

**Commission for Blacks**  
**Wednesday, September 3, 2014**  
**12:00 pm – 1:00 pm**

**Minutes**

**Call to Order:**

Lilia Neville calls meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

**Attendees:**

(1) Lilia Neville, (2) Syed Kamal, (3) Marshall Steward, (4) Mary Lee Stewart, (5) Joanne Hall (6) Tara Davis, (7) Alecia Davis, (8) Susan Benner, (9) Robert Nobles, (10) Rashad Cullen (as guest), (11) Marcia Johnson, (12) Jennifer Dobbins (representing LGBT Commission), (13) Eric Stokes, (14) Tanisha Jenkins (as guest), (15) Yolanda Kirkpatrick, (16) Katrina Oliver (representing OED), (17) Dan Berryman, (18) Cynthia Manning, (19) Latasia Woods

Lilia Neville: Welcome everyone to the first meeting of the commission. We meet on the first Wednesday of every month at noon. Meeting location will be Black Cultural Center on all months except for December. We try to keep the meeting location consistent so everyone knows where to come for the meeting. We meet during the lunch time. So feel free to bring and eat lunch during the meeting.

We conduct the meetings following Robert's Rule of Order. The basics of the rule are: (1) if you want to bring something forward to discuss in the meeting, you have to make a motion, (2) To discuss and vote on the issue, another person must second the motion. If no one seconds the motions, then we do not proceed with the motion.

For each meeting, we prepare the minutes of the meeting and distribute it to the commission members. Please review the minutes for accuracy. You may want to check whether what you said was recorded in the minutes and whether your statements were recorded accurately. If you find any omissions or discrepancies, please let us know and we will make necessary corrections. In each meeting, we approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

All CFB Meetings are public. Anyone can attend the meetings. However, only the commission members can vote. If you want to vote on the issues that we discuss here, please consider joining the commission.

**Introduction:**

Lilia Neville: I took some time to describe the housekeeping rule for our monthly meetings. This is our first meeting of the academic year. Let's take some time to introduce ourselves to our fellow commission members.

I will initiate the introduction part. I work at the digital media section in Creative Services. I have been at UT since 2010. This my 4<sup>th</sup> year in commission for blacks. I found about the commission on an e-mail that I received. It prompted me to check out the website of the CFB. During my undergrad years, I was interested in Africana studies. However, I did not pursue any such interest during my Graduate studies, So when I came to UT and found out about CFB in that e-mail, it was kind of natural thing for me to join the commission. In CFB, everyone needs to be at least in one committee. Thus after joining the

commission, I was participated in the PR committee. Last year was my first year as the co-chair along with Karla McKanders. This year, VC Hall asked us to serve another academic year. We started our second year as the Co-chairs. However, just before the start of the semester, Karla found out that she could not continue serve in the commission due to some personal matters. I am the only chair at this point. We will discuss issues related to filling in this vacancy later in the meeting.

Tenisha Marchbanks, one of our new commission members cannot be here today. However she sent us her bio for the introduction discussion. I will read her e-mail to introduce her to the commission. Tenisha Marchbanks is a Leadership Academy Fellow/Assistant Principal in Farragut Middle School. She is also Ed. S student seeking Admin and Supervision Degree in Education. She completed her undergraduate in 2002 and graduate school in 2004 from UTK. Before joining the commission, she was involved with the UTK Alumni Committee in 2013. Due to the meeting time conflicts, Tenisha may not be able to join us in all CFB meetings. She will be able to come to CFB meeting in October.

When I conduct the meeting, I usually initiate the discussion. However, I should not be the only person talking all the time. We are an advisory group. So it is important that we all participate in the discussion and feel free to voice our opinion in the meeting. So let's start the participation process with a self-introduction.

*[All members introduce themselves]*

Marshall Steward: I work in athletics. Diversity is an important issue for us in Athletics and our goal is to get involved in as many campus organization as possible. So I discussed about joining CFB with my director and we thought this is an important organization to have a representative from the Athletics. In this process I became a member of the commission.

Eric Stokes: I am the Senior Assistant Director in undergraduate admission. I have been working at the university for the last 10 years. I was involved with the commission in the past and I am glad to be back.

Latasia Woods: I am designee for Dean Melissa Shivers. I graduated from UT and never left. I am interested in CFB to make sure our voices are heard.

Tara Davis: This is my 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the commission. I learned about the commission during a job interview that I did with VC Hall. Even though I was not hired for the job at that time, I still got involved with the commission. I was working for city of Knoxville at the time and represented Alumni Council at the CFB. I currently work for the university at the office for the provost. In my previous job with the city, I was working at the fair housing projects keeping eye on issues of discrimination. I am also a parent of a UT student. In fact, I am involved with the University on many levels. I am interested in the commission because I am want to give back to the community and the university.

