

Commission for LGBT People

Meeting Minutes

November 6, 2017

Attendance: Danielle Burton, Bonnie Benson-Palmgren, Aaron Burnell, Sterling Field, Denise Gardner, Diane Goble, Cody Harrison, Shannon Herron, Stephanie Langley, Tatiana Leavitt, Joe Miles, Mitsu Misawa, Phyliss Shey, Jordan Smith, Sarah Swinford, Floyd Akins, Mary Lucal, Jenny Richter, Eric Carr, Kelley Kain, Bonnie Johnson, Ashley Morris, Joel Kramer, Matthew Theriot, Nancy Thacker

- I. Introductions
- II. Approval of Minutes
- III. Discussion with Jenny Richter, Associate Vice Chancellor for the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)
 - a. Jenny reviewed a brief history of the OED. She noted former Vice Chancellor Ricky Hall handled the proactive efforts, whereas her role was more with reactive, compliance efforts. Her current role is still primarily with compliance efforts. Key efforts include: (1) non-discriminatory new hire searches, (2) state and federal compliance plans, (3) non-discrimination policies, (4) ADA compliance for faculty and staff and accessibility for the campus, (5) programming and training for faculty and staff, and (6) collaborating with OIT to make educational materials accessible.
 - b. Question: Three to four years ago we completed the faculty/staff campus climate survey and subsequently were not provided with any results - specifically regarding LGBTQ+ faculty/staff. When will the next climate survey be offered?
 - i. Jenny Richter reported not being involved with this survey in 2014, and deferred to Mary Lucal.
 - ii. Mary Lucal noted the survey that took place in 2014 was state-wide. Administrators had planned to conduct another survey this fall, but the UT system decided not to conduct it at this time. Mary stated she believes the reasoning for the halt is to give new Chancellors across the state time to settle into their new roles before new data is collected.
 - iii. Jenny noted the rapid changes with federal and state administration creates difficulty, but we do have control over our institution's policies and procedures.
 - c. Question: In regards to our peer institutions, how does the University of Tennessee, Knoxville rank in regards to campus climate?
 - i. Jenny Richter reported this is a challenging question to answer, because there are various sources that measure campus climate in different ways. She noted those varying sources may only provide insight to certain areas of inclusion. However, she discussed from her personal experiences during searches for new hires, she has gathered some insight from candidates' perspectives of our campus, and it has been both positive and negative.

- ii. Floyd Akins discussed his desire for search committees to have diverse representation. He noted believing diverse representation impacts not just the person applying, but also the University.
 - 1. Jenny Richter followed up that she agrees, and they have run into issues by tapping into the same people with diverse characteristics to sit on search committees. She added that they currently do well with faculty hires in gathering a diverse search committee, but they struggle with staff hires at times because staff hires can be more rushed. She also noted how the hiring process is shifting to integrate more technology.
 - iii. Sterling Field asked how this hiring process impacts graduate students.
 - 1. Jenny Richter responded that individual departments and faculty have primary discretion over graduate student hiring.
 - 2. Joe Miles noted faculty in Psychology are intentional in their consideration for diverse applicants.
 - d. Question: Has there been any discussion around adding LGBTQ curriculum in the Humanities and/or Social Sciences?
 - i. Jenny reported the taskforce in the Provost's office is currently working on general education curriculum. Each department and discipline will have discretion over how they create courses and implement the standards.
 - e. Question: What goals do you have in place that you hope to strive for during your tenure as Associate Vice Chancellor and Director of OED?
 - i. Jenny discussed a primary goal for the OED this year surrounds increasing focus on discrimination towards multiple groups, beyond sexual harassment. She also discussed the importance of spreading non-discriminatory practices throughout units across campus. She note these issues should not be localized to her office; rather, the responsibility belongs to all at UT.
 - f. Eric Carr discussed online classes and how student's identifiers are anonymous. He asked if Jenny Richter had an opinion as to how such anonymity impacts interactions.
 - i. Jenny Richter responded that she thinks it would be a great research study. She discussed interviewing candidates via telephone and noted from her experience that telephone communication eliminates some bias that seeing an individual typically provokes. She stated online classes may create something similar, where bias is lessened.
 - ii. Mary Lucal noted STRIDE has research to this inquiry.
 - g. Floyd Akins discussed looking to Chancellor Davenport to lead diverse efforts, and as she reflects diversity and inclusion, others across campus will follow. He commended Jenny Richter for her efforts and success in her position.

