

# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



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**D11**

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## CONTENT

**We're Promoting Both Diversity and Inclusion**

D2

**Belonging: It Goes Deeper Than Diversity and Inclusion**

D2

**What Does Jon Benét Have To Do With Diversity?**

D7

**It's About Life and Death: Increasing Diversity in Healthcare**

D7

**Networking Event Encourages Diversifying Professional Networks**

D15

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# We're Promoting Both Diversity and Inclusion

The United States of today is more diverse than ever before. We innately know this from the changing world around us — neighborhoods are more ethnically different, our work teams include people from other generations and genders, and cultures we had not been previously exposed to bring new experiences to what we eat, watch on television and even impact how we view the world. This truth is also backed by data.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education released a study stating that from 1980 to 2020, the minority working-age portion of the workforce doubled to 37% from 18%, while the White population declined from 82% to 63%.

As the country becomes increasingly diverse, so does the workforce.

With a nation that's increas-



Gooch

ingly more diverse, why aren't more companies making diversity in the workplace a priority? Or at least interested in what diversity brings to a company financially?

Those are both good questions that those of us out there working don't understand as we continue to see corporations lacking in racial diversity, and even gender diversity — particularly in management positions. But don't forget, diversity is about so much more than just race/ethnicity and gender. Today, diversity encompasses sexual orientation and identity, age, disabilities, religion, and even economic status. It's about everything that makes us different, because in some way it shapes who we are and the experiences and ideas we bring to the table.

That's the diversity part of this issue: "who" we bring to the table. The inclusion part of this is about "the how." More than just hiring you, how do we make you feel that you belong. How do we let you know you're of value to the organization and that your contributions are appreciated?

We'll explore the importance of both diversity and inclusion in the workplace in this special section, and more than a half-dozen of our corporate sponsors will share a story about what diversity looks like in their organiza-

tion. We thank and appreciate them and the other corporate and non-profit advertisers who by their participation in this section make clear their commitment to both diversity and inclusion. Certainly, by their participation in this section, these participants are firmly on record — more than just a policy on paper, these corporations are working and committed to making D&I an inherent part of their culture. ●●

*Bonita Gooch*  
Editor-in-Chief  
*The Community Voice*

Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.

Verna Myers

www.declincinternational.com

## Belonging: It Goes Deeper Than Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity describes the breadth of range of talent — are you reaching and attracting people from many backgrounds, ethnic heritage, gender, sexual orientation, socio-demographics, parts of the world, different styles of thinking?

This matters because you need to appeal to best talent.

Inclusion means, actively including everybody in tasks, teams, conversations and developments.

This matters because it means the organization is making the most of all of its talent, and because it means everybody has a fair basis to contribute to the organization and fulfil their potential. It's rewarding and motivating all round.

Belonging means being part of a group, sharing the confidence, security and allegiance that brings. Diversity and inclusion describe characteristics: belonging is much more personal and emotive, it runs deeper.

Belonging is really where it all comes together: unity from our diversity, effectiveness from inclusion.

A positive sense of belonging carries

directly into morale, productivity and effectiveness.

It's how we pull together for collaboration — but it can also lead to conflict, if we define ourselves too far into separate tribes: and this is when diversity can become exclusion, or inclusion can become partisan.

Belonging is about commitment: from the employer to the employee, from employee to employer, and from employees to each other and to the business and communities they serve.

It's how we achieve high performance and how we win.

Pat Wadors, Chief Talent Officer at Service Now, advocates strongly for the critical difference that belonging brings, deeper and beyond diversity and inclusion, or employer brand:

"Diversity efforts fall short unless employees feel that they belong."

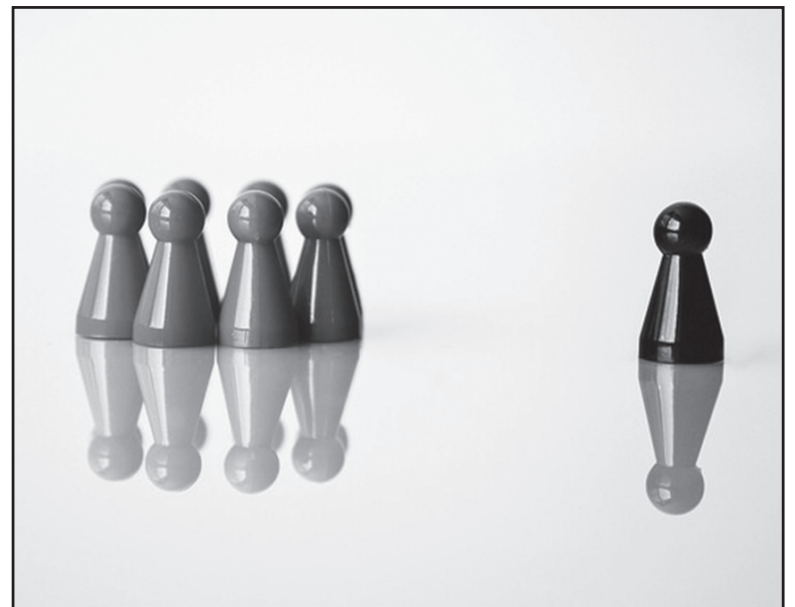
"Yes, diversity and inclusion matter, but it's how we help each other feel that we belong on the team, in our community, and in the organization that matters most."

Wadors has tracked the direct

impact of belonging on performance, particularly in improved collaboration and pace of innovation: "Companies need to focus on belonging moments — to create the space for someone to feel they belong. It makes it easier for people to give to others, and then they share back. That's the power of belonging."

So, ensuring a shared sense of belonging goes far beyond the traditional remit of diversity or inclusion or employer branding. It's at the heart of high-performance and high-growth companies. ●●

- Isabel Collins, *Belonging Works*, *BelongingSpace.com*.



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## Why are Almost all NFL Coaches White?

By **George B. Cunningham**  
Professor, Sports Management,  
Texas A.M. University

**B**rian Flores, the former Miami Dolphins head coach fired at the end of the 2022 season, filed a lawsuit on Feb. 1, 2022, against his former team, the NFL and two other NFL teams, charging widespread discrimination.

In the 58-page document filed in a Manhattan federal court, Flores alleges a pattern of racist hiring practices by the league and racial discrimination during the interview

process with the Denver Broncos and New York Giants, as well as during his tenure with Miami.

In the lawsuit, the firm representing Flores said the coach hopes to “shine a light on the racial injustices that take place inside the NFL.”

The lack of racial diversity in the NFL's high-level coaching ranks is real. As of a few weeks after the close of the National Football League's regular season, there was one Black head coach, one Latino head coach, and one Arab-American head coach left in the League – Mike Tomlin of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Ron Rivera of the Washington

Commanders and Robert Saleh of the New York Jets, respectively.

Of the nine head coaching vacancies filled by early February, just one was Black (Lovie Smith of the Houston Texans) and one was multiracial (Mike McDaniel of the Miami Dolphins).

