

Commission for LGBT People

Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2018

Attendance: Joel Anderson, Mitsu Misawa, Bonnie Benson-Palmgren, Pamela Durban, Ciara Gazaway, Diane Goble, Cody Harrison, Allison Heming, Bonnie Johnson, Joel Kramer, Stephanie Langley, James Perlow, Tammy Renalds, Luke Sciulli, Phyliss Shey, Chris Shuping, Jordan Smith-porter, Lizeth Zepeda, Sharon Couch, Misty Anderson, Nancy Thacker, Jennifer Richter, Matthew Theriot, Megan Haselschwerdt, Jill Malolepszy

- I. Introductions
- II. Approval of May 2018 Meeting Minutes
- III. Report from Co-Chair Mitsu Misawa
 - a. Review of the Commission purpose and responsibilities (can be viewed at cflgbt.utk.edu)
 - b. Review of sub-committees and members
 - c. Review of the Commission's 2018-2019 Priorities
 - i. Assess needs of LGBTQ+ undergraduate and graduate students
 - ii. Training for UTK community in LGBTQ+ issues
 - iii. Advocating for and supporting gender-neutral pronouns, restrooms, preferred names, etc.
 - iv. Revamp the LGBT Mentoring Program
 - v. Address needs of LGBTQ+ faculty and staff based on survey responses
 - d. Allison Heming noted these priorities have been consistent points of concern over the years. Our group has an opportunity to significantly influence at least two of these priorities this year. She voiced feeling encouraged that many people are present here and willing to work for LGBTQ+ people on these issues.
 - i. Mitsu Misawa responded that dividing priorities among committees will hopefully help us tackle multiple issues this year with success.
 - e. Interim Chancellor Davis will attend our next meeting. Mitsu Misawa reported meeting with the Interim Chancellor this summer; he is supportive of the Commission's restroom signage efforts and wants to review our report before the October meeting. Mitsu Misawa also reported meeting with Provost Manderscheid, whom has voiced support for diversity and inclusion and will attend our November meeting.
 - f. Mitsu Misawa opened the floor for commissioners to provide questions or topics of discussion to be addressed with Interim Chancellor Davis at our October meeting.
 - i. Joel Kramer: Will the Commissions and Council be involved with the new Chancellor hire?
 1. Allison Heming: President DiPietro is rumored to be leaving office soon. Will LGBTQ+ people be represented in the search and hire committees for a new President when the time comes?

- ii. Sharon Couch: What role does Interim Chancellor Davis believe the Commission serves on campus? How does he see our group being of service to the campus community?
 - 1. How does he see himself assisting us, especially in regard to our priorities?
- iii. Jenny Richter: Can Interim Chancellor Davis tell us his perspective of the current climate in Nashville, particularly related to diversity and inclusion?
- iv. Cody Harrison: We are curious about the Interim Chancellor's priorities and timeline to complete his priorities during his time as Interim Chancellor. Where do LGBTQ+ related issues rank in his priorities? Are there certain efforts the Commission may attend to that are more likely to move forward during his tenure?
- v. Misty Anderson: Can Interim Chancellor Davis discuss two recent reports related to diversity: The Diversity Champions Report and The VolVision report?
- vi. Bonnie Johnson: What are some strategies to address lawmakers' hesitations to provide public funding for LGBTQ+ people, offices, events, etc. on our campus?
- vii. Nancy Thacker will create a google document with the questions and topics listed above for commissioners to reference. Further questions or topics may be added to that document.

