1994 The Status of Women at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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The Status of Women
at
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Prepared by the UTK Commission for Women
March 1994
OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the review of the status of women at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK). The study was undertaken in the fall of 1990 by the UTK Commission for Women and continued through fall 1993.

We found that some things have changed and some have remained the same. We have been reawakened to the fact that many factors limiting the advancement of women at UTK result from old ideas and traditions concerning the role of men and women in our society. This report is not inclusive of all issues of concern to women. It does, however, respond to the key issues and provides recommendations for action.

The Commission for Women recommends periodic reviews of the status of women, both to measure progress and recommend revisions to the activities. The University community is ever-changing, with the result being that issues also change. Reviews will guarantee adjustment as situations change.

Wylene A. Vrba
Chairperson, UTK Commission for Women
BACKGROUND

Early in 1990 the Commission for Women proposed a review of the status of women at UTK to Chancellor Jack Reese. (The last review was conducted in 1972.) Three broad areas were identified for examination: (1) policies, procedures and programming affecting female faculty, exempt and non-exempt staff, and students; (2) safety and sexual harassment, and (3) child care. Chancellor Reese supported the need for the study but stated that since he was vacating the chancellor's position, it would be up to the new administration to officially initiate the study.

Upon Dr. John Quinn's appointment as Chancellor, the Commission resubmitted the proposal. He confirmed the need for the review but pointed out that due to major funding cuts it would have to be performed internally. He asked the Commission to consider carrying out the study. At the fall 1990 meeting the Commission agreed to form a task force on the status of women.

METHODOLOGY

Six subcommittees were formed to review the above areas. Four dealt with policies, procedures and programming, and two dealt with child care, safety and sexual harassment. Several existing reports and surveys were reviewed by the subcommittees.

Each subcommittee arranged numerous opportunities for input from the campus community through one-on-one conversations, open forums, brown bag discussion groups, etc. As a result, all subcommittees recommended a campus-wide survey in order to gauge the scope of these perceptions.

Under the charge of Chancellor Bill Snyder, the Commission undertook the administration of a campus-wide survey to study the above concerns. During the spring and fall of 1992, Commission members finalized the questionnaire and identified the target audience as all full-and part-time female faculty and staff and a random sample of male faculty and staff from the same categories. (Student population issues of course content, classroom interactions, and extra-curricular activities made any student survey different from one administered to UTK staff. Consequently students were not included.)

The survey was administered and results compiled by Social Science Research Institute (SSRI) in Spring 1993 with the financial support of Chancellor Snyder. In order to increase the response rate, a follow-up reminder was mailed to all participants. Faculty and staff response rates were 41 percent and 40 percent respectively. The survey dealt with perceptions of issues of particular relevance.
to women. In several areas it is unclear whether data reflect accurate perceptions, or whether there is a discrepancy between perceptions and reality. Thus further study will be necessary.

The remainder of this report consists of summaries of the findings, incorporating reports used by the Commission, as well as data from the survey. The order of the sections does not imply any priority of the issues.

ADVANCEMENT, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REPRESENTATION

Responses regarding development and advancement were similar to those in the 1972 report. Repeatedly, female employees reported that they felt unsafe, were prohibited from taking courses or training, supported an employer-sponsored child care program, were under-represented in administrative levels and on campus committees, carried heavier work loads than men, and generally were not valued as highly as their male coworkers. They noted a great deal of variation among departments as to the implementation of UTK policy.

Many respondents felt that a "glass ceiling" does exist. Indeed if one looks at the women in line positions, this idea is confirmed. Many expressed a belief that promotion of women within the University is only talk. We must assure women that they will have the opportunity for research, advanced learning, or internships. We must encourage a work and family atmosphere, being flexible in matters related to family.

Female and male faculty members report having about the same level of knowledge of the tenure process. However, the women feel that they have more difficult tenure and promotion requirements than do men.

