

## Commission for LGBT People

### *Meeting Minutes*

November 5, 2018

Attendance: Joel Anderson, Mitsunori Misawa, Ciara Gazaway, Diane Goble, Cody Harrison, Bonnie Johnson, Kelley Kain, Joel Kramer, Cal Lane, Stephanie Langley, Joanne Patterson, Tammy Renalds, Phyliss Shey, Chris Shuping, Lizeth Zepeda, Sharon Couch, Amber Roessner, Nancy Thacker, Mary Lucal, Matthew Theriot, Jill Malolepszy, Megan Steed, RJ Hinde, David Manderscheid, Dixie Thompson, Alyssa Garbien, John Zomchick, Kari Alldredge, Noelia Pacheco, Gretchen Neisler

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Updates from Committees
  - a. Equity and Climate. Bonnie Johnson reported they are collaborating with the Pride Center to create and conduct a needs assessment for undergraduate and graduate students.
  - b. Membership and Awards. Cody Harrison reported their goal is to increase nominations for awards. They intend to open awards earlier this year and will send a call for nominations soon. They also are developing a profile on what it means to be a Commissioner and leader on our campus.
  - c. Transgender and Nonbinary Issues. Cal Lane reported the group met last week. Their focus is not only advocating for the safety and inclusion transgender and nonbinary folks across campus, but also their needs to thrive. They are also supporting a clothing closet in collaboration with the Pride Center to offer gender inclusive options; anyone can donate clothing in the donation box in the Pride Center. The closet will be open during the Pride Center's Friendsgiving on Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.
- III. Reports from other Groups
  - a. Commission for Blacks. Sharon Couch reported their primary focus is on retention, specifically assessing why Black faculty, staff and students are choosing to stay at UTK. This assessment is in response to a survey earlier in the year where Black UTK members reported two factors—mattering and belonging—as key to their retention. The CFB has communicated needs for support in this effort with UT Administrators. During their last meeting, they opened discussions surrounding financial support, including the McNair Scholarship and SREB scholarship. The CFB ultimately hopes to increase engagement throughout the community. Using research as a vehicle, they hope to not only pair Black faculty, staff and students with each other, but also increase collaboration across units. Further, increases in research and collaboration that speak to relevant issues impacting the Black community will assist the growth of Black scholars and staff. As they understand the needs of our Black community, they aim design a program to support research, collaboration, and growth that can be applied across Commissions.

- b. Commission for Women. Nancy Thacker reported the CFW has secured a new fund, the CFW Excellence fund, to support the Chancellor's awards and initiatives to support women across our campus. Their committees are attending to various identified issues including but not limited to: parental leave policies for graduate students, awards for excellent women students, and cultural climate surrounding sexual harassment. Interim Chancellor Davis will attend their next meeting on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>.
- c. Faculty Senate. Amber Roessner reported the faculty senate has met three times so far this semester. They are hoping to gather reports from diverse groups across campus that include current issues, efforts to address those issues, and needs for support. Over next month, they are focusing their efforts to request the reinstatement of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

#### IV. Update from the Co-Chairs

- a. Joel Anderson reported the Interim Chancellor is currently reviewing the CFLGBT restroom report. Thank you to commissioners who contributed to the report. Interim Chancellor Davis will visit us at our next meeting in December.