At issue is the glaring absence of non-White head coaches. In a league in which most of the players are Black, it's hard to ignore that most of the NFL head coaches are White.

The NFL denies charges it discriminates against minority candidates. “The NFL and our clubs are deeply committed to ensuring equitable

employment practices . . .,” the league said in a Feb. 1 statement in response to Flores' lawsuit. “Diversity is core to everything we do, and there are few issues on which our clubs and our internal leadership team spend more time. We will defend against these claims, which are without merit.”

I have studied diversity and inclusion in sport for more than two decades, including the ways in which race and gender intersect to affect leadership opportunities for women and men. My research shows that biased decision-making, organizational cultures that value similarity, and

societal forms of bias and discrimination are all to blame for the lack of diversity among NFL head coaches.

### HISTORY OF EXCLUSION

The dismal numbers are nothing new. In 1989, Art Shell became the first Black head coach of an NFL team in the modern era. But his hiring did not break down the barriers other minority coaches face in the NFL.

Seeking to address its diversity problem, the NFL adopted the Rooney Rule in 2003, requiring teams to interview at least two minority candidates for their head coach openings.

See NFL page D8

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I can help you explore these choices and guide you through the necessary steps.



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## D4 Alzheimer's Association Leads Strategic Initiatives to Support Diversity & Inclusivity

At the Alzheimer's Association, diversity is integral to our mission and vital to our vision of a world without Alzheimer's disease and all other dementia. We seek to be inclusive of the millions of people currently affected by Alzheimer's disease, their caregivers and the communities in which they live. The Alzheimer's Association views diversity broadly and includes considerations such as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, regional, place or national origin, religion, language and persons with disabilities.

As the American population ages and becomes increasingly more diverse, the Alzheimer's Association will expand its mission activities to remain inclusive and meet the demand for culturally and linguistically sensitive education, information, care and support.

The Alzheimer's Association leads strategic initiatives to support diversity and a culture of inclusivity. These strategic initiatives also strengthen outreach to all populations, providing communities with resources and support to address the Alzheimer's crisis. By partnering with organizations locally and nationally to advance diversity and inclusion, the Association can broaden its reach

in all communities. The Alzheimer's Association believes we must create a society in which people feel safe, cared for and valued. To do this, the Central & Western Kansas Chapter and the Heart of America Chapter are extending our reach into as many diverse communities as possible. Examples include:

- Hosting a booth at the Wichita PRIDE 2021 Festival on September 25. Sponsoring the Mid America LGBT Chamber digital publication in Kansas City.

**DID YOU KNOW** that 7.4% of the lesbian, gay and bisexual older adult population is living with dementia and the LGBT older adult population is one of tremendous racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. For example, one in five (20%) of LGBT older adults are people of color. LGBT adults living with dementia face unique challenges in accessing support. Forty percent report that their support networks have become smaller over time. Thirty-four percent live alone and up to 30% experience lower rates of access to care.

- Hosting community forums such as "Achieving Health Equity for African American Women" and "Alzheimer's and Dementia Health Care Access in the Latino Community" to open conversation on health issues, caregiving



The Alzheimer's Association is recruiting a diverse pool of participants for their New IDEAS research study, particularly African Americans who are disproportionately impacted by the disease.

strategies and research news.

**DID YOU KNOW** that African Americans are about two times more likely than Whites to have Alzheimer's and other dementias and they are only 34% more likely to have a diagnosis?

- Providing a bilingual community educator in Wichita to facilitate education programming in Hispanic/Latin X communities and providing a Spanish speaking support group in Kansas City. Core education programs include The 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's; Healthy Living for Your Brain and

Body; Legal and Financial Issues; Dementia Conversations; Effective Communication Strategies; and Understanding Dementia-related Behavior.

**DID YOU KNOW** that Hispanics are about one and one-half times more likely than Whites to have Alzheimer's and other dementias, but they are only 18% more likely to be diagnosed.

Clinical trials are research studies conducted with human volunteers to determine whether treatments are safe and effective. Without clinical research and the help of participants, there

can be no treatments, prevention or cure for Alzheimer's disease. The Alzheimer's Association understands there is a well-recognized need for diversity in clinical trial populations to ensure diagnostics and treatments are safe and effective for everyone. The Alzheimer's Association is leading two major clinical trials with a strong focus on diverse participation. The New IDEAS study is recruiting 2,000 Latinos and 2,000

See **ALZHEIMER'S** page D14

## It Takes Intentional Commitment: A look at Diversity, Equity, Inclusion at Butler Community College

Since its inception in 1927, Butler Community College has promoted prosperity for all students who seek to learn on its campuses. Recently, efforts supporting traditionally marginalized students — students of color, for example — are flourishing here after years of faculty organizing and administrative leadership.

In the last year the college has added a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) dimension to all hiring processes from recruitment to candidate interviews. It has created gender-neutral language guidelines for all catalogues, syllabuses, and enrollment information. Dedicated teams have secured funding to add personnel to the school's mental health staff and supplied customized diversity training to its legions of full- and part-time faculty, staff, and students. Others have worked to ensure that all electronic course materials are fully acces-

sible according to ADA guidelines. These actions have been informed by systematic, ongoing studies of student and employee experiences through panels, surveys, and public forums.

In keeping with the true intent of higher learning, a Butler education offers routes to the economic and cultural mainstream of American life, especially among those who have been disempowered by economics or circumstance. Higher Education rests on crucial ground in the territory of the American Dream, too-often as the location of systemic discrimination and inequity, too-often as a gatekeeper of privileged access to sociopolitical influence. Butler aims to tend this ground with maximum fairness and equality for all.

Central to this mission is Butler's commitment to celebrating diversity, ensuring equitable access to learning and opportunity, and fostering com-

munities inclusive to everyone. The college strives to supply students with experiences that match the world in which they will soon make lives and careers and seek to prosper. Butler also embraces the responsibility of identifying which students succeed at disproportionately low rates and investigating why.

These commitments aren't new. Eight years ago, Butler inaugurated its Inclusion Council through a grassroots initiative led mostly by faculty. Now it is a thriving body charged with ensuring that diverse perspectives influence all offices and policies, classrooms and curricula, student activities and athletics, and experiences. Over this time Butler has sought, through the council, to understand the unique di-

versity among its students, a wonderful mix of learners urban and rural, national and international, immigrant and native, and from a range of socioeconomic classifications. Their needs are as diverse as their backgrounds, from honors students to developing learners to those seeking high school diplomas, from athletes and military

personnel to those requiring accommodation for (dis)abilities.

Last year, partly in response to social unrest in the US and on college

See **BUTLER** page D5



Butler offers crafts and culinary classes



## BUTLER from page D4

campuses, Butler recalibrated its DEI-oriented priorities, writing them into the institution's strategic plan which guides decision-making on all levels. It emphasizes these four areas: engaging students and staff in comprehensive conversations to better understand barriers and needs; expanding direct training related to DEI; strategically broadening advertising, review, and hiring processes to attract underrepresented populations; and intentionally supporting the development of a specific diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan.

