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Taking DEI to Duquesne University Staff and Beyond

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Dana Whatley Smith is the Assistant Director of Learning & Development at Duquesne University. She recently took on the role of Vice Chair on the Duquesne University Staff Advisory Council. Dana is the proud 2023 Chapter President in the Association for Talent Development, Pittsburgh chapter. Dana has over 20 years' experience in training and development and employee engagement and is passionate about helping others to achieve their goals. She holds an M.S. in Leadership from Duquesne University, a Paralegal certificate with a specialization in Corporate Law also from Duquesne.



Crystal McCormick is the Inaugural Chief Diversity Officer at Duquesne University. Before this appointment, Crystal was the Director of Diversity Initiatives at the University of Pittsburgh Library System. She is a founding member of The Greater Pittsburgh Higher Education Diversity Consortium and serves on the board of the Ellis School for Girls, the Pittsburgh Technical College, and the Allegheny County Bar Foundation. Crystal is the proud and devoted mother of Soror Madison McKenzie Ware who is a graduate of Duquesne University and a recent graduate of West Virginia University.

TAKING DEI TO DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY STAFF AND BEYOND

By Dana Whatley Smith & Crystal McCormick MS.ED, G-CDF.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace have always mattered, but the year 2020 proved to be a time when millions of Americans realized just how important DEI was. Amid racial injustice, an unforeseen global pandemic, and the crippling effects on diverse groups — change was no longer an option — it was now essential. The work of diversity, equity, and inclusion is important, especially for higher education professionals who have the responsibility to shape the minds of our future leaders. Transformation can only occur when you put in place the right conduits that will help bring forth that change, and Duquesne was now ready to make a change.

President Kenneth Gormley announced in the summer of 2022 his intent to hire Duquesne's first Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and Senior Advisor to the President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Gormley recognized the importance of this new position, not only for himself personally but also for the University community. As Gormley explained, "the creation of this position reflects our collective commitment to bolstering our inclusive practices, as well as the historic vision of our Spiritan founders to provide a learning environment where all are welcomed, valued for their rich contributions to the University community, and allowed to succeed." Therefore, with the appointment of Crystal McCormick Ware as the inaugural Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) in January 2022, the wheels were set in motion to launch Duquesne's first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Certificate Program.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION PROGRAM

Shortly after her first month on the job in February 2022, Crystal began work on this program and started meeting with Dana Whatley Smith, Assistant Director of Learning and Development in Duquesne University's Office of

An increased awareness of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion as it applies to an environment of both academic and workplace success and belonging.

Human Resources. Together, we worked tirelessly over eight months to launch the program. We had to garner support from the President, Ken Gormley, and Crystal's colleagues in the Cabinet who bought into the program by nominating members from their respective units to join the first cohort, a pilot program that will help us give shape to future programs.

Duquesne University officially launched the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Certificate Program on September 8, 2022. Through this program, faculty and staff may earn a completion certificate in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Launching the program, President Gormley was quoted in the Duquesne news outlets, "I am very pleased that this new initiative will provide ways for everyone to gain skills so critical to our collective success."

The program underscores the fact that part of Duquesne's mission is to maintain an ecumenical atmosphere open to diversity—and to do everything that we can so that those who wish to study or work here are included and have every opportunity for growth.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Certificate Program is designed to reinforce the Spiritan values of serving God by serving its students through valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion with a series of ten workshops that are made available to faculty and staff at no cost. The workshops address both Duquesne policies, as well as individual behaviors that impact an environment of opportunities for the entire Duquesne University community. Through these workshops, participants will have an increased awareness of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion as it applies to an environment of both academic and workplace success and belonging.

Many of the presenters and trainers are Duquesne University faculty and staff, who are noted in their respective fields. Our presenters volunteer their time and expertise to keep the cost of the program free to participants. We invited a few external consultants who are also experts in DEI to participate when in-house expertise was not feasible. We purposely chose to make the program in-person and not virtual, as we recognized the importance of cohort learning and growing together to achieve optimal success in this program.

The program consists of seven core workshops and seven elective workshops. Participants must choose a minimum of three electives but can attend more than three if they wish to do so. All workshops that are required to earn the certificate will be offered during the summer, fall, and spring through Learning and Development in the Office of Human Resources.

The core courses were selected to reflect all components of diversity in the world, especially diversity that affects employees in higher education. The core courses are designed to teach foundational level knowledge on a variety of topics that are important to our employees at Duquesne.

