The Journey to Building a Healthy Work Environment Through Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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Within the next thirty years over 50% of Americans will be nonwhite (Janik, 2015). Students, faculty and staff, within schools of nursing, need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population (AACN, 2017; Relf, 2016; Phillips & Malone, 2014). Faculty, staff and students must be willing and adept at communicating with individuals from diverse backgrounds with respect and efficiency. In addition, they must be able to work together successfully in multicultural teams (Breslin, Nuri-Robins, Ash & Kirshling, 2018).

The presenters will share their journey to promote diversity, equity and inclusion from the formation of an Advisory Council, to the creation of a Diversity Statement, the development of a Diversity Strategic Plan and the creation of an Evaluation Plan to track success and progress. This dynamic and interactive podium presentation, with diverse members of the faculty and staff from a School of Nursing (SON), will explore strategies and opportunities for aligning the diversity strategic plan with the school’s overall strategic plan to create a diverse, inclusive and equitable educational and work environment. The presenters will explore the meaning of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, examine issues and challenges related to increasing diversity, equity and inclusion and highlight why Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is so vitally needed for a healthy work and learning environment.

The presenters place special emphasis on three learning objectives 1) Understanding what Diversity, Equity and Inclusion means and how best to apply this knowledge to enhance the workplace climate and culture; 2) Exploring ways to express and promote civility and honor differences; 3) Examining legal policies, compliance obligations, values and pedagogies and how they work together to drive policies, programing and practices.

Using the learning objectives listed above as the backdrop, the presenters will outline their efforts using illustrative examples, discussion, questions and answers. They will explain what Diversity and Inclusion means through its newly developed diversity mission statement and demonstrate innovative strategies used to reform culture and promote civility amid diverse beliefs and values. The critical role of leadership both within the school as well as at the university level for the alignment of strategic commitment and the supporting resource requirements will also be explored. In addition, the presenters will discuss the important opportunities and challenges it faced as learning lessons for others. The audience will gain valuable information to inform their programs and progress as they journey toward building a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion.


Abstract Summary:
Diverse environments provide greater productivity, innovation, understanding and value to an organization. However, creating a diverse environment is just the first step to achieving these benefits. Organizations must create cultures where people with diverse characteristics can thrive. Members must feel included, respected and valued to do their best work.

Content Outline:
I. Introduction

A. Diverse environments lead to greater productivity, innovation, understanding and a greater value to an organization

B. Members must feel included, respected and valued in order to do their best work

C. The School of Nursing provides equal access to resources, opportunities and advancement for all members of the community and promotes equity and social justice by increasing success among marginalized people

II. Body

A. Defining Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the application of this knowledge to enhance the workplace climate and culture

1. Social Transformation
2. Recruitment & Retention
3. Leadership, Training & Accountability
4. Education, Research, Scholarship & Service

B. Expressing and promoting civility while honoring differences

1. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Town Hall Meeting
2. Diversity Retreat for Faculty and Staff
3. Diversity Lunch & Learn Series
4. Multicultural event
C. Examining how legal policies, compliance obligations, values and pedagogies drive policies, programs and best practices

1. Professional responsibility
2. University policies
3. Accrediting agencies

III. Conclusion

1. Aligning the Diversity Strategic Plan with the School of Nursing Strategic Plan is a slow and deliberate process yet integral to the mission of the school
2. On-going assessment and evaluation is important for the sustainability of a diverse environment

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Professional Experience: Dr. Davis has been in academia for the past seventeen years serving in both faculty and administrative roles. She is currently Associate Professor and Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the George Washington University School of Nursing. She is board certified as an Acute Care Nurse Practitioner. Her research interests are health equity, social determinants of health, and healthcare simulation. Dr. Davis is Past President of the Nurse Practitioner Association of the District of Columbia. She is a fellow of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) – Wharton Executive Leadership Program and AACN’s Leadership for Academic Nursing Program.

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Professional Experience: Ms. Sydnae Law is the Manager for the Acute & Chronic Care Community at the GW School of Nursing. Ms. Law received a Bachelor of Science in Digital Art & Design from Towson University and a Master of Healthcare Administration from Seton Hall University. She is a current member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and has received numerous awards of distinction in the healthcare industry. Ms. Law has an extensive knowledge of institutional effectiveness, program evaluation and clinical practice management. Ms. Law seeks ways to provide a safe and effective environment for providers, trainees, patients and administrators. She believes in the power of academic mentorship, for the future sustainability of healthcare leaders and healthcare providers.

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Professional Experience: Ms Emard is an Instructor for the George Washington University School of Nursing. Received in 2016 the Morton E. Bender Award for Teaching Excellence and inducted into the Academy of Distinguished Teachers. She is the Vice President for the Sigma Phi Epsilon Chapter and a member of Sigma's Charter Review Task Force (2 year appointment). From 1999-2012 she served as the Chief Operating Officer of NCQA. She has been consultant faculty for the AACN Graduate Quality & Safety Education in nursing effort. She is has just concluded her (2) three-year terms for the Board of Directors for the Care New England Health Care System and the Visiting Nurse Association of America. She is currently a member of the Planning & Evaluation Committee for the State of Vermont's Blueprint for Health.

Author Summary: Ms Emard has over 35 years of experience in nursing. She is an Instructor for the George Washington University School of Nursing. Her engagement in advancing health care quality includes her 12 years as the COO for NCQA and her experience as a member of the Board of Directors for a health care system. She was also a member of the VNAA Board of Directors and is involved in advancing post-acute care health care policy.