



7-16-1973

1973 Department of English Report on Recruiting Minorities

Commission for Blacks

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Commission for Blacks, "1973 Department of English Report on Recruiting Minorities" (1973). *Faculty and Staff Reports and Communications*.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 37916

July 16, 1973

Mr. Hardy Liston
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Administration Building 110

Dear Mr. Liston:

Here are my answers to the six questions that you proposed for our meeting on July 16.

1. The English Department attempted to recruit two excellent Black staff members for 1973-74. Dr. Juanita Williamson, a University of Michigan Ph.D., and Mr. Ronald Welburn, a Ph.D. candidate at Syracuse University, both unavailable at present for full-year appointments, were invited to accept visiting appointments. Dr. Williamson will be Visiting Professor of English during the second summer term of 1973. Mr. Welburn declined to accept our offer of a position as Visiting Lecturer in English for the fall quarter of 1973. Though Mr. Welburn chose to remain at Syracuse next fall, he remains interested in the University of Tennessee, and arrangements have been made to discuss the possibility of his joining our staff in the fall of 1974 upon completion of his work for the doctorate.

2. Undoubtedly, in the field of English, the most significant limiting factor in the recruitment of Black faculty is the very small number of qualified prospects with any interest in teaching at the University of Tennessee. The number of Black students pursuing advanced study in English is not nearly large enough to meet the demand, and many of the best qualified are not available to us, either because they do not choose to teach in the South or because they have a personal commitment to teaching in a predominantly Black college.

3. Despite the obvious difficulties, we have not given up hope. The great need, of course, for the University of Tennessee and for other colleges and universities, is an increased number of qualified young Black men and women in the field of English. In the next year or two we plan to increase our efforts to attract some of them into our own graduate program, especially at the doctoral level; and we hope that other universities in our region will do the same thing.

4. For several years we have written annually to all of the predominantly Black colleges in Tennessee soliciting applications for graduate and teaching assistantships. Next year we intend to write also to selected schools outside Tennessee. In addition, we are preparing for the fall of 1973 a brochure on the English major and its uses. We will see to it that this brochure is brought to the attention of the Black students on our campus.

5. To me affirmative action in the area under discussion is the effort to find and attract (1) qualified Black faculty members and (2) Black students who can profit from the programs that we are prepared to offer them.

6. It seems to me that relations between Black students and the faculty of the English Department are generally good. There are, of course, some problems, some misunderstandings, but the number brought to the attention of my office is small.

Sincerely yours,

Bain T. Stewart

Bain T. Stewart
Head

BTS :mrb