The Avon Foundation for Women awarded East Tennessee State University with a one-year grant to participate in the first National Leadership Institute: Changing the Narrative on Campus Gender-Based Violence. Through the $10,000 grant from the Avon Foundation, ETSU will be among the 20 schools to participate in this comprehensive, action-oriented leadership program to develop and implement action plans to prevent and respond to sexual assault. Together, they will form a growing learning community to ending gender-based violence on school campuses.

“The Avon Foundation has funded campus-based campaigns and bystander intervention initiatives for more than five years to help change behaviors around sexual assault. We want to inspire and empower others to be a part of the solution,” said Christine Jaworsky, Avon Foundation Program Director. “We see the National Leadership Institute as an innovative opportunity for students and schools to take the lead in shifting the conversation around gender-based violence in the campus setting, but also in the broader dialogue around sexual and domestic violence in our society.”

The first institute was held in Boston from October 25 to 26 with 10 area colleges and universities, followed by a second cohort in Atlanta with 10 area schools from November 30 to December 1. Each school will send a multi-disciplinary team of five to six representatives, including administrators, security and service providers, Title IX personnel, and student leaders. ETSU’s leadership team includes Dr. Phyllis Thompson, Director of Women’s Studies, Dr. Michelle Byrd, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Mary Jordan, Title IX Coordinator and Director of Equity and Diversity, Kate Emmerich, Counselor and OASIS Director, Amanda Worley, ETSU Police Sergeant and State Director of Rape Aggression Defense Systems, and Troy Perdue, ETSU Legal Counsel. During the program, participants will learn and share best practices on how to respond, using a trauma-informed lens, when an assault occurs. At the end of the two-day institute, each school will have a sexual assault prevention and response action plan, which they will be supported to implement over the course of a year.

“We’re very proud to partner with the Avon Foundation for Women on this National Leadership Institute to train multi-disciplinary school teams to take the lead and work collaboratively to end gender-based violence on their campuses,” said Lonna Davis, program leader for Futures Without Violence. “There were over 70 schools who applied to be part of the program, so we know there is an immediate need and desire to find and implement solutions.”

Futures Without Violence received a grant from the Avon Foundation for Women to research, design and implement a curriculum in collaboration with Harvard Law School’s Gender Violence Program and the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education.

“We are proud that the Avon Foundation for Women has chosen to support our program. With these funds we will be able to implement a new initiative that will bolster the important ongoing efforts on sexual assault awareness, prevention, education, and response on campus,” said Dr. Phyllis Thompson.
In an election cycle unlike any other, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA) and the Multicultural Center teamed up to sponsor the Gender and Politics Forum.

The Oct. 12 event, moderated by FMLA President Emily Miles, addressed the “women’s vote across the aisle” on concerns related to government assistance, intimate partner violence, family policy, and pay equity.

These topics were chosen specifically because of their bipartisan aspects. More divisive issues, or “wedge issues,” as Women’s Studies Assistant Director and Lecturer Dr. Hilary Malatino explained, often represent “deliberate political strategies” to divide voters. Prominent examples of recent wedge issues include reproductive rights and marriage equality. Malatino stated, “Intense focus on wedge issues detracts from less partisan issues” like those addressed by the forum.

Student representatives Nathan Farnor, College Democrats, and Olivia Proffit, College Republicans, fielded questions from Miles and answered with information from their respective party platforms. Both spoke to the multifaceted nature of the problems facing women today.

On the topic of women and government assistance, Farnor expressed that those receiving help “aren’t the problem, the system is.” To counter this, he said, we “have to solve a lot of other problems first,” like systematic discrimination and the pay gap.

For Proffit, the solution comes with “breaking the stigma of the working woman” and promoting self-reliance, financial literacy, and job training. She explained, “a gender-dual labor market makes for the best economy.”

Miles next asked how each of the parties combatted intimate partner violence. According to Proffit, women should be encouraged to reevaluate personal relationships and report assaults. She lamented that the Republican Party does not sufficiently promote healthy relationships and adequate sexual education.

Farnor addressed the responsibility of men and the need to “move past normalized violence.” The Democratic Party, Farnor explained, pledged to focus on teaching prevention efforts beginning in high school, appropriately responding to survivors, and regulating the handling of incidents, particularly on college campuses.

On the topic of paid family leave, Farnor explained that Democrats advocate for a minimum of 12 weeks paid maternity and medical leave. Republicans, according to Proffit, support a 6-week paid maternity leave. She supports a paid leave for both parents to help “normalize men playing a bigger role in the family structure.”

For the final topic, the gender pay gap, Proffit explained, “Republicans acknowledge the pay gap and want to hold companies accountable for discrepancies,” but a lot of “back and forth” occurs within the party. Farnor said Democrats proposed the Paycheck Fairness Act to allow mistreated workers to sue their employers and end punishment of employees who disclose wage information.

