

The Plank Center Summit on Diversity and Inclusion in Public Relations was held at DePaul University on Oct. 26, 2018. The Summit offered a unique opportunity to gain professional insights and to see, hear from and network with successful professionals, educators and students from underrepresented groups. Attendees gained a deeper understanding of the barriers of D&I in the profession and best practices to develop and implement strategic programs to grow, mentor and retain diverse populations within the field.

Keynote Address – Heide Gardner

The morning keynote address was delivered by Heide Gardner, SVP and Chief D&I Officer at Interpublic Group.

Heide Gardner: I have a kind of interesting perspective I think, because I've had a long career, and the first half of it was actually in the business. And I did not transition into working on diversity and inclusion until I guess half my career. Which was over 20 years ago. And being here in Chicago to talk about it is really kind of special because, you know, for those of you who are in Chicago, I can imagine you've heard of Tom Burrell.

Who is someone I not only know personally, but had the opportunity to first meet as a client of his when I worked for Coca-Cola. And he became a mentor and he is really one of the reasons that I moved from being in the business into moving to AAF. I'll tell you a little bit about that.

And this is kind of funny, the first account executive for an agency that I ever worked with, and I've been on client and agency side, is now the co-chairperson of Burrell. Her name is McGee Osse Williams ...oh, Williams Osee, and back when I knew her, her name was Geneva Richardson, so that's how long we go back.

So Chicago also is because Johnson Publishing. I knew Mr. Johnson. They're the reasons that I wound up making the transition. So, any of you who do follow me on Twitter, like maybe two of you, know that there's an awful lot going on in the world that's really troubling me. I believe that there are some head winds that we have to deal with in order to be successful. I was thinking, the reason that the reason I am here is to be helpful, so how can I be most helpful? There was this drawing, this can I be helpful to talk about improvement within the context of this very real stuff that is going on and that is actually stuff that we come to work with every day because identity is becoming so important and we're filtering so much of what happens to us in the world through these lenses and they're more and more important.

So, I was like, "Okay, do I go that way?" At about 6 o'clock this morning I said, "No, well maybe a little bit of that." Like Katelyn Jenner, really? Welcome to the party where there are so many of us who are already under the bus. You know, so you won't be lonely, you know? I'm sorry. Megan Kelly, You know, this is real kind of stuff that people talk about at work. So Megan Kelly, when your colleagues and people, I'm assuming you have some friendships with, pull your coattail and tell you have toilet paper on your shoe or that you stepped in some and explain to you why isn't it, "Thank you for sharing.



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I would never want to do anything to hurt you." And you move on. And I think that is more of what we need as colleagues and friends. The world is more of "I didn't know" and that's one of the biggest problems is we don't know, especially around race and ethnicity because we live very, very segregated lives, extremely segregated lives and we are not always encouraged to learn.

Okay, I got that out of my system. So now I am going to do what I think you want me to do which is to give you some insights on how you can change. Right? Which is about culture change and as I said, it was 6 am, I usually don't use notes but I am going to. The other thing is, I want you to feel really hopeful that you can change things. This is from the standpoint of someone who has been working for twenty years and has wanted to see things change and I have seen some things change, but the fact is that if you are a white male, your odds of moving from the professional level to the executive level is 300% of what your representation is at the professional level. If you are a white woman, your opportunity is about 80% of your representation at the professional level versus the executive level. If you are talking about management, you are at one to one which is perfectly even. If you are a person of color, especially if you are a black woman, the odds, the probability is less than the probability of being struck by lightning. Your odds are less than they should be randomly, that's not my analysis that's the American Association of University Women who put some economists on it and I know that it holds for us because our data, our track record is a little less.

So what have I learned? That we've made progress and I can tell you at IPG relative to the industry. I am really proud to say that Weber Shandwick, alone, in the PR space, I believe has about 30% of the black women executives in the entire PR industry working for them.

And I can tell you at IPG, we are only 12% of the industry but where we are doing and very underrepresented categories is 18% of the people in that category, 20%, 25% which is incredible and I'm on this data because I just had to report to our board two days ago so this is really fresh in my mind. But the other thing that is really incredible about IPG that I am particularly proud of is where those people are. For most of, something like 80-90% of the people of color who work in IPG are in professional and management roles whereas in the rest of the industry their predominately they are must more likely to be in administrative and office worker roles which is good for us because it means that we have more diversity helping us with our business and we've seen a lot of culture change. If you follow the industry then you also know that in the last few years we've outperformed all the other Holden companies and that is a huge deal because when I started, we didn't know if we were going to even exist, right?

So when Michael Roth is out talking about diversity, about our success and investors say, "What is it? What is the secret sauce?" One is we have the most diverse talent, we think we have attracted some of the very, very best talent in the industry and we know that our culture has changed. This is not to say that we have won the war, okay? We have so far to go and you know, but even for us the time has never been better because we know so much more about what it takes. We have so much information because



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companies have been at this for now 30 and 40 years so now there is a lot of data on what is working and what hasn't and I think that is really good wind at our back. I think the business environment has never been more compelling for diversity and inclusion and it is probably not what you think.