Faculty women report carrying heavier service-course loads and advising responsibilities than men do. Their appointments to the various campus committees and advisory groups may be higher than men, primarily due to having fewer members to call upon.

Non-exempt staff members feel that they have limited opportunities for advancement. There are very few open positions with many applicants. They become "locked in" a position due to years of service and salary. Often one cannot afford to promote to a higher position because the department is restricted on the salary it can pay.

Experience needed for promotion can also be a problem. Within the summary of open-ended responses to the survey, and during the informal subcommittee gatherings, non-exempt staff repeatedly reported that they were prohibited from
taking classes or training during their lunch hour. For some employees this is the only time they have available for such educational activities.

For non-exempt staff the recently introduced policy concerning on-the-job training should open opportunities for training, both in current job skills and learning new ones leading to advancement. WE COMMEND THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH A POLICY. In particular, restrictions on employees taking on-campus training and classes should be minimal and implemented only when necessary to cover essential services.

Several employees stated that it seems impossible to find out the requirements for various jobs on campus. Job descriptions are either lacking or guarded. Many commented that advancement is not encouraged.

Staff-exempt personnel have much greater flexibility in attending regular University courses and taking on-campus training classes. They receive more encouragement to become better educated and often have opportunities to apply newly learned skills to their current job, as well as increasing the potential for advancement.

The number of staff-exempt employees has increased in the last few years. This is largely due to the increased research funding resulting in new professional positions in this category. Many of these positions are filled with outside applicants, but internal transfer into these positions is common. These positions generally require an advanced degree, which limits considerably the transfer of a non-exempt person into a staff-exempt position. Many respondents commented that it appears that the degree requirements for many staff-exempt positions seem unnecessarily high and unrealistic. They suggest that advanced degrees are not necessary for many of these positions.

The most startling responses addressed performance evaluations. THE SURVEY DATA REPORT THAT 70 PERCENT OF THE STAFF RESPONDENTS, BOTH MALE AND FEMALE, SELDOM OR NEVER RECEIVE PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS.

Recommendations

1. Implement regular performance reviews.

2. Monitor implementation of the policy regarding on-the-job training to assure (a) that supervisors are not setting up artificial barriers to its implementation and subsequent improvement of employee abilities and (b) that women and men are participating in training in equal proportions.

3. Reorganize within the departments to distribute duties and provide a clear advancement path.

4. Pursue cross-training within the non-exempt classifications, enabling employees to learn the skills and requirements of higher level positions.
5. Seek internal candidates for open positions in both non-exempt and exempt categories.

6. Implement a data base, containing each employee's skills and educational level to enable identification of employees with the skills for open positions and facilitate their placement in them.

7. Implement internships or apprenticeships to provide opportunities to gain experience leading to possible advancement. This would differ from cross-training mentioned above in that it would involve activities in a department different from the base department.

8. Document male and female assignments related to course loads, advising duties, and committee representation. Check for trends in assigning female faculty to the lower division courses, heavier advising assignments, and to less prestigious campus committees.

9. Make a concerted effort to hire women in administrative positions. It is not enough to include women in the candidates brought to campus to interview. The presence of only one woman in a pool of five or six candidates doesn't appear to be more than a gesture toward equality.

10. Review the role of affirmative action in the retention of women in all positions at the University. Departmental promotion and tenure decisions should be reviewed to assure that unrelated issues do not enter into the deliberations and results.

11. Implement a policy to stop the tenure clock for faculty who become parents, either through birth or adoption. Several faculty have been granted such leave, and it should become the policy of the University of Tennessee.

12. Review of position announcements to assure that requirements are reasonable and not designed to limit applicants should be a part of the job announcement process.

13. Appoint more women to advisory and governing committees.

**CHILD CARE**

Countless studies have been done confirming that employee productivity is increased, employee absenteeism is reduced, and stress-related illness diminishes when parents participate in employer-sponsored child care facilities. Such facilities have also proven beneficial as recruiting tools for prospective
employees. For these reasons the Commission for Women has continuously lobbied for on-site child care facilities.