#### V. Discussion with Provost Manderscheid

- a. Q: What is role of the Provost?
  - i. Provost Manderscheid discussed his education and employment background and offered some reflections of his first months at UTK. He noted enjoying his time so far, and he sees the Commissions as a strength for UTK. After recent conversations with the Commission for Women, he intends to support a feature on the Commissions in a Provost newsletter. He discussed one of his six priorities is diversity and inclusion, and he hopes to collaborate with the Commissions on this priority. He discussed his role as Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs is to oversee anything academic. This includes graduation, tenure and promotion, E-learning, etc.
- b. Q: What do the words diversity and inclusion mean to you?
  - i. Provost Manderscheid responded diversity is more about numbers (i.e., who are we counting in what categories). Inclusion is about how we retain those individuals. He noted diversity can look different depending on academic unit. For example, in nursing, diversity might mean having more men; in engineering, diversity might mean increasing numbers of women and racial/ethnic minorities. He added diversity is less about political thought, but it is something we must be aware and considerate of. He also discussed the importance of our international community and their perspectives to add to the richness of our campus community.
- c. Q: What are three tangible things you plan to do to support LGBTQ+ people at UTK?
  - i. Provost Manderscheid responded: (1) Get the pride center on a permanent basis, (2) get HB 1066 off the books, and (3) fostering an inclusive environment. He discussed intolerant behaviors, such as discriminatory slurs, have no place on our campus. He stated our leadership should not

tolerate it and wants to ensure our campus is moving towards a more inclusive environment.

- d. Question from Cal Lane: What are action steps to ensure these intolerant behaviors are not tolerated?
  - i. Provost Manderscheid discussed making prompt statements that condemn hate, violence, and other forms of intolerance towards inclusivity. He stated one strategy is to ensure there are consequences for intolerant actions that occur on our campus. He noted we are all adults on this campus, and we should engage in respectful behaviors. In sum, he stated our response must start at the top. We have to make strong statements, so people know they will not get away with these things. These behaviors will not be tolerated.
  - ii. Gretchen Neisler, Vice Provost for International Affairs, noted we must have a two-pronged approach. There needs to be a strong statement from leadership, and we must have 1-on-1 interactions to work with perpetrators of intolerant behaviors. We have to have learning opportunities and programs in place to address these issues. We should proactively think about learning needs to establish programs that effectively address intolerance. These programs offer an opportunity for students to receive a clear message that their intolerant behaviors are not okay, and they may inform them of the impact their actions have on others. We need more than a statement from administration to shift our paradigm and culture.
    - 1. Cal Lane responded in agreement. They also discussed the power imbalances between faculty and students, and the fear students have to report.
    - 2. Provost Manderscheid agreed, noting that we need to shift our environment where students feel safe to report.
    - 3. Dixie Thompson, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, noted that Vice Chancellor Carilli's office is a good partner for us.
  - iii. Commissioner asked where students would report an incident with a faculty member? The LiveSafe app may be a new option to report incidents.
    - 1. Bonnie Johnson noted the Dean of Students Office houses the bias and incident reporting system, which is best way to report bias across campus. Students can call 947-HELP to report. Bonnie also noted the SafeZone program is a proactive, educational option as well.
    - 2. Provost Manderscheid noted there needs to be more training for faculty. We have training for new faculty, but there is a lack of consistent training across the career. He discussed title IX training but noted curiosity as to what other options we have.
    - 3. Joel Kramer noted the bias and incident reporting system statistics on reported bias incidents via their website: <https://bias.utk.edu/>
- e. Question from Bonnie Johnson: Considering free speech legislation, how can we ensure repercussions for hate speech incidents?