Today, Butler's Inclusion Council is 75-members strong and includes representatives from most campus offices, deans and faculty from a range of divisions, students, and executive-level administrators. The Council, through six Action Teams has a healthy list of goals ranging from identifying and reconstructing systemic inequities in all Butler processes to bringing the diversity of Butler's faculty and staff in closer alignment with the underrepresented populations it serves. The

Council is focused on providing direct training seminars and regimens for Butler students, faculty, and staff on all relevant matters pertaining to diversity and inclusion in order to foster a more inclusive work and study environment. Their work also attends to student and faculty/staff mental health matters, campus security and safety, and healthy work/study environments for the improvement of student retention, success, and post-college employment. Student involvement in inclusion-oriented activities, training for student-leaders and student organizations to implement inclusive best practices; and promotion of the projects and successes are also the vision with action items already underway. action items already underway.


Diversity, Equality and Inclusion are critical to the best future imagined for all of us. Though driven by mission, it is our intentional actions and critical consciousness that ultimately shape our inclusive community. We welcome dialogue and thought. Contact Monica Lorg, associate professor of Behavioral Science and DEI Council member, 316-322-3150 or email [mlorg1@butlercc.edu](mailto:mlorg1@butlercc.edu). ●●

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- M. Scott Peck



Foulston strives to create an environment celebrating and reflecting our communities. The firm's commitment to diversity and inclusion includes DEI involvement in the Wichita Chamber, the Wichita, Kansas City, and Kansas Bar Associations, law school scholarships fostering diversity, and Law Firm Anti-Racism Alliance membership.

For more information, contact C. Edward Watson  
at [cewatson@foulston.com](mailto:cewatson@foulston.com).

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D5

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

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THE COMMUNITY VOICE

# D8 NFL Requiring every Team to Hire a Minority or Female Offensive Coach

The NFL will require every team to hire a minority or female offensive assistant coach for the 2022 season.

As part of its diversity effort, NFL owners adopted a policy that allows for the coach to be “a female or a member of an ethnic or racial minority.” The coach will sign a one-year deal and be paid from a league-wide fund.

The head coach and offensive staff must work closely with the minority or female coach.

“It’s a recognition that at the moment, when you look at stepping stones for a head coach, they are the coordinator positions,” Steelers owner Art Rooney II, the chairman of the NFL diversity, equity and inclusion

committee, said, via Kevin Seifert of ESPN. “We clearly have a trend where coaches are coming from the offensive side of the ball in recent years, and we clearly do not have as many minorities in the offensive coordinator [job].”

Teams like the Buccaneers, who currently have a minority or female coach or coaches serving as an offensive assistant, already meet the requirement of the policy.

But it does represent the first hiring mandate in the history of the Rooney Rule.

The league also expanded the language of the Rooney Rule to include women at all levels. It now will read that women and/or people of color can satisfy the re-



On April 20, the Washington Commanders announced the start of the Doug Williams Diversity Coaching Fellowship, which will hire a coach from a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to become an offensive assistant. The position is being added as part of the new NFL requirement for all teams to hire a minority or female coach.

quirement to interview two external minorities for top positions, including

head coach.

Teams are not required to interview

a woman, but women now are included in the fulfillment process.

“The truth of the matter is that as of today, at least, there aren’t many women in the pool in terms of head coach,” Rooney said. “We hope that is going to change over the years, but for that reason we didn’t see it as inhibiting the number of interviews for racial minorities at this point in time. Obviously, we can address that as time goes on, but for now we didn’t see that as an issue.

“Really, we are looking at probably the early stages of women entering the coaching ranks, so we may be a little ways away before that becomes a problem.” ●●

## NFL from page D6

In 2021, the league expanded the rule to include general managers and offensive and defensive coordinators.

The policy had positive short-term effects, as the league saw an increase in Black and Latino coaches. The gains have since diminished, though, and the number of Black head coaches at the start of the 2021 season, three, was the same as in 2003. (Now, it’s two - Tomlin and Smith - plus one with a Black father who identifies as multiracial - McDaniel.)

In short, the NFL is back to where it started.

When looking for explanations, it is helpful to explore factors at the individual, organizational and societal levels. Research evidence shows some of these explanations are better than others.

At the individual level, people might not obtain a job if they lack skills or experience, don’t have contacts or don’t apply. There is no consistent evidence, though, that any of these explanations describe Black coaches.

For example, scholars have found that Black assistant coaches in college football were less likely to be promoted and had less career satisfaction than their White counterparts, but neither was a function of the coaches’ experience,

skills or social networks. This is the case in the NFL, too, where sports economists have also shown that Black assistant coaches are equally as skilled as their White counterparts.

Other researchers have analyzed NFL data from 1985 to 2018 and found no racial differences in the performance of head coaches.

In short, there is no evidence that Black coaches are unqualified.

### ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERS

On the other hand, research does show that leaders and organizations make a difference in who gets hired. For example, an analysis from Arizona State University’s Global Sports Institute shows that seven NFL teams have hired only White head coaches.

The types of positions Black coaches have access to also matters. Offensive and defensive coordinators are frequently in line for head coaching opportunities. But research at the NFL and NCAA levels reliably shows that White coaches are overrepresented in these coveted coordinator positions.

What’s referred to as “the glass cliff” offers another organizational explanation. This theory suggests that members of underrepresented groups are most likely to be hired by organizations that have a history of poor performance or that are in crisis. When performance continues to wane, the leaders are likely to be replaced by majority group members. Researchers have shown that race

and racism also affect the glass cliff, including leaders in sport. Relative to white coaches, minoritized men’s basketball coaches were more likely to be hired to teams with a history of losing, and if they were unable to turn things around, they were likely to be replaced by White coaches.

These examples show that leaders clearly make a difference. A study of the Las Vegas Raiders further illustrates the point. Under former general manager Reggie McKenzie, who is Black, the Raiders had the highest share of Black players in the league, at 79.2%. In 2016, when McKenzie won NFL executive of the year, the Raiders also had the highest share of Black coaches, at 82.3%.

Raiders Head coach Jon Gruden was fired during the 2021 season after revelations he sent racist and homophobic emails.

