

**Commission for Blacks  
Monthly Meeting Minutes  
April, 2015**

The monthly meeting of the Commission for Blacks was held on April 1, 2015 at the Black Cultural Center.

Co-chair Lilia Neville called the meeting to order at 12:03PM. Present at the meeting were: (1) Lilia Neville, (2) Robert Nobble, (3) Syed Kamal, (4) Mary Lee Stewart, (5) Aaliyah Johnson, (6) Jennifer Webb, (7) Marshall Steward, (8) Cynthia Manning, (9) Ronald McFadden, (10) Jennifer Dobbins, (11) Tanisha Jenkins, (12) Marcia Johnson Lane, (13) Susan Benner, (14) Yolanda Kirkpatrick, (15) Eric Stokes, (16) Alecia Davis, (17) Tara Davis, (18) Mary Lucal

**Approval of Minutes**

The Commission then started the proceedings of the meeting by approving the minutes of the March-2015 meeting. Robert Nobles made the motion to approve the minutes of the March-2015 meeting and Marcia Johnson Lane seconded the motion.

Commission discussed whether the newly adopted brief format of the meeting minutes properly reflected the proceedings of the meetings. The commission members expressed the opinion that the minutes captured adequate details even in its brief format and thus decided to continue with this brief format for future meetings minutes.

**Updates from Committees**

a. Faculty/Staff/Student committee

On behalf of the Faculty/Staff/Student committee Susan Benner reported that the committee targeted to make two nominations for the semester. One of the nominee, Dr. Bertin Louis, has already been featured as the Quest Scholar of the Week. The other nominee from the Commission was Dr. Derek Alderman. His nomination process is now complete and he will be featured in coming weeks.

Lilia Neville reported the open forum on the Employee Engagement Survey took place couple of weeks ago. The Commission was waiting to review the results from the Employee Engagement Survey before preparing this status of African American on Campus survey. The results of diversity and inclusion related question from the Employee Engagement Survey will be delivered to VC Diversity. Based on the results, the Commission will be able to 1) determine whether we should create a Status of African Americans Survey and 2) tune-in the specific questions to include on the Status of African American Survey.

b. Bylaws committee

Robert Nobles provided update on behalf of the bylaws committee. A “nearly final” version of the amended bylaws were distributed to the commission members before the meeting. Robert Nobles proposed that the Commission consider removing the 15-member number limit of the commission membership. The removal of this limit will allow the commission to have representation from different campus units such as academic colleges and departments, administrative units and student/staff/faculty organizations. To evaluate the proposal, the commission discussed membership limit of other council and commissions, the current membership recruitment process of CFB, whether requiring membership from different campus units on the commission will make the membership body of all commission and councils to have repetitive representations and whether increasing membership body will cause any quorum issues. Robert Nobles emphasized that lifting the limit

restriction will allow the commission to accommodate representation from different campus units that consider it an important to have their representation on the commission. He made the motion that the Commission eliminates the 15 member limit from the bylaws now and then form a subcommittee in future to make recommendations on the exact composition of the membership body of the commission. Cynthia Manning seconds the motion to eliminate the 15-member limit restriction from the bylaws. The Commission voted to strike out the 15 member limit from the bylaws with 7 members voting "Yes", 3 members voting "No" and 2 members abstaining.

Robert Nobles then made another motion to pass proposed amended bylaws with all the revisions. Susan Benner seconded the motion. The Commission voted to approve the amended bylaws with 11 members voting "Yes", 1 member voting "No" and 1 member abstaining.

c. Outreach/PR committee

On behalf of the Outreach/PR committee, Lilia Neville informed the committee is still looking for a venue for the next year's Trailblazer series. The attempt to attain a facility sponsorship was not successful. So the quest for an alternative venue for the event is still on. The desired location for the event is somewhere that is easily accessible on walk from different campus areas and also located adjacent to a parking garage. UC and event center locations are not easily accessible on walk from campus and the current Hodges Library location has parking issues. Some proposed location for the events was Alumni Center, Baker Center, and Law School and Brown Hall. Lilia Neville commented that Law School is convenient for parking, but it is hard to get space reservation at Law School. Moving the event time to evening hours may make it easier to get reservation at that location. Baker center is not suitable because of their limitation on advance reservations. Lilia Neville requested commission members to notify the PR/Outreach Committee Chair Tara Davis by coming Friday if they come up with any ideas on a suitable event location.

