In Memoriam

Dr. Marva Rudolph

This issue of Black@UT is dedicated to Dr. Marva Rudolph, in recognition of her humble service to the University in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Commission for Blacks honors her devotion and service to make UT a diverse educational institution that strives to provide rich educational environment for its students, faculty, administrators and staff in an “environment that is welcome to all and hostile to none.”

The one word that is repeatedly used to describe Dr. Marva Rudolph (“Dr. Rudolph”) is humble. After speaking with several of her close friends and colleagues, they admiringly stated that Dr. Rudolph worked very hard at advancing equity, diversity and inclusion, however, she never sought recognition for her acts to implement systemic changes to equity, diversity and inclusion at the University of Tennessee (“UT”). She was always behind the scenes working hard to facilitate an environment of inclusion and diversity. Dr. Rudolph “would communicate hard things about diversity. Not just say I am for it. She did more than just give diversity lip service. She had a way of manifesting diversity. She constantly served and modeled through her daily actions,” said Dr. Jennifer Richter, Dr. Rudolph’s close colleague. Undoubtedly, our lives are measured through the connections we build with others and the acts of service that we bestow upon others while we are on earth. Certainly, Dr. Rudolph’s contributions to African Americans and the UT community at large will not be forgotten with her passing on February 6, 2014.

Dr. Rudolph consciously worked against the remnants of institutionalized racism, segregation and discrimination that are a part of University of Tennessee’s history. While the University of Tennessee was desegregated in 1961 with the admission of three African Americans and its continued effort to combat discrimination with the 2011 implementation of the Rita Geier consent decree, many micro-level changes need to be instituted within the University to facilitate equality and institute diversity that brings a rich educational environment for students, facility, administrators and staff.

Dr. Rudolph focused on these goals in her role as the Associate Vice Chancellor and Director of the
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Office of Equity and Diversity at UT. Most people on campus are familiar with Dr. Rudolph’s involvement with ensuring that University hiring committees were complying with anti-discrimination laws. Dr. Rudolph would talk to search committees about diversifying their pools at the beginning of their searches and then at the end talk to the committees to get people to stop and think about their decisions and push them to realize how they could impact diversity and inclusion through their actions.

Her work, however, was much more broad and in-depth in scope. Dr. Rudolph was charged with the very essential task of responding to complaints of discrimination filed on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status at the University. She also was in charge of ensuring that the University was forward thinking in promoting diversity inclusion through facilitating the creation of diversity plans and reports. Dr. Rudolph worked to ensure equity in university recruitment and helped students. This is a challenging task, as Dr. Rudolph had to have very difficult conversations with people, at all levels, regarding the import of their conduct. Dr. Carolyn Hodges commented “Dr. Rudolph made the office a place where people would feel comfortable to go to address difficult issues and she placed the focus on the individuals coming into the office and made people feel overwhelmingly welcome.” She challenged people to take a look at their conduct and critically analyze how their actions impacted diversity and inclusion on campus. Dr. Jennifer Richter commented that Dr. Rudolph “was low key and did not pull any punches. We lost more than the Director of the office. We lost an individual who was committed to University and was very effective at her job.”

Although the responsibilities as the university’s equity and diversity administrator required Dr. Rudolph to be an enforcer of rules and regulations, she was also known to be nurturing and welcoming to her colleagues. In addition to being an enforcer of rules, her long time friend and colleague, Dr. Joy Desensi, indicated “she was a wonderful mentor to many faculty, staff and students on campus. She worked tirelessly and was very humble in the work that she did.”

In pursuit of cultivating a diverse and welcoming campus, in 2004, Dr. Rudolph was instrumental in founding the Committee on Diversity and Interculturium (initially named Chancellor’s Diversity Council). At its inception, Dr. Rudolph, along with Alan Chesney, served as Co-Chairs from 2004 through 2008. Dr. Rudolph was instrumental in developing diversity plans and helping lay the groundwork for the inaugural Vice Chancellor for Diversity position.

We lost a superb servant, leader and champion for all, who will be sorely missed.

“Dr. Rudolph was a graduate of Riverside High School class of 1967. She received a Bachelor’s of Arts Degree from Knoxville College in 1971, a Master’s Degree in Urban Planning from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 1975, and Doctorate of Political Science from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2007.

