

2020-2021 COMMISSION FOR WOMEN COMMITTEE REPORT

Safety Committee

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chair: Megan Haselschwerdt
Ronnie Williams
Carrie Bailey
Jalonda Thompson

Please offer a brief narrative responding to each of the prompts set forth below as it may apply to your committee's work this year.

1. Provide a summary of your committee's accomplishments in 2020-2021. Be sure to indicate the progress made in completing the specific charges provided to your committee. (Note: It is okay if you were not able to complete each charge or shifted focus based on discussions with the co-chairs.)
 - We made an initial connection with the UT Sistas group which is an informal group comprised primarily of Black faculty, staff, and administrators across campus (currently led by [Simone Stewart](#)). We met to discuss if there were any natural collaborations and to learn more about their work. It is largely social with the goal of enhancing Black women's social networks and sense of belonging at UTK. We did not identify any pressing or urgent needs, the pandemic had stifled some of their socialization, but we did discuss linking to Simone and the group (no formal website, informal recruitment of new members each year) on the Commission for Women webpage so that we could help amplify this networking group. *It would be great if we could link this and any other informal or formal women specific groups on campus under resources. I apologize for not mentioning this sooner, as it just came to me.*
 - In the fall, we discussed concerns specific to Black, Indigenous, and other women of Color on campus around the election. We realized there were actually going to be a good number of panels, town halls, and other listening sessions across campus so we did not propose any discussion. *Moving forward, it would be great for the Safety committee to collaborate with other committees to proactively plan for town halls around important elections so fears, concerns, and ideas for collective resistance and resilience can be shared across campus, as election season often brings about a lot of fears around personal and psychological safety.*
 - **Charge: Examine the best practices of other SEC schools in addressing campus sexual harassment and bullying.** We met with Ashley Blamey to discuss if there were other SEC schools that had creative or useful ways of addressing the following question: "how are SEC universities addressing instances of sexual harassment that do not arise to the level of policy violation?" Our committee contacted Title IX offices of all SEC schools and did not receive responses nor useful information that directly addresses

this issue. It appears that this is still a gap that universities are working to fulfill but have not done so yet.

- **We wrote a statement admonishing violence against Asian American and Pacific Islanders during the spring semester.**
- Committee members played active roles in planning panels, town halls, and special sessions specific to the broad umbrella of “Safety” on campus this academic year, including Megan presenting for CHEW during sexual assault awareness month and serving as the keynote speaker for Take Back the Night.

2. Provide any recommendations your committee may have for how the campus administration can help your committee in making progress in its initiatives in 2021-2022.

It might be useful to consider documenting all of the various committees across campus that are focused on Safety. In our various roles, we felt that we were addressing issues of women’s safety or that our respective offices or other committees were focused on this, making it hard to carve out something unique especially when folks were having Zoom fatigue and meeting fatigue and all of the fatigues. *As the chair, the committee members were all feeling this and we had a difficult time finding times to meet or time for folks to carve out commission work time. I believe the pandemic and chaos of the last year was the culprit.*

3. Offer your committee’s recommendations for priorities for the CFW for the 2021-22 academic year.

I think it would be best for the focus to be on safety among particularly groups of people, including for example, AAPI women on campus. This more targeted focus could help fill some existing gaps that may not be addressed as explicitly within the other larger “safety-focused” groups.