

**Commission for LGBT People**  
*Meeting Minutes*  
March 5, 2018

Attendance: Jennifer Jabson, Bonnie Benson-Palmgren, Denise Gardner, Luke Garton, Cody Harrison, Kevin Kidder, Tatiana Leavitt, Mitsunori Misawa, Michael Porter, Mary Lucal, Jennifer Richter, Eric Carr, Kelley Kain, Matthew Theriot, Joel Kramer

- I. Introductions
- II. Approval of Minutes
- III. Update from Commission for Women from Robyn Brookshire
  - a. The CFW has been studying work-life balance issues and is checking in with the CFLGBT on the findings. The group of faculty, administrators, and staff were first tasked with looking at childcare needs. After the work began, they realized that came under the umbrella of work-life balance. They began looking at benchmark and aspirational schools. There are two categories to work life balance:
    - i. Structural – resources/policies
    - ii. Cultural – are people using the resources available?
  - b. Finding: Some universities have offices of work-life balance including personnel that ensure policies are being communicated and adhered to. Some universities have handbooks that have explicitly defined what an email should look like to a supervisor to request flex time, among other topics. Campus child-care continues to be a concern with employees at UT.
  - c. Robyn Brookshire asked commissioners for their concerns regarding work-life balance.
    - i. Discussion about student childcare that emerged in the student climate survey.
    - ii. Jennifer Jabson noted, perhaps adding a work life balance question on the survey for LGBT UT employees.
    - iii. Eric Carr asked, did a university school come up in your findings? He noted having a child schooled on campus may help work-life balance.
      1. Brookshire responded those do exist. There are model laboratory schools to serve as a teaching demonstration type that supports a university's teacher licensure program. College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences is not currently interested in this mainly because of funding being a barrier.
      2. Carr stated perhaps that is another avenue to study.
    - iv. Mary Lucal discussed Human Resources is working on a "one stop shop" website for work-life balance.
    - v. Jennifer Jabson discussed a sense of safety and speaking with a supervisor is a concern; maybe having a FAQ that speaks to the LGBT Experience on this website would be helpful.
    - vi. Joe Miles noted exploring the broader cultural impact of the University of Tennessee. For example, not wanting to bring my personal life of working or

- questioning whether or not to bring your partner to work event. Creating a broader climate and culture that's accepting of work-life balance is needed.
- vii. Robyn Brookshire noted childcare is an ongoing need for faculty and staff. Perhaps working out a preferred provider could help UT employees. An issue of childcare is quality of care. There are not accreditations to test for diversity priorities. The Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R) is a statewide system for parents that will help parents find childcare. This office is housed in the UT Conference Center. They will help parents find childcare in East TN.
  - viii. Eric Carr noted the evaluation for managers could include them adhering to work-life balances issues.
  - ix. For additional input, please email Robyn Brookshire at [rbrooks8@utk.edu](mailto:rbrooks8@utk.edu)

#### IV. Updates from co-chair Jennifer Jabson

- a. Looking for new co-chairs for the next year
- b. LGBTQ Health Equity in Appalachia Symposium will be held on Friday April 6th. Panelists and key notes are confirmed; space is confirmed. Deadline to submit an abstract is extended to 3/9/2018.
  - i. To register for the Symposium, click [here](#).
- c. Sharing of preliminary results from LGBTQ Faculty and Staff Experiences Survey
  - i. The survey asked these eight questions:
    1. How would you describe your experiences as a LGBTQ+ person working at UT?
    2. Please describe your experiences with physical and emotional safety at UT.
    3. Please describe your feelings of acceptance as a member of your academic unit/department/etc.
    4. What stress do you experience at work because of your identity as a LGBTQ+ person?
    5. What do you think is needed to promote equity for LGBTQ+ faculty and staff at UT?
    6. What could be done to make UT more welcoming to LGBTQ+ faculty and staff? If UT has been welcoming to you, what made it feel welcoming to you? If it has been unwelcoming, what could we do to improve this for LGBTQ+ faculty and staff?
    7. Do you have any other advice, suggestions, ideas, or concerns you would like us to hear? If you could tell us anything about the experiences, needs, or concerns of LGBTQ+ faculty and staff at UTK, what would it be?
    8. The Commission currently facilitates a LGBT mentoring program for students, and we are also building a LGBT networking database for UT students, staff, and faculty. If you would like to provide your name and email for us to contact you about potentially becoming a mentor or being added to this database, please do so below. You are welcome to provide a non-utk email address.