Dr. Rudolph was intensively involved with the Commission for Blacks for several years. She served as a commissioner, member of the executive committee, and chair of the bylaws committee. She was active with the Commission until shortly before her death and provided guidance on the Commission’s ongoing retention related initiatives. In accordance with the Commission for Black’s mission, Dr. Rudolph always stayed in touch with both the community and academy and worked hard to connect both constituencies. For example, when attending the monthly general meeting of the Commission in December, just two month before her death, Dr. Rudolph stressed on involving the Commission with the city’s Title VI Symposium to bring Knoxville business owners into the fold of the Commission’s initiatives on issues related to retention of African American in Knoxville.

Dr. Rudolph was also an active member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and the Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish. Along with her love for the UT, Dr. Rudolph was also an avid golf fan and known for her unabashed loyalty to professional golfer Tiger Woods. “Our family will remember her for her humility and warmth”, said Dr. Rudolph’s son John Marcus Rudolph. Beside her son, she is survived by her husband, Johnnie; and daughter, Janna Michelle.

The death of Dr. Rudolph is a great loss for UT’s community. The equity, diversity, and minority-interest organizations at the UT will greatly miss her dedication, guidance,
CO-CHAIR’S CORNER

Letter from the Co-Chairs

The Commission for Blacks has had a very busy academic year working to keep the community engaged and informed through our programs and activities. This year we have partnered with many campus organizations to create successful programs that brought attention to issues affecting African Americans in at the University and the community of Knoxville.

At the beginning of the year we sought to accomplish,

(a) increasing visibility and awareness of the CFB across campus for the 2013 and 2014 academic year;

(b) recruiting for an engaged membership for the following years;

(c) holding a community event that focused on a Community Service Project which will work to bridge existing gaps between the community and UT; and

(d) co-sponsoring lunch during the MLK holiday which discussed issues of “race.”

We were able to accomplish these goals through our Retention of African Americans in Knoxville Panels and our joint MLK panel discussion, the Evolution of Activism with the Law School’s Community Committee. We are still working to increase our awareness and participation in the CFB throughout the year.

As we look forward to the fall of 2014, we seek to continue to advance issues that are pertinent to the African American campus community. We will do this through meaningful programming and exchanges including:

(i) creating, in association with the Vice Chancellor of Diversity’s Office, the Trailblazers Series featuring UT African-American community leaders in the forefront of their fields;

(ii) continuing to engage in a discussion and strategies to retain

Lili’a Uili Neville (left) and Karla McKanders (right), Co-chairs of the Commission for Blacks.

and experience. “We lost a superb servant, leader & champion for all, who will be sorely missed,” said University of Tennessee President Joe DiPietro. In a time where many are searching for leadership in the forefront to promote principles of human rights and non-discrimination, Dr. Rudolph is an example of the power in humility that is present when a person ethically devotes their life to serving without fear and without seeking recognition. It is in these daily acts of service that true transformative change occurs in our society.

Recognizing her more than twenty years of contribution to UT and more than thirty years of dedicated work in diversity and inclusion, the Commission for Blacks, along with the Office of Multicultural Student Life, awarded Dr. Rudolph the African American Hall of Fame Award at the Chancellor’s Honors Banquet in April 2014. In the fall, there will be an induction ceremony to commemorate the diversity efforts and legacy of Dr. Rudolph. The Office of the Provost and the Office of Equity and Diversity have also jointly established a fund in honor of Dr. Rudolph to recognizing more than twenty years of contribution to UT and more than thirty years of dedicated work in diversity and inclusion.

Faculty and staff may make a gift to the Dr. Marva Rudolph Diversity & Inclusion Fund by writing the full name of the fund on their giving card and turning it in to your department representative. You may also give by visiting the Big Orange Family Campaign and entering the full name of the fund where prompted. For more information, call (865) 974-8949.

Special Thank you to Dr. Rudolph’s dear friends Dr. Joy Desensi, Dr. Carolyn Hodges, and Dr. Jennifer Richter for their contributions to the article.
of African Americans in Knoxville and at the University;

(iii) Working to highlight the scholarship and activities of African American faculty, administrators, and staff on Campus;

(iv) Inducting Dr. Marva Rudolph into the UT African American Hall of Fame; and

(v) Responding to issues of diversity involving the African American community on campus.

We hope that you will join us in the Fall as we continue to support the African American community at the University. We are both honored and consider it a privilege to be able to continue to serve you next year as your co-chairs. We intend to live up to the challenge of remaining informed and taking action on concerns specific to the black community at UT and encouraging black faculty, staff and student involvement in all aspects of campus life.