Alecia Davis: I work at the Psychology department. I have been in the university for the last 7 years and this is my 3<sup>rd</sup> year with the commission. I got several degrees from the university and I love watching football.

Tanisha Jenkins: I am the Director of multicultural student life. This is my 5<sup>th</sup> year in the university and I served 3 years on the commission.

Susan Benner: I am Director of the Graduate School of Education and the Associate Dean for

Professional Licensure. I have been at the UT since 1980s. This is my 34<sup>th</sup> year at the university, but the first year in CFB. One of our major goals at graduate school of education is to bring diversity in the applicant pool. So I thought it is great opportunity to be involved with the commission.

Joanne Hall: I am a professor in Nursing and the faculty senate president. Whenever possible, I try to attend the meetings of the chancellor's 3 commissions. I am involved with the commission because I share the goal of improving campus climate for all.

Mary L. Stewart: I am from the office of the information technology and work with the Blackboard services. In CFB, I am representing the Exempt Staff Council. This is my first year as a member of the commission, but I attended CFB meetings in the past. I got the opportunity to come to CFB meeting as a guest speaker few years ago.

Dan Berryman: This is my 3<sup>rd</sup> year in UT. I have been an ex-officio member of the commission for all 3 years. I worked at different universities in different capacities before coming to UT. I was involved with the corporate world before starting career in education administration.

Cynthia Manning: This is my 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the university as a recruiter. I previously worked for the career center in Pellissippi State Community College. I got involved with the commission because I am interested in retention issues where the commission is playing a vital role.

Katrina Oliver: I have been working at the university for the last 4 months only. I am with the OED. Before coming to the UT, I was working at the US Department of Education. I am from Atlanta and travel back to Atlanta every week. I am interested in gymnastics and I got my kid involved in gymnastics as well.

Robert Nobles: I am the Assistant vice chancellor for research and engagement and also a faculty member in the college of education. Before coming to UT, I was at A&M College station. I began grade school in Japan (1st grade), but went to Florida A&M for my undergraduate degree in Molecular Biology and Master's Degree in Public Health, Epidemiology. My doctorate was completed at the University of Texas.

Marcia Johnson: I have been working at the university for the last 17 years. I am interested in CFB as I want to give back to the community.

Yolanda Kirkpatrick: I am with Vols Teach and this is my first year with the commission.

Rashad Cullen: I am just a meeting crasher! I was at the BCC and found about this meeting. So I thought about participating in this meeting. I expect a lot from my education and so I want to give back as well.

Jennifer Dobbins: I am GA for the LGBT Commission. I am a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student in college of law.

Syed Kamal: I am the graduate assistant for CFB and CDI. I am a doctoral student in Finance.

### **Committee Assignments**

Lilia Neville: In the past, we used to ask the members to sign-up for the committees in the meeting. I thought it will be convenient for all if I give a description on the responsibilities and goals of each

committee for the academic year. We will discuss this today and then Syed will arrange the signup process.

Faculty/Staff/Student Committee advises the commission on Faculty/Staff/Student concerns. The major goals of this committee for the academic year are (a) Student commissioner recruitment and retention and (b) Two Quest Scholar nominations.

We will have representatives on the commissions from the student groups. We are interested in listening from the undergraduate body. We want to identify why undergraduate involvement is a problem issue with the commission.

The other goal of the Faculty/Staff/Student Committee is to handle the quest scholar nomination process. Let me first describe what the Quest Scholar is. The Office of Research & Engagement presents the Scholar of the Week award to faculty members in recognition of significant research, scholarship, and creative accomplishments. The awarded faculty is highlighted on various UT websites. Karla and I came up with the idea that nominating pre-tenured African American faculty members for the quest scholar of the week can be an avenue to promote scholarly activities of the African-American faculty and also raise awareness of the academic endeavors of African American faculty on campus. When we looked up the previous nominations as the quest scholar, we found only 3 African-American faculty on the quest scholar list. So we decided to nominate at least two African-American faculty members per academic year. One of our nominated faculty has already been featured. We have one more in the pipe line. The nomination process requires meeting some eligibility criteria and submission of bio, write-up and photo. The responsibility of the committee will be to take up the nomination submission process. These are the major goals. The committee is also free to make up additional goals.

Community Outreach & PR Committee is involved with planning the events and attending the event on the day of the event. Major events for the academic year are the hour-long Trailblazer Series events and a half-day Retention workshop. We want the committee to be involved with the planning process and participate in the events. I cannot be present in one of the Trailblazer speaker series events. So I would like the chair of the committee to take lead on that date.

