

Commission for Blacks
Wednesday, October 1, 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) Rickey Hall, (5) Joanne Hall (6) Tara Davis, (7) Alecia Davis, (8) Susan Benner, (9) Robert Nobles, (10) Tyler Johnson, (11) Marcia Johnson Lane, (12) Joel Kramer, (13) Tenisha Marchbanks, (14) Ronald McFadden, (15) Yolanda Kirkpatrick, (16) Latasia Woods, (17) Dan Berryman, (18) Cynthia Manning, (19) Tenea Lowery (as Guest)

Approval of Minutes

Lilia Neville: We have sent the minutes of the last meeting for your review. Since then we have received an update request from one commissioner for correction to his biographic information. This update will not affect your approval decision of the minutes. If there is no further updates, we will need a motion to approve the minutes.

[Susan Benner makes a motion to approve the minutes of the September meeting and Joel Kramer seconds the motion]

Standing Committees Sign-up

Lilia Neville: I have brought copies of the committee rosters. We asked the members to the commission to sign-up for different committees using an online opt-in form. Except for the ex-officio member, all other members of the commission are expected to serve in at least one committee. So those who did not sign-up for any committee, we automatically assigned them to a committee. If you have been automatically slotted to a certain committee and you do not like this placement and prefer some other committee, please let us know.

I have listed the tasks that needs to be completed by each committee. Each committee will also have discretion to devise their own tasks. We have multiple people signed up for Community Outreach and PR Committee. We have multiple events on schedule. So we need help during the events and it is good that we have a larger group of people volunteering for this committee. We have several events lined up where we will need help from the members of the Outreach and PR Committee. I will not be able to attend the first Trailblazer series event as I will be out of town for attending a conference. For this event, we will need two greeters at two doors. We will also need one person to make the opening remarks and introduce the event coordinator Mr. Hallerin Hill. Dr. Carver, the Executive Assistant to the President, will introduce the Speaker Theotis Robinson. For all events, we will need three logistics coordinator to help the speaker, the moderator and the video production team. We will also need one person to make the closing remarks, announce the next event and present plaque to the guest speaker. It will be the responsibility of the committee to finalize all these details. Bylaws committee will need to work on proposing amendments for the Bylaws to restructure the membership composition. For example, certain campus organizations, such as SGA Diversity Committee and Graduate Student Senate, need to have a representation on the commission. Bylaws committee will work on ways to accommodate these organizations into the commission's membership. Similarly, I have listed the tasks for other committees.

Cynthia Manning: I see one person listed in the Faculty/Staff Students committee, but she is not employed with the University in those capacity.

Lilia Neville: Please let me know the details of the member and I will update her committee placement.

Unfinished Business/Past Events

(a) Collaborators for Change Summit, 9/12 at 8am

Lilia Neville: The Collaborators for Change Diversity Summit was a really successful event. The event was over capacity with participants. The registration quota was totally full. We also had significant number of walk-ins. There was some no-shows from some registered participants; otherwise we would have people standing during the sessions. Keynote speaker of the event was great as well. We will do debriefing on the event in coming week. Thanks for VC Hall for his support for this event. He may be able to add more about this event from his perspective.

Rickey Hall: First of all, I want to thank you all for your service on the commission. Your work is important to advance our diversity objectives and it certainly helps me with my mission. The works that the commission do is really important for me and we need it to reach our goal of becoming one of the Top 25 institutions.

As for the Summit, the Organizing Committee did a wonderful job. Thanks to Lilia to Chairing the committee. In fact, I did not have much to do, other than writing the checks. I have heard many positive comments about the keynote speaker. I will look forward to hearing from the organizing committee for their report on the feedback that they have received. One feedback that I have received is that there was not enough time allocated for discussion.

Susan Benner: I wanted to attend both session after the Keynote Speech. I wanted to hear more from the Keynote Speaker and thus stayed with his session. So I missed the session conducted by VC Hall.

(b) Diversity in Athletics issue

Lilia Neville: We have discussed this issue in our last meeting. Since then, I have completed the memo and distributed it to VC Hall, relevant people in athletics, and to the person who raised the issue. We will also distribute the memo to the commission. If you have seen this memo, do you have any comments on the memo?