Our core courses are as follows:

*Creating an
accommodating
and inclusive
Campus*

- **Cultural/Intercultural Competencies:** Participants gain an understanding and awareness of how to interact with individuals that belong to other social and cultural groups, specifically our underrepresented and international students, faculty, and staff on campus and beyond.
- **Disability Awareness: Creating an Accommodating and Inclusive Campus:** Participants receive an overview of resources, services, and accommodations that are available to staff, as well as policies around the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Generational Diversity:** (Traditionalist-Generation Alpha) Participants learn about generational values and similarities and how to unite to become a more unified campus.
- **Religious Diversity:** Led by the Duquesne University Spiritan Campus Ministry and Mission Animation. Participants learn about the rich history of Catholic Colleges and Universities, the Seven Marks of a Spiritan Education, and how Duquesne University embraces different religions on campus.
- **Socioeconomic Diversity:** Participants learn about the various class structures, their core values, the unspoken power structure, and how to not only work together as colleagues to build a stronger workforce, but to understand the student body as well.
- **Title IX/Sexual Misconduct:** Participants will explore Duquesne's policies, procedures, and training requirements for all employees regarding sexual harassment and sexual misconduct to promote a respectful and inclusive work and academic environment.
- **Understanding Veteran/Military Students, Faculty, and Staff:** Participants honor the service and sacrifices of Duquesne Uni-

versity's military colleagues and students and explain some of the barriers and obstacles that they can encounter. They will also learn about services available, as well as common transition issues that veterans and those who are in military families face, as well as national trends, and military culture.

In addition to the core courses, we thought about other categories that reflect diversity but are not necessarily required curricula. The elective courses are designed to take a "deep dive" into a variety of important DEI topics that affect people in the workplace. While these courses are equally as important, participants can select three courses out of the seven courses offered that best reflect their interests.

THE ELECTIVE COURSES

The elective courses are as follows:

- **Ally Awareness:** Participants gain insight into how to practice inclusive language, discuss societal barriers and inclusion, and gain tools in belonging practices for the campus community.
- **Best Practices in Recruitment of a Diverse Workforce:** Participants will explore best practices in recruiting a diverse workforce. They will also learn how to review resumes/CVs and build appropriate and inclusive interview questions.
- **Microaggressions in the Workplace:** Participants learn strategies to avoid microaggressions and tips on how to recover and repair any damage when a microaggression does inadvertently occur and potentially hurt a student or colleague.
- **Political Diversity:** Participants will learn how to navigate and respect different political theories to work more congenially with colleagues and to better understand the diversity of the campus and workplace.
- **Respect and Congeniality in the Workforce and Beyond:** Participants will learn how to promote the appreciation of differences in the workplace and the classroom and as a result, increase productivity.
- **Stereotype: Harmful and Often Misleading Assumptions:** Par-

Participants learn strategies to avoid microaggressions and tips on how to recover and repair any damage.

Participants learn the definition of stereotypes and biases, how to identify examples of stereotypes, and how to overcome learned thoughts that have proven to be harmful to students and colleagues.

- **Handling Workplace Bullying:** Participants learn the definition of workforce bullying, examine the cause and effects, and provide resources to defuse potential conflicts or take responsible actions if, and when it occurs in the workplace or classroom.

After completing the recommended classroom coursework, participants wishing to fully complete the program must participate in a group capstone project session facilitated by the Chief Diversity Officer and the Assistant Director of Learning and Development. The capstone project is a demonstration of the knowledge gained during the DEI program and either a sharing of that information or an application process.

*Demonstrating
a commitment
to the
principles
of diversity,
equity, and
inclusion.*

The purpose of the capstone is twofold:

(1) to indicate that the participant has expanded their knowledge of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion and shows their ability to create and enhance opportunities to build self-awareness, knowledge, and skills to interact effectively with aspects of diversity, inclusion, culture and global differences; and

(2) to promote a welcoming and inclusive Duquesne University environment by demonstrating a commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Project suggestions are as follows (but not limited to):

- Diversity and Inclusion program or workshop for students
- Suggest a new course or workshop for the DEI certificate program
- Article or conference presentation
- Presentation for faculty, staff, department, or local organization
- Development and implementation of a department diversity and inclusion goal and strategy
- Analysis of an existing departmental or division diversity initiative for improvement or change

- Research and propose a policy change
- Creation of a video for the CDO website
- Creation of an “Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion Grant Proposal
- Creation of a “Unity” Quilt.

The Capstone Project will be presented to the CDO, the Assistant Director of Learning and Development, and other identified reviewers to determine if the project indicates learning outcomes as it relates to DEI.

It is also our hope that graduates will also apply learned outcomes to their day-to-day lives outside of their work environment.

A DEI Certificate Program Graduation Luncheon is scheduled at the end of the spring semester to honor each participant with an award, a lapel pin, and a certificate to indicate that they have fulfilled all requirements and are recognized amongst their peers, as faculty and staff who have invested thirty hours in DEI instruction. The program facilitators hope that graduates of the program will continue to take DEI courses as they become available and as we introduce new courses to the curriculum. It is also our hope that graduates will also apply learned outcomes to their day-to-day lives on campus outside of their work environment as they interact with students and colleagues. The work of immersing diversity, equity, and inclusion into the culture is difficult, but we are well on our way to making it a part of our mission, vision, and values, through the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Certificate Program here at Duquesne.

*Dana Whatley Smith
& Crystal McCormick MS.ED, G-CDF,
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh.*

Further reading on DEI:

Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. New York, Random House, 2020.

Elly Belle, “How White People Can Hold Each Other Accountable to Stop Institutional Racism”: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/white-people-can-hold-each-other-accountable-to-stop-institutional-racism>.

The Tannenbaum website <https://tannenbaum.org/>. Tannenbaum combats religious prejudice, confronts hate, and builds respect for religious difference by transforming individuals and institutions.