The monthly meeting of the Council for Diversity and Interculturalism of 2010-2011 was held on September 21, 2011 in the Gordon Ball Board Room at the Brenda Lawson Athletic Center. Present at the meeting were Joan Heminway, Avery Howard, Jenny Moshak, Tom Cervone, Charles Houston, Tyler Johnson, Donna Thomas, Anton Reece, Herb Byrd, Carolyn Hodges, Marva Rudolph, Annazette Houston, Margie Nichols, Dr. Cheek, Kasey Robinson, Maxine Davis, Camille Hall, Michael Wirth, and Tracy Childress.

I. Diversity Initiatives Update- Chancellor Cheek

Following brief introductions, Chancellor Cheek thanked everyone for their service to the University community through the Council. The Chancellor reflected on the strategic priorities that he outlined in the beginning of his administration. Increased diversity for the campus was one of these priorities.

A Call for Civility, the video presentation created as part of the Chancellor’s civility initiative, will be shown at an upcoming conference for Public and Land Grant Universities. The video is available through a number of links within the University’s web site. It was shown during freshman orientation and small group discussions held during orientation week.

Chancellor Cheek reported that this year’s freshman class is more diverse than last year’s class. For example, the class included 9.0% African Americans compared to 8.3% in 2010.

The Chancellor also noted that this year marks the 50th Anniversary of African American undergraduate student enrollment at the University of Tennessee. He remarked that integration of public universities in Tennessee was different than the integration process in other states where governors physically blocked doors. Tennessee’s process, he said, was more peaceful. The Chancellor added that he hopes for significant change and improvement over the next 50 years.

The culminating event for the 50th Anniversary celebration is the September 23rd gala. More than 800 people are scheduled to attend.

Q & A

Following his opening remarks, the Chancellor answered questions from Council members.

Tyvi Small asked for the Chancellor’s thoughts regarding a chief diversity officer for UTK. The Chancellor responded stating that he is thinking about what the position ought to be. He highlighted the difficulty posed by the present budgetary crisis—the University is losing $64 million dollars. He added that he is interested in moving forward. However, he is unable able to commit to a time frame.

Dr. Marva Rudolph asked which, if any, of the prior year’s goals was not reached. The Chancellor answered stating that the administration wanted to increase diversity. While the undergraduate student body is more diverse, the University has seen little progress in graduate student recruitment.
The Chancellor added that the focus on civility has been well-received. There have been fewer reported instances of bias, graffiti, and similar destructive acts. He stated that the progress has been good. But, he is still not satisfied.

The Chancellor commented on the incident involving Rebecca Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* following her visit to UTK last spring. He stated that the students involved were properly dealt with by Dean Maxine Davis. Dean Davis stated that in her opinion, UTK has made strides with its students. However, the University needs to increase the diversity of the faculty, African Americans in particular. The Chancellor stated that he did not disagree and added that last year the University employed more African faculty than it has in recent history. The Chancellor said that the increase is not sufficient. But, it is progress.

Dr. Hodges suggested that the University can improve its success in attracting more diverse candidates by working more aggressively with the search firms. She stated that the existing faculty could serve as a resource for potential candidates.

Joan Heminway stated that in most cases, schools are looking for to fill faculty positions with people of color. She stated that UTK has to figure out how to make itself more appealing to diverse candidates. The University could use the search firms to gather information on why candidates do not select UTK. There are many variables that impact a candidate’s decision including salary, geography, and quality of life considerations.

Chancellor Cheek stated that generally, faculty members are not responsive to requests for candidate recommendations. He suggested that they should be encouraged to participate in the process by recommending candidates and encouraging candidates to choose UTK.

Dr. Rudolph added that the issue is not just recruitment, it is retention. She stated that the necessity of making sure that current faculty members are satisfied and able to move up the ladder should not be overlooked.

Avery Howard suggested that *A Call for Civility* should be shown to upper classmen. He also stated that a link to the video should be included in the A-Z index. The Chancellor agreed with these suggestions and added that he would like to hear suggestions on how to show the video to more students.

