30th Diverse Faculty Mentoring Program Workshop and with the Graduate School to institute a series of programs aimed at drawing minority women to graduate programs here. The Commission also hopes to work with the [Student Success Center](#) on promoting scholarship programs for women for advanced study. In addition, the Commission will continue to offer mentoring on a one-to-one basis in response to student demand. We will continue to work with the Women's Administrators Group on providing opportunities for leadership education, and we will highlight through various venues the considerable achievements of women on this campus. The Commission for Women looks forward, then, to working hard with the Chancellor and his staff, the other Commissions, and all groups promoting a safe, civil, and exceptionally productive community at the University of Tennessee in the coming year.

—Chair, Mary E. Papke
15 July 2011

