

Commission for Blacks
Wednesday, February 4, 2015
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Minutes

Call Meeting to Order

[Lilia Neville calls the meeting to order at 12:05]

Attendees

(1) Lilia Neville, (2) Robert Nobles, (3) Syed Kamal, (4) Cynthia Manning, (5) Aaliyah Johnson , (6) Tenea Lowery, (7) Ronald McFadden, (8) Tanisha Jenkins, (9) Marcia Johnson Lane, (10) Yolanda Kirkpatrick, (11) Susan Benner, (12) Jennifer Dobbins, (13) Alecia Davis, (14) Tara Davis, (15) Abigail Brumfield (16) Mary Lucal, (17) Joanne Hall, (18) Marshall Steward

Approval of Minutes

[Ronald McFadden makes a motion to approve the minutes of December-2014 meeting. Alecia Davis seconds the motion. The commission unanimously approves the minutes.]

Update from Committees

a. Bylaws committee

Robert Nobles: We reviewed all edits and comments from last meeting. We had a discussion with VC Hall about the co-chair position. We will discuss the inputs in bylaws committee meeting and present update to the commission. Major revisions that we are considering is that there will be a 2-year term for co-chair position and every year we will elect an incoming co-chair. So we will have one co-chair with a year of experience and a fresh co-chair. We will hash it out with the committee and then present to the commission in the next meeting.

Lilia Neville: My two-year term will end in May. So we may want to start accepting nomination for co-chair in March and vote in April. So you may start thinking about whether you would like to self-nominate yourself or someone else for this leadership position. If you have any questions about the time commitment required and the level of involvement with the VC Diversity and other council and commissions, please let me know and I would love to share my experiences with you to help you decide whether to consider taking on this leadership role.

Robert Nobles: I would like to add that Lilia has accepted the position as the communications directors in the Office of VC Diversity. We congratulate her for her new role.

Lilia Neville: I believe that serving in the commission for the last two years has certainly enriched me in my professional career as well.

b. Outreach/PR Committee:

Lilia Neville: We have Trailblazer series event coming on February 26th. In the past, chair of the PR committee gave the introductory remarks in the Trailblazer series events. If any member of the committee is interested in taking the responsibility of making the introductory remarks, we will be happy to provide you the opportunity to do so. The way it works is that one person from the commission introduce the series and introduce the event moderator using a script. We usually offer the sponsoring departments the opportunity to introduce the speaker. So if any member of the PR committee is interested in making the introductory remarks, please let me know. I will set you up for the remarks and provide you the scripts.

c. Faculty/Staff/Student committee

Cynthia Manning: We had a meeting with VC Hall about the survey on the status of blacks on campus. We discussed with VC Hall to understand what the expectations are for the survey. We will gather information about the past surveys and review those to identify ways to best structure the survey instrument. We are also working on the Quest Scholar nomination process and Susan Benner will provide update on that.

Susan Benner: We received a nomination for a white faculty member whose research focuses on tourism of slave plantations. We discussed whether the commission would be nominating a white person because his/her research focuses on issues related to blacks or whether the commission would be nominating an African-American person highlight the achievement of a person of color. The consensus in the committee was that we will solicit nomination for a faculty member of color. Because we thought the purpose of this nomination from Commission for Blacks is to highlight the works of person of color.

Lilia Neville: Robert and I met with the VC Hall and informed him about this nomination issue. He absolutely supports nominating Dr. Alderman because his research benefits black community. Being that said, we also want to highlight black faculty as well. We nominated Dr. Louis, but Office of Research informed us that he is in advanced stage for a Fulbright scholarship application process. We will wait for the Fulbright scholarship decision so that it can be highlighted in the Quest scholar section at the same time. Meantime, we will seek nominations for other faculty members as well. We have monthly meeting with the provost and we may ask for suggestions for the nominations. Also if any member of the commission has any suggestion, please send the suggestion to CFB's official e-mail. There are some guidelines for nominations that are available in our website. One restrictions is that only faculty members can submit nominations. So I cannot submit it. Dr. Benner is taking the responsibility of submitting the nominations on behalf of the commission.

Robert Nobles: Any comment about nominating a white person who promotes a black issue? I have no reservation about this. But I am curious what others think. Also we do not have to be limited in number of nominations for the quest scholar of the week.

Lilia Neville: We set a target of 2 nominations per academic year. Since it was a new initiative for us, we started with 2 nominations. But we do not have to be limited by 2.

Ronald McFadden: Who should receive the nominations once it is sent to the commission?

Lilia Neville: I think it should go to the Faculty/Staff/Student committee. Once we receive the nomination, we will forward this to this sub-committee.

Marshall Steward: I share Robert's opinion. If a person is championing the cause, we can nominate that person regardless of his/her race.

Susan Benner: How about we nominate Dr. Alderman and then also nominate other person of color? Since timing is an issue with the nominations, we can send Dr. Alderman nominations now and then send nomination of a person of color when we have it.