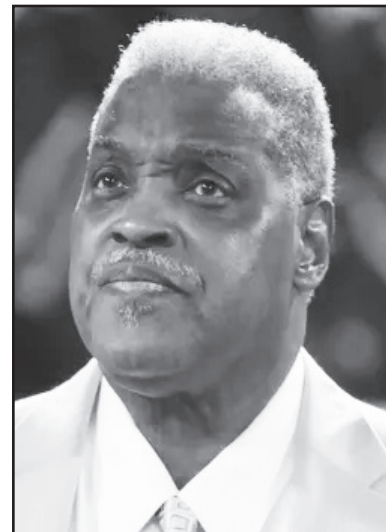
Following the 2018 season, the Raiders fired McKenzie and brought in a White head coach, Jon Gruden, and a White general manager, Mike Mayock. The percentage of Black players has decreased every year since. In 2021, in one of the most damaging blows to the NFL in recent memory, Gruden resigned after it was discovered that he made racist and homophobic comments after an analysis of thousands of emails sent to NFL executives and others. Mayock was fired after the season, too. At the same time, the percentage

of Black players on the Raiders roster dropped to 67.2%.

Though the study on the Raiders focuses on players, organizational scholars have consistently shown that people are most likely to hire others who are of the same race. Bias among decision-makers can affect the diversity of the organization.

### SYSTEMIC RACISM

Finally, societal factors make a difference, the most prevalent



After retiring as a player in 1983, Art Shell became an offensive line coach for the Los Angeles Raiders. In 1989, Shell was promoted to head coach of the Raiders, making him the first African-American head coach in the National Football League in the modern era.

of which are systemic forms of racism, meaning racial bias at the community, state and national levels.

Societal factors reflect people’s collective racial biases, as well as the racially tinged laws, policies and norms embedded in societies’ institutions.

A focus on systemic racism moves beyond individual actors and prioritizes the societal patterns of prejudice and discrimination. For example, my colleague and I have shown that county-level racism is predictive of fans’ reactions to Black Lives Matter protests by NFL players.

Systemic racism has an enduring impact that can affect people years later. Researchers have shown that counties most dependent on slavery in 1860 also have high levels of racism today. As systemic racism increased in these counties, Black residents’ poverty rates increased and their social mobility decreased.

Given the impact of systemic racism across all elements of society, it is hardly surprising that NFL coaches, analysts and scholars – including those in media studies, sport studies, sociology, sport management, and behavioral science – point to systemic racism as a reason for the lack of Black coaches in the league.

The evidence is clear: Organizations, their leaders and systemic racism all contribute. Until structural change occurs, the pattern will continue. ●●

*This is an updated version of an article originally published on January 24, 2022.*

# D6 Commerce's New DEI Leader Brings Passion and Commitment to Her Role

Commerce Bank's new senior vice president and director of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), Felecia Hogan, has come a long way during her 28 years with the organization. She started working at the bank to pay her way through college, encoding checks at night while attending school during the day. In the years that followed, she steadily rose through the ranks, eventually becoming a senior vice president of operations before being named to her new role in June.

Leading DEI efforts for a large organization with team members in 11 states is a great deal of responsibility, but Hogan is excited about the opportunity. "It's a huge honor," she says. "DEI is very important to me. At the end of the day, I want all the people who work here to know Commerce is a place where they can grow their careers and have all the right tools in place to help them succeed."

Despite being new to her role, Hogan has a long history of being involved in Commerce's DEI efforts, and she's proud to take the reins of the DEI programs that the bank has had in place for many years. For example, she played a prominent role in the establishment of VIBE, Commerce's multicultural employee resource group (ERG), and has been a sponsor of the group ever since.

"I've really had a front-row seat to Commerce's DEI journey, which started a long time ago," she says. "It's been an evolution that's included training sessions, our ERGs — which help our team members find a sense of belonging — and our 'Listen, Talk and Learn' sessions, where people can share their experiences, be vulnerable and have courageous conversations."

She sees her new responsibilities as an expansion of the work she's already been doing. "It's going to allow me to play an even greater part in building an environment for everyone, where every group is accepted, valued and respected," she says. "I want to ensure that people have the ability to thrive and be their authentic selves as they contribute to our organization's success."

Hogan says a primary element of her role as DEI director will be to help reinforce Commerce's core

values throughout the organization. "Our values are the foundation that shapes how we live and work," she adds. "They call out our commitment to DEI at work and in our communities. And that commitment helps us communicate openly and candidly with each other. It helps us trust each other and treat each other with respect."

As director of diversity, equity and inclusion, Hogan will set the strategic direction and manage operational oversight of the goals Commerce has set for itself. She notes that she will work closely with the bank's leadership and talent management teams to establish the direction the organization will take with its DEI programs, and to ensure that the bank is held accountable for making measurable progress on its goals.

Hogan says these efforts are a critical part of retaining and attracting talented people. "People want to understand that diversity is valued," she notes. "They want to know if we have policies and practices in place to make things more equitable, whether our environments are inclusive, and whether diversity is celebrated, not just tolerated. Job candidates are going to look for organizations with a strong culture of diversity."

The ultimate goal of Commerce's many DEI programs, Hogan says, is to encourage team members to learn about other people's experiences. "We want everyone to lean into their discomfort and diversify their circles of people they interact with," she says. "We've had more than 2,000 people participate in various sessions where they share their lived experiences. We all have to meet people who aren't like us in order to understand them better."

If Hogan sounds deeply passionate about diversity, equity and inclusion, that's because she is. According to Sara Foster, Commerce's executive vice president of talent and corporate administration, Hogan's passion is one of the qualities that made her the ideal candidate to continue growing the momentum of the bank's DEI efforts.

"I've worked with Felecia for many years, and she's always thoughtful, curious and very strate-



Hogan

gic about the way she thinks through any issue," Foster says. "She's always been a strong supporter of our people-development initiatives and is always raising her hand to learn more."

Foster says Hogan is always thinking about what else the bank could be doing to create programs that help

people — especially women and people of color — find their next-level opportunity. "Through her lived experiences, Felecia can help people see past their unconscious biases and make an impact on the way we develop, promote and hire people. She's just so perfect for this role."

For her part, Hogan is excited about

what's ahead for Commerce's DEI initiatives. "We have so many good things in the pipeline," she says. "We're very intentionally focused on how we operate internally and externally. We're looking at how we can improve upon everything we do. I'm excited to continue the great work that's already been started." ●●

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# What Does Jon Benét Have To Do With Diversity?

D7

By Bonita Gooch  
The Community Voice

I'm not sure exactly when I heard the term "pack" journalism, but I vividly remember the story that clearly cemented the concept in my mind. It goes back to 1997 and the case of murdered child beauty pageant participant Jon Benét Ramsey.

For those who are too young to remember the story — or for those who obviously had their head in the sand back then if they missed this story — Jon Benét Ramsey, the daughter of affluent parents, was only 6 years old when she was found murdered in her family's Boulder, CO, residence on Dec. 26, 1996. Her murder — which is still unsolved — became one of the decade's most famous police investigations and a media favorite.

I had just started as editor-in-chief of The Community Voice in November 1996, and although I had a degree in journalism, I had not worked in the field, and had paid only a limited amount of attention to how journalists fixated on one particular story. As the coverage of Jon Benét continued for months and for years, I couldn't help but wonder, WHY?? What made the murder of this young girl so important while other stories were totally ignored.