Awards Committee administer the nomination process for the CFB awards. We administer 3 awards: the Hardy Liston, Jr. Symbol of Hope Award for faculty/stuff/alumni, the Gene Mitchell Gray Pioneer Award for students and the African-American Hall of Fame awards. The Hall of Fame awards are jointly administered by CFB and Multicultural Student life. We expect the awards committee not only to assist the nomination process but also review the nomination criteria for the awards. Last time, Karla, Tanisha Jenkins and I worked on to clarify the Hall of Fame award criteria. But the committee needs to review the criteria for our other two awards. You can rely on Syed on help with administering the nomination process.

Bylaws Committee is responsible for reviewing the bylaws and propose amendments. Bylaws were updated last year mainly to make provisions for the commission to report to the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and restructuring or combining the committees were the major changes. The committee will need to review the bylaws and make sure the bylaws reflect growing needs of the Commission. At this point, I have the least amount of guidance on what the updates should be. It is totally on the committee to decide on the areas of the bylaws that needs update. For this reason, the committee members are usually seasoned personalities of the campus with experience on managing campus organizations.

We ask all members to participate in at least one committees. In addition to the standing committees, we also have an Executive committee. Executive committee is comprised of the CFB Chair (Co-Chair), Chair-elect, Immediate Past Chair, Chairpersons of standing committees, ex-officio members from the offices of Equity and Diversity and Human Resources, and the representative of the Black Alumni Council. The executive committee used to meet before each monthly meeting. However, with the regular monthly meetings and the standing committee's own functions, meeting of the executive committee before each monthly meeting resulted in too many meetings for the commission members. So we made the requirement of executive committee meeting an "as needed" type of meeting. So if you are a chair of committee, you don't have to worry about coming to an additional regular meeting for the executive committee. .

We will send e-mail to the commission members for committee signup and for nomination of the chair of the standing committees. We will vote in October for electing the chair of the committees.

### **Unfinished Business/Past Events**

#### *(a) Updates on Quest Scholar of the Week*

Lilia Neville: We have nominated Courtney Wring over the summer and she was featured as the Quest Scholar of the week. In addition to UT websites and social media, we have also highlighted her on CFB website. For highlighting our nominated quest scholars, we have created a new section on our website under the awards category. We have also completed the nomination process for Dr. Bertin Louis. However, we have held on to the submission until December to match timing with his book being published.

#### *(b) CFB Newsletter, published during the summer*

Lilia Neville: Our intention was to publish the newsletter in April. However, completing all articles and creating special feature on Marva Rudolph took some time and we finally published the Newsletter in May. In addition to publishing the newsletter on our website, we also printed full-color hard copies for distribution. I brought some black and white version here today for you.

There were several new items on this year's newsletter. We highlighted CFB awards winners on the newsletter and there was a write-up from the student member of the commission on his experience at UT. Syed created a beautiful design for the newsletter. I am constantly surprised by his graphic design ability being a doctoral student in Finance.

This year, we plan to feature our nominated Quest Scholars on our newsletter as well.

#### *(c) Updates on the Diversity in Athletics Issue*

Lilia Neville: Last year we received a memo from a faculty member questioning the lack of diversity in the cheerleading dance team and ball boys in Athletics. Upon receiving the memo, we started meeting with people in athletics to review this issue in question. We ended up getting in touch with head coach. Karla attended one of the cheerleading dance team try outs and worked as judge. Based on the outputs from the meetings and hands-on experience from the tryouts, we put together a response memo and intend to distribute to VC Hall, our contact in athletics, and the person who raised the issue.

The summary of the memo is that the recruitment process was fair. However, only a few student of colors attended the tryouts. So we recommended publicizing the tryouts to new students and local area high schools. For ball boys, we recommended publicizing the ball boys recruitment to African American staff and faculty. Faculty/ staff/student committee and PR committee will work together to help publicizing the tryouts information. Any question?

Rashad Cullen: Did you think about about doing a survey to see why students are not coming out to the tryouts?

Lilia Neville: This is a fantastic idea. We did not do a survey. Previously we did a survey on the retention issue. But we did not do any survey for finding reasons for low minority attendance in tryouts. The barrier on conducting the survey is reaching out to the target group. We have a listserv and our reach is limited to the faculty/staff/students who sign-up for the listserv. However, we can go through the VC Halls office to target specific population groups.

Rashad Cullen: Did you contact the high schools for try out?

Lilia Neville: We found out about the dates of the tryouts just 4 days prior to the tryout. With this limited amount of time on hand, we sent to e-mail to school team coaches for whom we found contact information on the Knox County School website.