**Unfinished Business/Past Events**

a. Trailblazer Series spring events & 2015-2016 planning

Lilia Neville reported that the attendance at the Valisia Lekae Trailblazer series event was very poor and only one commission member attended the event. She requested active participation from all commission members for the upcoming Trailblazer series event on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

The commission members discussed ways to improve turnout at the Trailblazer series event. Several suggestion of improving attendance at the event were: (a) reducing the number of Trailblazer series event to two per year instead of four per year, (b) assigning commission members to a working capacity at the event to ensure commission members attendance at the event, (c) targeting selected audience group for the events, (d) changing the event time from noon to evening after business hours, (e) serving refreshments as an incentive for attendance, (f) conducting an attendance sign-up at the beginning of the year to have at least 5 commissioners signed-up for attendance at each event, and (g) engaging the community with these events.

Answering a question about the target audience for the events, Robert Nobles informed the commission that students are naturally a target audience. The event was designed as a mechanism to showcase that the campus community is welcoming and supportive of trailblazing personalities for their life-long struggles and achievements to promote diversity. So, apart from students, current employees who are interested in diversity and inclusion issues and historians in-pipe can also be benefitted from attending these events. However, the target audience may vary as well depending on the speaker. Eric Stokes emphasized the need to working with academic units to enhance student participation in the events. Yolanda Kirkpatrick commented that introducing students with the historical achievements of the trailblazing personalities is very important and thus being strategic to enhance student participation at the trailblazer series should be a top priority.

The Commission also discussed ways to enhance participation of the commission members in the Trailblazer series events. Lilia Neville recognized that the speakers are selected a year ahead of time and the speakers hosted by the current commission are actually selected by the member of the commission during the previous year. So there is a disconnect between speaker selection and current commissioner time frames. However, some members expressed the opinion that attendance at the events by the commission members should not be based on specific speaker, rather the members should attend the events to support the mission of the commission.

Lilia Neville also informed the commission that a possible time change for the events are under consideration. However, serving refreshments during after business-hours events will depend on facilities policies as well as on limitation on alcohol based beverages in events involving students.

### **Upcoming Events**

- a. Trailblazer Series: Mark Dean, April 7 at 12:30pm

The final event of the 2014-2015 Trailblazer Series is scheduled for April 7th and it will feature Dr. Mark Dean.

- b. Final Retention Solutions meeting, April 9 at 10:30am

The Commission members are meeting outside of the monthly meeting time to work on the details of the proposed solution from the Retention Workshop. So far 6 solutions are already detailed out. The last meeting will be for finalizing details on the remaining part of the document.

- c. BFSA Power Hour, April 20 at 5:30pm

Alecia Davis provided information on the upcoming BFSA Power Hour Event. The event is targeted to initiate conversation on race and diversity issues. Student organizations, faculty and representatives from the administration will be part of this conversation. Refreshments will be served.

- d. Multicultural Graduation Ceremony, April 23

Tanisha Jenkins provided information on the Multicultural Graduation ceremony that will take place on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to celebrate the achievement of the graduates of color. Name of the recipients of the Carl Cowan scholarship will also be announced at this event.

### **New Business**

- a. Chancellor coming to May 2015 meeting

Robert Nobles requested members to submit questions on the online google document. The link for the google document will be sent again.

- b. Co-chair nominations open

Lilia Neville informed the commission that nomination for commission members for the upcoming academic year will be open this week and nominations can be submitted in an on-line form. She also informed the commission that the Co-Chairs are brainstorming suitable nominees for the Co-Chair position to replace her. However, the nomination and election of co-chair position will be pushed back till December to sync the timing with Robert Nobles time-in office so that the new co-chair comes on board when Robert Nobles completes his first year as Co-Chair. Lilia Neville will end her term as Co-Chair in May and Robert Nobles will serve as the sole Co-Chair till December.

Cynthia Manning informed the commission that she is leaving UT and will continue to serve at the Commission as a community member.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:12PM