Young Black, Brown, Yellow and Red girls were disappearing all over America, but the press continued their focus only Jon Benét.

You may have noticed the press' incessant fixation on numerous stories, and like me, you might have wonder why. I later learned the term "pack" journalism, to describe this lack of

diversity in news coverage.

This isn't the kind of "diversity" most people may have had in mind when they first came across this section. However, pack journalism is too often the result of the lack of diversity in newsrooms. Pack journalism is the characterization of news reporting as being homogeneous. I say pack journalism is too often the result of a newsroom being too homogenous.

Too often, newsrooms focus on the same basic stories, because the staff of the newsrooms are staffed with similar teams — predominantly White — with similar interests and perspectives of what is news.

While diversity of news coverage is changing some, too often the lead stories on national and local newscasts are the same, and the lead story in newspapers across the country are glaringly similar each morning. Fox news is the lone voice for conservative America, and across the country Black, Brown, Red and Yellow stories still struggle to be shared. There are plenty of other groups struggling to be heard by mainstream media and most often because they're also not represented in newsrooms.

The Community Voice, while just 27-years-young, counts itself among a historic group of Black newspapers that were called upon after the end of slavery to help tell our story, when White newspapers wouldn't. Now, on the other side of integration, not much has changed. Coverage of Black people in mainstream media too often remains limited to crime, sports and celebrities. Beyond that, our stories are rarely shared and our perspective on issues are rarely addressed.

Daily online and every two weeks in our print

edition, our publication produces story after story that aren't covered by other news media. I can't tell you how many times people of all colors come up to me and tell me they wouldn't have known about an issue if they hadn't read it in The Community Voice.

Our stories are different, because our team is different and because of it, we come to this job with a different perspective. Often our stories come from being at "that"



event in the community or from a chat with an acquaintance we bump into at the grocery store. We lean into our specialized knowledge of our community to generate stories that are informative and meaningful to and about our community.

From their very beginnings Black newspapers — and all newspapers — have played a vital role in both educating and building the



communities they serve. What's great, though, is that the diverse stories told by diverse media helps to educate us about each other, our culture and our dreams. A diverse media plays a major role in breaking down the many barriers that keep us estranged and apart, and teaches how much more we have in common than we ever thought.

Diversity is important in newsrooms and diversity is also important in news sources. ●●

## It's About Life and Death: Increasing Diversity in Healthcare

Diversity: It's important in life, it's important in culture, and it's incredibly important in healthcare. So important, in fact, that lives literally depend on it.

There has been a plethora of articles written about racial and ethnic health disparities. This phenomenon is not new. In 1985, Margaret M. Heckler, former Health and Human Services Secretary commissioned and released "The Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Black and Minority Health." The landmark Malone Heckler Report documented disparities in the health care delivered to racial and ethnic minorities.

The report found and cited numerous specific disparities. Minorities were less likely to be given appropriate

cardiac medications or to undergo bypass surgery and were less likely to receive kidney dialysis or transplants. In addition, several studies showed significant racial differences in who receives appropriate cancer diagnostic tests and treatments. By contrast, the study found minorities were more likely to receive certain less-desirable procedures, such as lower limb amputations for diabetes and other conditions.

"The real challenge lies not in debating whether disparities exist, because the evidence is overwhelming, but in developing and implementing strategies to reduce and eliminate them." Wrote the Heckler Report committee chair Alan Nelson, a retired physician and former president of the

American Medical Association.

Among the responses suggested in the report was increasing the diversity of the health care workforce. Increasing the diversity of the health care eco-system improves access to health care for underserved patients. Why?

Because diversity in healthcare has measurable benefits for both healthcare professionals and the communities they serve. For the healthcare industry, some of the key advantages of increasing the diversity of healthcare professionals on their team includes:

**Increased provider comfort levels:** Studies show that students who have trained at diverse schools are more comfortable treating patients from ethnic backgrounds other than their own.

### Current Gaps in Representation in U.S. Healthcare

64% of physicians are male and 56% are white.



The majority of NP, PT, and OT workers are female, but only 25% are non-white.



Only 6% of physicians identify as Hispanic, despite this group making up 19% of the population.



Only 5% of physicians identify as Black or African-American, though 13% of the population is Black.



Sources: AAMC | Data USA | U.S. Census

See HEALTHCARE page D10

# D8 New Partnership Between the Kansas Leadership Center and Kansas Organizations Serving Communities of Color Makes 'Creating Leadership Together' Possible

In an effort to cultivate leadership and inspire hope for the future among Kansans of color, the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) has launched a new initiative, Creating Leadership Together, and has selected nine Kansas organizations to serve as partners.

"We're excited to launch Creating Leadership Together and create a community development partnership with nine organizations that work with Kansans of color who are typically under-represented in leadership programs. Each partner has committed to sustainable, ongoing training sufficient to make a difference while working toward the common good of their community. In return, we are providing an all-encompassing, from-the-ground-up package of support that will position these community-based organizations to offer a sustainable leadership program under their own direction," said Racquel Thiesen, director of community partnership at Kansas Leadership Center.

KLC's partners for Creating Leadership Together are:

- Urban League of Kansas (Wichita)
- Kansas State Conference of NAACP (Wichita)

- Salud + Bienestar (Wichita)
- Topeka Latino Professionals (Topeka)
- Wichita Urban Professionals (Wichita)
- WSU Office of Diversity and Inclusion (Wichita)
- Start at Zero (Kansas City)
- Made Men (Kansas City)
- Opus Media (Overland Park)

"Wichita Urban Professionals has been wanting a leadership program for a long time. We've worked alongside the KLC for a number of years and this program is providing a true pathway to get a program off the ground," said Danielle Johnson, Wichita Urban Professionals lead and executive director of Habitat for Humanity.

Research conducted by Third Floor Research, KLC's research partnership with Kansas State University, studied the impact of community leadership programs in Kansas, particularly those that adopt KLC's approach to leadership as an activity for anyone, not just a select few in roles of authority. The results revealed a link between these programs and increased workforce and community engagement. Participants who graduate from these programs:

- Feel more confidence in their leadership



(L-R) Tyrena Judie, director of finance; Idalia Loya, associate with events & programs; Alejandro Arias-Esparza, custom civic engagement manager; Jonathan McRoy, field team

efficacy

- Develop significant new leadership skills for the workplace
- Are three times more inclined to serve their communities in a civic role

"We know that community leadership programs develop the capacity of both individuals and the communities where they have influence and impact. Yet providing personal development programs is too often an unaffordable or unknown luxury for many community-based

groups. That's why we came up with Creating Leadership Together, to strengthen resources and infrastructure in these Kansas communities," said Thiesen.