Alecia Davis: For survey, BFSA has access to sending survey to reach bigger audience. We can discuss the issue.

Lilia Neville: If possible, we can incorporate our survey question into their survey.

Latasia Woods: One African American lady cheering this year.

#### *(d) Updates on Grants Awarded to CFB*

Lilia Neville: We recently applied for the Ready for the World Grant to support the Trailblazer series. Syed created the grant applications. We were awarded the grant.

#### *(e) Multicultural Welcome Reception*

Lilia Neville: CFB and Multicultural Student life jointly organized the reception. Our goal was to increase attendance at the event. This was a wonderful success! We had just around 90 attendees and the evening was full of meaningful contributions from our students, faculty, and staff.

### **Upcoming Events**

#### *(a) Collaborators for Change Summit*

Lilia Neville: Next week on September 12<sup>th</sup>, we have the Collaborators for Change Summit. The event will run from 8AM to 1PM. Breakfast and lunch will be served. Dr. Jason Laker from San Jose State University in California will be the keynote speaker and he will also moderate session. I am on the planning committee and will make a presentation at the summit. I encourage you all to attend. This summit is

targeted for the persons are involved with the diversity related initiatives on campus.

## **New Business**

### *(a) Co-Chair position*

Lilia Neville: Upon Karla's resignation, I met with VC Hall to decide the course of action on filling in the vacancy. VC Hall left it up to me to decide whether I want to carry on as the sole chair or take-on someone else on board.

From my experience, having another person as co-chair is very beneficial to leverage the work load and complement each other. So I am in favor of taking on someone else as the co-chair starting next semester. We will accept nominations through November and then vote in December. So the new co-chair will work with me starting from spring semester. This way, we can have cohesiveness in the functionality of the commission and knowledge transfer. We worked to attain some goals and it is important to maintain cohesiveness in our target. Having a Senior Chair and Chair-elect type provision will ensure a smooth transition. If you have any suggestion, please feel free to contact me by e-mail.

Meanwhile, I will carry-on as the sole chair till December. This will give you enough time to understand your responsibilities in the commission and find out whether you can take on the additional responsibilities of a co-chair. I have Syed as the graduate assistant to run the day-today functions of the commission. He is a very high functioning person and I think he is the most efficient GA we have ever had.

### *(b) Goals for the Year*

Lilia Neville: I have already talked about our goal to increase student participation in the commission. Our other major goal is to create a long-term strategic plan for commissions' work on the retention of African Americans in Knoxville. We did the first panel discussion in November 2013 and then followed up with a student-focused retention panel in February 2014. So we have done some work in this area. Our next step is the workshop in November. We will work in small groups to come up with realistic tactics. What we want to take away from the workshop is a formalized roadmap for retention.

### *(c) November Event on Retention of African Americans*

Lilia Neville: As we just discussed, we have the retention workshop in November.

Tanisha Jenkins: Do we have any date for the event?

Lilia Neville: we have two tentative dates November 1 or 8<sup>th</sup>. Location will be either here in BCC or Law school.

### *(d) Trailblazer Series*

Lilia Neville: Our other major program of the year is the Trailblazer series. CFB will organize these event

with the help of the Office of VC Diversity. The invited speakers will talk about how they achieved their trailblazing success and how they got to where they are now. Our speakers for the first year are: Theotis Robinson, Rita Geier, Mark Dean and Valisia LeKae. We are in the process of finalizing the details of our event. The event will be in interview format. The interviewer will also moderate the question and answer session.

*(e) Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony*

Lilia Neville: On October 11<sup>th</sup>, we will organize the induction ceremony of Dr. Marva Rudolph in the Hall of Fame. The event will be organized in association with the Multicultural Student Life.

**Announcements**

Lilia Neville: 2nd Annual Day of Dialogue will take place on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. This is a Campus-Wide Diversity Symposium. The registration for the event is now open.

Alecia Davis: Black Faculty and Staff Association will hold its first meeting tomorrow. We are working towards organizing a regional symposium.

Joanne Hall: We do not have much diversity in the Faculty Senate. We have opening for two at-large members in the executive council. We would like to utilize these slots to enhance diversity in the committee. The Executive council meets before the senate meeting. If you know of any tenure track faculty who might be interested joining the faculty senate's executive council, please ask them to get in touch with me. I would also like to emphasize that these positions are appointed positions. So you do not have to worry about running any kind of election.

Lilia Neville: We will distribute the faculty senate vacancy information to our listserv.

**Adjourn**

*Lilia Neville adjourns the meeting at 1:05 PM.*