Commission for Women
March Meeting Minutes
3/4/2021


1) Call to order

Joan Heminway welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at Noon.

2) Approval of the February minutes

The February meeting minutes were unanimously approved by the voting members upon motion duly made and seconded.

3) Announcements

Joan announced that two additional students referred by the CFW to the Knoxville chapter of the American Association of University Women for consideration were awarded scholarships to attend the 2021 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL). Those new scholarship recipients are: Jessie Li (Chemical Engineering) and Gianna Noel (Architecture & Design). Joan noted that, as a result of these successes in the second round of scholarship applications for the 2021 NCCWSL, four UTK students will be attending the conference this year on scholarships.

Joan noted the CFW’s role in the faculty roundtables hosted by Teaching Learning Innovation (TLI) on Wednesday, March 3. Each commission and the Council for Diversity and Interculturalism were asked to supply a roundtable discussion leader. Joan served as a discussion leader on behalf of CFW for one of the roundtables, which focused on “Institutional Culture, Climate, and Being an Ally.” She described low attendance at this session of the faculty roundtables and noted TLI’s concern about that. She noted the recognition that faculty members might be experiencing zoom fatigue, but urged faculty
members on the commission to offer her other explanations for low attendance for this event so that she can pass them on to TLI.

4) CFW Bylaw Amendments – Consideration of Revised Draft

Joan described the proposed amendments to the CFW bylaws that had been circulated to commissioners in advance of the meeting. She reminded everyone that these changes were requested by Chancellor Plowman and Vice Chancellor Small and are necessitated by a planned change in the staffing of the CFW by the Division of Diversity and Engagement (DDE) of which we were unaware of in December. Specifically, starting in the 2021-22 academic year, a dedicated staff person will serve the CFW and the commissions and council, rather than a graduate research assistant. In addition, Joan indicated that she had changed the effective date of the amended and restated bylaws to July 2021, so the changes to the bylaws will conform to the expected date of the staffing changes in the DDE.

Alex Garnhart-Bushakra asked if the staff member would have voting rights. Joan responded that the staff member will not have voting privileges, but that it was expected that the staff person will be present at the CFW’s monthly meetings and be responsible for taking the meeting minutes. Catherine Luther added that DDE was still in the process of drafting the specific responsibilities for the new position. Once further information is known about the position, it will be shared with the CFW.

There were no further questions or requests for discussion on the proposed bylaw changes. Joan called for a motion to approve the bylaws as amended. Upon motion made and seconded, the amended bylaws were approved by a vote of 30 commissioners in favor and none against.

5) Committee Updates

Awards Committee

Alison Buchan described the awards committee had a productive effort in identifying awardees for the four Chancellor’s awards. The four categories this year were: the Notable UT Woman award, recognizing a UTK alumnus; the Angie Perkins award, recognizing an administrator in a faculty or staff position; and two UT Rising Woman awards; one for an early career professional and one for an undergraduate student. She noted that the Notable UT Woman award was not awarded this year because the sole nomination received was not a UTK alumnus. Allison thanked Joan and Catherine for allowing two undergraduates to be recognized for the UT Rising Woman award.
Catherine recognized Vice Chancellor Small for allowing CFW to award two UT Rising Woman awards to the undergraduate students.

Allison stated due to the wonderful and diverse pool of nominations this year, the committee felt there would be value in notifying individuals that came very close to receiving the awards in order to provide recognition and gratitude to the nominees.

Joan described challenges faced by some in monitoring and navigating the rotating award categories. She asked the committee whether there might be ways to meet these challenges. Catherine suggested that the awards committee collaborate with the communications committee to ensure clear promotion of the awards and their respective requirements.

Alison emphasized the importance of being very explicit on the awards criteria. She recognized Jill Zambito, her committee co-chair, and Michelle Kwon and Alex, members of the committee, for their efforts in selecting the award recipients. She noted the concern that worthy students may not be eligible for the UT Rising Women award due to the rotating categories.

Lisa Lynch added that historically the rotation was in place due to the time constraints at the honors banquet as well as financial constraints if there is a monetary value associated with the award.

Megan suggested the idea of one website for all of the awards across campus, including the Chancellor’s awards, fellowships, and scholarship opportunities, etc.

Joan agreed and stated the idea could be raised to Dr. Janelle Coleman and the DDE.

Communications Committee

Joy Panigabutra-Roberts reported that the communications committee has been working on producing a video conversation between Joan and UT Law Professor Valorie Vojdik on the life and legacy of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Professor Vojdik shared her reflections on Justice Ginsburg’s impacts as a lawyer and Supreme Court justice as well as key moments when her life and career intersected with those of Justice Ginsburg. The video will be shared on the CFW website after receipt of confirmation from Professor Vojdik.
Joy also reported that UT Libraries is creating a Women’s History Month resource document. Those resources will be added to the CFW website when it becomes available.

Finally, she noted that the committee plans to meet with Joan and Catherine soon to discuss planning for and implementing a social media strategy for the commission.

Equity Issues Committee

Jamie Coble reported that committee members have been reviewing the 2019 gender compensation data for intersections with race and ethnicity and studying 2020 compensation data for disparities and patterns based on gender, race, and ethnicity. She shared data on underrepresented faculty at all levels.

