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Annual Report

Commission for Women
1985-86

Prepared by

Judy Webster, Chair

Commission Members:

Dr. Linda Burton
Ms. Charlene Rice
Ms. Gail Clay
Ms. Joan Cronan
Dr. Jerry Askew
Dr. Greer Fox
Dr. Nancy Goslee
Ms. Lucy Hamilton
Dr. Jeanette Jennings
Dr. Marcia Katz
Ms. Susan Kemppainen
Dr. Suzanne Kurth
Ms. Nicole LePoutre-Baldocci
Ms. Helen Mays
Dr. Patricia McClam
Mr. J. Otis Cochran
Dr. Martha Lee Osborne
Ms. Eleanora Overbey
Ms. Deborah Schriver
Ms. Beverly Sweeney
Ms. Maxine Thompson
Ms. Wylene Vrba
Dr. Max Wortman
Dr. William Shurr

Students
Ms. Tina Shackleford
Ms. Janice Friebaum
Ms. Shannon Kinney
Ms. Gwendolyn Fuller
Ms. Patti Bowling

Approximately one year ago I was quoted in the Daily Beacon as having acknowledged the fact that the Commission for Women is an advisory body. That comment caused a fair amount of concern to be expressed by women on the UTK campus who want the CFW to be more than that. In retrospect, the most important goal that I have wanted to achieve as a new chair of the Commission for Women has been to illustrate how it is possible for a committee to be "advisory" and still accomplish something.

The Chancellor has charged the Commission for Women to "...advise on planning, implementation, and evaluation of University programs, policies, and services designed to improve the status of women." The Commission recommends changes in policy or procedure relative to the concerns of women. It facilitates coordination of new and existing academic and extracurricular programs. It recommends and encourages research to assess the status of women at UTK and compares their status with that of women at other institutions and agencies. It assists in the evaluation and revision of the Affirmative Action Plan. It advises and consults with all University officials on the needs and status of women. And it aids in ensuring campus and community access to information on Commission and University activities related to women.

During this past year I have attempted to guide the work of the Commission with the Chancellor's charge in mind.

The CFW has held monthly meetings in the University Center this year. The meetings have been open to the campus and are usually announced in the Campus Capsule section of the Daily Beacon. The

programming of these meetings has combined guest speakers with a discussion of related issues. The chair has met regularly with the Chancellor to advise him on our discussions and concerns and he met with us at the December meeting of the full Commission.

The CFW has established an advisory role with the University administration on the need for a campus day care center. It was at our December meeting that we learned of the Chancellor's commitment to establishing a facility if funding were available and the details could be worked out.

We have established an office for the Commission located at 2012 Lake Avenue. We share this facility with Dr. Martha Lee Osborne and her staff who direct the Women's Studies program at UTK. We furnished our office with surplus equipment and furniture which was available at the UT warehouse. In January we hired a student assistant, Ms. Shelbonnie Coleman, who helps with the administrative work of the Commission.

Early in the Fall Quarter, we organized ourselves into several sub-committees to facilitate proposals which are then brought to the full Commission for discussion and recommendation. We have established liason with the Commission for Blacks; our chair attends their regular meetings and Otis Cochran, who chairs the CFB, is also a member of CFW.

Other activities of the year have included participation in the interviews for the Dean of Students and the Dean of Liberal Arts positions. We have sponsored a woman applicant to the Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education, which is held at Bryn Mawr College. The chair has handled specific complaints and concerns brought by

individuals where women's issues were involved. The chair has met with various members of the University Administration in resolving these problems throughout the year.

One of our most important activities has been the publication of Networker. We believe that this publication specifically relates to our charge to "ensure campus and community access to information on Commission and University activities related to women." We have received favorable comments during the year from women who saw opportunities mentioned in Networker that they did not see anywhere else.

Of course, there have been frustrating moments for me as chair of the Commission for Women. I view it as an important responsibility, but its activities and accomplishments take a fair amount of time. One of my main objectives has been to improve communication between the CFW and the campus community, but communication takes time. Good communication takes even more time and time is something that is difficult for me to find because of a full schedule of responsibilities as a librarian in the Main Library.

I was very pleased when the Chancellor appointed a woman as Director, Office of University Communications. I regret, however, that similar appointments have not occurred in other areas of the University. Much work remains to be done. Discrimination remains despite the progress that has been made in recent years. Much of today's discrimination is subtle and some is unintentional. I view

that very fact as a serious problem because we often do not even realize that something has happened until it is too late.

There will be many opportunities for the Commission for Women to provide a leadership role in the next academic year. I hope that the group will continue to serve an agenda-setting function regarding women's issues which come before the University administration. Thoughtful consideration needs to be given to the definition of affirmative action at all levels of campus administration because that concept is so different to so many people.

The Commission should take a look at campus programming and make recommendations on any particular area that needs to be covered in any area of campus. This does not mean that I believe that the Commission should actually undertake the programming itself. On the contrary, programming by the Commission takes time and focuses on events rather than issues.

In conclusion, I would say that it has been a good year for the Commission for Women. There have been successes and failures, as well as interesting problems and frustrating ones. Along the way, I have learned a lot about individuals and the parts which they play in our organizational structure. It has been a fascinating and rewarding experience.