Best,

Karla McKanders
Lili’a Uili Neville
Co-Chairs
UT Commission for Blacks

In Pictures: Civil rights activist Mr. Avon Rollins (top), Tennessee Justice Center Co-founder Attorney Gordon Bonnyman (middle) and Vice Chancellor Rickey Hall (bottom) at the CFB Co-sponsored “Evolution of Activism” Event at UT Law School on January 23, 2014
Reflections on My First-Year as Vice Chancellor for Diversity

By Vice Chancellor Rickey Hall

It is hard for me to believe that I have completed my first academic year at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I remember vividly driving into Knoxville in mid-May of 2013, two weeks before I officially started my tenure at UT. It seems like a short time ago. I remember wondering if I had made the right decision to move to a new region of the country and into a new role for the institution. I worried about how my transition to the south and to the campus would go. Would I find myself regretting the decision to accept the position?

This past year was a bit of a whirlwind. Sometimes things were a bit daunting and I often found myself exhausted. I also found myself challenged and stretched in new ways, which has been good for me personally and professionally. I found myself mentally engaged in a way that I had not been in several years.

In any new position there are both expected and unexpected challenges. The most significant of those challenges for me was the death of a cherished colleague, Dr. Marva Rudolph. Dr. Rudolph served as my Associate Vice Chancellor and the Director of the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED). For many years, she did the “heavy lifting” of advancing diversity and inclusion on campus. Her unexpected death affected many on campus. This was especially true of the staff in OED. When the death occurred I knew I needed to help the staff deal with their grief and assist the office in dealing with additional workload. Each of the staff members continue to mourn the loss of their leader and dear colleague, but they move forward championing the issues Dr. Rudolph was so passionate about. The campus community, including the Commission for Blacks, found appropriate ways to honor Dr. Rudolph’s legacy. That was important to OED staff, the Rudolph family, and many across campus.

I am hopeful. I am hopeful because of the excitement about the work of the constituent groups.

Another challenge was capacity. There were and are many programs and projects I would like to implement and just do not have the time to do so. In some cases, I could have gotten a project off the ground, but would not have been able to sustain it. In the long run, that would have not been useful. In order for diversity and inclusion to be transformative, our efforts must be sustained. Over the next year I will pursue new collaborations in order to develop capacity across campus.

The last challenge I will mention is that I found many on campus to have a limited concept of diversity. There were and are many programs and projects I would like to implement and just do not have the time to do so. In some cases, I could have gotten a project off the ground, but would not have been able to sustain it. In the long run, that would have not been useful. In order for diversity and inclusion to be transformative, our efforts must be sustained. Over the next year I will pursue new collaborations in order to develop capacity across campus.

While there were challenges, there were also many accomplishments. Some of the accomplishments were:

- Established a new unit, including transitioning in three areas that previously reported to other administrative offices and giving one area an administrative home that previously did not have one.
- Aligned the work of the Council for Diversity and Interculturalism and the Commissions with the strategic priorities of the institution.
- Met with every collegiate dean and vice chancellor. One critical focus of those conversations was to find out how I could work more directly with the colleges and administrative units to help them achieve their diversity goals.
- Created the UT, Knoxville Diversity Roundtable (diversity leads). This increased support and communication for diversity professionals across campus.

I am hopeful. I am hopeful because of the excitement about the work of the constituent groups.
EVENTS & PROGRAMS

• Seized opportunities to meaningfully engage with students, especially around the topic of advancing diversity and inclusion on campus.

The list of accomplishments could go on and on. We have truly achieved a great deal in a short period of time. None of these things would have been accomplished without the support of committed students, faculty, and staff. These accomplishments certainly would have not been possible without an incredible team of staff members in the administrative units reporting to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, the Council for Diversity and Interculturalism, and the Commissions. Thank you for your support and for making a difference in the lives of students and communities that have been historically underrepresented and/or marginalized.

Now when I am asked how things are going, I respond that overall my transition has been extremely positive. That does not mean that UT is perfect and that we do not have a lot of work to do. It does mean, however, that I am hopeful. I am hopeful because of the excitement about the work across constituent groups. I am hopeful because of faculty like the STRIDE@UT group (Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence). This group is engaged in addressing barriers that inhibit the institution’s ability to attract a more diverse faculty. I am hopeful because the demographics of the state and the world are changing and that is something that can be harnessed. Most importantly, I am hopeful because of all the students I met over the past year who are interested in playing an active role in creating a campus community that is excellent because of its diversity. I look forward to the good work we will do together in the next academic year to make this fine institution even better.

