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## Commission for Blacks Meeting Minutes April 21, 1999

Commission for Blacks

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**Commission for Blacks: Minutes**  
**April 21, 1999**

The Commission for Blacks met on April 21, 1999 at 1:00 p.m. in the fifth floor conference room of Andy Holt Tower. Members present included: Roberto Benson, Rickey McCurry, Jo Milton, Latha Reddy, Mary Robinson, Marva Rudolph, and Rosa Emory Thomas. Ms. JoAnn Jeter contacted the Commission Chair and informed him of a conflict in the minutes. Members, then, reviewed and approved the minutes of the March meeting.

Dr. Roberto Benson reported that he met with the Chancellor and discussed the method in which to attract young African American faculty members to UTK. He stated that a registry of African American candidates could be established for identification purposes. Furthermore, he specified that the registry should comprise a vita bank of African American candidates who have accepted a staff or a faculty position at UTK. DRES is already developing a vita bank of African American persons who have applied for various professional staff and faculty positions at UTK.

Dr. Roberto Benson stated that he met with Dr. James Pippin who is responsible for the Minority Engineering Program. He reported that they discussed recognizing Dr. Mark Dean, the recipient of a Golden Torch Award for being the Distinguished Engineer of the Year, at an event that would draw a considerable amount of people (such as Charter Day). Further information of their efforts will be provided.

Dr. Roberto Benson recommended that the nominations for Charter Day Awards should be centralized within the Commission for Blacks in a similar manner to the practices of the Commission for Women. Ms. Joann Jeter has agreed to contact the Commission for Women about the specific criteria involved in making nominations.

Ms. Rosa Emory Thomas asked the members if the Commission for Blacks would like to host a Charter Day reception like that of last year. Members considered the pros and cons of hosting a Charter Day reception and then decided to continue this trend so that UTK students, staff, and faculty will have an opportunity to network with each other. The office of Diversity Resources and Educational Services will provide the mailing labels, the invitations, and provide financial assistance to host the reception as they did last year.

Mr. Rickey McCurry commented to the members that no African Americans were nominated as a Torchbearer. Members concluded that the lack of African Americans to receive this award might be linked to the lack of some African American faculty and staff members to nominate African American students among the various other administrative duties required by the University. Members stated it is important that African American faculty and staff must be more conscientious in nominating African Americans for this honor.

In reference to new business, Dr. Roberto Benson stated that in the previous year, the participation in the Black Faculty Staff Association Annual Conference included approximately 125 attendees. The current year's projection is for approximately 200 attendees.

Dr. Roberto Benson, in continuation of the new business agenda, reported on the need to reaffirm mentoring for new African-American faculty. Members agreed that the Commission of Blacks must become aware at the onset when new Black faculty members arrive to the campus so that the Commission can be a valuable source in disseminating information of interest to minority employees. He commented on the existing unfamiliarity about the administrative system of UTK by new employees who arrive from various universities that hold policies and procedures that conflict with the ones held at UTK. Mr. Rickey McCurry commented that Black candidates should be encouraged to seek out support from the Commission for Blacks and the Black Recruitment Advisory Committee on various professional concerns.

Ms. Marva Rudolph stated to the members that the Commission, often, overlooks considering those African American graduates of the fall and summer semester for recognition because the commencement during the spring semester appears to gain more public attention. Ms. Rosa Emory Thomas stated that a certificate should be granted to all African American graduates of the fall, spring, and summer semester to recognize all African American graduates who will be receiving a Baccalaureate degree or a Master's degree or a Ph.D.

In regards to announcements, Dr. Roberto Benson reported to the members that he recently received the Outstanding Teacher Award in the College of Engineering. He, also, reported on the noteworthy achievement held by Ms. Rosa Emory Thomas who received the two awards at the Chancellor's Honors Banquet: Women of Achievement and Staff Service Award.

Dr. Roberto Benson announced the following open positions at UTK: Head of the Materials Science and Engineering in the College of Engineering, Equal Opportunity Specialist in the Office of Diversity Resources and Educational Services, and Assistant Director of Development in the College of Business Administration.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. The next and last meeting to conclude the 1998-1999 year is scheduled for May 19, 1999.