The Child Development Laboratories, through the College of Human Ecology, provide a model environment for children. Staff members confirm that the majority of the children enrolled there have parents who are UT employees. The main problem is the limited enrollment, for which no increases are planned. Numerous employees consider the fees for the Laboratory high, in spite of a sliding-scale calculation.

During informal staff group meetings, child care issues were a frequent topic. The majority of the survey respondents do not have any children under five years of age. For those who did have children in that age group, the likelihood of using child care facilities increased as the age of the children increased. That is, there was a greater need for toddler and preschool care than for infant care.

The University must continue to monitor child care needs, especially for students. Statistics show that the average age of the college student is now 25. This re-entry student population is increasing. In the spring 1994 term, 4,000 re-entry or non-traditional students enrolled. That is an increase of 600 students since spring 1993! These students often have children who require child care. Informal inquiries show that the need for drop-in and temporary child care is increasing. To address this issue for UTK's students will be increasingly important. Also mentioned were arrangements for care of sick children, a day camp to cover times when public schools were dismissed yet UTK is still in session, and the possibility of a summer camp. (The summer camp formerly offered by the Health, Leisure and Safety Department is being evaluated due to funding changes.)

In January 1994 the Child and Family Studies Department of the UTK College of Human Ecology announced formation of the Knoxville Area Child Care Information Referral Service. This program, sponsored by Levi Strauss Company Child Care Fund, will assist the University community with identifying and selecting child care that is convenient to home or work sites in Knox, Anderson, Blount, Sevier and Union counties. Such a service has been recommended and supported by the Commission for Women for some time. WE COMMEND LEVI STRAUSS AND THE UTK CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES DEPARTMENT FOR WORKING TOGETHER IN CREATING THIS MUCH-NEEDED SERVICE.

Recommendations

14. The Commission for Women should continue to review child care needs, working with the College of Human Ecology to prepare a long-range plan for child care for the University's students, staff and faculty. Such a plan would permit quick action should funds become available. Both groups should continue to call attention to the benefits of employer-provided child care and the needs of employees and students.
15. Survey results on child care should be shared with the local child care establishments, making them aware of employee needs and the potential market.

16. The University should address the needs of the Child Development Laboratories as they relate to safety of the facilities, state-of-the-art teaching and learning opportunities, enhanced services, and national visibility as a model program. The Commission encourages expanding this program to serve more University students, staff and faculty.

17. UTK should also pursue joint child care facilities with some of the larger local employers such as Whittle Communications and Tennessee Valley Authority. Many corporations are finding it advantageous to join together in such ventures, realizing that together they can provide an excellent facility that would otherwise not be possible.

18. The Commission encourages creativity and flexibility in arranging parent work schedules. These opportunities, coupled with job-sharing and working at home, can alleviate many of the child care difficulties faced by employees.

PART-TIME ISSUES

Part-time employees at the University generally receive fewer benefits and lower pay than their full-time colleagues. In addition, they have little input into their job assignments. On the other hand, survey respondents reported that availability of supplies, space, and support staff is generally good.

Many respondents feel that the University does not seem to realize the significance of the contributions of part-time employees. The flexibility inherent in part-time positions is not sufficient compensation for their efforts. Their salary is generally well below that of full-time employees performing the same functions. Furthermore, they are not entitled to many of the benefits enjoyed by full-time employees, particularly if their appointments are below 75 percent time.

Recommendations

19. Take steps to bring compensation, including longevity, of part-time employees up to the level of full-time employees performing identical functions.

20. Encourage part-time employees who are interested in promotion to learn new skills. Provide support for professional training and development.
21. Enhance efforts to include part-time employees in departmental meetings and activities.

SAFETY

In subcommittee activities and via the survey, women reported that they felt unsafe on the UTK campus, particularly after normal working hours. There were numerous comments about the poor response of the UT Police Department (UTPD) to (1) reports of unsecured buildings and (2) employees, particularly females, who report to campus police that they are working after hours on campus, expecting some follow-up by police regarding their safety and continued presence.

