DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR JAMES L. HILL

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for James L. Hill, senior vice president, president’s office, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

IN MEMORIAM
JAMES L. HILL

The life of Dr. James L. Hill is noteworthy on two counts, either of which by itself would justify the widespread celebration of his eighty-four remarkable years. The first count is the inspiration provided by the arc of his own life story, the second is the fruit of his labor at the University of Texas. And yet the two are difficult to separate, as his personal story could not but bolster his effectiveness as a high-level ambassador of the University to critical constituencies.

James Hill was born in Austin in 1928, the son of a street sweeper and homemaker, neither of whom had progressed beyond grade school. Hill became salutatorian of his high school graduation class, which would have automatically qualified him for admission to his first choice for college, the University of Texas, but for the fact that it was 1949 and he was black.

Mr. Hill enrolled at Austin’s Huston-Tillotson University and graduated in 1953. He was an accomplished trombonist, and his first full-time job was as a band director at an all-black high school in Abilene. But as he was already married and had a child, he found the salary too low to live on. His principal suggested he become a guidance counselor. By this time, the Supreme Court had outlawed educational segregation in Sweatt v. Painter, and in 1959, James Hill enrolled at UT Austin as a master’s student in educational psychology. After earning his degree, he stayed connected to the University through participation in the Texas Exes, with a special interest in recruiting African-American students. Foreshadowing his future role in the UT administration, as a high school guidance counselor, he personally would travel with UT students to Dallas and Houston to meet with principals, counselors, and prospective students to dispel the notion that the University was an unwelcoming place for minorities.

James Hill returned to UT Austin once more to earn his Ph.D. in 1978. This opened the door for his move into educational administration. By the mid-1970s, he was moving up the ranks at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and in the early 1980s, he began an eight-year tenure as deputy commissioner.

From the TEA, Dr. Hill went to work as director of the southwest field office for the Princeton-based Educational Testing Service. But in 1993, UT President Robert Berdahl called him back to The University of Texas at Austin to become associate vice president for administration and public affairs. In 2000, Dr. Hill made history when President Larry Faulkner appointed him as UT Austin’s first African-American vice president. As vice president for community and school relations, his portfolio grew to include the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, the University Interscholastic League, Neighborhood Longhorns, Community and School Relations, University Outreach programs, and Pre-college Youth Development.

At UT Austin, Dr. Hill facilitated relationships with schools, school systems, and state agencies and was a leader in promoting diversity among students and faculty. He greatly strengthened the University’s relations with neighboring communities and minorities.

In 2007, President Bill Powers appointed him senior vice president, a title he held for the remainder of his life.
At his funeral, Dr. Hill’s colleague, Deputy to the President Charles Roeckle, said, “What he accomplished by example and deed, helped transform the University—from what it was to what it should be. And his influence will endure for generations to come.”

This memorial resolution was prepared by Avrel B. Seale, Office of the President.

Distributed to the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President on October 30, 2012, and posted under “Memorials” at http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.