- ii. 23 completed the survey to date
- iii. Affiliation: 5 faculty, 14 staff, 2 graduate students, 2 prefer not to answer
- iv. Sexual Orientation: 2 lesbian, 7 gay, 7 bisexual, 5 heterosexual/straight, 1 queer straight, 1 prefer not to answer.
- v. Gender Identity: 9 women, 10 men, 1 gender-neutral, 1 transgender and identify as neither man or woman, 1 prefer not to answer, 1 I don't know what this question means.
- vi. Reports on identity disclosure: 22% all people know; 48% some people know, 26% no one knows.
- vii. Summary of how participants would describe their experiences as a LGBTQ+ person at UT.
  - 1. Several individuals report positive experiences.
    - a. *Empowering, especially after tenure and promotion.*
    - b. *I find my co-workers to be very supportive.*
    - c. *I feel I am treated like everyone else.*
    - d. *While I am sure that there will be/have been challenges for others, I have been privileged enough to not personally come across any while working as a staff member here at UT.*
  - 2. Some individuals didn't have negative experiences, but still preferred to not be out about their identities.
    - a. *I feel that overall the university is a good place for LGBTQ+ people to work. I haven't chosen to be completely out on campus, but that's just my personal choice.*
    - b. *I pretty much keep to myself around here.*
  - 3. Several individuals reported negative experiences.
    - a. *I feel saddened by the way that UT disregards LGBTQ+ people. The Pride Center defunding debacle really disappointed me. It is a shame that alumni and community members have to raise money to keep the Pride Center going for the students. I also feel that the university is not going far enough to combat hate groups on campus, including still allowing the hate group to have space on campus for February 17 and not trying hard enough to find and punish students who have defaced LGBTQ+ spaces. Some people I work with have made disparaging remarks about LGBTQ+ people in my presence.*
    - b. *I believe that there is a lot of talk about being inclusive and accepting but there isn't a whole lot of action in that regard. So that is why I don't live a completely open lifestyle at work but I'm also not scared to share if I need to or want to.*
- d. Discussion of preliminary results
  - i. Jennifer Richter noted we can do something about "Some people I work with have made disparaging remarks"

- ii. Mary Lucal discussed potential for employees to not want to out themselves by making their supervisor aware that they identify as LGBTQ+.
- iii. Jennifer Jabson asked how can we utilize allies that can be active bystanders?
- e. Please encourage other LGBTQ Faculty and Staff to complete the survey here: <https://goo.gl/forms/cKoArEuENg4skh013>

#### V. Updates from committees

- a. Membership and awards, Luke Garton: LGBT Student Leadership Award and LGBT Advocate Award have been chosen. Winners will be announced after the Chancellor's Awards Banquet. The committee is facilitating search for co-chairs to lead the Commission next year.
- b. Trans and Non-binary committee, Bonnie Benson-Palmgren: There are still places on campus we need covered to look for gender-neutral restrooms. We would like to get these to the Chancellor by the end of the academic year. Nancy will send updated sign-up list on 3/7/18.
  - i. Danny Glassmann noted there will be a gender neutral restroom in the Student Union Phase Two.
- c. Commission for Blacks, Tatiana Leavitt: Chancellor Davenport met with CFB during their last meeting. There were some questions regarding student climate survey and overall asking for progress towards securing a Vice Chancellors of Diversity and Inclusion. Questions about faculty and staff retention – retention especially. It was commented there are a lot of programs to recruit diverse faculty, but none in place to retain. Davenport commented that every College has a diversity champion, and she discussed recent successes including: 5 year enrollment/recruitment plan, fund raising for the Pride Center, and diversity initiatives for her cabinet. The CFB wants to host a speaker regarding invisible labor, and expressed an interest in co-hosting across the Commissions.
- d. VOLout, Joel Kramer: UT hits a record low for the Princeton Review: 5<sup>th</sup> worst LGBT friendly campus. VOLout is looking for comments from upper administration about this report.
  - i. Denise Gardner noted the review's ranking is based on 1 question.
  - ii. Jennifer Jabson asked can a single question assess climate?
  - iii. Joel Kramer also noted the UT student climate survey results are out. There was a lot of LGBTQ content that came up in the survey. Results can be found here: <http://mycampus.tennessee.edu/>
- e. LGBT Mentoring Program, Tatiana Leavitt: There are about 10-12 students that are paired up; there are a list of eligible mentors that are not yet paired. There are at least 4 mentors waiting to be matched.
- f. Jennifer Jabson noted this is Luke Garton's last commission meeting. His last day at UT will be March 29<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your years of service to campus and the Commission for LGBT People Luke!

#### VI. Adjourn