African American students, staff and faculty at the University of Tennessee and members of the Knoxville community tend to have one goal in mind: getting out of Knoxville or making it a pass-through city. The majority of students and professionals are in Knoxville for only a small amount of time—just long enough to obtain their degree or gain more experience—before they head to bigger cities. According to an informal survey by the Commission for Blacks, many students consider Knoxville as a city with limited job prospects and find the city’s culture to be somewhat unwelcoming. In order to address these issues of retention of African-Americans in Knoxville, the Commission for Blacks, in association with the College of Law Community Committee, hosted a panel discussion entitled “Engaging your City: Retention of African Americans in Knoxville” on November 12, 2013. More than 160 students, faculty, staff, and members of Knoxville community turned out for the panel discussion.

The panelists for this event included: City of Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero, Knoxville Developer, Buzz Goss; Vice Chancellor of Diversity at the University of Tennessee, Rickey Hall; and Knoxville Area Urban League President, Phyllis Nichols with WVLT’s television reporter, Sharee Gilbert serving as the moderator. The panelists discussed the reasons behind Knoxville’s problem retaining professionally educated African Americans. They highlighted the initiatives that are in place to market the city of Knoxville and the University of Tennessee as a great place to begin a career and the potential advantages of choosing Knoxville as home over other nearby cities. The panelists also discussed the strides to be taken to retain African Americans in Knoxville.

Panel Discussion on Retention of African Americans in Knoxville

City of Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero at the CFB’s Panel Discussion on Retention of African American in Knoxville on November 12, 2013
Following the discussion, the audience participated in a lively question and answer session. The general opinion emerged that “brain drain” is a critical issue for the city of Knoxville. Audience members opined that if Knoxville cannot retain diversity, the city will never reach its full potential as diversity cultivates a rich city wherein many people can thrive and benefit from the diverse environment. The panelists encouraged the facilitation of more conversations around retention that encourages engagement amongst African Americans and other diverse constituents in order to make advancements creating a city that is welcoming to all. This type of discussion has the potential to impact the community greatly by uncovering the hidden beauties that Knoxville has to offer and how African Americans can find their connection with the city.

The City of Knoxville and the Commission for Blacks share a common goal of stopping the “brain drain” of talented professionals and fostering a more diverse community. In order to facilitate continued discussions on this much-needed topic, the Commission will have a follow-up event geared towards developing an action plan to retain African Americans in Knoxville in November 2014. While the November 2013 event was geared toward discussing the problem, this event will be geared toward facilitating a discussion to create concrete solutions to enhance diversity in the city of Knoxville and at the University of Tennessee.

In February 2014, the Commission for Blacks (“CFB”) and the University of Tennessee’s (“UT”) student chapter of the National Association of Colored People (“NAACP”) jointly organized a panel discussion entitled “Retention of African Americans in Knoxville: Focusing on Undergraduate and Graduate Students at UT.” Similar to the November 2013 event, the panel discussion was geared towards the retention of African Americans in the Knoxville Community, but with a particular focus on targeting African American undergraduate and graduate students at UT. Approximately thirty undergraduate and graduate students of color participated in the event.

The panel consisted of members of Knoxville’s young African American community who have chosen to make Knoxville their home. The panelists for the event included: the president of the Knoxville Area Urban League Young Professionals, Damon Rawls; the Community Manager at U.S. Bank and Knoxville’s Dr. Martin Luther King Commemorative Commission, Clarence Vaughn; and, College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences associate director of undergraduate advising and native Knoxvillian, Jamia Stokes. UT Senior, Diane Tate, CFB Commissioner and president of our Student Interests Committee, served as the moderator of the event.

The panelists engaged in an open discussion about the factors that influenced their decision to make Knoxville their home and how they engage their surrounding community. Many panelists reflected on how their African American peers in larger cities do not have the same opportunities to sit on boards, hold influential positions with the city, and experience fast career advancement that may not be possible in a larger, more urban area. Panelists also discussed the professional environment in
Knoxville for African Americans. After the panel discussion, students and audience members engaged panelists in a detailed question and answer session. The questions addressed various issues regarding settling in Knoxville, welcoming nature of the community, diversity, issues of racism, opportunities to engage in social activities geared towards young professional African Americans and job prospects in the city. The event concluded with a social gathering that gave the participants an additional opportunity to network with panelists about opportunities for young African Americans in Knoxville. The panelists and student participants were left with a sense that while Knoxville may be a great place to stay after graduation and build your career, the city and community leaders must do more to engage the young professional community, at large, in order to retain talent in the area.