- i. Provost Manderscheid acknowledged the legislation surrounding free speech. Although there may not be legal consequences, our code of conduct may be a way to reprehend hate speech. Repercussions may include more of a shunning, since legally hate speech is often protected free speech.
- f. Question from Joel Kramer: The Provost described diversity as a counting of diverse individuals, yet LGBTQ+ individuals are currently not counted at UTK. Are there plans moving forward to count LGBTQ+ individuals at UTK? Could we allow for anonymous identification?
  - i. Provost Manderscheid responded there are no plans at this time. An avenue to count LGBTQ+ individuals within currently existing means is the enrollment management systems within student applications for admittance; but there may be problems with this method as parents often oversee students' applications. He asked if anonymous identification has ever been considered?
    - 1. Commissioners responded no, not that they are aware of.
    - 2. Amber Roessner asked if peer institutions have done this.
      - a. Commissioners agree this may be an area to explore.
    - 3. Provost Manderscheid discussed offering an opt-in option within surveys and applications. He asked commissioners if they could think of alternative ways to anonymously self-identify.
    - 4. Commissioner reported their previous institution, Dalhousie University, conducted a census for all faculty and staff where individuals could anonymously self-identify. The project was called, Get Counted.
- g. Regarding shifts towards a more inclusive environment, Mary Lucal discussed STRIDE trainings/workshops. The program prioritizes creating an inclusive, mattering and belonging type of community. She encouraged commissioners to attend if they have not before. The STRIDE 2 training specifically addresses bullying. Mary Lucal noted Human Resources is sending out a code of conduct training in the spring to address how to have respectful interactions with others.
  - i. Sharon Couch voiced interest in implementing a multicultural competency training across the UT system. She noted it may be proactive a learning opportunity, to Gretchen Neisler's point. Sharon also discussed addressed multicultural competency throughout educational curriculum as well.
  - ii. Joel Anderson discussed his experiences in some trainings have been inclusive to one group but not others. Joel noted our trainings and larger environmental shift needs to consider what it means to be culturally competent.
  - iii. Mary Lucal noted there is a vast call from community member to spend time having discussions about civility and inclusivity. Mary voiced challenge in creating a shared curriculum; the commissions might collaborate on how to achieve this.
    - 1. Bonnie Johnson noted we are unable to have mandatory trainings on LGBTQ+ issues due to HB 1066.

- h. Question from Cody Harrison: What previous experience do you have getting legislation off the books?
  - i. Provost Manderscheid noted he does not have past experience. Addressing HB 1066 will be a first for him. However, he noted UT has a lot of people ready and able to address it. He voiced many administrators recognize our campus could be better without the bill. He noted Randy Boyd and John Compton have connections that can influence the legislature. We can use our community to tackle this issue. He also discussed avenues for addressing legislators with the following example: He is a member a group of academic deans of Arts and Science colleges across the U.S. The organization holds conventions and trainings for academic leadership. However, due to a CA law that prohibits state employees to travel on state dollars, the organization is not renewing a contract to host a convention next year. States included in the ban are those with state laws that are viewed as discriminatory towards diverse groups. TN is one of the states on CA's ban because of HB 1066. The implication from this example is that HB 1066 hits Nashville in the pocket book. Avenues such as these may be used strategically to advocate for change. He noted currently lobbying our administrators on these issues, but he thinks it is a community effort.
  - i. Joel Kramer discussed UTK's Princeton review LGBT unfriendly ranking. He noted it creates a negative perception for incoming LGBT people on our campus. How do we address this when LGBTQ+ individuals ask about safety?
    - i. Provost Manderscheid recognized the negative effect this ranking has on our campus. However, he noted we can address during 1-on-1 interactions with those individuals. The Commissions can also offer support with search committees.
  - j. Cal Lane discussed being forthright about their experiences on campus. They do face discriminatory experiences. Cal Lane asked if Provost Manderscheid could send the Commission a list of action items to address the issues we discussed today and how the Commission can support these efforts. They noted having a list would be helpful to show incoming LGBTQ+ people how our administration and campus community is working to change our culture.
    - i. Provost Manderscheid responded he is happy to provide a list. He noted that he does not want UTK community members to sugar coat their experiences, but to also include positive qualities or actions that they experience.

## VI. Approval of Minutes

## VII. Other Updates

- a. The Commission for Women, in collaboration with the Office of the Provost, is hosting a panel discussion on Wednesday, Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>, from 3:30-5pm in Strong Hall 101. The panel is entitled: *Equity, Sexual Harassment Prevention, and Bully-Free Workplace*. All are welcome to join. Light refreshments will be provided.
- b. Phyliss Shey encouraged everyone to vote tomorrow, Nov. 6th!

- c. Thursday, Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>, our campus community is celebrating first generation students. Most events will take place throughout the day on Pedestrian Walkway. If you would like a 1<sup>st</sup>-Gen pin, email Phyliss at [pshey@utk.edu](mailto:pshey@utk.edu)

VIII. Adjourn