



The Maxine Smith Fellows' Showcase:

Historical Perspective on the Program and an Examination of the
Purpose, Process, and the Overall Impact of the Project

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Abstract

Historically, minorities have been underrepresented in professional employment positions at institutions of higher learning. This has been especially problematic in the southern regions. In an effort to bring diversity into higher education in Tennessee, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) created the Maxine Smith Fellowship program, a strategic initiative to provide training and promotional opportunities for underrepresented groups with hopes of having these groups serve in upper-level administrative positions. Despite these efforts, many ethnicities continue to be underrepresented in professional positions at institutions of higher learning. Due to this issue, it is even more important to track participants in the program, their success, and provide a forum in the form of a showcase in which fellows can be highlighted. This paper will provide an overview of Maxine Smith Fellows Showcase, provide a review of literature on how the program was started, explain the process for the project, provide statistical data on underrepresented populations within TBR, and explain the importance for the continuation of the Maxine Smith Fellows program and the Maxine Smith Fellows project.

In order to fully understand the need for this project, it is vital to first get an understanding of what precipitated the need for diversity initiatives and fellowship programs for underrepresented groups. It is equally important to examine various other fellowships that are offered outside of Tennessee, and their overall purpose in addressing underrepresentation.

Program and Initiatives Designed to Increase the Representation of African Americans in Higher Education

Discriminatory practices have had a significant impact on the representation of minorities. During the 1960s and the 1970s the idea of fellowships was started with the purpose of increasing the representation of African American professionals in higher education. Initially programs such as MFP were created to provide financial and educational assistance to increase the number of Ph.D.'s and faculty positions for African Americans (Padilla et al., 1973).

The College of Public Affairs at UC Berkeley (2015) noted efforts toward addressing the underrepresentation of African American students, faculty, and administrators. In 2015, the college began working on creating a \$20 million endowment to assist in the recruitment of African American students and faculty, as well as revamping the entire climate and culture for individuals of color (Public Affairs, UC Berkeley, 2015). Prestigious colleges and universities such as Yale University have supported initiatives to increase the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty. Yale University has pledged over \$50 million over a decade toward diverse faculty development and recruitment (Zang, 2015).

Programs such as the McNair Scholars Program (2016) provide another initiative to assist underrepresented groups in acquiring a graduate degree. In the program, students are given the opportunity to participate in classes, lectures, and seminars that address research and various

topics pertaining to higher education (McNair Scholars Program, 2016). Regional efforts have been created to address the underrepresentation of African Americans in Ph.D. programs and faculty and administrative positions. Organizations like the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) were created to increase diversity in the southern region of the United States. The SREB created fellowships to provide assistance to minority students by identifying specific barriers and providing multiple levels of support including financial assistance and training for those seeking a doctoral degree. Because of these efforts, the SREB has been successful in graduating more than 800 minority Ph.D. graduates since its founding in 1993 (SREB, 2016).

Historical Perspective of the Maxine Smith Program

To understand the need for this project, it is vital to get an understanding of historical events and landmark cases which significantly impacted institutions of higher learning, specifically those that have impacted TBR institutions. A brief review of literature offering a historical perspective of programs and an examination of desegregation and other strategic initiatives that were implemented to reverse the effects of discrimination has also been provided.

The lack of African American representation and discriminatory practices involving the hiring, retention, and salary for African Americans at Tennessee institutions was brought to national attention in the 1960s, which would eventually lead to a case that would change TBR institutions of higher learning. In 1968, the renowned Geier vs. University of Tennessee lawsuit was brought to the forefront. The basis for the lawsuit centered on the idea that the state of Tennessee continued to have dual systems that prevented African Americans from receiving equitable educational opportunities. Although the lawsuit would go on for approximately 40 years from beginning to end, the courts came to an agreement in 1984 laying out a strategic plan to address years of discriminatory practices (Winn, 2008). In 2001 the courts finalized the Geier decree, which resulted in the state allocating an additional \$20 million to an

HBCU, Tennessee State University, and an additional \$40 million to fund strategic initiatives at TBR institutions. These funds were allocated with the purpose of eradicating discriminatory practices and to increase the retention, hiring, and professional development of African American students, faculty, and administrators (Renshaw, 2007).

As a result of the decree the TBR implemented the Maxine Smith Fellows program, a strategic initiative designed to provide professional development opportunities to increase the number of qualified African American applicants for faculty and administrative positions. Since its inception, the Maxine Smith Fellows program has been expanded to include other underrepresented groups in addition to African Americans (TBR, 2016). Although the Maxine Smith Fellowship is named after an incomparable civil rights leader, the reality is that this program was truly started because of a determined African American professor named Rita Geier. Geier started the process that would facilitate promotional opportunities that would change the lives of over one hundred aspiring professionals.

