

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF BLACKS  
September 13, 2021

Members Present

Margo Dirkson	Charria Campbell	Arthur Banton
Krystal Akehinmi	Simone McKelvey	Robert Owens
Rosemarie Black	Holly Mills	Rufaro Chitiyo
Troy Smith	Edward Driggers	Sayota Knight
Mason Martin	Jamaal Thompson	

Members Absent

Harry Ingle	Gregory Holt	Jimmy Jones
Daniel Allen		

Proceedings

The Commission on the Status of Blacks met on Monday, September 13, 2021 using the Teams Meet format. The meeting was called to order by Arthur Banton at 2:32pm.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved. Margo Dirkson made the motion. Holly Mills seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes

A motion to approve the August 2, 2021 minutes with corrections was made by Krystal Akehinmi. It was seconded by Holly Mills. The motion carried unanimously.

Proceedings

Introductions

CSB members introduced themselves and welcomed new members.

New Faculty of Color & Staff welcoming committee report

Krystal Akehinmi and Rosemarie Black obtained lists containing names of minority faculty and staff. They contacted the Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, the College of Engineering and other entities who contributed information to be distributed to the newcomers. These items were placed in a goody bag and distributed. Five bags were distributed. A

note of thanks and appreciation was received from Dr. Cynthia Polk-Johnson (V.P. Student Affairs). The team pointed out that many people are difficult to locate. Perhaps a "buddy" could be assigned to help newly hired employees of color to feel more comfortable, find the resources available on campus and in Cookeville, as well as present a more positive, welcoming climate.

Further discussion centered around Human Resources' orientation for new hires. Kevin Vedder is the Associate Vice President of HR. Dr. Robert Owens is TTU's Chief Diversity Officer. Dr. Owens stated there are 15 individuals presently on the track for tenure. Ten are of color. Troy Smith stated that this was a positive increase over a few years ago where only 5 individuals of color were on the track for tenure.

#### Expectations and Wellness Committee (for survey questions)

The wellness survey would ask how are people doing and provide time to express themselves. It could center on three basic areas: work, family, and other. Simone McKelvey offered to contact Cathy Frederick regarding a survey she used with students of color. Volunteers for this committee are: Simone McKelvey, Rufaro Chitiyo and Troy Smith.

#### Committee for MLK Week of Service

The Commission was asked to think of ideas for MLK week and share them at the October meeting. Michelle Huddleston of Service Learning may be contacted for her suggestions. The plans for involvement need to be solidified in October.

#### Committee for Engagement/Social Activities (COVID Friendly)

Volunteers for this committee are: Simone McKelvey, Krystal Akehinmi. Student representatives are Mason Martin and Jamaal Thompson.

#### Other Such Matters

A suggestion to begin meeting in person was proposed. Simone McKelvey stated that in person meetings need to be held in a very large space that permits social distancing. Perhaps a hybrid situation is to be considered. Allen Driggers will work on this.

Other Such Matters continued: Upcoming Events

Sara Lowery presents "Shining Light On Mental Darkness  
September 14, 2021 at 7pm in Derryberry Hall Auditorium.  
Sponsored by the Student Government Association and the Counseling  
Center.

Tamara Winfrey-Harris presents Serena: Superwoman as Every (Black)  
Woman

Monday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in Derryberry Hall Auditorium.  
This is co-hosted by the Women's Center, the Department of English  
Creative Writing Program, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Tamara Winfrey-Harris will present "Black Women: Writing Our Own  
Stories"

Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. at 11am, Her background as a published author  
will go into more depth as to how to use writing as a form of self-care.  
Contact Dr. Helen Hunt (hhunt@tntech.edu for reservation details.

Cheya Thousand Wellness and Self-Care events will begin on  
Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Reservations are required. Contact Charria  
Campbell: ([cycampbell@tntech.edu](mailto:cycampbell@tntech.edu)) for more information.

Cheya Thousand presents "Self-Care Strategies in Daily Life"  
October 5, 2021 at 11am in Derryberry Hall Auditorium.  
All students, faculty and staff are invited.

Native American History Month Celebration

Wednesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 7pm in the Bryan Fine Arts Building  
Auditorium. All are invited.

Please find the event's calendar listing information

here: <https://www.tntech.edu/calendar/index.php?eID=3963>

### Adjournment

A motion was made to end the meeting by Krystal Akehinmi. It was seconded by Holly Mills. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting ended at 3:34pm. The next meeting will be on October 4, 2021, at 2:30pm. The meeting will be held through Teams (or members will be notified of a hybrid or in-person meeting).