Rickey Hall: Does everyone aware of the issue that we are talking about?

Lilia Neville: For those who were not present in our previous meeting, I will briefly describe the background of this issue. 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 this is what we are discussing at this point.

People in Athletics are busy this time of the year with various athletics events. So I wanted to distribute the memo to the people in Athletics to get their comment before distributing to others.

Rickey Hall: I think they were very receptive of the memo.

(c) Co-chair position

Lilia Neville: We received one nomination so far for the co-chair position. To collect more nominations for the Co-Chair position, Syed will create an online form. Self-nominations are also welcome. If you are nominated, I will contact you to check whether you would like to accept the nomination or would like to decline. If you accept the nomination, then we will ask you to send us your bio to include in the ballot. I was present in the CDI meeting when they conducted the Co-Chair election. I loved the way CDI included the pictures and bio of the candidate in the ballot. It makes the decision making process much easier. We will conduct our co-chair election in November.

Upcoming Events

(a) Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, October 11th

Lilia Neville: The hall of fame induction ceremony will take place on October 11 here at BCC. CFB and Multicultural Student Life will jointly organize this event. I wanted Director of Multicultural Student Life Tanisha Jenkins to talk about this event. But she could not be here today. The event will take place during the Homecoming weekend. Parking may be an issue. So please plan accordingly. Reception will start at 9:30AM and Induction ceremony at 10AM. Many events take place during the home coming weekend. The induction ceremony will be a shorter duration event. So it will allow you time to attend other homecoming festivities. Syed distributed to the flyer of the event to the listserv. If anyone needs the flyer, please let us know.

(b) Trailblazer Series: Theotis Robinson, October 22th

Lilia Neville: We are co-sponsoring the Trailblazer series with Office of VC Diversity. Local Media Personality Mr. Hallerlin Hill will moderate the event in a story-telling dialogue format. We are hoping for a good turnout. In particular, we want student participation in the event. So I would like the members of the Community Outreach and PR committee to give us suggestion on how to get students involved in this event. We are currently finalizing the website for the series. It will go live up tomorrow. Once the website is up, we will send an e-blast to announce the website.

(c) Retention of African Americans Initiative Workshop Registration

Lilia Neville: This is our main event for the year. We discussed it previous meeting. Let's recap for those who were not present in previous meeting. Last semester Karla and I took initiative to start a dialogue on the issue of retention of African Americans in Knoxville. In November 2013, we organized a panel discussion entitled "Engaging Your Community: Retention of African Americans in Knoxville". During this panel, Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero, Knoxville Area Urban League President Phyllis Nichols, UT Vice Chancellor for Diversity Rickey Hall, and Community Development Leader Buzz Goss discussed laid the groundwork in identifying barriers to the retention of diverse young professionals. However, people who attended the panel provided feedback that they wanted a longer event so that all attendants get the opportunity to voice their opinion. There was a lot of interest on this topic. To add to our efforts to retain talented students in Knoxville post-graduation, in February 2014, the Commission along with the UT student chapter of the NAACP jointly organized a panel discussion entitled "Retention of African Americans in Knoxville: Focusing on Undergraduate and Graduate Students at UT." The event that we are organizing in November will focus on finding realistic solution. We have a planning committee for formulating details of the event. We recognized that breaking people into smaller groups and keep the groups focused on the discussion topics is difficult. So we contacted Leadership Knoxville, who have expertise in moderating small group discussion.

Based on the discussion in the previous events and feedback that we received from the participants, I have listed the barriers to the retention of African American professionals in Knoxville. We have meet with the representatives from the Leadership Knoxville last week. They recommend identifying 3 topics for small group sessions. During the online registration, people will be presented with a list of retention related topics and will be asked to select 3 topics that they are most interested in. Based on this input, the planning committee will select the topics for the small group working sessions. This will ensure that we discuss the issues that are important to the participants. Leadership Knoxville also proposed that we include short description on each issue on the registration. In the handouts, I have included the topics draft descriptions. If you have anything to contribute to add to the blurbs, please let us know. I understand sometimes it is difficult to provide feedback instantly. If you come up with something that you would like to add, please send us your proposed blurbs via e-mail.

