

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Approved by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees
December 11, 2001

The primary mission of the University of Tennessee is to provide quality educational opportunities for the people of this state. Essential components of a quality education include an outstanding and diverse faculty, first-class facilities, and an environment conducive to learning. The Board of Trustees is committed to achieving each of these essential components at the University of Tennessee.

One measure of the quality of an educational experience is the extent to which it enables the recipient to compete and be productive in the marketplace and contribute to the quality of life. Through the expansion of transportation and communication systems, the marketplace continues to become more diverse and global in nature. The Board of Trustees recognizes that diversity in the educational environment adds value to the educational experience and the degree earned. This value-added experience prepares the graduate to contribute more effectively to society and to compete more effectively in the global marketplace of the 21st century.

As the University of Tennessee enters its third century of service to the people of Tennessee, the state is experiencing significant demographic changes reflective of national demographic trends. The Board of Trustees recognizes that the University must meet the challenge of providing educational and employment opportunities for this changing population.

The Board of Trustees specifically affirms its commitment to the requirements, objectives, and spirit of the court-approved Consent Decree in the desegregation litigation known as *Geier v. Sundquist*. The Board is committed to achieving the Consent Decree's ultimate objective of a racially unitary system of public higher education in Tennessee and elimination of any policy or practice traceable to the racially segregated system of higher education that once existed in Tennessee by law. The Board is also committed to making employment and promotion decisions unfettered by the discriminatory practices of the former system. To these ends, the Board expressly reaffirms the University's policy of nondiscrimination in all aspects of university life, including financial aid, extracurricular activities, hiring, promotion and retention of employees, and the recruitment, enrollment and retention of students. Consistent with the continuing duty to eliminate any vestiges of the former racially segregated system, the Board recognizes the need for the University to engage in a variety of remedial initiatives to attract and retain African American faculty, staff, and students. The Board of Trustees hereby directs the University administration to engage in vigorous compliance with the letter and spirit of the Consent Decree and to report periodically to the Board on compliance activities and achievements. The Board further directs that any performance evaluation of department heads, deans, vice chancellors, provosts, and chancellors/vice presidents of each campus and institute include a review of performance with respect to the requirements and objectives of the Consent Decree.

It is the vision of the Board of Trustees for the University of Tennessee to become a university of choice where faculty, staff, and students of diverse backgrounds and cultures choose to affiliate; where all people are treated with respect, understanding, and fairness; and where a quality educational experience enhances the growth and development of all served. Achievement of this vision is the administrative responsibility of the University administration, beginning with the President and including the administrative staff of each campus and institute.