

Commission for Women Year End Report 2011-2012

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, 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 Amy Greene, author of *Bloodroot*, a family saga set in the Smoky Mountains, to the campus. On November 8, the Commission helped sponsor the visit of music critic and historian Sara Marcus, author of *Girls to the Front*, a history of the Riot Grrls Revolution. During Women's History month, the Commission supported the Diva Opals 3rd Annual Beauty Beyond Measure Scholarship Pageant held on March 9. On March 13 and 15, the Commission sponsored on its own a poetry reading and a fiction reading by local women writers held in the Hodges Library Auditorium, another set of highly successful events. 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 J. Camille Hall, College of Social Work, Professor Rachel Chen, Department of Retail, Hospitality and Tourist Management, 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 Sherry Cummings, School of Social Work, and Jenny Moshak, Women's Intercollegiate Athletics. In addition to the HERS scholarships, the Commission selected from numerous nominations two women to honor at the Chancellor's Banquet: Hillary Fouts, assistant professor in Child and Family Studies,

Angie Warren Perkins Award; and Catherine Luther, associate dean for the College of Communication and Information, Notable Woman Award.

Last year, the Commission began a thorough revision of its website and archives. This was 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 were very lucky last year to have the considerable expertise and assistance of a member of Creative Services, and we launched the new and much improved website. That website will also connect to TRACE and the Commission documents already available there in digital form. The Commission continues to communicate with its constituents through 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 also made accessible electronically in this way and highlighted pressing concerns of the Commission.

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 left this campus for another academic appointment, the Commission continues 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 last 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. 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 advocates 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 very much looks forward to working with the new Vice Chancellor for Diversity on the issues noted above and for the advancement of diversity in the broadest sense of the term and the promotion of a more civil community on this campus. The Commission has advocated vociferously for this position, and the Chair serves on the search committee.

The Commission has long appreciated the outstanding successes of the Women's Athletics program. The Commission was therefore concerned that with the merger of women's and men's athletics, the women's athletics program might be affected negatively. The Commission invited Athletic Director Joan Cronan to address the Commission on the merger process and the effects on the Women's Athletics program. The Commission will continue to monitor the well-being of the Women's Athletics program.

The Commission is investigating through an ad hoc committee the best articulation of a standard of practice regarding faculty-student romantic and/or sexual relationships. Provost Susan Martin agreed that the current policy in the *Faculty Handbook* needs elaboration. The ad hoc committee includes representatives from the Office of Equity and Diversity and the Faculty Senate.

The Commission discussed partnering with the UT Alumni Association and the University Women's Club in coming years and will continue to investigate possibilities. We will also 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*
24 July 2012