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2-2-2009

Minutes, 2/2/2009

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
February 2, 2009

Time: 12:00 PM

Place: Hodges Library, Room 605

Present: Melissa Bartsch, Tony Boulet, Connie Briscoe, Ben Doty, Lars Dzikus, Leslee Fisher, R.J. Hinde, George Hoemann, Joel Kramer, Erik Leander, Mary Lucal, Bharat Mehra, Suzanne Molnar, Anton Reece, Marva Rudolph, Lynn Sacco, Renee Smith, Meshia Thomas, Ed White

Call to Order: 12:01 PM

Old Business: None.

New Business:

A) Welcome

Minutes approved at 12:02 PM.

B) Discussion of Discrimination Complaint Language

The executive committee concluded that the language used in the discrimination complaint procedure document was too difficult to understand. Marva Rudolph responded by pointing out that the language was taken directly from university policy as well as federal and state laws. Lynn Sacco expressed the opinion that the language of the document invites litigation.

Dr. Hoemann noted that, according to the language of bullet three, discrimination based on sexual orientation appears to be permitted “in educational programs and activities.” This appears to contradict the language of bullet one. Consequently, it does not appear to be the case that the categories protected by university policy are overarching.

Roger Weaver suggested that the document should lay out a complaint procedure that could be potentially applicable to any category. Ms. Rudolph noted that the Office of the General Counsel is concerned that they do not want the document to appear misleading. However, she intends to bring the Commission’s concerns to the General Counsel’s attention.

In response to a question from Ms. Sacco, Ms. Rudolph noted that documents outlining appropriate behavior towards candidates for employment should explicitly prohibit inquiring about sexual orientation. The omission of such language was an unintentional oversight.

R.J. Hinde suggested that the three commissions collectively urge for alterations to the complaint procedure. Ms. Rudolph suggested using the upcoming Diversity Council meeting to raise the issue with Chancellor Cheek.

Bharat Mehra noted that, unlike several other universities, ethnicity and income also appear to be omitted from the complaint procedure document.

C) Awards Committee

The call for awards has gone out. The deadline for nominations is February 12th, 2009.

D) Communications Committee

The committee completed a discussion forum recently. A similar forum will be planned for later in the semester.

On February 12th, from 4 to 6 PM, the committee will host “Welcome Back for LGBT Students, Faculty, and Staff.”

E) Equity Committee

The committee is continuing to gather information on the extent to which major employers in the area offer domestic partner benefits.

F) Other Business

Lynn Sacco expressed concern about the well being of many LGBT students on campus. She suggested that members of the Commission should reach out to the student population. This could take the form of informal mentoring until more structured programs can be developed.

Adjournment: 12:56 PM