Joanne Hall: Do you have a count on how many people comments on each of the quotes?

Lilia Neville: I have reviewed the discussion and took notes on the quotes. However, I do not have any count.

Tenea Lowery: What do you want us to provide as content?

Lilia Neville: For example, we have listed Climate of the City as a topic. If want to bring a new perspective on describing the city climate, then we would like to hear about it. The topics that we listed here all came from quotes from the participants in last year's panel discussion.

Ronald McFadden: Do you have any date established from the event?

Lilia Neville: Yes, the event date is November 8th. The registration for the event is now open at www.tiny.utk.edu/retention. We expect about 100 registration. We have sent an e-blast last week and we immediately received almost 30 registrations. There is always from no shows among the registered persons. So we expect to have around 84 people. We will divide them into 12 groups with 7 persons in each group.

Dan Berryman: So you are planning to accommodate 100 people in this room?

Lilia Neville: This room has capacity for 84 persons. We will setup 12 tables in the room for discussion. We will also have a podium for reporting. Breakfast and Lunch will be served in the lobby.

Dan Berryman: Even though you can accommodate 84 people here, but if you plan to have any kinds of simultaneous discussions, it will be really loud. I think it will be difficult for people to discuss in such a loud environment.

Tenea Lowery: The catholic Center across the street have much bigger meeting room. Also, the nearby Fred Brown Hall has in 3 multipurpose rooms.

Joel Kramer: Two of the rooms there have computer access.

Tenea Lowery: Can you add a new topic for resources?

Lila Neville: Lack of resources?

Tenea Lowery: Not really lack of resources; I was thinking about preparing a list of resources for African American Community. When I first got here, I found it difficult to connect with different organizations or find events. A list of resources will be really helpful for people who come Knoxville.

Tara Davis: We are talking to about Retention. Our focus is not on recruiting. List of resources is more for newly recruited peoples. But we want to focus on existing people...find ways to keep them in Knoxville and find solutions to make them fit in with the community.

Tenea Lowery: Resources are relevant for retention too. If we can help them find existing resources, then it will help to keep them in the city.

Robert Nobles: Yes, it is important to help people find the available resources. If you do not feel connected, then you are more prone to leaving.

Tenea Lowery: When I got here, I took the initiative to find the available resources and made connections. However, not all people are active seekers like me. So having a list of resources will help with retention.

Lilia Neville: Last semester, Karla, VC Hall and I attended a diversity conference in Nashville. They provided us with a booklet of 100 plus pages that listed all African American related resources. I think Multicultural Student Life also have a similar list of resources.

Alecia Davis: But this list is not updated.

Rickey Hall: Doug Banister's article in Knox News focused on this topic.

Lilia Neville: I will distribute the articles to the Commission. Doug Banister's first article was about identifying the issue that Knoxville is losing its professional African American population. His follow up article focused finding reasons for this phenomenon. This follow-up article also covers news about our workshop and comment from VC Hall.

Robert Nobles: What is meant by the topic-mentorship?

Tara Davis: People don't want to relinquish positions until they can't do it themselves anymore. There is no mentoring in city to progress upward to take up the role when positions finally become available. To be in the city's minority related council and commissions, you need to reside in the city's black majority areas otherwise you will not be supported. There is no organized way out for advancements.

Joanne Hall: I think the mentorship is about issues related to glass-ceiling for advancement

Rickey Hall: It also related to succession planning.

Lilia Neville: This is a good example that one person did not understand what is meant by the term mentorship. We need to identify the terms that is not readily understandable. We can then elaborate on the topics to explain it in the topics description.

Ronald McFadden: On this topic, you also need to incorporate the fact that there exists a severe imbalance. Leaders should not give up on grooming the successors. I recently wrote an email to the Mayor about the Walmart on Campus. I asked them to do it on the east side. We need more resources in the east side of the city. We have a brain drain on east side. There are regional imbalance within the city. City officials knows that the imbalance exists. However, the picture of imbalance is most graphic on the east side.

