

Commission for Blacks
Wednesday, November 5, 2014
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Minutes

Call to Order

[Lilia Neville Calls meeting to order at 12:02 PM]

Attendees:

(1) Lilia Neville, (2) Syed Kamal, (3) Marshall Steward, (4) Amber Roessner (as Guest), (5) Joanne Hall (6) Tara Davis, (7) Alecia Davis, (8) Susan Benner, (9) Mary Lee Stewart, (10) Jennifer Dobbins (representing LGBT & CFW), (11) Marcia Johnson Lane, (12) Crystal Hardeman (as Guest), (13) Eric Stokes, (14) Margaret Davis, (15) Yolanda Kirkpatrick, (16) Latasia Woods, (17) Cynthia Manning, (18) Tenea Lowery (as Guest), (19) Robert Nobles

Ida B. & Beyond Initiative Funding

Lilia Neville: Dr. Lori Amber Roessner from School of Journalism and Electronic Media submitted a funding request for their Ida B. & Beyond event. Since we have limited funding available from CFB, we invited Dr. Roessner to describe the event to the members of the commission. We will later discuss the feasibility to granting the fund for the event.

Amber Roessner: Since the commission has other business on the agenda, I will keep my presentation short. The Ida B. Wells-Barnett Initiative is an interdisciplinary project to foster research about the life, work, and legacy of Ida B. Wells-Barnett and other like-minded global social justice crusaders by scholars and students of communication and history. We have requested fund from the Commission for the Ida B. & Beyond conference. This is a one-day conference focusing on the life, work, and legacy of Ida B. Wells-Barnett will be held at the University of Tennessee in March 2015. This will help our UT student population to draw connections among past national social movements and to articulate how they helped shape modern global initiatives in order to combat inequities and to foster social justice. The \$500 fund that we have requested will be used for event promotion activities and for meeting expenses for bringing in the keynote speaker.

Lilia Neville: Is it considered as a long term project for CCI?

Amber Roessner: We will try to do the conference once in 5 years. Also, we will publish an edited volume of scholarship related to Ida B. Wells-Barnett. We also want to invest to involve the students by including the issue on the curriculum. There are documentary available on Ida. We also want to produce a video focusing Ida B. Wells-Barnett's life and legacy in social justice.

Lilia Neville: Will there be any student presentation at the conference?

Amber Roessner: Yes. We have several high schools involved with the initiative and they are inviting their students to the conference.

Susan Benner: Have you marketed to the event to the Deans?

Amber Roessner: We got funding from History department. We will approach College of Law. However, we did not approach the Deans.

Susan Benner: Dean of School of Education may commit. Other may be interested too. So you may put together a pitch for the Deans.

Lilia Neville: For the Diversity summit, we requested funding from the Deans and we received generous support.

Amber Roessener: Thanks for the suggestion. We will surely think about approaching the Deans. Thank you for having me.

[*Dr. Amber Roessener leaves the meeting after her presentation for the Commission to deliberate on the funding request.*]

Updates from Committees

Faculty/Staff/Student committee:

Cynthia Manning: Our committee met yesterday and discussed about Quest scholar nomination and increasing student involvement. We needed some information on quest scholar nomination process. We received the requested information from Lilia later yesterday. As I understand, we already have one quest scholar nomination in process. Is it right?

Lilia Neville: Yes, we already have one in the process. But it would be great to have one nomination per semester.

Bylaws committee:
No update

Awards Committee
No update

Outreach/PR committee:

Tara Davis: At the last CFB meeting, I told the committee members that I will set a date for the committee meeting. I am sorry that I did not set a date. I will do it soon and have a committee meeting. We have the Retention workshop coming this Saturday and we need support from the committee members for logistics of the workshop.

The second event of the Trailblazer series scheduled for this Friday. Please disseminate the Trailblazer series event information to your networks.

Lilia Neville: I was out of town for a conference and so was not able to attend the first Trailblazer series event. However, all the feedback that I received is very positive. I heard back from VC Hall and he was really impressed about the conversation. Overall, it was a successful event.

Robert Nobles: But we badly need more attendance.

Lilia Neville: I have discussed with our student Commissioner Kaylyn Harris and she proposed some ideas to enhance student attendance in the Trailblazer series events.

For the committee meetings, we do not expect to have update every month. We have the whole year. So you can plan out the activities for the year and meet accordingly.

Unfinished Business/Past Events

(a) Trailblazer Series

Lilia Neville: The first event of the Trailblazer Series took place on October 22nd. Theotis Robinson was the guest speaker. The discussion was very engaging and I have heard great feedback about the event. However, turnout was fairly low. We need more participation from our commissioners at our events.

