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Commission for Blacks

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Response to the Chancellor's

Progress to Date Report on The Task Force on Race Relations Recommendations

*The Commission For Blacks
June 22, 1994*

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #2

We recommend structured, broad-based programs aimed at sensitizing all students to the despicability of racism. We further remind the University that old patterns will be sustained and perpetuated if our students are not sensitized.

Commision for Blacks' responses:

1. It is suggested that:

- (a) The African and African-American Studies Program be elevated to a full fledged department by (Fall 1995), or thereafter and increase the number of full-time faculty. In addition, to assess the feasibility of offering a Masters degree program by (Fall 1996) and employ a staff of (twelve full-time) faculty persons by 1997.**
- (b) The Chancellor should create a campus and community-wide committee to help bring to fruition the creation of a Chair of Excellence in African-American Studies. This could be achieved in conjunction with the now defunct Alex Haley project.**
- (c) The University libraries should join with student affairs people to create an International Affairs reading room in the student center equipped with newspapers and magazines reflecting a wide range of cultures.**

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #3

The Task Force recommends that the University step up its efforts to effectively and completely integrate the Athletic Departments and associated programs including cheering squads and bands.

Commission for Blacks' responses:

1. The Commission for Blacks should revisit the Athletics Department, regularly, to ensure that the proposed efforts are continuing in all facets.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #4

The Task Force recommends that the University develop a minority vendor program which will increase minority business relationships with the University.

Commission for Blacks' responses:

1. Reevaluate the impact of the minority vendor program, regularly, to ensure that proposed efforts are continuing in all areas.
2. Minority vendors need to target what the bidders have to offer.
3. It is recommended that the Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance provide an analysis of UT expenditures with outside vendors for 1992-94 indicating amounts and percentages spent with minority business persons and firms. The Chancellor should charge the Business Vice President with establishing numerical goal increases in the aforementioned areas.
4. The Chancellor should require minority subcontractors in all future campus construction projects including:
 - (a) The new law school addition
 - (b) Alumni Hall renovation
 - (c) Clement Hall parking garage
 - (d) International House
5. The Chancellor should charge the University's space utilization committee with monitoring minority construction, sub-contractor's access to UT projects.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #5

The Chancellor of the University, in cooperation with the President of the University, shall call a series of meetings with the City of Knoxville's top leaders (business, political, religious, education, social) to discuss the urgent importance of making Knoxville a community in which minority opportunity is a reality.

Commission for Blacks' responses:

1. Regarding community outreach, it is suggested that the University's involvement should include:
 - (a) The Beck Cultural Center
 - (b) Eastside YMCA
 - (c) Black Churches (e.g. Mt. Zion, Mt. Olive, etc.)
 - (d) KCDC
 - (e) Mechanicsville Development Corporation
 - (f) Knoxville College
2. The Commission For Blacks should be consulted for nominations.
3. The Chancellor and his staff should create other opportunities to interface with the Black Community in addition to the Chancellor's Associates.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #6

The Task Force urges that the University widely publicize among students the procedures for students filing complaints with the University Ombudsperson. Furthermore, the functions of that office must be clearly and publicly articulated.

Commission for Blacks' responses:

1. The summary describing activities of the Ombuds Office requested by the Chancellor as of May 1, 1994, should be disseminated on campus.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #7

The Task Force recommends that the University bring together, under the leadership of a high level University administrator, all special programs related to minority student interests. The Task Force proposes that UTK immediately move to hire a Vice-Chancellor for Minority Affairs.

Commission for Blacks' responses:

1. The Commission agreed that there should be shared ownership of minority issues on campus. It is recommended that programs related to minority student interests should be reviewed on a daily basis.
2. Ongoing employment and recruitment activities should be increased to improve the understanding of issues related to diversity and make more student work available on the UTK campus.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #9

The Task Force urges that the Orientation Program for all students include a strong component which emphasizes cultural diversity and individual student obligation to obey the laws of the Country, the State, and the University with respect to racial equality. Further, the Task Force urges that this same emphasis be a part of the Orientation which the University offers for parents.

Commission for Blacks' response:

1. Invite the Office of Orientation to explain their training regarding cultural appreciation at a Commission For Blacks meeting.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #10

The Task Force recommends that the administration take immediate steps to address the issue of faculty attitudes towards Black Students and to provide a forum through which faculty can confront and forge solutions to this problem.

Commission for Blacks' response:

1. The university should continue to encourage more of the university administration, faculty and staff to participate in programs.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #14

We propose that a budgetary pool be set up for recruiting Blacks to the faculty and staff.

Commission for Blacks' response:

1. It is suggested that the Vice Chancellors be requested to provide a plan designed to attract and retain African-American faculty, staff and administrators. Special emphasis should be placed on those colleges and departments with few or any African-American individuals (faculty, staff, students). The Chancellor, the deans, and those department heads should be asked to speak to a public audience about their strategies to achieve diversity in their areas.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #16

The Office of Academic Affairs should develop a program by which all students are to select either one elective that emphasized Afro-American history or a cultural studies course that deals with multi-ethnic and multi-racial experiences. In addition, the Provost and appropriate officers of the University should charge the respective deans with the responsibility of urging their faculty to develop all University courses in such a way as to reflect the multi-racial and multi-cultural character of American society.

Commission for Blacks' response:

1. The Commission still agrees with the spirit of this recommendation.
2. Invite Dr. Gary Schneider, Chairperson for the Committee on Diversity and Multicultural Issues to update the Committee on the report describing ongoing activities to integrate cultural diversity and issues of race and gender into the university's course curriculum.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #17

Particular considerations that factor in the decision to hire specific minority persons should be considered in the tenure and promotion process.

Commission for Blacks' response:

1. Given the number of Black faculty leaving the university, the administration must address its recruitment and retention problems.
2. The Commission For Blacks recommends that exit interviews be conducted with Black faculty members to assess why Black faculty are leaving the University of Tennessee.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #19

There should be a review of the "Grow Your Own Program" for its effectiveness. The program should be more widely publicized and an advising committee of representative persons should be established to assist in the determination of grants awarded.

Commission for Blacks' responses:

1. Review program guidelines for the formerly termed "Grow Your Own" program which is currently known as the Black Graduate Opportunity Program, to assess the participation rate of students and staff members, the financial resources allocated to the program, the pool of candidates selected for the program and the procedures used to assign program graduates to full time positions on campus.
2. Reevaluate the channels used in advertising the "Black Graduate Opportunity Program" Many students and staff members are not aware that the program exists.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #20

A formal program should be implemented to raise the awareness of all faculty and staff with respect to both the legal responsibility and moral obligation we share in the matter of harmonious race relations and non-biased treatment of all students and co-workers.

Commission for Blacks' response:

1. The Affirmative Action Programming and Personnel offices have implemented some programs but are understaffed and underfunded. They need to be supported in terms of resources and staff.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #21

The Task Force urges the administration to give special care and attention to all University awards, both honorary and achievement-based, in order to assure that they reflect the presence and participation of Blacks.

Commission for Blacks' response:

1. There has been an increase in blacks receiving both honorary and achievement based awards for the past six years at the Chancellor's Honors Banquet. However, continued efforts are needed to maintain and improve these numbers.