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Commission for Blacks Meeting Minutes November 19, 1997

Commission for Blacks

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**COMMISSION FOR BLACKS
MINUTES: NOVEMBER 19, 1997**

The Commission for Blacks met at the Office of Diversity Resources and Educational Services (DRES) on November 19, 1997. Members present included: Roberto Benson, JoAnn Jeter, Susan Mee, Alan Chesney, Rickey McCurry, Delores Smith, Clark Brekke, Kedesha Washington, and Marva Rudolph. The meeting followed the agenda (see attached). A summary of information discussed follows.

I. Minutes of the October 29, 1997 meeting were distributed and read. A change was made to indicate that the date the BSDF committee initially planned to review applications was November 15, 1997.

II. Roberto Benson provided a summary of his monthly discussion with Chancellor Snyder. He stated that they continue to discuss: the need to recruit and retain minority faculty and staff; the pros and cons of having a specific person, "Diversity Czar", whose primary function would be to address ways to recruit and retain minority faculty and staff persons; the "reactivation" of training for administrators on the issue of climate awareness/diversity; and the possibility of designating a Chancellor's Award to recognize persons who do something for the enhancement of diversity at UTK. Roberto stated that both he and the Chancellor want to find out: (1) why black faculty/staff leave the university and (2) what is the best way to monitor the progress of black faculty as they move through the tenure tract system?

An extended discussion pursued regarding the related issues of exit interviews--who handles them, what types of questions are asked, what types of responses received, what happens to the information, and how can we make these interviews more useful. The main purpose of the discussion was to pursue ways to help determine why minority faculty and staff leave the university. The exit interview is one means of doing so. JoAnn Jeter also suggested that we should consider getting exit interview information on transferred personnel as well.

III. There were no committee reports. The Student Committee has not had an opportunity to meet yet and will probably not be formed until later since meeting times present a problem. Kedesha Washington (graduate student representative) stated that, in the future, there should be more students appointed to the committee since: (1) the issues that face graduate students may differ from those that face undergraduate students; and (2) the meeting times might not always be convenient for a student committee member so that back-up representation would be possible with more students on the committee.

IV. There was more discussion regarding the possible designation of a Chancellor's Award for Diversity, i.e., for persons who do things that help to enhance diversity at UTK. Marianne Woodside has offered to provide assistance (via Margie Russell) to work with the CFB on looking at this award. Alan Chesney also suggested that Debby Shriver, who works with the Staff Development Recognition Group, would be helpful to the CFB on this matter. Rickey

McCurry and JoAnn Jeter suggested that their Community Outreach Committee could be the CFB sub-group that would work with Debby Shriver and Margie Russell.

V. Dr. Benson identified some of the job vacancy announcements received from UTK and UTC. Dr. Brekke asked that the CFB contact members of the Ag Campus sub-committee (Dr. Celvia Dixon, Dr. Michael Smith, and ---) to provide them a list of possible campus and community resources that they can use in dealing with searches conducted by the Ag Campus. Marva Rudolph stated that she would try and make contact.

Dr. Willie Hart

Further, the committee suggested that all UTK campuses could work better together in spreading the word regarding job vacancies. It was noted that this is done already in an informal way. Alan Chesney suggested that Dr. Benson draft a letter to Sara Phillips (Assistant Vice President, Systems-wide Administration, Personnel) to encourage better cooperation between UTK campuses on this matter.