

Commission for Women
Year End Report
2015-16

Co-chairs: Mary E. Papke and Hillary Fouts

The Commission for Women is appointed by the Chancellor to advise on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of university programs, policies, and services designed to improve the status of women on the Knoxville campus of the University of Tennessee. Its main purpose is to cultivate a welcoming and inclusive campus environment with special attention given to the needs of women.

Accomplishments:

Through an aggressive recruitment campaign and with the help of Commission members, the Commission successfully brought in more staff and student members. The Commission will continue inviting self-nominations each year and polling Commission members for further nominations.

Two university women will attend HERS Institutes during the summer and fall of 2016: Jennifer Richter will attend Bryn Mawr, and Hillary Fouts will attend Wellesley.

The Commission will advertise the program again this year and with the Chancellor's help will recruit and select one candidate for next year's Institutes.

The Commission presented two awards at the Chancellor's Honors Banquet: Stephanie TerMaath was given the Angie Warren Perkins Award, and Caula Beyl received the Notable UTK Woman Award.

Graduate students in STEM organized a second STEM Symposium and also created Pipeline: Vols for Women in STEM. The Symposium was given the Innovative Program of the Year award and Pipeline received the "Best New Organization of the Year" award given by the Division of Student Life. The idea for the Symposium and organization originated within and was facilitated by Commission members.

During Women's History month, Mary Lucal and Rita Smith hosted a lunchtime discussion of Kathy Kay and Claire Shipman's "The Confidence Gap," an essay published in The Atlantic. The essay focused on women and self-assurance and argued for the necessity of confidence as well as competence for success. The event was attended by a spirited crowd that filled the Mary Greer room in the Library that included students, staff, faculty, and administrators. It was a very well-received event, and Lucal and Smith are considering following up this term with another like event.

Plans for 2016-2017

The Commission for Women will focus on the current status of women (students, staff, and faculty) at the university by examining existing data and considering whether there is a need to generate new data. Assessment of the status of women at the university will help guide the activities of the Commission in the coming years and help us to maintain focus on issues that are most pertinent to women on our campus. We will also keep an eye on the aftermath of the defunding of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and, in particular, how this will impact women and programming geared toward women on campus. The Commission will likewise follow the continuing discussion on outsourcing. The Commission will also examine the family leave policies for birth or adoption, with special attention to students and non-tenure track faculty. Next year we will as well continue carefully reviewing the State Legislature activities that are relevant to women at the university and more broadly to diversity and inclusion on our campus.