DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
ROBERT L. MARION

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Robert L. Marion, professor emeritus, special education, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
ROBERT L. MARION

It is the rare individual who has the opportunity to make a significant and long lasting effect upon society or its educational institutions. Dr. Robert L. Marion was one of those rare individuals. Visualize the difficulties and complexities for an African American young man in the 1950s to gain access and progress to the completion of bachelors, masters and Ph.D. degrees from one of the nation’s elite institutions of higher education, the University of Michigan. These accomplishments alone speak to the intellect and resourcefulness of Dr. Marion. The focus of his educational pursuits and interests—adaptive physical education, counseling/educational administration—also reflect a growing, life long commitment of service to individuals of greatest need, those with disabilities or special gifts.

Early in his career, Dr. Marion provided leadership in public schools as a high school principal and assistant superintendent. He supported opportunity and more open access to higher education as assistant director of admissions and coordinator of Opportunity Awards at the University of Michigan. It was from success in these roles that Dr. Marion was recruited to The University of Texas at Austin in 1973 as assistant to the vice president with an appointment as assistant professor in the Department of Special Education.

Dr. Marion’s appointment to The University of Texas at Austin brought success as an academic through his teaching, research, and service. He developed the secondary education, special education teacher preparation program in the Department of Special Education, published scholarly articles and books, and made important presentations to learned societies. His book, *Educators, Parents, and Exceptional Children* has become the standard for persons concerned with students with disabilities and their parents. At a time in history when there was limited knowledge and commitment to culturally diverse students with disabilities, his article “Communicating with Parents of Culturally Diverse Exceptional Child,” published in the prestigious journal *Exceptional Children*, resulted in new knowledge and a focus particularly innovative and almost non-existent, in 1980.

But, perhaps more importantly, Dr. Marion’s appointment to UT placed him in a position of life long advocacy for institutional responsiveness to the professional preparation needs of those who serve in diverse communities, with an emphasis on culture, language, and disability. With his significant human skills, Dr. Marion was able to effectively be the conscience of the University and its academic departments as they sought to provide access, justice, and equity to African American students. His presence and the known value of positions he held brought honesty and change to the University in admissions, pedagogical practices, and commitment to success of students.

The campus office of Dr. Marion served for years as a place for advice, catharsis, support, and openness for many ethnic minority students, athletes, and students with disabilities—a place not typically available but critical in a large research university. A role model for the many students he mentored and advised to completion of their degrees, he will always be remembered and missed. But, his students will have carried his values, advice, and knowledge throughout the nation to others in need.

For those who interacted with Dr. Marion in other contexts, such as the Belmont Hall weight room (Dr. Marion was a superb athlete, having played varsity football for the University of Michigan), you could be certain to
have fun and enjoy joking about football rivals, such as Michigan vs. Ohio State as the last game on their annual football schedule approached. Dr. Marion regularly visited Belmont Hall to compensate for his own lingering effects of football injuries to his shoulder, neck, and knee. These effects ultimately restricted his mobility in his later years, but they provided the context to observe his energy, commitment, and never-give-up-attitude. It is these attributes and commitments that colleagues and friends will miss; it is the University that will forever experience the loss of their impact. Robert L. Marion passed away, Monday, June 28, 2010.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James Yates (chair), Shernaz Garcia, and Audrey Sorrells.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Education, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on October 25, 2010. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.