Overview of the Maxine Smith Fellows' Showcase

The Maxine Smith Fellow's Showcase is a continuous project that highlights the program and its participants and consists of two major goals. The first goal of the project was to create an updated electronic record of contact and credential information for all individuals who have participated in the program. The second goal of the project was to create a website to highlight former fellows and their accomplishment.

The Purpose of the Maxine Smith Showcase Initiative

In an attempt to continue the legacy of the civil rights leader Maxine Smith and the Maxine Smith Fellows program, a project highlighting the program was created. The project began a formalized process of continuous communication among program overseers, as well as

current and previous fellows. The project highlights the achievements, accomplishments, and vitas of previous participants. Initially, this record will be housed on an independent website; after which, the information will be part of the TBR website and will be accessible to program participants and future employers.

The Maxine Smith Fellows Showcase is more than just a location to view former fellows, but an opportunity for fellows to continue the networking process that extends beyond the Tennessee boarder. Through this initiative, fellows, specifically those in upper administrative positions, will be able to acquire potential employees that have successfully completed leadership skills sets specific to academia.

The Maxine Smith Fellows' Showcase will serve to be a great resource for the Maxine Smith Fellows and the Program. The project will assist the Office of Strategic Effectiveness in tracking and locating previous participants in the program. This project is a continuous initiative and will provide information on previous, current, and future participants that will serve as resource for TBR, underrepresented groups seeking insight on networking and employments opportunities, and a networking tool for current and previous participants.

Data Examining the Need for the Continuation of the Program and Project Initiative

Although great strides have been made to diversify the Tennessee Board of Regents, there is still a great need to continue the efforts and goals of the Maxine Smith Program. The charts below provide statistical data on the number of underrepresented individuals that served in faculty or administrative positions for the Tennessee Board of Regents in 2014.

Full-time Administrators by Race (EE 01)

July 1, 2014

Institution	Alaskan Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Unknown	Grand Total
APSU			3			29		32
ETSU			1			45		46
MTSU		1	9	1	1	65		77
TSU		2	40	1		10	1	54
TTU		2	2			28		32
UoM		4	5	1	1	51		62
Total		9	60	3	2	228	1	303
CHASCC			4		1	21		26
CLSCC						8		8
COSCC			1			7		8
DSCC			1			15		16
JSCC			3			14		17
MSCC			1		1	5		7
NaSCC			2			25		27
NeSCC						10		10
PSCC						14		14
RSCC			1			9		10
STCC			1			9		10
VSCC			1			5		6
WSCC			1			10		11
2 Total		0	16	0	2	152	0	170
Grand Total		9	76	3	4	380	1	473

Full-time Faculty by Race (EE 01)

July 1, 2014

	Alaskan Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Unknown	Grand Total
APSU		26	30	3	4	300	4	367
ETSU		44	26	5		536	13	624
MTSU		68	69	18		804	4	963
TSU	1	60	149	9	3	146	5	373
TTU		31	12	8	1	353		405
UoM		107	86	16	2	710	2	923
1 Total	1	336	372	59	10	2849	28	3655
CHASCC		4	13	1		177		195
CLSCC		4	3	1		64		72
COSCC		1	8		1	87		97
DSCC			5			44	4	53
JSCC			4			82		86
MSCC			6	1		86		93
NaSCC		3	9	5		147		164
NeSCC		2	3	3		107		115
PSCC		2	16	6		216		240
RSCC		6	6	3		114		129
STCC		6	6	3		114		129
VSCC		4	15	1	1	134		155
WSCC		1	4	2	1	152		160
2 Total	0	33	98	26	3	1524	4	1688
Grand Total	1	369	470	85	13	4373	32	5343

The underrepresentation of African Americans in faculty and administrative positions has continued to be evident at most TBR institutions. Data from the TBR indicated that out of the 303 administrators at 4-year TBR institutions, African Americans accounted for 60 positions (20%) (M. Greppin-Watts, personal communication, July 1, 2014). However, these numbers included a significant number of administrators at Tennessee State University (TSU) an HBCU. When data from TSU is removed from the complete set of data, African Americans accounted for only 20 (8%) of the 263 administrators at the other five TBR universities: Austin Peay State University (APSU), East Tennessee State University (ETSU), Middle Tennessee State University

(MTSU), Tennessee Tech University (TTU), and the University of Memphis (U of M). The underrepresentation of African American faculty was also prevalent at TBR community colleges at which African Americans accounted for less than 10% of 170 administrative positions. The underrepresentation was also evident in faculty positions in which African Americans accounted for 470 (9%) of the total 5,343 faculty positions at TBR community colleges and universities. As with administrators, the disparity is even greater when TSU an HBCU is withdrawn from the numbers. With TSU excluded, African Americans accounted for 321 (6.5%) faculty positions of the 4,970 faculty positions at the remaining 18 institutions.