Bonnie Ownley added that the overall ratio of full professors to associate or assistant professor in these underrepresented faculty tracks the pattern observed in sorting the data by gender, although there are fewer observations with respect to race and ethnicity than with respect to gender.

Megan Haselschwerdt asked if the results could be shared by email. Bonnie stated that general information could be shared. She added that Jamie has been coding the data to make the analysis process easier and has made wonderful progress to help with the sustainability of this effort.

Joan stated that at the end of the year she and Catherine will provide a report to the Chancellor and she is hopeful that the salary equity information gleaned from the committee’s work will be available for inclusion in this report.

Jamie reported that the data available to the committee includes the number of years since people earned their Ph.D. However, the data does not currently include how long people have worked at UTK. As a result, she is studying the average salary for everyone across groups with different employment tenures at UTK. A significant difference can be seen based on the number of years since receipt of a Ph.D. This could occur for a variety of reasons but may be the result of similarly situated faculty members not getting raises at the same rate.

Joan asked how we might share this information, for example, with the Provost, apart from including information in the CFW year-end report. Diane Kelly
indicated that the Provost’s office does have this data and the office sends it out to the deans and department heads. She continued by stating they are in the process of splitting up the data files to identify characteristics such as gender and race so that salary, rank, and other important variables can be seen. They will send this data out to encourage colleges and departments to use it in allocating campus raises in a manner that addresses equity issues.

Events Committee

Abby Sherman announced the March 30 Lighting Your Path workshops on cultivating careers. These workshops will be conducted as multiple breakout sessions for participants to attend as part of a larger event, with each session lasting around 20 minutes. The program is geared toward staff, but anyone is welcome to attend. There will be a networking opportunity for the participants and speakers after all of the sessions finish. A keynote address is being offered by Gretchen Neisler.

Abby noted that one of the subcommittee members will not be able to moderate a session. Accordingly, if you are interested in participating as a moderator, please email Abby. The events committee and professional development and mentoring committee members will moderate to assist with fielding questions and monitoring time.

Catherine expressed the importance of advertising this event and requested Mary Lucal’s support in advertising to staff members. Mary agreed.

Joan thanked the Events, Professional Development and Mentoring, and Communication committees for their collaboration and creativity in creating and promoting this event. She emphasized the need for this type of program, especially for staff members on campus.

Professional Development and Mentoring Committee

Jeannie Tennant reported that the committee is continuing its work on creating a one-stop shop for professional development resources for the UTK campus. She noted that the committee is partnering with the campus Office of Information Technology to assess the feasibility of creating a central website, and plan the creation of the website as well as where the website will “live” on the UTK website. Sustainability and accessibility are two main focuses for this project.
She noted that the committee is looking for the best way to organize the information identified for inclusion on the website. Kristin Tocci is crafting a proposed site map for the website and considering its possible functionality. Jeannie indicated that there are a number of people from in and outside the CFW contributing to this initiative.

Mary suggested looping Dr. Janelle Coleman in on this initiative because the campus Diversity Leads group has also been discussing a similar initiative for possible inclusion on the DDE website. The website under discussion through Diversity Leads would allow other organizations to dovetail into their page.

Jeannie indicated there are ongoing conversations with Dr. Coleman and that the committee’s efforts are geared to meeting the needs of the other commissions and addressing the needs of the campus holistically. The committee is also assessing how a website of this kind links with existing campus structures (such as the events calendar, K@Te, etc.). There are so many ways this can support campus. Kristin concluded by noting that, in the end, this resource will allow us to be aware of both the current and ongoing professional development needs that are not being met and opportunities to better meet campus professional development needs.

Safety Advisory Committee

Megan reported that she had met with Joan, Catherine, and Kayla Irwin to determine the safety committee’s focus for the remainder of the academic year. She stated the committee had regrouped this week (following that meeting) and will begin gathering information from other Southeastern Conference (SEC) campuses on how Title IX offices respond to allegations of gender-based harassment. She added that the committee will also connect with these offices to get comparative information on other issues (including questions relating to student amnesty in connection sexual assault reporting, for example, if the student has consumed alcohol and is under 21 years of age.

She indicated the committee would evaluate events in April (Sexual Assault Awareness Month) to see if there is anything specific for faculty and staff around gender-based violence and harassment. The committee will consider filling in any programming gaps for faculty and staff members.

Work and Family Committee
Karmen Stephenson reported that the committee members have been researching childcare support at other SEC campuses. They recently met with Kelly Houston from the University of Mississippi. Kelly founded a working mothers’ support network at her institution.

The committee has also been looking at the experiences of women as caregivers and came across Jeannie’s telecommuting parents group as well as a graduate student doing a narrative inquiry thesis project on this same idea.

Joan stated that she and Catherine recognize the need for the committee to be attentive to student parents in these types of conversations and recently had an inquiry along those lines.

Thura Mack added the committee is continuing the work completed by the committee last year to develop a well-rounded report for everyone.

Alison commented that under normal circumstances, children who had to miss a day of school might be able to come to campus with a parent. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, they are not able to do so now. This has put obvious strains on parenting during the pandemic.

6) The meeting adjourned at 1:02 p.m.