Through Creating Leadership Together, Kansas Leadership Center is offering \$10,000 worth of in-kind leadership development training and program design consulting for each of the Kansas-based organizations selected as partners in the initiative. Additionally, each partner is eligible to

See KLC page D10

## Diversity & Inclusion is One of Wichita Chamber's Six Priorities

This crucial topic is one that the Chamber embraces and takes so seriously that in 2017, Diversity and Inclusion became one of its 6 priorities. Just what does that mean? From a statement perspective, the Chamber's DEI priority is to "Champion the competitive advantage for our members, businesses and communities." In lay terms, we want to "Lead with Intent."

• Intent to make sure that diverse voices and perspectives are included in all decisions which usually lead to the best solutions. Since 2018, Chamber's staff and leadership diversification has changed tremendously in race, gender, and age. The Chamber's 60-plus member board makeup has gone from including two persons of color to over 10. The leaders of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce are now automatic members of the board. That is addressing diversity from the top. Initially a Director of Community Advancement was hired and was to oversee the area of diversity and inclu-

sion. Recognizing its importance, in 2020 our DEI focus was changed to a standalone thus a Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was named and reports directly to the CEO.

• Intent to encourage, invest and be a resource for our members/business to leverage diverse talent pools which results in more economically sound business solutions. Business leaders are increasingly recognizing that there is a strong economic case for embracing our diversity and being intentionally inclusive. Many requests for proposals/contracts now question and challenge businesses on their culture of diversity from the top. This does not stop with a simple non-discrimination policy or statement. We have been made aware of companies who will pass on businesses, organizations, firms, etc. who do not have diverse leadership. The Chamber collaborates with a diverse advisory team (race, gender, industry, age, etc.) to help determine those type of gaps and to assist in finding solutions such as identifying certified/diverse suppliers.



Rolfe

Lastly, as a way to invest and support, in 2020, Board members sponsored in excess of 45 Chamber memberships for minority business thus allowing leveraging opportunity.

• Intent to focus on a diverse leadership which doesn't mean just creating programs and/or departments. It means to integrate diversity into all the processes and policies of our businesses and organization. Diversity (differences) and intentional inclusion



Ellison

must become a lens for looking at, identifying, developing, and advancing talent to make us successful. And while race or gender was not the primary reason, but instead, choosing the best person for the job, we are very excited to have **John Rolfe, the first African American in our history to lead the Wichita Chamber of Commerce to the next level starting October 4, 2021, as its President and CEO.**

Diversity, equity, belonging and inclusion are becoming more common in our lives and workplaces. We're hearing these words and phrases more and witnessing increased roles dedicated to forming inclusive environments and leadership. Per data from ZoomInfo, the number of executives with diversity and inclusion job titles are "up 113% and climbing with nearly 40% of Fortune 500 companies onboarding an executive focused specifically on the issue."

Like these companies, the Chamber is intentional with our inclusion strategies, setting clear milestones and goals and seeking skilled people to lead these efforts. Some may say that this is not enough. We agree. That is why we won't stop there. This is not an overnight problem, and we don't have an overnight solution.

Yet, the Wichita Chamber Leadership is leaning into inclusion-related work as a focus and a priority and not an ad hoc separate business strategy. We will continue to analyze the issues that need to be fixed and the type of skillset needed to do so. ●●

# What does leadership look like? YOU.

LEADERSHIP ISN'T ABOUT WHERE YOU COME FROM OR WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE.  
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR GENDER OR WHERE YOU FALL ON AN ORG CHART.

**LEADERSHIP IS FOR EVERYONE.**



At the Kansas Leadership Center our mission is to foster leadership for stronger, healthier and more prosperous Kansas communities. Through programming and our ongoing work helping others develop their own DEI framework, we're dedicated to ensuring that leadership in Kansas reflects the people of Kansas.

To learn more, visit [kansasleadershipcenter.org](http://kansasleadershipcenter.org).



**KANSAS  
LEADERSHIP  
CENTER**



## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

The world's best ideas are uncovered when individuals with diverse backgrounds, viewpoints and talents come together as a team. Spirit AeroSystems is committed to creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture for its employees and the communities where we live and work.



**Enhanced understanding of value sets:** A more diverse group of healthcare professionals will have a better understanding of colleagues' and patients' different belief systems.

**Improved employee engagement and retention:** People take pride in working for companies that are making a positive impact in society

**Benefits for the patients includes:**

**Improved communication:** Not only may some patients be able to more effectively communicate with providers who speak their language, but they might also receive better care. Patients with limited English proficiency experience higher rates of medical errors and worse clinical outcomes.

**Increased patient trust:** Patients of color may be more likely to seek out care. A Stanford University study found that Black male patients who were treated by Black doctors were more likely to seek preventative services than those who were treated by non-Black doctors.

**Greater patient choice and satisfaction:** Racial and ethnic

minority patients who have a choice are more likely to select health care professionals of their own racial or ethnic background and report receiving higher quality care, when treated by a health professional, and being more satisfied with their care.

**Reduced health disparities:**

Improved cultural competence and ethnic and racial diversity can help to alleviate healthcare disparities and improve healthcare outcomes in diverse patient populations.

The good news also is that African-American, Hispanic, and Native-American physicians are much more likely than White physicians to practice in underserved communities and to treat larger numbers of minority patients, irrespective of income.

**HOW DIVERSE IS HEALTHCARE TODAY?**

Most active physicians today are White men and more nursing and rehabilitative positions are held by women — in turn, people of color are still vastly underrepresented in these areas. It's important for employers to understand current healthcare demographics and the barriers and challenges faced by women, people



of color, and LGBTQ people in the healthcare workforce, which we'll cover more below.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, only about 36% of active physicians are female.

Only about 5% of physicians identify as Black or African-American, despite this group making up 13% of the U.S. population, and fewer than 6% of physicians identify as Hispanic, despite Hispanics making up about 19% of the U.S. population. However, 28% of physicians and surgeons in the United States are immigrants, with doctors from India and China making up the largest groups. This speaks to issues of systemic oppression: People from minority groups that have been oppressed for generations in the United States are less represented as physicians than are immigrants of color.

Some healthcare professions, such

as nursing, physical therapy, and occupational therapy, are female-dominated. However, the vast majority of nurses, PTs, and OTs are White (non-Hispanic). About 91% of nurse practitioners and nurse midwives are female, but only one-quarter do not identify as White. Similarly, 69% of physical therapists are female, but only 22% do not identify as White; 84% of occupational therapists are female, and only 17% do not identify as White. In these professions, men are in the minority and may face discriminatory attitudes — especially in nursing, where stereotypes about “male nurses” abound. ●●

## KLC from page D8

receive up to \$10,000 in seed money for their first two years of programs.

“At Start at Zero, we believe deeply that parents and caregivers are capable and responsive to the needs of their children and are also the experts on their children. Our parent and family-centered early education programming set parents and children up for success, and we make it our mission to go above and beyond to meet families where they are. We will utilize this grant to develop the skills and capacity of families as they learn to exercise adaptive leadership in all

spheres of their lives,” said Jumesha Wade, executive director of Start at Zero.

