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1983 Correspondence between Hold and Graf re Autonomous CFW Newsletter - Networker

Commission for Women

Faculty Senate

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Dear Dr. Graf,

A few weeks ago you were quoted in the Daily Beacon that you favored the concept of a Chancellor's newsletter which would also serve as an umbrella, incorporating other campus publications.

I, too, favor a newsletter from the Chancellor and have advocated one for some time that could serve as a vehicle for explaining news and views from the Administration. But I am disturbed that, in recognizing the importance of such a communications tool for the Administration, the Chancellor fails to respect the value and the absolute necessity for other organizations likewise to use this basic communications tool, unfettered by even subtle interference.

It is especially significant, I believe, that the Commission for Women maintain an autonomous publication. This organization's very mandate from the Chancellor places its members at times in an advocacy role for women against conditions sanctioned, officially or through benign neglect, by the Administration.

If the Commission should be forced to publish through the Administration's publication, how could it possibly maintain credibility as a body devoted to helping women overcome administrative shortcomings in such areas as promotions, tenure, equal pay, child care, sexual harassment, health clinic problems, campus safety, appointments of women to high-ranking positions, and the scores of other issues the Commission has doggedly tackled over the years? If the Chancellor is sincere—and I believe he is—in wanting to hear constructive dialogue on the issues that concern women at UTK, he must be ready to stand by the Commission's original charge to "educate students, staff, and faculty about sex discrimination and bias." And the Commission must be able to do this in a credible fashion.

UTK can be proud of its Commission for Women and the Commission's quarterly newsletter, Networker. Research I am conducting shows that such women's organizations and their publications are functioning widely across the United States within hundreds of socially conscious institutions, sanctioned, supported and blessed by their male-dominated corporate or academic leadership. These institutions recognize that such networking among women is vital if women are to advance professionally. These networks and their publications are the vanguard of what some writers are calling "the wave of the future" for the feminist movement. Is UTK now going to retreat from this on-going process?

Dozens of studies have focused on the elements of effective written communications. They include color of paper, typeface and size, graphics, layout, frequency, ability to identify and reach a specially targeted audience with a specific message, ability to control the readership of one's publication so as to be thoroughly familiar with the reader's demographics
and psychographics. They all play an important role in reflecting the communicator and the effectiveness of the communication process. Clearly, a page in the Chancellor's newsletter denies the communicator autonomy over many of these elements.

It was Susan B. Anthony almost a century ago who said, "As long as newspapers and magazines are controlled by men, every woman upon them must write articles which are reflections of men's ideas. As long as that continues, women's ideas will never get before the public."

Surely we have learned something since those long-ago words. Surely UTK can afford, philosophically and financially, to support gracefully—and if it's not asking too much, enthusiastically—an autonomous women's publication.

Respectfully,

Nancy Hild
Graduate Student, Communications
Editor, CFW Networker

cc: Gail Clay, Chairperson
Commission for Women
December 12, 1983

Ms. Nancy Hild, Editor
Commission for Women Networker
332 University Center

Dear Ms. Hild:

I apologize for my delay in replying to your letter of November 23 concerning the prospective biweekly campus newspaper. A variety of obligations have filled the intervening weeks to prevent an earlier response.

I'm sorry you feel that the Commission's efforts to improve the lot of women on campus would be inhibited by participation in a general publication. Although the format and policies of the paper have not been announced, I have assumed that organizations which give up current publication outlets would be afforded space unfettered by editorial interference. I can't believe that the administration, which currently finances the Networker without asking you to curtail your freedom of expression, would change its attitude toward free speech in a general publication. And from your point of view, it seems to me, reaching a wider audience with "the scores of . . . issues the Commission has doggedly tackled over the years" would be a desirable goal. As it is now, you reach only the converted; with the forum of a campus-wide newspaper, you could reach the unaware, the insensitive, and the unconvincing.

Recognizing that the projected newspaper will entail a sizeable outlay of funds, I would hope that in due time all segments of the campus whose current publications are financed by the central administration would voluntarily join in "contributing" those funds which we have been getting, but which in fact belong to the entire academic community, to the common enterprise.

Thank you for the copy of the Networker which I enjoyed reading; and also thank you for reminding me that there is another perspective on this topic.

Sincerely yours,

LeRoy P. Graf, President
UTK Faculty Senate

cc: Gail Clay, Chairperson
Commission for Women

LPG/pja