Lilia Neville: This type of clear realistic examples are the ones that we want to present to people at the workshop. If you have any further comments, please e-mail me. We will meet the Leadership Knoxville representatives next week and provide them with our finalized topic list and topic descriptions for review. We will then add these topics to our registration form for people to choose from. Those who already registered, we will send them a supplement form for topics selection.

New Business

(a) Black History Month Calendar

Lilia Neville: Each year we allocate about \$500 for co-sponsoring Black history month events. We do not have a big budget. So we try to do our best within our limited financial means. I contacted BCPC to create a calendar for all events that are happening during the Black history month. Many events are planned for this occasion. McClung Museum will show civil rights movies and provide space for Black history month related events. We can create a calendar together and distribute it.

Tenea Lowery: Will you be able to include National Pan-Hellenic Council events on the calendar?

Lilia Neville: I am interested in including all related events.

(b) Status of African Americans at UT report

Lilia Neville: VC Hall recently hosted a Chair's Retreat for the chairs of the councils and commissions. We talked about it. We want to know about status of our respective population groups. BSFA will conduct a survey. They will also allow us to include some question from the commission. The questions from the commission will be related to the campus climate for African Americans. Whoever comes on board as Co-chair, I would like him or her to take lead on this issue.

(c) Announcements

Lilia Neville: Please share if anyone have any announcements.

Alecia Davis: First meeting in BFSFA will be in October 9th. We meet at UC Room 220 during lunch time. Feel free to bring friends and bring lunch. If you want to be included in our e-mail distribution list, let me know.

Joanne Hall: In the last meeting of the council, I talked about a vacancy of an at-large member for the executive council of Faculty Senate. A lot of people expressed their interest about this and I want to thank everyone for expressing their interest.

Ronald McFadden: Education Advancement Program will organize the 35th anniversary of TRIO Legislation. I will send announcements and invitations to members of the commission. There will be a luncheon. All details will be included in the invitation.

Tara Davis: Knoxville area Local Black Alumni Council will host a dinner tonight...to discuss how we can contribute more. We will also meet with the students who met with the university administration about the UT Lead Summer Institute.

Lilia Neville: Can you describe what it is about?

Tara Davis: UT Lead summer institute was cut from university programs due to budgetary issues. UT Lead summer institute offers summer programs where student participate during summer to be successful during the school year. When announcement made about cutting this program, we received concerns from alumni all over the country who benefitted from this program in the past. While we were formulating a plan of action for this, a group of students met with the university administration on this issue. We will sit together with this group of students tonight and they will share their experience about the meeting with the administration.

Robert Nobles: How much was cost of running this program?

Rickey Hall: The cost of the program was about \$285,000 for each summer.

Ronald McFadden: The program started around 1983 and it continued till 1989. Then it was stopped. Then it was reintroduced. Enrollment increased for the first few years and then it came down to about 40 last year. So the administration decided not to continue this program.

Robert Nobles: Do the Students pay any tuition for this?

Rickey Hall: No, they do not pay tuition and they also get stipend for taking two courses.

Joel Kramer: The program offered housing for students as well.

Tenea Lowery: National Pan-Hellenic Council will organize a chartering ceremony on October 25th.

Rickey Hall: We will have the Day of Dialogue events on October 3rd

Dan Berryman: College of Law will be hosting forums with all of the 5 finalists for the Dean position. College of Law sent out the e-mails announcement yesterday. I checked out the profile of the 5 candidates online and found that there is one African American candidate among them. These forums are open to public.

Lilia Neville: The e-mail was sent to all faculty, student and staffs

Dan Berryman: I want to emphasize that I am no disclosing any private information. I found all information with google search.

Committee Meeting

Lilia Neville: I have to leave at 1PM for an appointment. We distributed the list of people who are assigned to different committees. I have also sent e-mail to the persons who are elected Chairs by the commission members on online vote and asked whether they are OK with their appointment. Please feel free to stay around and meet with each other.

Adjourn

[Lilia Neville adjourns the meeting at 1:00PM]