Core teams from each partner organization have the option of attending KLC's programs and will participate in required mentor conversations through October 2022.

“Through Creating Leadership Together, we will empower youth and Latino entrepreneurs to develop community partnerships and promote strong civic engagement and business development practices that will allow our communities to flourish in the coming years,” said Luis Estrada, founder/ex officio director of Topeka Latino Professionals. ●●

Sept. 3, 2021



**Dr. Marché Fleming-Randle (CENTER)**  
VP AND CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER  
MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Wichita State is committed to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion through priorities such as:

- Helping families through access and affordability
- Supporting Kansas businesses with a talent pipeline that meets employer needs
- Increasing economic prosperity with higher education that benefits the Kansas economy

WICHITA.EDU/DIVERSITY



# Spirit: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Are Critical Drivers

Spirit AeroSystems values the full range of differences, perspectives and abilities its employees bring to the workplace. As a company, Spirit has been on this journey for more than ten years, armed with a strong business case centered on the talent pipeline, employee engagement, corporate social responsibility, and a customer and supplier focus in a global market. The company is committed to creating a world-class company that provides an equitable and inclusive culture where all employees' diverse skills and talents are valued, and an environment where all employees feel welcomed and a sense of belonging.

At Spirit, diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) are critical drivers for developing an engaged, collaborative, high-performing global team, which directly aligns with the corporation's values of Transparency, Collaboration, and Inspiration. DE&I is integrated into the overall business strategy with focus areas and measures that will have a direct positive impact on enhanced performance and ultimately improved business results.

As such, Spirit President & Chief Executive Officer Tom Gentile and Spirit Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Sam Marnick co-chair and lead the Executive Global Diversity Equity & Inclusion Council. The Executive Council sets strategic imperatives for the organization

globally to take meaningful action in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environment. The first critical action taken by the council was to establish a DE&I framework consisting of five strategic pillars that drive this work and build organizational capability. The pillars are focused on leadership engagement, global alignment, communication, citizenship, and talent.

To drive accountability and demonstrate commitment, the Executive Global DE&I Council also established targeted goals to increase the recruitment, development and promotion of underrepresented talent across Spirit leadership positions. Specific goals have been established to increase female representation globally and ethnic minority representation in the U.S. within the Spirit leadership ranks. In support of these goals, the organization took tangible actions to develop new partnerships with organizations like BEYA (Black Engineer of the Year Award), and enhanced diversity recruiting efforts with local, state, and national partners.

In addition, Spirit's leadership team is committed to actively listening, seeking to understand, and leading with empathy, accountability, and action. While it is not only important to promote and value DE&I, leaders must also be willing to invest the time to grow their own personal awareness of the



challenges and inequities underrepresented populations face in their workplaces and their communities. To address this, a Task Force consisting of several senior strategic leaders from across the organization was created to focus on Spirit's cultural transformation and to accelerate the DE&I strategy. The organization also established Site DE&I Councils, which include the Site Leaders, to activate this work locally.

Even in a year faced with extreme business challenges caused by the ongoing grounding of the 737 MAX and the economic damage from the global pandemic, all of which were compounded by the heightened awareness of some of the

systematic inequities and social injustice that exist in our society, Spirit's commitment was unwavering. The organization's focus was actually heightened to identify opportunities and drive progress in this space.

Understanding there is no singular silver bullet, the responsibility of developing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment requires the involvement of everyone. At the end of the day, we all want to come to a workplace where we feel included, valued, and have a sense of belonging.

Spirit believes that together, we can create a more equitable and inclusive community for us all. ●●

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## D12 At WPS' Equity, Diversity, and Accountability Office is a Critical Component of Our Strategic Plan

Wichita Public Schools is committed to ensuring that our schools are trusted as safe places, focusing on closing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates, decreasing the disproportionate discipline of minority and disabled students, and making sure all students feel like they belong and are included. The Wichita Public Schools' Equity, Diversity, and Accountability Office (WPSEDA) is a critical component of this element of the district's Strategic Plan.

WPSEDA works to create a future in which student outcomes are not predicted by any kind of societal or cultural disposition and is committed to ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students by allocating resources and providing diverse learning opportunities to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to equity across the district.

WPSEDA's mission is to provide equitable access to a high standard of educational success for all students

with the intention of closing achievement gaps, particularly for student groups with the greatest academic needs.

This vision and mission are acted on by establishing high expectations for all students while providing equitable opportunities, support, and the resources needed to ensure that all students receive rigorous and engaging instruction while enrolled in the Wichita Public Schools.

WPSEDA designs and implements strategies and programs to integrate diversity and equity into all aspects of the Wichita Public Schools' mission and culture and is committed to building and sustaining an environment that embraces and celebrates all aspects of diversity.

Priorities established by WPSEDA serve our students by increasing equity training for stakeholders to help eliminate disproportionate discipline of minority students and to challenge stereotypes with the goal to produce a bias-free school and work environment. Additional initiatives to provide



Included in Wichita Public School's programs for equity, diversity and accountability are several programs designed specifically to help minority children excel. Students above are participants in the BAASE Program that operates in all Wichita middle and high schools.

educational equity, inclusion, and belonging for students include providing mentoring and tutoring for students, improving recruitment and retention of African-American male teachers in K-5, utilizing Restorative Practice, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Social and Emotional Learning, Trauma-Informed services and increasing the number of African-American males in

advanced educational programs.

Many of these strategies and goals are pursued through WPSEDA's sub-departments, which include Family Belonging and Inclusion, Future Ready Advocates/Mentors, Equity Champions/Committees, Equity Learning Academy, the Magnet Schools Department, Training Office, and Equity Work Groups.

There are many other programs and initiatives that WPSEDA provides to help minority students excel. Among them are the "95-0-3" initiative in which students are encouraged to have 95% Attendance, 0 Suspensions, 3.0+ GPA.

Another initiative, the "BAASE Program," has chapters at all Wichita

See WPS page D15

# Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce is proud to welcome



**John Rolfe**

as our new President and CEO and

**Ricki Ellison**

as our new Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce champions diversity and inclusion with an intentional approach to inform people, and to create policies and practices that strengthen access and opportunity in the business community and region at large.





# Department of Equity, Diversity, and Accountability

The mission of Wichita Public Schools' Office of Equity, Diversity and Accountability is to provide ***equitable access to a high standard of educational success for all students*** with the intention of closing achievement gaps, particularly for student groups with the greatest academic needs.



**D14 ALZHEIMER'S**  
from page D4

African Americans to investigate the impact of a brain amyloid PET scan on clinical care outcomes, including diagnosis and treatment. The U.S. Study to Protect Brain Health Through Lifestyle Intervention to Reduce Risk (U.S. POINTER) study is a two-year clinical trial studying the effects of multi-component lifestyle interventions on risk of cognitive decline in a diverse population in the U.S. It is our goal to strengthen our criteria for clinical trials to maximize the number of eligible people from diverse and

under-represented communities.