The survey feedback from the audience showed that 82% of the participants rated the event as very good or excellent. Participating students appreciated the panelists honest, open, and informative discussion. Students considered the event an opportunity to express their concerns and contemplate what factors to evaluate when selecting a city in which to reside after graduation. While the event facilitated a robust discussion, participants emphasized the need for continued dialogue.

The panel discussions in November 2013 and student panel discussion in February 2014 were successful in identifying and recognizing the problem areas relating to retention of African American’s in Knoxville. This panel was inline with the Commission’s goal of facilitating a much-needed discussion regarding the retention of African Americans in the Knoxville area.

This year in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. (“MLK) Day, on January 21, 2014, the Commission partnered with the College of Law Community Committee to sponsor a panel discussion, entitled “Civil Rights Today: The Evolution of Activism.” The panel discussion focused on the current state of civil rights and how civil rights activism has evolved over the years. The guest panelists included Attorney Gordon Bonnyman, Co-Founder & Former Executive Director, Tennessee Justice Center; Avon Rollins, Former Director, Knoxville’s Beck Cultural Exchange Center; Cassie Watters, Union Organizer, United Campus Workers (UCW); and Estefania Chavez, Law Student, UT College of Law with Attorney Brenda McGee serving as the moderator.

Part of the Commission’s achievements in creating and sustaining a welcoming and inclusive environment is to support and building relationships with other campus entities working towards diversity and inclusion. To that end, the Commission made a financial contribution to the Issues Committee to sponsor the Angela Davis event to kick off Black History Month on February 4, 2014. The Commission also financially contributed to UT’s Black Faculty and Staff Symposium, which will take place in March 2015. The Commission will serve on the planning Committee for this event. And finally, the Commission annually sponsors and collaborates with the Office of Multicultural Student Life on the Black Issues Conference during Black History Month. Our participation includes volunteering on the planning committee and also making a financial contribution to the event.
Growing up my home, the question was never “if,” you are going to college, but “where,” you are going to college. It was an expectation that was non-negotiable in my household, and I want to publicly give thanks for my mother’s steadfast efforts in making sure I made it to college. Thanks Ma.

When I was a senior in high school and applying to colleges, I vividly remember sitting in the school library during my “teacher aiding” period and applying online for the University of Tennessee (“UT”), Knoxville. Within weeks I received my acceptance letter and I was off to Big Orange Country.

Upon arrival at UT I did not suffer immediate culture shock as I saw the waves of my peers who were White. I had grown up attending predominantly White schools and it was not an issue, however I often thought, “Will I face the same struggles I did in elementary, middle, and high school in regards to being seen and treated differently because of my skin color?” As a freshman in college, I hit the ground running, but I was apprehensive because of my past experiences dealing with racism. I wondered if I would have to “act white,” in order for me to be successful. To clarify, when I say “act white,” I mean purposely excluding myself from anything on campus that is culturally directed towards African-Americans. Would it be to my advantage to distance myself from other Black students? Should I dress a certain way to “blend in” with my white peers?

I have been involved in student government associations in all phases of my education, so when I arrived at UT it seemed natural to join Student Government Association (SGA). As I mentioned before, constantly I felt questions of racial identity and belonging arise from within as I walked across campus, going about my everyday activities. These questions were quickly answered as I sat in SGA Senate meetings, and meeting with the UT administration—they liked me for me! And the administration cared about diversity! This was shocking to me because I did not understand how my White classmates and I, who had matriculated together since elementary school, had lived in these “shells” of who we were supposed to be based on our skin color. I went to a University that had a legacy of racism, however my tenure at UT showed a University that was changing and embracing (not fighting) the change.

These celebrations and efforts to increase diversity remained prevalent throughout my college years and it constantly reaffirmed my belief that it truly is “great to be a Tennessee Vol!” I am not saying that I have never experienced racism while being a student here, but what I am saying is that the University has made efforts to make all of its students feel welcome. I also applaud how the University strives to blend all students together as they pursue their respective degrees. I have felt in my previous phases of schooling that I was at a disadvantage because I am African-American, but I have never felt that at UT. I am thankful for being a student at UT, and now an alum. Go Vols!

*50th anniversary of African American undergraduate enrollment was celebrated in 2011. It was a huge deal on campus—they even had a gala to celebrate the first African-American undergraduate (Theotis Robinson) becoming a student at UT. It was an amazing event!

