Meeting Minutes for Commission For Women with Chancellor Plowman  
Thursday, September 5, 2019  
12PM-1PM  
Attendance: [To be inserted]

Rachel Chen (the Chair of the CFW) called the meeting to order promptly at 12:00 p.m., with a warm welcome to Chancellor Plowman and thanked her for attending the meeting. Rachel Chen highlighted the many appointed and newly appointed for the Commission for Women. Before providing Chair Reports, individual introductions were provided. Duties were expressed and Rachel Chen read the mission for the Commission for Women: “The Commission for Women (CFW) is a body appointed by the Chancellor of the University of Tennessee (UT) to advise on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of university programs, policies, and services designed to improve the status of women on UT’s Knoxville campus.”

Rachel Chen expressed her honor and excitement to serve as the chair of the UTK Chancellor’s Commission for Women and conveyed three suggested and continuous major focal points: (1) Women’s Leadership development (2) Sexual Harassment Prevention and Bullying Free Environment and Policy (3) Equity. There was a mentioning of an additional three focal points: the CFW will work and connect collaboratively and strategically across campus to bring out excellence of students | faculty | staff through providing various awards (Notable UT Woman award, Angie W. Perkins Award, and Rising UT Woman award); creating professional / leadership development opportunities (e.g., HERS and women’s leadership sessions); and offering meaningful community outreach. Rachel Chen encouraged the group to conceptualize and think about these objectives.

Rachel Chen provided documentation (flyer) to the group regarding the 10-04-2019 event, Women’s Leadership in Higher Education. Registration for the event was open for only forty-eight hours and acquired 130+ registrants. Due to capacity, the location has been changed to the Howard Baker’s Toyota Auditorium to accommodate the participants. The idea for the Women’s Leadership derived from Chancellor Plowman to increase leadership development and empowerment for women across campus. Rachel Chen then diverted the gist of the meeting to Chancellor Plowman to provide a self-introduction, to share her vision to the members of the Commission for Women and discuss her commitment to women’s leadership. Chancellor Plowman thanked the commission for their willingness to get things done. Chancellor Plowman was impressed that the Commission is making positive and progressive changes for the betterment of our campus and community. Chancellor Plowman discussed her academic career, complexities of professional career and the environments where she identified the need for change. She expressed her excitement to see what the commission had done and wanted to further express her observations about women in higher education. Chancellor Plowman discussed the early stages of her career and she came to understand the intricacies of leadership. She discussed starting out as a graduate student and expressed her excitement for being able to work with Tyvi Small, Interim Vice Chancellor of the Office for Diversity and Engagement and discussed the ways in which we could go forth.

Chancellor Plowman discussed the idea of invisible labor and has witnessed women doing everything and not realizing they can negotiate some of the things they are asked to do. One observation that’s been witnessed is that women quietly labor away and don’t have people to discuss things with. Chancellor Plowman discussed the importance of stepping forward and being confident. She emphasized how stepping forward, made life much better and encouraging oneself to understand the fluidity of asserting yourself. Her goal is to hire women in leadership and develop a wider lens in terms of identifying leadership potential. Chancellor Plowman discussed that the act of courage is leadership and to identify those who can resolve conflict and possess innovative ideas to bring forth positive momentum and progression. Chancellor Plowman encouraged women to go for opportunities and find ways to make the opportunities work by creating a plan and finding ways to support each other.

Chancellor Plowman discussed initiatives to make people on campus feel like they matter and that they belong. She encourages departments to hire more women and create the space where women can be acknowledged for their contributions. Chancellor Plowman also expressed her excitement with returning to Tennessee and witnessing a plethora of women in leadership positions. In an effort to keep the momentum going, Chancellor Plowman advised the commission to identify three of the most important things we need to do to advance the status and stature of women on this campus and make it a place where women feel like they belong and can succeed. There was an emphasis placed on the idea that
there needs to be a change in the culture where people feel responsible to be active bystander to make it a safe place. By the end of the year, the Commission for Women was advised to map out the objectives and have an agenda. The agenda should highlighted the retention from your prospective pre-emptive packages, strategies for pre-emptive moves, getting people plugged in, instituting exit interviews and connecting with faculty who identify as women of color.

During Chancellor Plowman’s discussion, Rachel Chen highlighted three objectives to reinforce on campus: Belong-making sure women feel like they belong on campus and within their environments; bright-wanting to ensure University of Tennessee is a bright place to work; believe-as women we should strongly encourage, support and empower one another. Chancellor Plowman further discussed the importance of salary equity surveys and the importance of working closely with standing committee chairs, obtaining feedback and the desire for more mentee and mentor relationships across campus. Rachel Chen informed the members of the commission about spring 2020 events, e.g. Negotiation and encouraged the group to think about speakers and educational programs that would be conducive and serve the UTK women across campus in the best capacity.

Chancellor Plowman then left the meeting to attend prior obligations. Rachel Chen continued the meeting by asking for Chair reports from each subcommittee. The awards committee indicated they expect to receive many award nominations in the coming months. Committee members also discussed how funds can be applied to various scholarships through allocating the CFW’s Excellence fund and unused annual operation budget. The Equity Committee will be facilitating a gender equity survey to all tenured line and tenured faculty. The data set to do so is compared to a data set from 2009, indicating a significant difference by gender, when the data is applicable. The survey will also capture salary differentials between men and women. Members discussed the nuances are more complex in other categories and have discussed objectives they’d like to implement. Rachel Chen informed members that the Provost Office will be joining us the November meeting. In an effort to follow up on work from last year, the Commission received valuable feedback from a survey Rachel Chen compiled. We need knowledge, updated policies, and tools to sustain healthier culture to ensure the UTK is a productive and safe workplace.

In October, the CFW’s Ex-officio members of Title IX and OED will present concurrent trends and issues. Rachel Chen encouraged members to work closely with their standing committee chairs and to start preparing the 2020 women’s celebrations in March. Chen highlighted the CFW’s newsletter being a method of effective communication.

Rachel Chen adjourned the meeting at 1:02 p.m..