Jenny Moshak suggested that the video could be played at football games. Showing the video and men’s and women’s basketball games was also suggested.

Anton Reece inquired about the impact of the diversity plan review process that was completed last fall. The Chancellor stated that diversity hiring remains part of the University’s performance review criteria.

Charles Houston stated that the Black Staff and Faculty Association has a “Grow Your Own Initiative.” The program seeks to prepare current employees for promotions and positions of greater responsibility within the University. He suggested that the University could adopt a similar approach and focus on promoting qualified candidates that are already employed by UTK.

Tom Cervone stated that he would like to see the Council embrace the breadth of diversity and address issues beyond race. The Chancellor added that diversity of thought is important.
II. 2011-2012 Council Membership
Herb Byrd led a discussion on the current composition of the Council and opportunities to add additional members, if needed. Suggestions for additional members included representatives from the Exempt Staff Council and the Employee Relations Committee. Mr. Small added that now might be an appropriate time to add additional faculty members. He stated that there is no representative from Research or the Division of Finance and Administration.

Dean Michael Wirth stated that if members are added to the Council, they should be people that are passionate about diversity issues. Otherwise, the Council has enough members.

Ms. Moshak suggested that the Council should consider new membership based on diversity issues that need representation rather than representation of campus units.

Dr. Rudolph suggested that veterans may need representation. This includes students participating in ROTC and veterans returning to college after service.

Donna Thomas shared her opinion that the faculty retention issue will persist until the community becomes more inviting to diverse candidates.

After a general discussion on the Council’s community engagement goal, Mr. Small mentioned that an upcoming diversity leadership conference may present an opportunity to increase the Council’s engagement in the larger Knoxville community. Tracy Childress will forward information regarding the conference to the Council along with a list of the Council’s current membership.

III. Surveys
Mr. Byrd distributed a draft of employee engagement survey that will be distributed on November 1st.

Ms. Moshak asked whether the marital status question will include “partner” as a potential response. After a general discussion on the need for inclusive language, Dean Davis stated that there is a group on working to address language issues in University communications. That group’s work may provide guidance for the language in the employment survey.

Ms. Heminway added that in previous surveys, the University may have been constrained in its ability to modify questions because it was using the Chronicle of Higher Education survey. However, she added, there are some ways to ask parallel questions.

Mr. Byrd added that it is important to achieve a high level of consistency between the questions asked in the previous staff survey and the upcoming survey in order to create a good longitudinal study.

Ms. Moshak added that confidentiality must be emphasized so that participants feel comfortable enough to give sincere responses.

Ms. Heminway commented that the Council has not seen the results from the spring employee engagement survey. Mr. Byrd added that the student survey has not been analyzed.

IV. Diversity Plan Updates
Margie Nichols reported that the Chancellor distributed the information for the non-academic plan updates to the each of the vice chancellors. The deadline for the submission of the updates is October 30th.

Anton Reece asked whether meetings were ever held with deans and department heads to discuss the diversity plan updates for the academic units that were completed last fall. Dean Wirth stated that he has not received any feedback from the plan submitted for the College of Communication and Information.

**V. Commission Reports**

**Student Affairs**
Avery Howard, Student Government Association representative, reported that Student Activities is hosting diversity week October 10th-14th.

**LGBT**
Jenny Moshak reported that on October 22nd, there will be a full day of LGBT programming on campus for the first time.

**BFSA**
Mr. Houston reported that the BFSA will host its Fall Retreat on October 14th in the University Center. There is no cost to attend. He added that the 50th Anniversary Gala will mark achievement through the decades. He stated that the program includes a great deal of student participation.

**Faculty Senate**
Ms. Heminway reported that soft benefits for domestic partners are among the issues that the Professional Benefits Committee is working to resolve.

**VI. Next Meeting**
October 19, 2011 at 3:30 p.m., Gordan Ball Boardroom, Brenda Lawson Athletic Center