Lilia Neville: Dr. Alderman has been a prolific researcher in the geography department. His research focuses on naming of MLK streets and their location. He also recently received cross-institution grant to study plantation tourism sites, how we remember slavery and that impact on American culture. Since Quest scholar nomination highlights recent achievement, Dr. Alderman's recent award satisfies the timing issue as well.

Tenea Lowery: How about we do one in each race category: one black and other from other races who champions black causes. This way it will document the commission's fairness in its nomination decisions.

Robert Nobles: There is no limitation on the number. So we can submit as many as we like to submit. However, I don't think the nominator's name is made public. So the commission's name will not be declared in the quest scholar announcements.

Susan Benner: When we send the nominations, we write that we are nominating this person on behalf of the Commission for Blacks. However, the nominator's name is not included in the Quest scholar features.

We also talked about student participation in the commission in our committee meeting. Yolanda Kirkpatrick will provide update on this issue.

Yolanda Kirkpatrick: We discussed about different ways to enhance student participation. We thought about advertising the name of the commission to a larger student body. May be black students participates in certain organizations or take certain classes. We thought about targeting those specific areas to get the words out about the commission. These are the certain ideas we discussed in the sub-committee.

Lilia Neville: Can PR committee team up with this effort?

Tara Davis: Sure.

Lilia Neville: Also I want to point out that our SGA representative is present here today. So if you want to get her opinion on this issue, this will be a good opportunity to do so.

Tanisha Jenkins: You talked about targeting different student groups. Is that right?

Yolanda Kirkpatrick: Not just some student groups. We talked about looking at student life in general. We plan to get the words about the commission and its mission among the student groups. It can be any number of student groups.

Tanisha Jenkins: If we want to involve certain student organizations, we can ask them to join the commission. If we have their representation on the commission, we can have more buy-in and we can then get back to them if students are not showing up in commission events.

Susan Benner: We discussed amending the bylaws about student participation in the commission. I am not sure where we stand on this amendment at this point.

Robert Nobles: We talked about having a forum named Friends of CFB to engage organizations. We will include some core organizations in the commission and then incorporate other groups as Friends of CFB forum. We cannot provide representation to all student groups as we have a 15-member limit on the commission. We will discuss specifics about this in bylaws committee and provide update to the commission.

Yolanda Kirkpatrick: Will it the Friends of CFB be different from ex-officio membership?

Lilia Neville: Yes, I think it will a different entity. I like the idea of having friends of CFB because it is more inclusive. My only concern is that without a formal appointment we may not get those groups committed into participating in commission's initiatives.

I know that Commission for Women formed a student caucus. Jennifer may be able to give us some details about that.

Jenifer Dobbins: The CFW formed a student caucus to get the students involved and get their inputs for the commission meeting. We usually meet about a week or two ahead of the commission's meeting. 3 or 4 organizations participates actively and there are about 10 more organizations in the caucus.

Lilia Neville: This is sort of the form I envisioned for the Friends of CFB.

Abigail Brumfield: I am the SGA program coordinator. We have an alternate representative system for all SGA representations. If your assigned representative cannot come to a meeting, then the alternate can attend on his/her behalf.

Unfinished Business

a. Retention Workshop update

Lilia Neville: We asked Syed to digitize all the feedback received during the retention workshop by February 1st. He completed the task and now have a short update on the process.

Syed Kamal: The workshop had three different sessions. We had 6 discussion topics for our workshop. Participants used solution worksheets where they listed the solutions, partners, opportunities, and threats. We also had an audio recording of the report back session, so we were able to refer to that if we needed clarification on the solution worksheets.

Most of the data was qualitative. That method is not my background so I will look to the chairs to do the qualitative analysis. I performed quantitative reporting of the data. From 24 tables, we had 54 solutions. 11 solutions for city climate, 9 solutions for UT, 12 solutions for community, 9 solutions for social engagement, 5 solutions for mentorship, and 8 solutions for jobs. Some solutions were detailed

and had full SWOT analysis; some solutions had the solution but didn't have the full SWOT analysis. We can refer to audio when we pull that together.

Tanisha Jenkins: Can Syed Send the report to us?

Lilia Neville: Absolutely. We will send the digitized version to the commissioners. I would also like to add that I have academic background in qualitative research methods. I will look into the qualitative aspects and broader areas for the solution, major partners, minor partners etc. I do not have a concrete idea on how the final report will look like at this point. I imagine there will be separate sections on the topic areas and a separate sections on the long-term partners for implementing the solutions. My goal is to finalize the plan by end of academic year so that it can serve as a roadmap for future leaders of the commission. I am not sure how the length of the plan will be. My guess it that it can be for 3 to 5 years.

Robert Nobles: We will finalize this over the summer and present to the commission in fall.

Lilia Neville: Any comments on the digitization process of the workshop solution worksheets?

