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General Comments Regarding Task Force Issues

Commission for Blacks

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GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Would a survey of Black Alumni provide valuable information? Black Alumni might be available as role models - especially in conjunction with a Cultural Center.

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2. I will preface these suggestions with the observation that, while I believe a quasi-militant approach to our problems may have been (or, to some degree, may still be) necessary, it will not be sufficient itself for ultimate solutions. I personally believe that long-run solutions to our problems will require a "graduation from militancy." Consistent with these thoughts, I have attempted to formulate the following suggestions which should complement existing efforts and possibly help foster a second phase of progress relying heavily on cooperation by both Blacks and Whites who have attained a common, long-run perspective.

Following are specific suggestions:

(1) Campus Visitations of Successful Black U.T. Graduates. It would seem cohesive and fulfilling for current black students to see and have the opportunity to confer with "successful" black U.T. graduates who, to some degree, embody what is probably the essence of the aspirations of many black students. Witnessing actual "results" should promote a constructive belief of attainability. I personally know of two recent black U.T. graduates (one a modest and one a better-than-average student) whose progress in the public accounting profession should be meaningful evidence to current black undergraduates that reasonable degrees of personal effort and self-direction can lead now to personal, professional, and financial fulfillment. I feel that most CPA firms involved would be willing to underwrite a reasonable number of such visitations.

(2) Counter-Problem Perspective. It should be realized that each significant problem with which our group will deal probably has a significant counter problem. If these counter problems can be anticipated, analyzed, and understood by the minority group, it should contribute toward a long-run perspective that would be more conducive to the ultimate solution of our problems. Simply stated, this perspective tends to lead to the realization that we, rather than I have a problem.

(3) Extension of Horizons. Although it is probably true of all problems with which we will deal, certainly the most severe and significant problems require a planning horizon, a tolerance threshold, and an accomplishment goal that is consistent with long-run solutions. This is not to be mistaken for a "some day" approach to problem solutions but rather a genuine effort to optimize the expectation level of all groups, the anticipated degree of change, and the desired outcomes in a manner consistent with long-run solutions.

(4) Critical Role Orientation. It is probably safe to say that there have never been greater opportunities to change those attitudes contributing to minority problems. It must be widely realized that most actions of the present minority groups on campus will, to some degree, either destroy or confirm the prejudiced views of those whose beliefs must be changed before

an acceptable long-run solution to the race problem is accomplished. The present group of minority students must understand that, if they are at all successful, they will be the vanguard of much larger groups to follow.

Among whatever obligations exist to their parents, their colleagues, or those who follow, most impelling is the obligation to fully exploit every personal resource, to strive for maximum achievement, and to represent their group in a manner that inspires cooperation, respect, and goodwill. Regardless of innate capacities, the group should expect from each individual dedication, self-discipline, and a concern for attainment that is consistent with the suffering that has been endured and the promise for all that will come with success.

Ideally, there should be preliminary briefings leading to such an awareness, a counseling program to refine this awareness, and where necessary possibly even a group self-policing function where the actions of any small group tend to subvert the accomplishments of the larger group in any aggravated way.

I suspect that most of what I have attempted to describe above are possibly subtle ideas or concepts and hope that these descriptions are sufficient to convey the essence of each to others. Possibly after additional reflection and assistance from others, a more precise description can be formulated.

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3. I perceive that in surveying each of these areas we may discover three basic potential types of problems. There are cases which may involve at least implicit denial of access to Blacks, cases involving simply a moderate difficulty of access, and cases where too much attention may be producing the tendency toward isolation by misapplied emphasis. Implicit in these comments perhaps is my feeling that the unifying thrust of our concern is the matter of bringing Blacks into as full an unselfconscious involvement with university life as is possible.

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4. The specific approaches to be taken in an attempt to ameliorate the problems accrued within each area are, of course, open for discussion and exploration. I will be prepared, however, to offer a suggestion at the next committee meeting. Finally, I would like to note that I favor your suggestion that our meetings be held in a room with writing space.

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5. (1) We should establish basic statistics such as the number of black students in the University, the numbers by year, sex, geographic origin, etc.

Our primary inquiry in this area, I believe, should be with regard to techniques and effectiveness of recruitment procedures. Hopefully, after examination of present procedures, we can make recommendations regarding more effective methods of recruiting.

(2) The availability of financial aid is closely related to admissions policies and their effectiveness. We should canvass the present financial resources available through the University, and hopefully make recommendations for new sources of aid.

(3) We should establish the number and kinds of black faculty and other staff presently employed by UTK, and make any indicated investigations and recommendations regarding their status vis-a-vis the rest of the University staff.

We should also examine the efforts and techniques presently employed by the various departments of the University in recruiting black staff.

(4) We should examine any special problems relating to blacks in connection with academic performance, including grading and available special programs designed to aid blacks.

(5) Probably the most difficult area with which we will deal, as well as the most important one, is that concerning the social and cultural life of blacks on the UTK campus. Here we will be dealing with pervasive social attitudes on the part of blacks as well as whites, and will be confronted with the enormous difficulty of effecting change in these attitudes by means of institutional devices. The area also presents basic policy issues regarding the desirability of separatist as opposed to integrational tendencies within the institutional system. I am hopeful that the Committee will adopt integration as its basic goal.

Perhaps there will be some situations in which feasible institutional changes can aid in achieving positive results. We may be able, for example, to propose new ways for increasing the extent and effectiveness of integration in campus rooming. Hopefully there will be many other situations where we can make similar recommendations.

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