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1994 Chancellor's Response to Concerns Raised by the Commission for Women at UTK, March 1994

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**Response to Concerns
Raised by the
Commission for Women at UTK
March 1994**

Introduction to the Response:

The result of discrimination is that all members of the UTK community are prevented from achieving their fullest potential. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, has made a strong commitment to providing a campus climate that embraces diversity and welcomes the expression of cultural and individual differences. We depend on each other for our existence and should work and learn together in harmony.

The following is an excerpt from the vision statement drafted for UTK as we move toward the 21st century. Not only our actions, but our underlying philosophies and values commit us to work toward a better understanding of issues related to discrimination and diversity.

UTK aspires to be a university of choice by being value driven, customer oriented, and learning focused.

Being a **UNIVERSITY OF CHOICE** means that various constituents deliberately choose to affiliate with UTK because they expect it to provide the services and opportunities they need and want. For example, students would expect to get a quality education, would expect the institution to be committed to helping them succeed as students and to their development as total persons, and would expect an opportunity for growth in understanding and experiencing diversity (differences among people) in its many forms.

Faculty would expect a professionally and personally satisfying place to work and the availability of good students, quality faculty colleagues, and good facilities.

Staff would expect a good environment for doing meaningful work that will be valued.

Alumni would expect the institutional reputation and the degrees which they hold to be highly regarded.

Prospective employers would expect graduates to be well prepared academically with a good work ethic and ability to function effectively as team members.

The citizens of Tennessee and state government would expect the institution to be a valuable resource to the state and nation in addressing the problems of society.

Being **VALUE DRIVEN** means that there are certain institutional values that will be widely embraced by the university community in all we do and say as representatives of the university. Institutional values we consider to be important are that all people shall be treated with respect, understanding, caring, and fairness; that a sense of community or "belonging here" will prevail; that the campus environment will encourage the attainment of the highest potential of individual faculty members, students, and staff; that management and administrative decisions will be based on facts and opinions that are widely disseminated and understood; that the process followed in achieving objectives is as important as the objectives; that the institution is obligated to understand and meet the needs of those persons it serves as both internal and external customers; that a commitment to continuous improvement is essential; that diversity will be embraced as a moral imperative as well as an opportunity for personal growth and development; that honesty and fairness in dealing with people are essential; that individuals must assume responsibility for their behavior and actions; and that a philosophy of collective ownership of all institutional problems should exist.

Being **CUSTOMER ORIENTED** means that we accept the principle that we as a university do have customers, and our role is to know who our customers are, to know their needs, and to meet or exceed their needs and expectations. We have both internal and external customers. Our customer base includes students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, parents, legislators, the general public, prospective employers, and any other persons who are recipients of the services offered by the university.

Being **LEARNING FOCUSED** has broader implications than simply the transmittal of facts and information. In addition to the "something" that is to be learned, i.e. the content, our learning focus should include research on teaching and learning, emphasis on lifelong learning, integration and synthesis of content, cross-disciplinary learning, learning through research and scholarship, and learning about the institution to promote understanding of the institution as a system with many separate but interdependent parts.

Several recent documents have reported perceptions of gender relations and

sexual harassment on the UTK campus, including the Gender in the Workplace survey, the Commission for Women's report of the Status of Women at UTK, and the Student Sexual Harassment survey conducted by the Social Science Research Institute and the Graduate Student Association. The emphases of each of these studies was on identifying problems and, indeed, we have many problems that must be addressed. One way of addressing these problems is to confronting the issues of improving our campus climate and increase acceptance of diversity. As we challenge ourselves to learn more about each other, we also embrace an important opportunity for personal and institutional growth and maturation.

Thinking about diversity as an opportunity rather than as a problem is important in three ways:

- * It will contribute to the personal growth and maturation of students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
- * It will enrich the educational and cultural experiences of our students.
- * It will enhance the reputation of this institution as a place where diversity is valued. It would indeed be a marvelous vision for UTK to be perceived as a university of choice because it is committed to seeing diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem to be dealt with or controlled?

The following general observations about ways of thinking and acting to improve the campus climate regarding appreciation and celebration of diversity are proposed for reflection and dialogue as we begin to address the gender-related issues raised by the Commission for Women and others.

- * Embracing diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem is a journey and not a destination. The commitment must be deep, continuous and ongoing.
- * We must continuously work to increase the number of traditionally under-represented persons among students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
- * We must identify and correct salary inequities which exist on any basis other than merit.
- * Persons in management and leadership positions must be totally committed to developing a climate congenial to diversity.
- * We must help people deal with change. Dealing with change

means recognizing that, whether change seems either too slow or too fast, it must come and it will come. We must then be ready to take full advantage of new opportunities and new responsibilities.

- * We need more models of success - more programs that embrace and promote the enhancement of diversity on campus.
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The subtleties of sexism not only hamper women students' education but also limit women faculty, staff and administrators' productivity and advancement. Discrimination in any form prevents institutions from being the best they can be. Identifying these barriers and offering solutions to them are the first steps toward a welcoming campus climate -- for everyone. The Commission for Women is owed a tremendous debt of gratitude for the diligence and thoughtfulness required to address and recommend solutions to several difficult, but pressing, issues on the UTK campus.

To ensure that the issues raised by the Commission for Women receive thoughtful attention and consideration, the response to the concerns outlined in The Status of Women at UTK will occur in seven parts, corresponding to the general areas discussed in the report. These areas are sexual harassment; safety; student issues; part-time issues; advancement, professional development, and representation; salary; and child care. Part I of this response, which considers recommendations related to sexual harassment, is attached.