Director of Women’s Studies Dr. Phyllis Thompson brought the event to a close with “a bow to sheros” like early suffragettes. Thompson said, “The vote is the legacy they gave us.” She asked, “What’s our legacy? Educating ourselves and passing it on to others... Go vote!”
Kara Russell: What is Sex Week?
Emily Miles: Sex Week is a comprehensive week of sex education for our campus and community. We will be covering a range of topics from LGBTQ+ specific sex education to a reproductive health seminar to a consent workshop. These events will help promote a safer and healthier environment on our campus. This will be our second time putting on Sex Week.

KR: Who is involved in Sex Week?
EM: Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA) will be the primary organizer for Sex Week, but we are reaching out to organizations on campus and in the community such as HEROES (Helping to Educate Regarding Orientation, Equality, and the Spectrum) and the Washington County Health Department.

KR: How is Sex Week funded?
EM: The first time we tried to put this event on, the school was concerned about negative repercussions. Since our event was a success, well attended, and we proved we could implement a productive educational event, the Student Government Association (SGA) decided to fund us. FMLA will be donating from our own account, and we will also try and partner with local businesses to raise more money. We received $4,700 from SGA and plan to raise at least $1,000 more. When we were awarded the BUC Funding, we were surprised but happy to receive the full amount we requested from BUC Funding.

KR: What are your hopes for future Sex Weeks?
EM: We hope that Sex Week becomes a regular program on our campus and that we can partner even more with the school in the future and keep making it bigger and better.

Sex Week will be held February 6-10, 2017.

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Merry Noel Miller, MD (Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences)

In her presentation “Finding Your Emotional Balance: A Guide for Women,” Dr. Merry Noel Miller discussed her book of the same name. Calling herself a “living example of how treatment works,” Miller’s book answers the “real need for something more in depth than women’s magazines” to help women maintain mental health and inform them of the unique issues they may face. Although women are twice as likely to suffer from depression and anxiety, women’s mental health issues are among the least studied in medicine. Miller, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Quillen College of Medicine, discusses the stages of life and how each period presents a different set of considerations for women. For any stage, Miller encouraged all “not to buy into the stigma” surrounding mental health and seek help when needed.

Opal Clark (Theatre)
The Process of Queer Directing in Hetronormative Theatrical Spaces

Opal Clark is a current theatre graduate student who directed the production of Diana Son’s “Stop Kiss.” Clark is one of only a handful of graduate students to whom the honor of directing a play has been extended. She was drawn to “Stop Kiss” because it reflected her own community on stage in an empowering instead of stereotypical manner. The play shares the story of a lesbian relationship in New York where protagonists Sara and Callie experience a hate crime during their first kiss. Clark made subtle changes to update the play from its 1990s origins but believes the story itself remains relevant. For Clark, the “show is about normalization of same-sex relationships” instead of queer politics: the play is “very simply about a love story.”

Judy G. McCook PhD, MSN, CNS, RN-BC (Nursing)
Someone you know has been sexually assaulted... How can you help?

Dr. Judy McCook, Associate Professor at the College of Nursing, shared guidelines for appropriate responses to survivors of sexual assault. McCook, joined by a panel of advocates and educators who serve the area, drew upon the “Start by Believing” initiative that combats cultural norms of invalidating survivors’ experiences and blaming victims. She advises listeners to be aware of how powerful their responses to survivors can be; a respectful response can greatly impact a survivor’s journey of healing. McCook also serves as a specially trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), one of only six in the region. ETSU’s health clinic will hopefully be able to provide SANE services beginning Spring 2017.

Women on Wednesdays

Getting Down to Business: Sex Week with Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance President Emily Miles

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#SEXWEEKETSU
Women’s Studies Steering Committee

Pictured from Left to Right:

**Pat Buck**, Instructor of Women’s Studies, and British and Worldwide Literatures

**Dr. Phyllis Thompson**, Director of Women’s Studies and Associate Professor of Literature

**Dr. Hilary Malatino**, Assistant Director and Lecturer of Women’s Studies

**Dr. Jamie Branam Kridler**, Professor of Human Services

**Dr. Rebekah Byrd**, Assistant Professor of Counseling and Human Services

**Dr. Dinah Mayo-Bobee**, Assistant Professor of History

**Heidi Marsh**, Executive Aide, Women’s Studies Program

**Harriet Masters**, Director of the Women’s Resource Center

Not Pictured:

**Dr. Jill LeRoy-Frazier**, Associate Professor of Liberal Studies, Assistant Dean for the School of Continuing Studies and Academic Outreach

**Rebecca Tolley**, Associate Professor of Library Administration

**Tracy Barry**, Director of Equity and Assessment

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