

15 December 2006

The School of Art ad hoc committee on diversity, whose members are Emily Bivens, Baldwin Lee, Cary Staples and Patricia Tinajero-Baker was charged with responding to the request to draft a diversity plan. At this time we wish to defer utilizing the format of the diversity spreadsheet but instead wish to offer this position paper.

The School of Art affirms the importance of diversity. We are committed to doing all that can be done to ensure the ideals of diversity will be realized through the adoption and implementation of requisite policies.

As a preface to our observations and proposals concerning diversity, we would like to include the following:

The Letter of the Law vs. Beliefs of Hearts and Minds: a personal statement from Assistant Professor Patricia Tinajero-Baker

Every time that issue of diversity comes to the table it is really about compliance with State and/or Federal laws. I consider this effort well intentioned yet it does not show a deep commitment to carry out a strong and continuous effort to promote diversity that will change our minds and hearts towards the others. I rather find this effort as an attempt to fulfill a legal quota.

When I received the news that I had been offered a job at the University of Tennessee, I was excited, and called some close friends to share the news. I was quite surprised with the response that some of my close friends had to offer. One said: "I am sure that your minority status played a big part in getting your job!" I know my friend well, and I am sure that she did not mean to hurt my feelings, but she did.

There is a general resentment towards how minority and diversity issues are presented and handled within universities and other educational institutions that creates friction. On one hand, we are almost convinced that diversity is positive because it brings a broader understanding of the world around us that includes a diversity of race, gender, physical disabilities, religious beliefs and more. Yet at the same time it seems to create feeling of being threatened.

I am used to this kind of comments that my friend made, and sometimes the treatment that comes with it, so it was not a surprise when I arrived in Knoxville, where on many occasions I was asked to drop the Hispanic part of my name, Tinajero-Baker, leaving just Baker. I am aware that not everybody is affluent Spanish speaker, but it would be nice to show some patience and tolerance when exposed to something that is different. It would be nice that all of us have more exposure to a wider range of experience to prepare our students to be ready for the world.

The goals proposed by the diversity ad hoc committee seem appropriate, but this effort needs to be continuously ongoing to be

effective. To foster a welcoming environment and a support net for diverse groups requires funding and a standing committee that monitors and evaluates progress.

It is imperative that at the dismissal of the 38 year-old Geier lawsuit that the University of Tennessee not only continues to enhance the environment of diversity but also demand its commitment to diversity be enlarged¹. Not only would it be unacceptable for momentum to be lost but it is also the responsibility of the University of Tennessee to guarantee that the principals of diversity be aggressively pursued. The School of Art believes that the post-Geier era poses an opportunity and a challenge for the University of Tennessee to reaffirm its pledge to aspirations of diversity.

The School of Art recognizes mandating adherence to diversity from the “top down” offers no assurance that implementation will occur. We therefore recognize and assume our responsibility. The School of Art is moving to establish a standing diversity committee whose charge is to ensure continued effort and action within the school to increase diversity, as well as, ensure a welcoming and conscientious environment to a broad definition of diverse student, faculty and staff. The committee will fulfill an annual responsibility of collating and reporting issues of diversity, as well as, compliance and implementation of established and future goals.

The School of Art believes that as it adopts these strategies, equivalent efforts be required of all other units at the University of Tennessee. We believe that diversity is a fundamental interest for every unit, at every level of the University. The School of Art stands ready to assist the Diversity Council in formulating University-wide diversity standards and practices. Toward this end we propose that the office of Vice President for Equity and Diversity be charged with the responsibility of overseeing all aspects of diversity related issues in the University of Tennessee.

As important as it is to declare our commitment to the mission of diversity, it is as important to institute means of implementation and determination of compliance. Failing to foster an environment of diversity is not a crime without victims. Existing means of redress for aggrieved individuals are insufficient². We therefore propose that the re-

¹ Daily Beacon, [Effects of Geier Suit Continue](#), Sarah ElGhazaly, 2006-09-25 13:56:40
While the Geier lawsuit — named after Rita Sanders Geier, the original plaintiff in the case — put pressure on state universities to improve their recruitment and acceptance of black students, UT officials say that it is currently appropriate to broaden the definition of campus diversity.

“Under Geier, diversity was very binary, black or white. But post-Geier, we are redefining diversity,” said Richard Bayer, dean of enrollment services. “We are casting the net much wider.”

² [University Of Tennessee Discrimination Complaint Procedure](#)

1. Employees and students are encouraged to attempt to resolve a complaint through the administrative structure of the employment unit or academic department

instatement of the Office of the Ombudsperson. The jurisdictional scope of the Faculty Ombudsperson is insufficient to address grievances concerning diversity issues suffered by students, staff and other University personnel. This proposed Office of the Ombudsperson will have as one of its specific charges the responsibility to mediate diversity related grievances.

The proposed School of Art diversity committee will be charged with creating a welcoming, supportive and inclusive campus. To accomplish this we must first understand and acknowledge and give voice to those who feel the deleterious effects of exclusion and lack of sensitivity. The most open, accessible and non-threatening forum must be provided. We will develop an online questionnaire to collect this information. With this information, the diversity committee could more pointedly address current issues and make appropriate recommendations for the future.

Clarity and visibility on issues of diversity would greatly serve many of the goals set forth. Dedication to the principals of diversity will be a fundamental component of the mission statement of the School of Art. A statement of diversity will be prominently displayed on those portals where the largest numbers of visitors will be informed of our stance on this issue. This will include the School of Art website. We propose that the University of Tennessee demonstrate its commitment by similarly ensuring that both visitors and members of the University community be made aware of this concern.