IV. Updates from sub-committees

- a. Jordan Smith-Porter, LGBT Mentoring program. The LGBT Mentoring program will undergo redesigning this semester. Jordan Smith-Porter reported he and Stephanie Langley plan to meet on Monday, 9/17, at 1:30pm in the Hodges Library Starbucks to begin restructuring the program. If other commissioners are interested in being a part of the working group, you are welcome to join them or contact Jordan at jsmith15@utk.edu.
- b. Bonnie Johnson, Equity and Climate. Bonnie Johnson and Allison Heming have met to discuss priorities for the group. The committee plans to meet in the coming weeks.
- c. Cody Harrison, Membership and Awards. The committee has met to review goals and objectives for the year. They intend to focus on increasing award applications with more diverse representation of individuals across campus.
- d. Bonnie Benson-Palmgren, Transgender and Non-binary Issues. Bonnie Benson-Palmgren shared findings from the restroom report. The report will be sent to leadership by Monday. The restroom taskforce included surveying locations, signage, and makeup of gender-neutral restrooms across campus.
 - i. Preliminary findings: Originally 98 restrooms in 41 buildings were listed as "family restrooms." The group verified 69 of those restrooms. A few buildings still need to be surveyed, as they were inaccessible during the summer months. The group found only 50 restrooms are actually open to the public (meaning, individuals would not need special access and/or the

restroom is open at all times). Only 40 restrooms were found to be open to the public and wheelchair accessible. With the exception of one multi-stall restroom, all restrooms found were single-stall.

- ii. Bonnie Benson-Palmgren shared the campus map with listed restrooms. She reviewed the buildings with gender-neutral restrooms. Some restrooms found need to be added to the campus map. Specific details regarding buildings will be listed in the committee report.
- iii. Bonnie Johnson reviewed summarized findings. Gender-neutral restrooms are few and far between and not easily accessible in terms of physical location and/or time the building is open. Signage across campus is not uniform; signage appears to be determined by a particular building staff. People generally have to travel a distance to visit a gender-neutral restroom. Where there are restrooms available, both student and professional staff appeared uncertain of what a gender-neutral restroom is and where it might be located. Some staff reported being discouraged to allow the public to use gender-neutral designated restrooms (as they are often designated for staff of that building). The label of “family restroom” is used hastily, in that those restrooms did not appear to be family friendly (e.g., no changing table).
- iv. Bonnie Benson-Palmgren reviewed suggestions from these findings. There is a need to adopt more gender-neutral signage that is not specific to male/female. There is a need to increase the number of gender-neutral restrooms, and we should work to educate individuals about the existence and location of these restrooms. The campus map should be updated to include three lists of restrooms that are (1) wheelchair accessible, (2) gender-neutral, or (3) family restrooms. The campus map may also include which restrooms are not open to the public.
- v. Bonnie Benson-Palmgren welcomed commissioners to provide feedback.
 1. Lizeth Zepeda noted Hodges Library is working to secure a lactation room. She noted advocating for more inclusive signage for lactation rooms may be a future point of effort.

V. Other Updates

- a. Bonnie Johnson reported the OUTstanding conference will be held on October 13th. She handed out flyers to commissioners. An electronic will be distributed to the listserv. More information can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/outstandingutk>
- b. Joel Kramer, VolOUT. VolOUT members are in the midst of officer elections, so updates about fall events will be forthcoming after elections take place. Joel Kramer inquired about the programs for minor policy as it relates to minors attending OUTstanding.
 - i. Bonnie Johnson noted that Dr. Leticia Flores may be a point of contact; information to contact will be shared via the listserv.
- c. Ciara Gazaway, Pride Center. Ciara Gazaway noted they are working to set goals and initiatives based on needs of students. She will update the Commission on events and initiatives at the next meeting.

- d. Mitsu Misawa reported the following members will serve as representatives for other diversity groups: Council for Diversity and Interculturalism, Mitsu Misawa; Commission for Women, Nancy Thacker; and Commission for Blacks, Bonnie Johnson.
- e. Joel Kramer noted UTK has been listed as the third LGBTQ+ unfriendly University by the Princeton Review. Has the Commission considered responding to that ranking?
 - i. Commissioners noted this is an issue we may bring up with Interim Chancellor Davis in October.
- f. Allison Heming noted the Johnson City TriPride event will take place on September 15th; more information can be found at <https://www.tripridetn.org/>

VI. Adjourn