IV. Updates from co-chair Danielle Burton

- a. Danielle Burton discussed the open forums held on November 1st. They will analyze the data in greater depth in the coming weeks with co-chair Jennifer Jabson. Some immediate action steps came from the forums: (1) creating a friends of the Commission listserv, (2) creating a LGBTQ+ Faculty and Staff at UTK

Facebook page for communication—this will not be an official extension of the Commission or University; it is to provide a social platform, (3) increase interaction with the Chancellor via Twitter, and (4) revamping our website to include community resources for LGBTQ individuals.

- b. Danielle Burton reported co-chair Jennifer Jabson has secured a grant to explore the feasibility of a LGBTQ+ health center in Knoxville. Jennifer will be holding a summit in the spring, and we would like to partner with her to hold a LGBTQ research symposium. Further planning is needed, and we will keep commissioners informed.
 - i. Bonnie Johnson noted WGS and SEAT hold a similar type of summit and asked if we could join with them.
 - ii. Mitsu Misawa noted the Equity and Diversity will look into that partnership, as their committee is leading this effort.
- c. Danielle Burton will attend lunch with Chancellor Davenport on Thursday. They asked commissioners to please share any topics or questions to present to the Chancellor.
 - i. Phyliss Shey asked to extend a thank you for the Chancellor's decision to opt out of outsourcing.
- d. Danielle Burton discussed community connections.
 - i. Sterling Field reported on the LGBT health resource conference held earlier this fall. Moving forward to next fall, he is partnering with TEP to expand the conference to include the greater Knoxville community as well.
 - ii. Danielle discussed connections made at World Café and how they will help with reaching the greater Knoxville community moving forward.

V. Updates from Committees

- a. Equity and climate report from Mitsu Misawa. In addition to leading the research symposium with Jennifer, the committee is partnering with Bonnie Johnson and the Pride Center to revamp SafeZone training. The committee will meet next week.
- b. Communications and alumni from Shannon Herron. He praised the homecoming event held last Friday with LGBT Alumni Council and noted their committee will look to partner with the Council moving forward. He reported the Fall Social in early October went well, and they are planning to hold more socials; the next Social is scheduled for Dec. 7th at the Fieldhouse Social. They hope to have some type of donation drive for the holidays. Advertisements will be distributed soon.
- c. Membership and awards from Cody Harrison. The committee is continuing to work on creating a database of resources, which would include a list of faculty/staff at UT who teach, research, and/or advocate for LGBTQ people on campus. The committee has discussed vulnerability issues and is considering an unlisted option. They will send out invites to be included in the database and also advertise our mentorship program. The committees next steps will be to create a list of people they will reach out to. Commissioners were encouraged to please share contacts.

- d. Transgender & non-binary committee from Bonnie. She discussed an update on name changes in the banner system at UT.
 - i. Phyliss Shey noted a draft form has been created and will go through a trial period this month. The trial will include around 100 students who have indicated desire to change their names.
 - ii. Bonnie Benson-Palmgren noted a need to update information on our print-form trans* and non-binary resource guide regarding directions to contact the student health center.
 - iii. Multiple commissioners asked Danielle for copies of the trans* and non-binary resource guide booklet.

VI. Updates from Other Groups

- a. Joel Kramer report from VolOUT. The Halloween drag show has been delayed, and will now take place on December 1st. Joel also noted the Knoxville area PFLAG was recently granted their charter, and Joel is their secretary.
- b. Bonnie Johnson discussed upcoming events at the Pride Center. Details can be found on the UTK Pride Center Facebook page here:
https://www.facebook.com/pg/UTKpridecenter/events/?ref=page_internal
- c. Sarah Swinford noted Pride Ambassador applications are open and encouraged commissioners to alert any interested students.

VII. Adjourn