The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year. We propose that the University, under the direction of the Vice President for Equity and Diversity, perform this task annually.

Within the School of Art, we are initiating an effort to bring creative diversity through our visiting artist and scholars program. We see this as an opportunity to broaden our exposure to individuals and ideas not reflective of our dominant culture. We affirm our belief in diversity in the process of hiring new employees in our School by insisting on a vigorous effort to seek out and retain minority and underrepresented students and faculty. The School of Art will develop and adopt procedures to provide diversity training faculty, staff and students. We will make good-faith efforts in revising departmental curricula to reflect our commitment to broaden the mission of diversity. We will continue to engage in international/intercultural endeavors such as our Shanghai Media studies program and the Africa semester project. We believe it should be a University priority to provide a level of funding commensurate with its stated priority in support of diversity.

The School of Art stands firmly in support of the recommendations of the Diversity Council.

The University of Tennessee

Diversity Plan

College/Dept. School of Art

Goal One: Create and sustain a welcoming, supportive and inclusive campus climate.

Objectives	Strategy/Tactics	Date	Responsible Party	Benchmarks
1	The School of Art is moving to establish a standing diversity committee whose charge is to ensure continued effort and action within the school to increase diversity, as well as, ensure a welcoming and conscientious environment to a broad definition of diverse student, faculty and staff. The committee will fulfill an annual responsibility of collating and reporting issues of diversity, as well as, compliance and implementation of established and future goals.	Spring 2007	School of Art Diversity Committee	
2	Clarity and visibility on issues of diversity would greatly serve many of the goals set forth. Dedication to the principals of diversity will be a fundamental component of the mission statement of the School of Art. A statement of diversity will be prominently displayed on those portals where the largest numbers of visitors will be informed of our stance on this issue. This will include the School of Art website.	Spring 2007	School of Art Diversity Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.
3	To bring creative diversity through our visiting artist and scholars program. We see this as an opportunity to broaden our exposure to individuals and ideas not reflective of our dominant culture.	Spring 2007	Visiting Artist Scholars Designers Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.
4	The proposed School of Art diversity committee will be charged with creating a welcoming, supportive and inclusive campus. To accomplish this we must first understand and acknowledge and give voice to those who feel the deleterious effects of exclusion and lack of sensitivity. The most open, accessible and non-threatening forum must be provided. We will develop an online questionnaire to collect this information. With this information, the diversity committee could more pointedly address current issues and make appropriate recommendations for the future.	Spring 2007	School of Art Diversity Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.

5	re-instatement of the Office of the Ombudsperson. The jurisdictional scope of the Faculty Ombudsperson is insufficient to address grievances concerning diversity issues suffered by students, staff and other University personnel. This proposed Office of the Ombudsperson will have as one of its specific charges the responsibility to mediate diversity related grievances.	Spring 2007		

Goal Two: Attract and retain greater numbers of individuals from under-represented populations into faculty, staff, and administrative positions (particularly department heads, directors, deans, and vice chancellors).

Objectives	Strategy/Tactics	Date	Responsible Party	Benchmarks
1	The School of Art will develop and adopt procedures to provide diversity training faculty, staff and students.	Spring 2007	School of Art Diversity Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.
2	The proposed School of Art diversity committee will be charged with creating a welcoming, supportive and inclusive campus. To accomplish this we must first understand and acknowledge and give voice to those who feel the deleterious effects of exclusion and lack of sensitivity. The most open, accessible and non-threatening forum must be provided. We will develop an online questionnaire to collect this information. With this information, the diversity committee could more pointedly address current issues and make appropriate recommendations for the future.	Spring 2007	School of Art Diversity Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.

Goal Three: Attract, retain, and graduate increasing numbers of students from historically under-represented populations and international students.

Objectives	Strategy/Tactics	Date	Responsible Party	Benchmarks
1	The proposed School of Art diversity committee will be charged with creating a welcoming, supportive and inclusive campus. To accomplish this we must first understand and acknowledge and give voice to those who feel the deleterious effects of exclusion and lack of sensitivity. The most open, accessible and non-threatening forum must be provided. We will develop an online questionnaire to collect this information. With this information, the diversity committee could more pointedly address current issues and make appropriate recommendations for the future.	Spring 2007	School of Art Diversity Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.

Goal Four: Develop and strengthen partnerships with diverse communities in Tennessee and globally.

Objectives	Strategy/Tactics	Date	Responsible Party	Benchmarks
1	To bring creative diversity through our visiting artist and scholars program. We see this as an opportunity to broaden our exposure to individuals and ideas not reflective of our dominant culture.	Spring 2007	Visiting Artist Scholars Designers Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.

Goal Five: Ensure that curricular requirements include significant intercultural perspectives.

Objectives	Strategy/Tactics	Date	Responsible Party	Benchmarks
1	We will make good-faith efforts in revising departmental curricula to reflect our commitment to broaden the mission of diversity.	Spring 2007	Curriculum Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.
2	We will continue to engage in international/intercultural endeavors such as our Shanghai Media studies program and the Africa semester project.	Spring 2007	School of Art faculty	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.

Goal Six: Prepare graduate students to become teachers and researchers in a diverse world.

Objectives	Strategy/Tactics	Date	Responsible Party	Benchmarks
1	We will make good-faith efforts in revising departmental curricula to reflect our commitment to broaden the mission of diversity.	Spring 2007	Curriculum Committee	The processes of monitoring and reporting are essential components in ensuring compliance to the ideals of diversity. The diversity committee of the School of Art will be developing mechanisms to measure the effects of programs implemented each year.