Chief Yovella reported, however, that there have been no official complaints of this type registered with the UTPD. The police have established a good reputation for handling complaints from members of the University community. Should such an official complaint be presented to them, the police would do everything in their power to handle the situation efficiently and expeditiously.

Additionally, UT Police report that no employees have been assaulted in campus buildings in recent years and that thefts from campus buildings have decreased steadily since 1991. In addition to the commissioned police officers, the UTPD has approximately twenty non-commissioned security officers assigned to walking beats in and around campus buildings during the night hours. These security officers have played a major role in reducing the overall crime rate in these areas.

University police have made dramatic changes in their procedures, facilities, and campus crime prevention programs, e.g., the addition of Enhanced 911, specialized training of the officers and safety programs for the campus community. Also, a working relationship and development of definite lines of authority have been identified with the Knoxville police and the Knox County Sheriff’s Department.

The UTPD employs five female officers who play a vital role in the operation of the department. Two of them hold the rank of sergeant, one is a detective, and two are patrol officers. THE UT POLICE DEPARTMENT IS COMMENDED FOR (1) TAKING THESE PROACTIVE STEPS TO REDUCE CAMPUS CRIME AND (2) EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN WITHIN ITS RANKS.

Safe transportation between university buildings is a key safety concern. In 1992, operation of the Escort Van Service was transferred to Parking Services. The service is intended to provide safe transportation for individuals who must move about campus at night. Mary Lynn Holloway reported that ridership has
doubled in the last year. With a core of six vehicles and term drivers, the service transported more than 49,000 riders between July 1, 1992 and July 1, 1993.

Recommendations

22. Review reasons for the drop in the number of assaults in campus buildings, to determine if this is due to greater police patrol and crime prevention or to the possibility that people have curtailed their after-hour visits to campus as a safety precaution, thereby removing themselves from potential danger.

23. Install blue light phones in the parking garages and buildings with a history of criminal activity.

24. Instruct security officers to identify themselves to people in the building after normal working hours and on weekends. This will do two things: (1) unauthorized persons will leave and (2) authorized persons, i.e., employees and students, will become aware of security personnel presence.

25. Implement a voluntary check-in and check-out system between after-hours workers and campus police. A simple as listing of name, building and room, phone, and estimated departure time should suffice. Periodic checks by police with those listed would be undertaken.

26. Provide regular transportation, such as buses, during the peak hours of evening campus activity, i.e., 6 PM to 11 PM. Well-marked stops and a reliable schedule are essential. Off-peak hour services should continue to be provided by term employees driving standard vehicles.

SALARY

In 1991 the Commission for Women obtained the report "The Status of Women Faculty and Staff at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1985 to 1990." One component of the report was a salary comparison of regular employees within job groups. For the most part, salaries of female employees lagged behind those of male employees. The one exception was within the professional staff where salaries of females compare favorably with those of males.

Over the summer of 1993, a subcommittee of the Commission for Women reviewed the issue of salary inequities on this campus. They confirm a long-standing pattern of significant salary differences associated with gender even after other major contributing factors such as years of service and rank are controlled. Data on faculty salaries show that the average salary difference for men and women has increased. In the 1990-91 year a man's salary was $1,247
higher than a woman's; and by 1992-93 the difference was $2,206. In three years the difference has increased by 76.9 percent! It is remarkable that this pattern of increasing disparity occurred during the period when salaries had been frozen by the legislature.

Recommendation

27. Review this salary disparity and eliminate it.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment was a frequent topic during informal employee discussion groups. A major portion of the survey focused on such abuse. One in five women and one in twenty men responded that they had been sexually harassed as outlined in the UTK statement on sexual harassment.