Our 24/7 Helpline, 800.272.3900 (a free service), is available to anyone 365 days a year and offered in more than 200 different languages to meet the needs of the caller. We know a crisis typically won't happen at 1 p.m. but rather in the middle of the night and our dementia trained specialists will be there to answer your call. Our website ALZ.org (a free service) offers multiple free online tools for individuals with Alzheimer's or another dementia and their caregivers.

No one should go through Alzheimer's or any other dementia alone. Please call us to learn more. 800.272.3900●●



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# Intentional Commitment to Diversity, Equality & Inclusion



- **ADVANCE KANSAS** - A community initiative in partnership with Spirit AeroSystems, Meritrust Credit Union, Westar Energy and Juan Johnson, president of Diversity Leadership in Action, LLC. Host of Wichita's annual Diversity Awards Breakfast.
- **PROGRAMS RESPONSIVE TO STUDENT DIVERSITY** -
  - Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) for English
  - AVID for Higher Education - Butler is Kansas' only AVID college
- **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COUNCIL** - Butler employees passionately keeping diversity and inclusion values alive.
- Repeatedly recognized as a **WBJ DIVERSITY AWARDS HONOREE** for our Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives.



ButlerCC.edu

# Networking Event Encourages Diversifying Professional Networks D15

By Jazzlyn Johnson  
The Community Voice

**D**o all your professional contacts look like you, have the same interests and experiences as you?

People do tend to cluster together based on their race, culture, education, age and professional status. The problem with surrounding yourself with those who have similar contacts is it may be difficult to make connections with new people or businesses.

“One of the most important things you should do for yourself personally and professionally is to have a diverse network, a robust network that’s full of different people with various backgrounds at varying levels with assorted life and career experiences,” said Rahdiah Barnes, president of the National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications (NAMIC) in New York, in an interview with The Muse.

Research shows that people who have more diverse contacts come up with more creative ideas and original solutions. Through connecting with those from different backgrounds, you gain insight that will make you better at your job and help you grow professionally.

“The more diverse your network, the more likely you are to make overlapping linkages between clusters of people. The more linkages you can make between clusters of people the stronger your network can be,” wrote Ivan Misner for Business Journals. He’s the founder of BNI, the world’s largest business networking organization and also known as the “father of modern networking.”

“If you wish to build a powerful per-

sonal network, branch out. The only thing that they should have in common with you and the other people in your network is that they should be

of Hispanic friends within our community. To be honest, it just seems like there is a divide and uncomfortableness,” Hutchins



(L) For the Culture networking was a way to allow Black and Brown people to help diversify their professional networks. R) Justin Reyes, president of the Young Latino Professionals of KC, and Black Excellence KC member Akil Hutchins.

really good at what they do. Create a personal network like that, and you’ll have a network that can help you succeed at anything,” Misner wrote.

A recent event that brought together two disconnected communities worked to do just that.

Black Excellence KC member Akil Hutchins noticed the disconnect between the Black and Latino communities in Kansas City. He realized many of his friends did not have any Latinos in their circles.

Hoping to bring the communities together, Hutchins help host a networking event called “For the Culture.” Other partners for the event held earlier this month were Black Excellence KC and Young Latino Professionals of KC.

“We don’t necessarily have a lot

said. “It’s important that the Black and Brown community come together because we’re both people of color. We both endure a lot of some of the same barriers and issues, whether it be systematically or statewide. There are a lot of things that we go through that they go through, and vice versa.”

Justin Reyes, president of the Young Latino Professionals of KC agreed and said it seems like the groups are siloed. He hopes future For the Culture events will encourage all types of communities to network with each other and mobilize together to tackle social issues.

Hutchins suggests the best way to start to branch out is by starting to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. He hopes more networking events will help people become more comfort-



able with each other, work together and share resources.

“I hope that people emulate what we do with For the Culture within their communities, and hopefully in a roundabout way, we’re all able to interact and be collaborative and move forward in a positive manner

that way we can develop opportunities and create generational wealth,” Reyes said.

To learn more about Black Excellence KC, visit: [www.BXKC.org](http://www.BXKC.org).

To learn more about Young Latino Professionals, visit: [www.YLPKC.com](http://www.YLPKC.com). ●●

## Tips for Diversifying Your Network

- **Consider this:** The goal is to create positive relationships as you meet new people from different backgrounds, rather than checking off a “diversity box.” Be intentional to form relationships with each interaction.
- **Be a good listener.** Use each interaction as an opportunity

to learn about experiences that might be different than your own.

- **Step out of your comfort zone.** Reach outside of your bubble.

- **Ask for introductions.** Try turning to your own network and asking for introductions to people they might know. ●●

## WPS from page D12

middle and high schools and consists of fraternities of 7th – 10th grade boys striving for academic and social excellence, which prepare them to be Future Ready Leaders.

The “Middle School Challenge” is a Jr. League Football initiative with a focus on “putting the student into the student athlete.”

The “Engaging Congregations” initia-

tive works with congregations within the city’s urban core in the work of preparing our students for future-readiness. This message is shared by church leaders and in church youth programs to make a positive impact on high school graduation rates, third grade reading proficiency, suspensions/expulsions, and preparing all students to achieve college, career, and life readiness.

WPSEDA’s “Future Ready Advocates” serve schools that have a disproportionate rate of suspension of at-risk students, which often extends their

work beyond the school day to include residential settings.

Working with parents/guardians, teachers, administrators and utilizing community resources, “Equity Champions” are in-school advocates committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), are respected by their peers, trained, and are socially and culturally aware. The Equity Champions head “Equity Committees” in their buildings which are groups of committed individuals whose goal is to ensure that each child receives the

tools necessary to achieve their academic and social potential, eliminate inequities and disparities in student achievement, and promote inclusion that engages and draws on the assets of students, families, staff, and community members.

Additional focus on DEI is pursued by the introduction of supportive language in various policies, the WPS non-discrimination statement, Cultural Proficiency education, and civil rights.

WPS and the Equity, Diversity, and Accountability Office rigorously pur-

sues the ultimate goal of being able to facilitate the improvement of minority students’ attendance, behaviors, and academic success, which is monitored by the frequent analysis of various platforms that are part of WPS’ data ecosystem.

The Wichita Public Schools has acknowledged the need for increased equity within their institution and has allocated the resources necessary to grow and empower the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Accountability to ensure that all students are future ready. ●●

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WE'LL KEEP  
FIGHTING.**

The reinvigorated cry for social justice in America and across the world has given us at AARP more reason to stand firm in our values. We still believe that age, race and gender should never be barriers to living with dignity and purpose while fulfilling goals and dreams.

And as advocates for social justice, we'll continue to fight for true inclusion, access to proper health care, and the general improvement of lives of ALL people, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Visit [aarp.org/BlackCommunity](https://aarp.org/BlackCommunity) to learn more.