

Toward Inclusive Excellence: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion at Wayne State University

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What is a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO)?

- ❖ “The CDO is a boundary-spanning senior administrative role that prioritizes diversity-themed organizational change as a shared priority at the highest levels of leadership and governance.
- ❖ Reporting to the president, provost, or both, the CDO is an institution’s highest-ranking diversity administrator.”

The Chief Diversity Officer, by Damon A. Williams and Katrina C. Wade-Golden



The CDO Defined (Cont'd)

- ❖ “The CDO is an integrative role that coordinates, leads, enhances, and in some instances supervises formal diversity capabilities of the institution in an effort to create an environment that is inclusive and excellent for all.
- ❖ Within this context, diversity is not merely a demographic goal, but a **strategic priority** that is fundamental to creating a dynamic educational and working environment that fulfills the teaching, learning, research, and service mission of postsecondary education.”

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My Definitions / Observations

My experiences and background provide me with some working notions of what a CDO does:

- She/he takes an eagle's eye view of the institution and surrounding community evaluating and assessing not only where the needs, challenges, and gaps are, but also where the opportunities, promise, and potential are and from that *establishes a vision*.
- She/he then sets about building coalitions, garnering resources – human, financial, and political – to lay a foundation for the work ahead.
- She/he launches the first of many initiatives and then, as things go along, monitors the progress toward goals, making mid-course corrections as needed and adding new goals, objectives and initiatives to keep the work moving forward.



Defining Diversity

“At Wayne State University, we believe diversity is essential to our urban mission, which prepares students from varied backgrounds and experiences to excel in an increasingly complex multicultural and global society. We embrace human diversity in all of its myriad forms and manifestations, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, geographic origin, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, language, religion, thought, ability and disability, veteran status and socioeconomic class.”

Excerpt from draft diversity statement, GRAD Committee, 2015



Wayne State University's Greater Retention and Achievement through Diversity (GRAD) Report

<http://provost.wayne.edu/diversity.php>

GRAD Report Strategic Goal Areas

- ❖ Educational Excellence and Achievement
- ❖ Retention and Degree Attainment
- ❖ Educational Access and Opportunity
- ❖ Diversity Learning and Development
- ❖ Diversity in Faculty and Staff
- ❖ Campus Climate



GRAD Report Strategic Goals

- ❖ Promote and support excellence in the form of high quality education and high achievement for all students.
- ❖ Increase retention and degree attainment for under-served, under-represented, and minority students.
- ❖ Provide meaningful access to higher education for under-served, under-represented and minority students.



GRAD Report Strategic Goals (Cont'd)

- ❖ Enhance the strategic value of diversity and diversity learning to the entire campus community.
- ❖ Increase minority representation among faculty and staff.
- ❖ Promote a campus climate that supports, values, and demonstrates a commitment to diversity by the entire University community.



Brief Retrospective: Where I've Been So Far

- ❖ Participating in/leading many (many) hours of meetings with individual undergraduate and professional students, staff, and faculty with various concerns/issues;
- ❖ Presenting, upon request from various units, my thoughts about what I've seen thus far at Wayne State and what my vision might be for moving diversity and inclusion initiatives forward;
- ❖ Responding to specific requests to serve on or work with diversity committees/task forces from various schools, colleges, programs;
- ❖ Engaging in strategic outreach to schools, colleges, and other units across campus;
- ❖ Attending various community events so as to be seen as a presence specifically tasked working on diversity and inclusion.



Current Status: What's Happening Now

- ❖ Developing diversity and inclusion initiatives that “fit into” or align with the current version of the Wayne State University Strategic Plan for 2015-2020;
- ❖ Worked with the School of Medicine's Diversity & Inclusion Task Force in developing a plan for enhancing diversity of their students;
- ❖ Exploring funding possibilities to expand my ability to do what this position was created to do.

My Conclusion: There is a lot of work to be done to truly develop and implement a comprehensive plan for diversity and inclusion across the campus over the next 1, 3, 5 years, **and so I am speaking about the “izes.”**



A Word About the “-Izes”

In order to really accomplish the goals that were laid out in my position description, there are several things I must do:

- ❖ Rights**ize** people’s expectations for what I can accomplish given the resources I have (time, budget, personnel)
- ❖ Strateg**ize** with others about where the needs and gaps are and where are untapped resources for meeting them;
- ❖ Priorit**ize** what needs to be done immediately and what can wait; and
- ❖ Operational**ize** (take action on) what can be done, bringing to bear the resources (human, financial, temporal) on hand to fill the gaps and meet the needs.



Engaging the Process

- ❖ Determine the top institutional priorities
- ❖ Work with a team to develop a strategic diversity framework and plan, using the GRAD report and the other documents as a foundation.
- ❖ Begin to build the infrastructure to address the identified institutional priorities.
- ❖ Create and implement measures and systems of accountability so we can monitor our progress.
- ❖ Remembering to celebrate progress and achievements.



Challenges and Opportunities

- ❖ Getting the campus – administrative units, colleges and academic units, and other entities – to see their own roles and responsibilities in making the campus diverse, inclusive, and welcoming;
- ❖ Broadening the network and reach of offices and units that support various constituencies;
- ❖ Supporting those entities working with and on behalf of underrepresented, underserved, marginalized groups.



My Top Challenges

❖ Scope of the work

- Student success – where we are and where we hope to be
- Creating structures to support students, staff, faculty, and others from historically marginalized backgrounds and identities
- Recruiting diverse staff and faculty that mirror/reflect the diversity of the Detroit metro area
- Creating a campus climate/culture where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and supported.

❖ Financial and human resources to build the infrastructure needed to move the institution forward.



A Perspective

“The more we do, the more we see the potential of what is possible. We are not discouraged by the enormity of what lies ahead; we are motivated by it.”

~Ursula Burns, President of Xerox