When presented with a list of specific actions considered to be forms of sexual harassment, many respondents indicated that they had experienced at least one of them. Unwanted teasing, questions, remarks or jokes of a sexual nature were reported by nearly half of the faculty women and 40 percent of the staff women. Other incidents included unwanted pressure for dates, letters and/or phone calls of a sexual nature; and unwanted sexually suggestive looks or gestures. Superiors were identified as the perpetrator in most instances. Survey data from faculty indicate that many of these incidents occur in meeting settings.

When asked to what degree these incidents interfered with their work, respondents stated that remarks, teasing, and pressure for dates had the least impact while cornering, pinching, touching, and pressure for sexual favors interfered greatly.

MOST INCIDENTS WERE NOT REPORTED. The most often marked reasons were "I didn't think anything would be done," or "I felt complaining would make the situation worse," or "I resolved the dispute myself." A high percentage of respondents reported knowing the appropriate offices for reporting such incidents.

Recommendations

28. The policy on sexual harassment and the procedures to address charges of sexual harassment should be included in the Faculty Handbook, the Employee Handbook, the Policy and Procedure Manual, HillTopics, and all other appropriate publications. Annual publication in Context, StaffStuff, and The Daily Beacon should occur.
29. A campus-wide program to educate administrators, faculty and staff on what constitutes harassment and how it affects individuals should be undertaken.

30. New employees should be informed of the University's policy on sexual harassment during their orientation. The legal ramifications should also be covered, especially as they apply to the University's liability.

31. Make disciplinary procedures for sexual harassment explicit and known to all University personnel and students. Discipline must be carried out for proven cases.

**STUDENT ISSUES**

The following information was obtained through informal focus groups. No survey of the student body regarding gender issues has been undertaken. The Commission is aware of a pending survey on sexual harassment being conducted by the Graduate Student Association but has no information on distribution or reporting.

The student issues fall into several categories: safety, particularly during the evening and late night hours; the perpetuation of negative stereotypes through such campus activities as Carnicus, Timettes, etc. and sexist treatment of females by faculty and staff.

Students realize that individuals bear much of the responsibility for personal safety. HIGH MARKS WERE GIVEN TO THE DATE RAPE SESSIONS COORDINATED BY THE DEAN OF STUDENTS' OFFICE. We wish to point out that the UTPD has twelve safety programs that are available to and widely used by the University community. Most of them are free. Some student requests include increased police patrols, aggressive training sessions on defense and date rape and additional lighting in the areas where escort van service is common. In addition they request training of maintenance personnel in appropriate behavior (stares and lewd comments are unacceptable), advance notice of maintenance personnel presence in the residence halls, and a review of the Greek system and Carnicus and how it perpetuates negative views of women.

Students also requested information on gender parity in job placement by Career Services. The lack of mentors and role models was also of great concern, especially the lack of women in administration and faculty.
Recommendations

32. Survey the students regarding safety, sexism in the classroom and various campus activities, representation and mentoring, residence hall security, etc.

33. Post schedules for maintenance activities in the dormitories.

34. Study Career Services placement statistics by gender.

SUMMARY

Members of the Commission for Women are aware that numerous activities are already taking place across campus as a result of this review of the status of women. Centuries of cultural influences and tradition in which women were regarded as property and capable of only mundane activities must be abolished if everyone is to have a fair chance at performing to the best of his or her ability.

Long-term solutions must be developed addressing the fundamental principles of equity and fairness regarding gender. The UTK Commission for Women will continue to monitor these issues and assist in the development and implementation of the solutions.

However, employees and students need to see prompt good-faith activity—actions confirming that UTK administrators are serious about diversity and gender equity. As a starting point, the recommendations restated below could be implemented quickly and with little or no cost.

- Implement regular performance reviews [Rec. 1].
- Encourage creativity and flexibility in arranging parent work schedules [Rec. 18].
- Make disciplinary procedures for sexual harassment explicit and known to all University personnel and students. Discipline must be carried out for proven cases [Rec. 31].
- Post schedules for maintenance activities in the dormitories [Rec. 33].