The author, Harlin Miller, is a 2014 Graduate from the Political Science & History department and a Member of the Commission for Blacks.
This spring semester was sadly marked by the death of longtime UT employee Dr. Marva Rudolph. A Chattanooga native, Dr. Rudolph worked in the areas of diversity, inclusion, and human rights for over thirty years. Before joining UT in 1990 as a specialist in affirmative action, she worked with the Tennessee Human Rights Commission. In 1994, she was named assistant director of UT’s Diversity Resources and Education Services office, later renamed the Office of Equity and Diversity, and she became the office’s director in 1999.

In 2013, she was promoted to Associate Vice Chancellor. Dr. Rudolph worked to ensure equity in university recruitment and helped students and employees resolve issues related to equity and diversity. She also was responsible for ensuring the university’s compliance with federal diversity and disability requirements. She was very involved with the Commission for Blacks, serving as a commissioner, a member of the executive committee, and chair of the bylaws committee. She remained active with the Commission until shortly before her death, stressing the need for Knoxville business owners to be involved in encouraging African Americans to stay in the city and work for its future growth. Dr. Rudolph passed away on February 6. Recognizing her lifetime of service, Chancellor Jimmy G. Cheek said, “Marva was a recognized diversity professional who worked tirelessly to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion at UT.”

The Commission for Blacks selected Dr. Rudolph for induction into the African American Hall of Fame to honor her decades of distinguished service, leadership, and advocacy for a diverse and inclusive campus environment.

For nearly thirty years, Dr. Amadou Sall has been one of the most visible and beloved advocates of internationalism and interculturalism on UT’s campus and in the wider community. As a lecturer of Africana studies, Dr. Sall has been a leader in promoting diversity and multicultural understanding both within and outside the classroom. He regularly organizes events to broaden peoples’ understanding.

Since the 1980s he has worked with the African Student Association on their annual production of Africa Week, and last year he organized an African film series on campus. He also founded and now leads an annual Africana studies mini-term trip to Ghana, and last summer he took students on a service-learning trip to Cape Town, South Africa.

Dr. Sall has been honored for his dedication with the University Citation for Excellence in Teaching, the Outstanding Adult Educator–East Tennessee College Alliance Award, and the Black Graduate and Professional Student Association’s Outstanding and Dedicated Service Award, to name a few. Sall’s students “learn in ways that far exceed what they can get from any book or film; he challenges them interculturally, intellectually, and personally in all sorts of vital ways,” his nomination noted. He is currently UT’s sole faculty member teaching Fulani, the university’s first and only African language course.
AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Gene Mitchell Gray
Pioneer Award:
Ms. Brittney Jackson

Whether in the classroom or at a meet, Brittney Jackson has a track record of excellence. A communication major from Maplewood, New Jersey, Jackson is a part of the track and field and cross-country teams.

Jackson’s teammates, classmates, and coaches all note her leadership abilities and passion for all that she does. One of her nominators stated that Jackson holds herself to a higher standard and exhibits a level of maturity that stands out from the crowd.

An SEC Honor Roll recipient, she has been involved in a wide range of leadership and diversity initiatives across campus.

Torchbearer
Highest UT Student Honor:
Ms. Diane Tate

Inspirational is a perfect way to describe Diane Tate. After a faculty member heard Tate speak as a UT admissions ambassador, she said she was never more proud to be at the University of Tennessee.

A senior communication studies major from Chattanooga, Tate is active with the Commission for Blacks, Minority Enhancement for the University of Tennessee, the Student Government Association, the Chancellor’s Civility Task Force, the Vice Chancellor for Student Life’s Diversity Roundtable, and the programming committee of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority.

From her participation in the Business Education for Talented Students program early in her UT career, Tate immediately established herself as a role model and a star student. She is known as someone who brings positive energy to each situation and improves the quality of life for others.

Jefferson Prize:
Karla McKanders

During her six years as a faculty member, Karla McKanders has brought a new dimension to the UT College of Law’s clinical programs. She and her students have represented clients statewide in immigration and asylum cases with a great deal of success.

Her teaching and research interests are advocacy, civil rights, international humanitarian law, immigration, and refugee law and policy. She also teaches a seminar she developed on asylum law. In 2011 and 2012, McKanders was a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Mohamed V-Souissi in Rabat, Morocco.

When law classes are not in session, McKanders carries a substantial pro bono and clinic caseload. She is a member of the Tennessee Bar Association’s Access to Justice Committee, a board member for Friends of Literacy, a member of the College of Law Admissions Committee, Co-Chair of the Commission for Blacks, and a faculty advisor for several student organizations.

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