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Minutes, 1/12/2009

The Commission for Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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Minutes
Commission for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People
January 12, 2009

Time: 12:00 PM
Place: Hodges Library, Room 605

Present: Joseph Anderson, Donna Braquet, Alan Chesney, Amy Davidson, James DeVita, Ben Doty, Rusty Drummer, Lars Dzikus, Leslee Fisher, Julia Hendrix, R.J. Hinde, Pam Hindle, Joel Kramer, Erik Leander, Mary Lucal, Becky Morgan, Jenny Moshak, Dustin Nelson, Gina Owens, Marva Rudolph, Lynn Sacco, Jan Simek, Renee Smith, Meshia Thomas, Pia Wood

Call to Order: 12:01 PM

Old Business: None.

New Business:

A) Welcome
Minutes approved at 12:01 PM.

B) Resource Center Committee
The resource center committee has secured a three-room space on the first floor of Melrose Hall besides the honors college. The committee has also acquired surplus furniture from Ayres Hall. The space should be usable as a resource center in a few weeks. If anyone has any ideas about what to name the center, they encouraged to e-mail James DeVita at jdevita@utk.edu.

C) Communications Committee
On January 13th at 7 PM in the Hodges Library auditorium, the communications committee will be hosting an issues forum to discuss expectations for the Obama administration and the impact of the recession.

D) Discussion with Chancellor Simek
Responding to a question from George Hoemann, Chancellor Simek noted that it is hard to predict the long-term effects of budget difficulties. By the end of 2009, a 20% budget reduction will have taken place. When facing such difficulties, the primary focus is to preserve the quality of the academic programs. However, Chancellor Simek also stated his belief that it is important to promote a safe and inclusive campus climate. To that extent, the administration intends to do the best they can to preserve campus organizations. He believes the administration shares a moral commitment to do this. He

also believes this commitment is shared by Chancellor Cheek. Accordingly, he expects Chancellor Cheek to be supportive of the commission's programs and goals.

Lars Dzikus asked Chancellor Simek if he had advice for approaching the administration about the commission's concerns. Simek responded by stating that the administration should not be viewed as an adversary of the faculty and staff. He believes all members of the administration are receptive to any concern and that the commission should not refrain from engaging them.

Pam Hindle asked if the diversity commissions are at risk of budget cuts in 2009. Simek stated that the budgets in place for 2009 will not be altered. He also believes that the Chancellor's Honors Banquet should be streamlined in order to reduce its length. He thinks this can be done by giving out some awards at a different time or schedule separate banquets for faculty and student awards.

Lynn Sacco asked if domestic partner benefits are off the table due to the budget issues. Chancellor Simek responded by urging the commission not to relent in advocating for any institutional reforms. He does not believe that domestic partner benefits, specifically, are off the table. He added that persistent external and internal political pressure is a necessary aspect of meeting the commission's goals.

Pam Hindle asked about the possibility of a retirement incentive. Chancellor Simek noted that such incentives would cost money, and consequently, such a policy would not be effective in reducing the budget.

In response to a question from Pia Wood about furloughs, Simek pointed out two problems that he saw with the idea. First, he does not think the university should pursue policies that do not permanently effect the budget. Second, he believes that it would be difficult to reach a consensus on this matter. However, it remains an option if budget problems persist.

In response to a question from Jenny Moshak, Simek stated that he agreed that the university as a whole needs to convey a consistent and coherent message regarding inclusiveness. Moshak noted that there is concern that the administration would not support faculty and staff who speak out about intolerance on campus. In response, Simek restated his belief that the LGBT community should view the administration as an ally.

Adjournment: 1:01 PM