

## **Commission for Women Year End Report 2012-2013**

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. Of particular urgency this year has been the drafting and putting forward of a more precise and detailed Standard of Practice Regarding Faculty-Student Romantic and/or Sexual Relationships for inclusion in the Faculty Handbook.

### **Campus and Community Programs**

During Women's History month, The Commission sponsored a series of events. On March 5, the Commission celebrated women writers by featuring readings and Q&A sessions with four students from the Department of English Creative Writing Program: Stephanie Dugger, Hannah Ledford, Anna Laura Reeve, and Helen Stead. The reading was well-attended and lively. On March 13, the Commission sponsored two sessions. The first was entitled "Breastfeeding: Balancing Work, School, and Life," and offered informative presentations by Jenny Richter, associate director of the Office of Equity and Diversity; Erika Magnuson, lactation consultant from the Breastfeeding Center at Lisa Ross; and panelists, Kasandra Atwood, senior auditor, UT Audit and Consulting Services, Robyn Brookshire, Ph.D. student in child and family studies and interim executive director of the UT Early Learning Center, Dawn Coe, assistant professor in Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sports Studies, and Carolyn Stice, Ph.D. student in creative poetry, Department of English. The event was organized by Hillary Fouts, Assistant Professor in child and family studies. The sizable audience requested similar panels for the next year. The second event, held later that afternoon, was entitled "Smoking, Sleep, and Sex" and included presentations by Theresa Lee, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Azieb Kidanu, public health educator from the Knoxville County Health Department, and Anita Marie Blatnik, women's health nurse practitioner from the Student Health Services. The event was moderated and organized by Rosa Emory Thomas of the SEE Center.

### **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 Sherry Cummings, Associate Dean of Social Work, Jennifer Moshak, Senior Associate Athletic Trainer in Women's Intercollegiate Athletics, 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 Professor Veerle Keppens, Associate Dean in the College of Engineering, and Professor Stephanie TerMaath, Civil and Environmental Engineering. In addition to the HERS scholarships, the Commission selected from numerous nominations two women to honor at the Chancellor's Banquet: Cynthia Peterson, the Kenneth and Blaire Mossman Professor of Biomedicine, Angie Warren Perkins Award; and Rosemary Gillespie, Schlinger Chair in Systematics and Professor, Department of Environmental Science, The University of California, Berkeley, Notable Woman Award.

The Commission continues to work on updating its website and archives. This is 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 are very lucky to have the considerable expertise and assistance of a member of Creative Services, whose work enabled us to launch a new and much improved website. That website connects 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 also 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.

## **Major Projects and Concerns**

A task force generated and supervised by Professor Cheryl Travis has worked hard for the last year on drafting a clear and definitive Standard of Practice Regarding Faculty-Student Romantic and/or Sexual Relationships for inclusion in the Faculty Handbook. This report was submitted to the Provost and then transferred to the Faculty Senate for discussion. The Commission hopes that this new standard will be implemented as policy in the Faculty Handbook during the coming year.

The Chair recently learned the distressing news that because of a shortfall in earnings in the Angie Warren Perkins endowment that the Commission will not be able to offer an award this coming year. The Commission highlights only two awards specifically designated for women, and the loss of one is therefore a considerable loss.

The Commission would like to go on record as intensely dissatisfied with the handling of the Sex Week events. If we are even to aspire to Top 25 status, we cannot ever allow freedom of speech and the freedom to educate to be determined by entities other than ourselves. Indeed, we lost a valuable opportunity to educate state citizens and politicians about the value of broad education, discussion, and debate. Benjamin Disraeli stated that "A university should be a place of light, of liberty, and of learning." We should make the University of Tennessee that kind of university.

We very much look forward to working with Rickey Hall, the new Vice Chancellor for Diversity. We hope that his involvement with the Commission will help improve communication

between administration and the Commission and also help direct us to make the Commission an even more efficient and powerful voice for diversity on campus.

—*Chair, Mary E. Papke*  
*21 July 2013*