The monthly meeting of the Council for Diversity and Interculturalism of 2011-2012 was held on January 18, 2012 in the Gordon Ball Board Room at the Brenda Lawson Athletic Center. Present at the meeting were Tyvi Small, Carolyn Hodges, Marva Rudolph, Charles Houston, Robert Hinde, Jenny Moshak, Tom Cervone, Margie Nichols, Sarah Gardial, Herb Byrd, Anton Reece, and Tracy Childress.

I. Committee/Commission Reports

Black Faculty and Staff Association

Charles Houston reported that the BFSA held its first meeting of the year last week. Mr. Houston stated that the BFSA may elect new officers in the near term.

LGBT

Jenny Moshak and Tom Cervone shared news of an exciting event. I.O. Tillet Wright, creator of the Self Evident Truths will bring the Project to Knoxville. Self Evident Truths is a photographic installation featuring faces of the LGBTQ community from around the country. Ms. Wright has selected big cities as the locations for her photo shoots making the selection of Knoxville particularly special. In each city, she photographs 300 people. University Tennessee students, faculty, and staff are encouraged it to participate. Self Evident Truths is supported by the Human Rights Campaign. UTK was connected to the Project through a contact at the Tennessee Equality Project. Organizers will try to tie Knoxville’s participation in the Project to an upcoming LGBT alumni event.

II. Diversity Statement

Two members of the Creative Services team, Karen Simsen and Leigh Shoemaker, shared a preview of the University’s new website. The new website will go live on February 1st. Ms. Shoemaker stated that the team researched the habits of potential users and studied the websites of other SEC schools and the Top 25 in order to improve the design and functionality of UTK’s site.

One change immediately noted by Council members is the separation of the “Diversity” and “International” tabs. The rationale behind the separation is that diversity expresses who the UT community is while international takes an outward look at UT’s connections to external communities. The “Diversity” tab will be more accessible, placed at the top right hand corner of the home page. The diversity message is also woven throughout the website. Ongoing initiatives such as the Call for Civility and Community are highlighted.

One unique feature of the site is that it will be responsive. The new website will self-adjust for mobile devices and other technology. Users will not have to select a mobile version of the site in order to view it clearly.

Anton Reece suggested that pictures of students at diversity events could be integrated into the large image block on the Diversity page. Ms. Shoemaker stated that images and content for the website should be fed to the Creative Services team. Sarah Gardial stated that the Council and other campus
organizations should take responsibility for the site’s content. Additionally, Ms. Simsen stated that the campus calendar is not automatically populated. Individual entries are required.

Margie Nichols will distribute the new narrative to the Council so that the language can be reviewed.

**III. Employment Engagement Survey Letter Response**

Anton Reece shared the response that he received from Chancellor Cheek regarding the employment engagement survey. The Council’s concerns regarding the need for more inclusive language were received and understood. However, decisions regarding language and consistency were made and agreed upon by leadership in Human Resources. The requested changes were not made.

**IV. Chief Diversity Officer Funding**

Herb Byrd initiated a discussion on potential funding strategies for the chief diversity officer position. Mr. Byrd stated the adding an administrative position will always be a challenge from a budgetary standpoint. Also, there may be additional fiscal pressures placed on the University from the legislature. He suggested that the Council may need to consider outside funding sources in order to overcome the financial hurdle.

After a general discussion, several Council members agreed that seeking foundation funding and grants to secure the chief diversity officer’s salary does not demonstrate the institutional commitment that the position deserves—soft funding equals a soft commitment.

Tyvi Small asked whether external support for the position from alumni or other stakeholders would be beneficial. He stated that an outside push, coupled with internal pressure may be the only way to move the effort forward. Several Council members expressed frustration with the lack of progress. Margie Nichols offered to discuss the need for a chief diversity officer with her peers on the Chancellor’s Cabinet. Tracy Childress will provide Ms. Nichols with the information that the Chief Diversity Officer Subcommittee compiled last spring. She will also distill the information into a one-page document that can be distributed to various stakeholders.

Charles Houston added that advancing the chief diversity officer position would be a natural next step following last year’s celebration of the 50th Anniversary of African American Achievement.

**V. Next Meeting**

The Council will meet on February 15, 2012 at 3:30 p.m. in the Gordon Ball Boardroom, Brenda Lawson Athletic Center.