Strategic Steps in the Creating the Project

The Maxine Smith Showcase was an extensive project culminating the experiences and credentials of previous fellows. In an effort to successfully complete this project, several strategic steps occurred, which are detailed below:

Step 1: The first step of the project was to determine the type of the components for the project. I was unsure if it would be database, a website, or pamphlet. After careful consideration, I realized that a website that would show the picture of fellows and their credentials would be best for the project. Once I decided that the project would entail a website, I arranged a time to communicate with individuals from the Tennessee Board of Regents. Due to the fact this process was going to require an extensive amount of technical assistance, Dr. Thompson, Vice Chancellor of Strategic Initiatives, referred me to Matthew Gann, who would assist with any website assistance. Mr. Gann recommended that I draft a comprehensive process for the project, which would include acquiring a complete list of current and former fellows dating back to 2003. As the program manager for the project, I was able to communicate with the coordinator of the program to acquire an excel sheet that provided contact information for each fellow.

Step 2: I took the advice of Mr. Gann and immediately sent out an email requesting for each fellow to send his or her vitae, a current photo, and relevant contact information. After only receiving a small amount of correspondence from fellows, it became very clear that the emails listed on the initial excel sheet were no longer applicable. Locating the former fellows proved to be a daunting task that would require additional support and an extensive amount of time. In an effort to get updated contact information, I employed a student worker to assist me in locating former Fellows. This task required us to use search engines and social media platforms such as Google, Linkin, Twitter, and Facebook. After about two weeks, we were able to locate all but a few participants.

Step 3: After reviewing the website, I quickly realized that the project needed to be expanded to include the history and the specifics of the program. Many of my colleagues had congratulated me for being accepted in the program; however, they would also then ask me about the program. This prompted me to include new articles and videos about the historical civil rights leader, Maxine Smith.

Step 4: In an effort to ensure that the project was suitable for the requested task, I had Dr. Wendy Thompson review the website. She instructed me to provide additional information about the Geier lawsuit, which ultimately started the Maxine Smith Fellowship. After receiving this information, I decided to include additional information on the website highlighting the Geier lawsuit and the initiatives that came out of this landmark case. This would provide website visitors, specifically potential future Maxine Smith Fellows, with a more comprehensive view of the history of the program and its purpose.

Step 5: Upon updating the website, I realized that it would be beneficial to create a pamphlet that could be distributed to schools and potential candidates. This brochure would serve as a marketing tool for the previous recipients and the program. In the pamphlet, I provided a detailed description of the program, the purpose of the program, the financial and networking benefits of the program, as well as a list of very successful individuals who have completed the program with hopes of placing more attention on the program.

Step 6: In this step, I wanted to take one last opportunity to have all individuals review the final documents and website. In order to complete this task, I had Ms. Deanna Stacy, Dr. Thompson, and my mentor to review the documents to ensure that the information was suitable and at the professional level.

Step 7: The final and most critical step was presenting the website and pamphlet to my peers, a president emeritus, staff, and two Vice Chancellors. The Maxine Smith Showcase was presented and approved with recommendations, which are provided below:

Recommendations

- 1.) Due to copy right laws, it was recommended to acquire approval for any information that was placed on the website.
- 2.) It was further recommended that the fellows be grouped together by division. This would better assist potential employers in searching for candidates for their organization or institution.
- 3.) In an effort to ensure that fellows' information was not tampered with, it was recommended that I put the vita in the form of a PDF.

Project Continuation

The continuation of this project is imperative to the Maxine Smith Fellows program. Although the Maxine Smith Fellows' Showcase is a prototype, the ultimate goal of the program is to continue to highlight the high caliber of participants that have successfully completed this leadership training initiative. In order for this to occur, each new candidate or previous candidate will be required to submit information to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. This project will allow the program to have a central location to update information on fellows, assist in the continuous tracking of participants, provide a venue for potential employers to acquire diverse qualified applicants, and assist in the continued networking and professional opportunities for participants.

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