Robert Nobles: We talked about the retention workshop with the Provost and she was very supportive of our initiative.

b. Trailblazer Series spring events

Lilia Neville: Next trailblazer series event will take place on February 26th at 12:30PM. Dr. Mark Dean is the speaker at this event. We have also started the process for selecting speakers for the 2015-2016 academic year. I mentioned in our previous meeting that we are contacting Dr. Nettles and Mr. Condredge Holloway. Tara Davis also suggested the name of Anne Holt Blackburn and VC hall loved this suggestion. We will initiate contact with the proposed speakers. We also received a suggestion from Karla McKanders for Cynthia Fleming, who recently retired after 32 years' service as faculty in History Department. She was also the first female African American professor at UT. Being this the last spot, is everyone OK with this suggestion?

Robert Nobles: Can we send a bio to the commission? This will help us to decide.

Marshall Steward: A short bio came in e-mail announcement and I am thoroughly impressed.

Ronald McFadden: This is an excellent proposal.

Lilia Neville: VC Hall also thought this is an excellent suggestion.

Robert Nobles: This will be the 4th speaker. So we have 2 for spring and 2 for fall.

Upcoming Events

a. African American Read-In

Lilia Neville: I was contacted by a professor in College of Education, Health and Human sciences. There will be an event called African American Read-in on February 27th at the Hodges Library. Susan Benner may be able to describe it in detail.

Susan Benner: It been going on for several years. People do sign-up ahead of time and it requires people to read a book /paragraph or page or two and describe why they chose the reading material. It is a nice event for promotion and recognition of African American authors.

Lilia Neville: I am particularly excited about it because my undergrad major was in English literature. We have included this event on the electronic version of the black history month calendar. However, it was little too late to include in the printed version. We have also received request for co-sponsorship in terms of helping with publicity and participation for the event. So we will be publicizing this event on our web, listserv and social media.

Alecia Davis: We can publicize this in BFSA website.

Lilia Neville: The event is 5 hours long, but you do not have to stay for the whole 5 hours. If you are available on February 27th, please consider participating in this event.

b. Black Issues Conference

Lilia Neville: Black issues conference is on February 7th. Registration is now closed. Is there any availability for late registration?

Tanisha Jenkins: We are hosting the 10th annual black issues conference. Registration begins at 9:30AM and conference starts at 10:00AM. Registration closed on February 2nd, but we have just a few slots for on-site registration. It is free for students and \$10 for all others.

c. Trailblazer Series

Lilia Neville: As I have already mentioned earlier, the Trailblazer Series event with Dr. Mark Dean will be on February 26th at 12:30PM in Hodges Library Auditorium.

New Business

a. Black History Month Calendar

Lilia Neville: The black history month calendar is now complete. It is hosted on VC Hall's website. We will also include it in CFB website. Any events that are missing in the printed version will be included on the electronic version. Also if any further details becomes available about the events, they will also be reflected on the electronic version.

Robert Nobles: Can you convert to PDF so that we can circulate it to others?

Lilia Neville: Sure, we can. We will also do some publicity on our listserv about the Black History Month calendar and the featured events.

b. BFSA Symposium

Alecia Davis: March 19 and 20 is the BFSA symposium on diversity and inclusion. We came up with some topics to discuss in the symposium. Example of some of the topics are: Sense of belonging, where are people who look like me, diversity issues in classroom. We will have 4 sessions. First 3 sessions will have 6 workshops that will run concurrently. Then we will have a 4th session which is kind of like an open forum/panel discussion. This will be the wrap up session for the day. We will serve breakfast and lunch. Keynote speaker is Tojna Johnson, who is the Vice President for Communication and Marketing for the UT System. Student and BFSA members can participate for free. Staff and faculty is \$20 and all other are \$50. Detail information available on BFSA website. The location is at school of law.

Susan Benner: What is happening on 19th?

Alecia Davis: We will have intro session on 19th and Reception at Haslam. Vice Chancellor Rickey Hall will give the intro speech. We divided workshops in 3 tracks.

Tenea Lowery: We will have open track, student track and faculty and profession track.

Alecia Davis: we will send invitation letter to the commissions by e-mail.

c. Newsletter

Lilia Neville: We invited Soren Sorensen to author an article on Stride program and implicit bias in hiring practices. He accepted our invitation to author an article. Kaylyn Harris agreed to author an article on student engagement. VC Hall will write his reflections about the year. We will also have standard write ups on awards winner, Quest scholars and a statement from the co-chairs. We will also do a recap on the workshops and other events. We asked all to submit their articles by March 1st. If you are interested in authoring an article, please let us know. Any thoughts?

Marshall Steward: How were the topics selected?

Lilia Neville: We had a working lunch and brain storming session on the article topics.

Robert Nobles: We discussed the issues on campus and who can write related to that. It was kind of open process.

d. Award Nominations

Lilia Neville: We received just one nomination so far. Please submit nomination and deadline is February 20th.

Announcements

Jenifer Dobbins: We just elected our Editor in chief for law review. She is a black women and the first person of color to be elected in that position.

Robert Nobles: You should publicize this.

Lilia Neville: When the announcement comes from the Law school, we can distribute it.

Alecia Davis: BFSA will meet next Thursday. Bring a friend and bring lunch

Tanisha Jenkins: Outreach event on March 4th for graduating seniors. Please save the date and encourage students to participate.

Adjourn

[Lilia Neville adjourns the meeting at 1:10PM]