

## 2020-2021 COMMISSION FOR WOMEN COMMITTEE REPORT

### Work and Family Committee

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

**THURA MACK, CO-CHAIR**

**KARMEN STEPHENSON, CO-CHAIR**

**ERIN WHITESIDE**

**KATIE WILEY**

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.)

The work and family subcommittee accomplished the following tasks this year:

- a. Researched each SEC-member institutions for information on their childcare resources and identified data that is needed for a more detailed comparative analysis.
- b. Met with Kelly Houston, the founder of the "Working Mothers Support Network" at University of Mississippi. In that conversation we discussed how she established the group, how it is run, who the group serves, and what kinds of support the group provides.
- c. Established dialogue with the Office of Diversity and Engagement to include work-family questions in the campus climate survey. The survey was put on hold, but we hope to continue to advocate for work-family balance questions on the survey.
- d. Communicated with Dorian McCoy (faculty advisor) and Miranda Rutan (thesis student) about her research entitled, "The Experiences of Women Working in Higher Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic."
- e. Reviewed recordings from Telecommuting with Children group hosted by Learning and Organizational Development in the Human Resources department.
- f. Developed a shared Google Drive for the committee so research can be easily passed along to new committees/members each academic year, to promote continuity and the forward movement of projects in subsequent academic years.

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 is well-known that working mothers experienced unique hardships during the pandemic, trying to balance work and childcare. These effects will be long-lasting and due to this outcome, we believe the university administration must be more proactive in consulting the CFW for guidance on decisions about campus culture and work-related policy. It is essential for the Work and Family subcommittee and the CFW overall to provide input to university administration about how we might creatively find solutions that specifically support working parents as we try to recover from the pandemic, and more generally, address the longstanding challenges women and working mothers face in building sustainable, upward-moving careers at the University of Tennessee.

Research is also showing that the harm brought on by the pandemic was felt most acutely by women of color. That being said, one thing the pandemic did do was spotlight how working from home can be of great benefit to working parents, whose most critical resource is time. Faculty routinely worked from home prior to the pandemic, and the university should prioritize adopting policy that permits telecommuting among staff as a way to support working mothers. Developing a policy about telecommuting could also be one way to more directly support BIPOC staff.

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

The Work-Family subcommittee has developed several recommendations for the upcoming 2021-2020 year:

- a. Collect and/or gather important data about the effects of Return to Campus on the working caretaker. Establish ongoing dialogue with other offices that may be conducting similar research (such as HR, the DDE, or other Commissions) to aid in data sharing.
- b. Collect and/or gather data about the effects of COVID on the working caretaker that includes information about the experiences of BIPOC mothers.
- c. Provide an assessment of how the University of Tennessee's childcare offerings compare to other SEC and peer-aspirational institutions. Provide specific, actionable recommendations to improve the ways the university can support women with childcare needs.
- d. Propose changes to current childcare offerings based on collected data in item c.
- e. Create a policy proposal to submit to university administration about staff telecommuting and flexible schedules.