(b) Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Lilia Neville: Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony took place October 11th. The Rudolph family members were so pleased and honored with our arrangements. The music at the event was amazing. Syed took great photo at the event.

Upcoming Events

(a) Trailblazer Series

Lilia Neville: The second even of the Trailblazer Series with Rita Geier will take place on November 7th. The event will start at 12:30PM at the Hodges Library auditorium.

(b) Retention of African Americans Initiative Workshop

Lilia Neville: Saturday, November 8th, we have the Retention of African Americans Initiative Workshop. The event will start at 8AM with breakfast and registration. I have made name tags for the commissioners. Other participants will write in their names. After the breakfast and registration, Tara Davis will provide the introductory speech, Kaylin Harris will give a brief history on our retention events and then Leadership Knoxville facilitators will take charge to run the small group discussions. There are will be 10 minutes breaks in-between the sessions. Lunch will be served by Austin East Culinary Arts School. After lunch we will start the report back session where one representative from each small group from each session will report on their discussion. All the ideas generated at the event will be digitized. Syed will play a major role in this process. We will provide the finalized output to VC Hall and will also be published on our website.

We have large number of registrations from the city and campus community members. We have about 20 slots left. So if you have not registered yet, please do so as soon as possible.

I have some previous commitment and will be out of town this Saturday. I will attend the Friday Trailblazer Series event, but I will not be able to participate on Saturday. Tara Davis will be in charge in my absence.

Tara Davis: We will need volunteers for the logistical support during the event. I expect active participation from the commissioners in this event. If you have not registered yet, please do so.

New Business

(a) Black History Month Calendar

Lilia Neville: Crystal Hardeman and I are working on to prepare an events calendar for the Black History Month events. The calendar will document all the events that are scheduled for the Black history month. We want to collect entries by December 4th. I think this is a good way to build partnership with other organizations and spread words about CFB.

Crystal Hardeman: Please contact us if your unit have any event for the Black History month and we will include it in the calendar. The calendar will be published on MLK Birthday.

Robert Nobles: How are you soliciting people for feedback about their events?

Lilia Neville: We asked VC Hall to disseminate the information about the calendar through his network.

Robert Nobles: Any plan to incorporate city-wide events?

Crystal Hardeman: Yes, involving city events will be a great addition too.

Latasia Woods: Will you be doing a hardcopy calendar that we can display on walls and noticeboards?

Crystal Hardeman: We will make the calendar printable so that you can display it in your notice boards.

(b) SGA Proposal for gender neutral, family-style bathroom

Lilia Neville: Last night SGA passed a bill for gender neutral, family style bathroom on campus. They asked for endorsement from CFB on their bill. Last semester we expressed support for a similar proposal on this issue from LGBT Commission. We have included the proposal in the meeting reminder. We would like to hear your opinion on this issue.

Jennifer Dobbins: I am the graduate assistant for the LGBT Commission. I would like to point out that there is a major difference between the proposal from LGT Commission and the bill that was passed in SGA. Our proposal asked for gender neutral family style restrooms in future new constructions. But the SGA bill proposed for gender neutral family style restrooms in all existing and new UT buildings.

Lilia Neville: Thanks for pointing this out. During the LGBT Commission proposal discussion, we discussed this issue about whether it will be feasible to arrange gender neutral restrooms in all buildings and in general our opinion was that it is too expensive to renovate existing buildings to accommodate gender neutral restrooms in existing buildings. So the provision passed in the SGA bill for gender neutral restrooms in all buildings is a major issue to consider.

Robert Nobles: If SGA's proposal asked for gender neutral restrooms in all buildings, did they consider about the funding for such an initiative? Where the money will come from to make such changes?

Jennifer Dobbins: I think the SGA's bill does not include any outline for the funding. The LGBT commission's proposal also did not include any outline for funding method either.

Alecia Davis: If the proposal asks for renovating all buildings, I don't see any possibility of this happening.

Robert Nobles: Considering the fact that we are still working on make fire safety provisions in many existing buildings, this new proposal for gender neutral restrooms is indeed a big proposition. I do not see this proposal going through without any outline for funding provision.

Jennifer Dobbins: I would like to assure you that I have expressed my concerns about this to SGA.

Susan Benner: Persons with Disability Act also makes provisions for accommodating the rule's requirement in newly constructed buildings.

Tara Davis: I have seen a lots of restrooms in many existing buildings. Some of them can be reassigned as Gender neutral restrooms. It does not mean that others cannot use those reassigned restrooms. It means that people with need for gender neutral restroom will have provisions to utilize those restrooms. So if we consider the fact that accommodating gender neutral restrooms just needs reassigning some of the existing restrooms, then retro-fitting existing buildings does not seem such a bad provision.

