

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

The monthly meeting of the Commission for Blacks was held on September 10, 2015 at the Black Cultural Center.

Co-chair Robert Nobles called the meeting to order at 3:32PM. Present at the meeting were: Robert Nobles, Syed Kamal, Rickey Hall, Calvin McLean, Soren Sorensen, Marshall Steward, Derek Alderman, Ashley Evans, Dawn Duke, Celeste Waugh, Susan Benner, Cynthia Manning, Katrice Morgan, Ronald McFadden, Shannen Dee Williams, Lilia Neville, Thura Mack, Valeria Hodge, Crystal Hardeman, Erica Echols, Joanne Hall, Sharon Jonphi, Bruce MacLennan, Eric Stokes, and Mary Lucal.

Co-chair Robert Nobles started the proceedings of the meeting with an introductory speech. He welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the commission. He emphasized that he takes the role and the services provided by the commission to the campus community very seriously. CFB is the only commission to address ethnic and racial diversity issues. This is a safe place for conversation and mechanism for action. After the introduction from Dr. Nobles, all members of the commission then took turns to introduce themselves.

Vice Chancellor Rickey Hall attended the meeting to interact with the commissioners. VC Hall provided an update on the controversy in the media about the preferred gender pronoun issue. VC Hall explained that the director of the university's Pride Center wrote an article about preferred gender pronoun in the inclusive practices section on the quarterly e-newsletter from the Office of the Diversity and Inclusion. VC Hall clarified that no mandate or official policy existed regarding the use of pronouns; rather the information was offered as a resource to the campus community to better understand inclusive practices. Based on the article, FOX news published a column on their website erroneously describing the inclusive practices article as a university policy mandating students to use gender inclusive pronouns. As a result, a senate higher education hearing is being arranged for a date in October to discuss university's diversity and inclusion programs. After much discussion and reflection, a decision was made to remove the newsletter from website. VC Hall reminded the commission that much of the work in diversity and inclusion has the potential to be controversial and we need to remain steadfast in our core values.

VC Hall then identified the areas of his priority for the upcoming year. These priorities are: (1) Building capacity across the University for doing the works for enhancing diversity and inclusion; (2) Creating resources for diversity education and training; (3) Improving communications to effectively communicate what going on in terms of diversity and inclusion; (4) Arranging external funding; and (5) Developing meaningful metrics to measure and evaluate diversity.

Robert Nobles informed the commission that in order to maintain a process of continuity in its priorities, a tentative strategic plan is to identify the priority areas for the commission that are consistent with the broader priorities identified by VC Hall, and then to form teams or sub-committees to work on the identified priorities.

Commenting on VC Hall's identified priorities, a commissioner commented that he is very interested in contributing to initiatives involving advancing cultural diversity. In response, VC Hall acknowledged the existence of cultural fear on campus and emphasized the importance of dialogue on cultural diversity. He informed the commission that a course will be offered in spring for creating space for intergroup dialogue; and organizing social justice circles.

Robert Nobles pointed out to the commission that he took conscious effort to involve more faculty with the commission. Initiatives that reflect the view of the faculty are viewed favorably by the university administration. Discussing on this issue, a commissioner briefly presented the concepts behind the STRIDE initiative.

In response to a question about the proportion of black students at UT and whether this number is increasing or decreasing, VC Hall commented that he would welcome ideas about indicators that can be included in the diversity metrics.

The commission also discussed the importance of corporate support in promoting diversity and inclusiveness on campus. The corporate sector understands the value of diversity and there are examples on campus where the corporate sector emerged as a pressure group to demand a diverse and inclusive campus climate for continued corporate support.

Robert Nobles discussed about the possibility of having a representative of CFB on the VC Hall's diversity metrics committee to voice the commission's opinions and insight.

The commission also discussed the importance of participation in the VOL Vision milestone committee's upcoming feedback sessions. This document will be used to decide on the priorities of the institution for the next 5 years and it is important that diversity is included as one of the top priorities. Robert Nobles commented that he can coordinate to collect an executive summary of the document to be discussed in the commission and then commission members can volunteer to participate in the feedback sessions to voice concerns for the CFB.

Robert Nobles presented an outline for the proceedings of upcoming commission meetings: (1) Inviting an office or group on campus to provide update on their activities. During the presentations, the commission will be encouraged to ask presenting units about the diversity initiatives undertaken in the past and how CFB can contribute to their mission going forward. Potential groups that may be invited to future CFB meetings include, Human Resources, Admissions, Office of Research & Engagement, Faculty Diversity (John Zomchick), Graduate School (Carolyn Hodges), Development (i.e., Alumni and Donor development), and Procurement (regarding minority vendors on campus). The commission also need to decide on its strategic priorities. A commissioner proposed including social justice and outsourcing issues on the agenda for the commission. It was suggested that Andy Power from facilities services would be a good person to come and talk about outsourcing issues.

Robert Nobles mentioned that a volunteer request would be circulated for participation on other commissions and councils. It was also indicated that a co-chair election will occur later in the semester.

Before concluding the meeting, the commission voted on to approve the minutes of the May-2015 meeting. Calvin McLean made the motion to approve the minutes and Lilia Neville seconded the motion and the commission voted unanimously.

Adjourn

Robert Nobles adjourned the meeting at 4:45PM.