

Inside OUTREACH

From the desk of Craig Weidemann, Vice President for Outreach

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“We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles.”

Unknown

Consideration of diversity at the workplace and in our society is a very complex and highly personal issue with many conflicting views that are tied to deeply held values. Regardless of your personal lens on the importance of advancing and supporting diversity, it is clearly evident that our world, state, and neighborhoods are becoming more diverse.

For me, the recognition of our increasingly diverse world is a compelling argument for advancing diversity as a core value of Outreach. Each of us needs to think hard about our personal perspective, attitudes, and beliefs regarding how we feel about embracing diversity in our organization.

Outside the traditional 7 states, Pennsylvania has the fastest growing Latino population.

There have been distinct experiences throughout my life that have had a profound effect on my lens regarding diversity, the human spirit, our commonalities, and the riches and challenges of our differences. These experiences deeply embedded in my own value system that respect, acceptance, and advancement of our collective differences are simply the right thing to do.

Not only is diversity the right thing to do on a personal level, it's the right thing to do organizationally. Organizations with diverse people are more dynamic, competitive, and innovative because employees have wide-ranging talents and skills and are more receptive to different ideas, opinions, practices, and philosophies. We also have a leadership responsibility to nurture our innate diversity as well as help our constituents embrace the richness and challenge of living in increasingly diverse communities, through diversification of our programs and audiences.

[Richard Florida](#), author of “The Rise of the Creative Class,” says metropolitan regions are successful because they are known for diversity and open-mindedness. He goes on to say,

“The ability to attract creative people in arts and culture fields and to be open to diverse groups of people of different ethnic, racial and lifestyle groups provides distinct advantages to regions in generating innovations, growing and attracting high-technology industries, and spurring economic growth.”

Outreach takes a three-pronged approach by ensuring diversity of staff, programs, and audiences. One Outreach group that works hard to keep diversity in the forefront of our minds is the Outreach Diversity Council.

84% of Pennsylvanians have a high school education or higher and 27% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Formed in 2005, the Council is charged with enhancing diversity by providing leadership for policies, strategies, and action by focusing, stimulating, and assessing Outreach initiatives to foster a welcoming working environment that promotes learning, and embraces student, customer, and client service. Throughout the year, Council members encourage diversity discussions; monitor climate, recruitment, and retention of



Outreach faculty, staff, and programs; and implement diversity programs to enhance staff awareness and foster community.

Chaired by Sharon Youtzy from Continuing and Professional Education and with the guidance of Sue Cromwell from Planning and Administration, approximately 25 volunteers from across Outreach serve on at least one of six Diversity Council Committees. Below is a brief description of each Committee.

Members share a deep commitment to fostering diversity awareness and ensuring Outreach is a welcoming work and learning environment for our faculty, staff, students, customers, clients, and community members.

- Climate Survey—creates, distributes, and analyzes surveys. Responsible for communicating survey results and suggesting action steps.
- Communications/Information Sharing—finds and reviews information resources and distributes diversity information. Responsible for promoting professional development programs and creating opportunities for discussion within Outreach units.
- Employee Recruitment and Retention—recommend policy and strategy to support and enhance diversity. Responsible for monitoring diversity initiatives and working closely with Human Resources on retention programs.
- Outreach Programs and Services for Clients and Students—promotes inclusiveness in serving students, customers, and clients. Responsible for optimizing program content, marketing, and delivering programs to diverse audiences.
- Professional Development/Programs for Outreach Staff—arranges professional development programs. Responsible for monitoring available external diversity programs and communicating program information to Outreach staff.
- University/Community Networking—establishes communication with diversity groups within the University and external to the University. Responsible for benchmarking web programs at other Universities.

Sharon Youtzy, Chair

Year-round, the Council works hard to keep Outreach informed on diversity. Their thoughtful roadmap for fostering diversity throughout Outreach is outlined in the Outreach Diversity Strategic Plan. I encourage you to take a few minutes to review the plan at <http://app.outreach.psu.edu/weidemann/OutreachDiversityPlan.pdf>.

Pennsylvania ranks 3rd in U.S. with largest cohort over age 65.

Thank you to the Council members for volunteering their time and efforts to encourage and ensure a diverse environment. Thank you to all Outreach staff who have also dedicated their time and efforts towards fostering diversity in our work environment, our audiences, and our programs.

In business there is a saying that you and I are smarter than you or I will ever be. At the risk of oversimplifying a very complex issue, I think diversity can be approached in a similar way. I encourage all of us to seek out each other's uniqueness and continue to make Outreach a welcoming, inclusive, and creative environment.

Craig

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Data collected from The Brookings Institution report "Committing to Prosperity" & U.S. Census Bureau.