Lilia Neville: So how should we express our concern to SGA? Can someone make a motion?

Eric Stokes: I would like to make a motions that we do not approve the request for endorsing the SGA proposal.

Robert Nobles: If I am allowed to add to the motions, then I would like to add that we think this proposal has certainly have some justification. However, without specific outline for funding provision, requiring all existing buildings to have gender neutral restroom is not a feasible proposition. However, requiring new constructions to have gender neutral restrooms is certainly a supportable idea.

Lilia Neville: So we will modify the motion to include Robert's additions. Can we get a second to this motion?

[Susan Benner seconds the motion and the commission votes in favor]

(c) Co-chair voting

Lilia Neville: We received several nomination for the co-chair position. Thanks for all who submitted nominations. Some of the nominated persons sent their regrets for not being able to accept the nominations. Fortunately, we still have two persons who accepted their nomination. So we have prepared paper ballots for voting. I would like to remind you that only the voting members of the commission can vote. If you are a volunteer members, then you are a voting member of the commission. Among the ex-officio members, only the designee for dean of students, designee for vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion, president of faculty senate, President of Black Alumni Council, and the Chair of Council on Diversity and Interculturalism are voting members. So if you are a voting member, please take a ballot.

One of our nominees is Dr. Susan Benner, the associate Dean of Professional Licensure and Director of Graduate School of Education at the College of Education, Health, & Human Sciences. Our other nominee is Dr. Robert Nobles, the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research at the Office of Research and Engagement. We have included the bio of the nominees on the ballot. We will give the opportunity to our nominees if they have anything to share before we vote.

Robert Nobles: I would like to point out that I am new to Knoxville and UT campus. So not aware of all the issues that the Commission deals with. Last semester I got in touch with Karla and Lilia and decided to join the council. But the truth is I am not knowledgeable enough to lead the council at this point and will need lots of help to work as co-chair. I still accepted the nomination because I did not want all the nominees to reject their nomination.

Susan Benner: I am not new to the UT Campus, but I am new to the commission and similarly not knowledgeable enough to play role at the co-chair position. I have other obligations and often cannot attend all events of the commission. For example, I will have to fly out to Florida this Friday. So I have some limitations for you to consider. But I felt obligated to accept the nomination to honor whoever nominated me. I am comfortable being on the ballot with Dr. Nobles and if he is elected, he will have my full cooperation.

Lilia Neville: Thank you both for accepting the nominations. You all voting members should have a ballot. Once you finish voting, please fold the ballot in half and hand it over to Syed.

[Voting members of the commission takes part in the balloting process]

(d) Decision on *Ida B. & Beyond Funding Request*

Lilia Neville: We heard from Dr. Roessner today about the funding request for the *Ida B. and Beyond* project. They asked for \$500 funding from the Commission. Now we have to decide whether to approve the request and

for how much. If we approve, we can approve it for \$250 or for \$500. We have limited funding and we have to arrange outside funding for our own events. Syed and I have applied for a grant from the Office of Research and Engagement. If we receive the grant, we can approve the funding request for \$500. If not, we may have to limit what we can give to others.

Tara Davis: The event is not until March 2015. Can we postpone the decision until December? This will give us time to hear back from the grant proposal that you have submitted.

Lilia Neville: Yes, we can postpone the decision till our December meeting. Can we make a motion for it?

[Tara Davis makes a motion to postpone the decision on Ida B. event funding request until December and Eric Stokes seconds the motion.]

(e) Ferguson Report Back

Lilia Neville: Vice Chancellor Hall's administrative assistant Sarah Gonzalez is taking a history class. Her professor and other professors at the history department are organizing a report back on the Ferguson event. A group of students at UT and other members of the community took a trip to Ferguson and they did a report back on their observations. This event will be similar to that, but it will also include a dialogue moderated by Josh Inwood. So the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Diversity is hosting an open forum on Ferguson: Report Back on November 19, from 6:30-8 in AMB 27, in which students will share a report from a recent trip to Ferguson, Missouri. The second half the event will focus on dialogue as to local Knoxville and East Tennessee race relations.

We have already sent the flyer to our listserv. We will put it on the commission's website as well.

Announcements

Alecia Davis: BFSA will meet on November 13th. We meet at UC Room 220 during lunch time. Feel free to bring friends and bring lunch.

Jennifer Dobbins: LGBT Commission will organize OUTstanding: LGBTQ+ Mind, Body, and Soul on November 8th.

Alecia Davis: BFSA will organize Diversity and Inclusion Matters conference in March 2015. We are inviting proposals for the conference.

[Participants make announcements on upcoming events]

Adjourn

[Lilia Neville adjourns the meeting at 1:08PM]