I don't want to take up too much time, which I guess that I am. But I think the backstory is important because, one I am here to give you hope so you know that you can make more progress. So here are the three things that really matter in changing culture.

One of them is the paradigm, right? Culture change is just that. It is change. It starts with what your burning issue is, whether you are a family or a society, any organization, it's what is the burning issue and that determines everything: who's in charge, the resources, the sense of urgency. I don't think we have been doing we've been doing this for the right reasons from a business standpoint. There's a fairness and equality paradigm, which is let's make our organizations completely diversity neutral where gender, where race, have no bearing on outcomes, no bearing on our culture and we align our processes so that we can achieve those goals and that works really well if you are the army because of commanding controls. There's a lot of controls on those processes and you have a really compelling reason to do it, because of what you do.

But what happens in those kinds of organizations, it makes it really, if you are supposed to be in this diversity blind, gender blind, race blind, every other kind of blind environment, how in the world, do you bring that into your organization? How in the world do you have conversations about diversity issues and do we really even want to pretend that when you look at me you don't see a black woman with pink hair? No, of course not, let's not even pretend that. You know, even when we want to believe that, our brains still, okay? And we don't have any control over that. So that paradigm can get you diverse but it certainly isn't going to help you max out on a talent.

The next paradigm, which is kind of where we are is this whole idea of a portfolio and let's have a portfolio of diverse people so that we can build more credible and authentic relationships with emerging diverse markets. The problem is, in most of our agencies that's not what we do, right? We don't do that. The other thing is, that works and it has worked in like financial services where they hired a bunch of black MBAs to do business with black run cities, they had a lot of diverse customers. Sales, direct sales, insurance, where you are in a city and you want people to be selling to their neighbors. That makes sense that doesn't require us either. The paradigm that we really should be working for is a paradigm that doesn't ask people to assimilate into an organization which is a lot of what we do which is let's take them and let's figure out how we can make them fit in our cultures, right?

The most important and most helpful paradigm is learning, is one that is about learning and effectiveness and is actually about achieving critical masses of diversity, incorporating their perspectives. Different people don't just, might not, and they don't always, might not know something about their marketplace. Different people have different models, different mental frameworks about how they even see what a problem



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is, how they go about solving it and they also do have needs when they come into the work place and there are things that you need to do to make sure that you can capture that. So, the model becomes how do we get all of the barriers out of the way so that we can really get people to contribute, that we really get critical masses and that we are focused on innovation, and we are focused on that. I think that is a much more compelling, burning business issue for any company now so how do we do that? How do we not neutralize differences and here is an example.

Everyone is talking about how we have to assimilate, we have to integrate millennials and there is also this, we have to change the way we work. And there is all this, we have to change the way we work, well there are a lot of other reasons for that. So that's one thing, the burning issue and then there's in terms of the culture, there's the values and the belief system and everything that you do, everything, every way you do it, which means that it's a business transformation effort. You cannot silo that and say, "HR, go fix it." Right? Any business transformation effort you have to have business leaders leading it and owning it, the people everyone looks up to because they are the ones who make the company go.

You have to have the burning platform and the other thing that we know and when we talk about diversity and innovation is that you need diversity to solve very complex problems. The harder problems are, the more important diversity is. It's a mathematical fact. So, a group of people with diverse backgrounds from expertise but especially, demographic and cultural backgrounds are going to be better than a team of homogenous experts or a single expert in solving your problem given that they have some ability to solve a problem, which means that they are smart and they know a little something about the issue. They will be better at predictions, they will use more different mental models to solve it and they will also evaluate the options better. You know, we know all of this stuff, you know, that we didn't know before. The Mackenzie study that everyone cites about the effect of diversity on financial performance, what happens when you, you know, have boards and leadership comprised of women and/or ethnic or cultural minorities, people are always talking about that. What they are not talking about the rest of the report, which says those companies that had that and were able to outperform their sectors, the leaders of those companies were the ones that had business leaders involved in leading, they had a burning business issue, where it was linked to growth, they used information and data to inform a portfolio strategy, and then the fourth thing they had in common was that they targeted it.

And so I am going to leave you with, so it is about, how do we go about the problem. We need more people around the table helping us. I would suspect that a hiring manager would tell you a lot about how you can help them make better decisions or a leader about their challenges, you know, and ideas for better leading diverse teams. If we don't do that, we just aren't going to make it. Matching the market isn't a good argument for us yet, you know. Fairness and equality paradigm has limited results.

Last thing I am going to leave you with is the importance of belonging. A lot of people are talking about belonging now and authenticity. Done internal research, fifteen



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thousand employees, I don't think ours are any different than one else. Belonging is not about warmth and welcome and, you know, can I wear my hair pink? You know, it is much more practical. Belonging means I can ask for what I need, whether it is my personal life and work life, whether it is how I want to be treated, how I don't want to be treated, to get help with my career, to get feedback, it is very important to know that I can ask to contribute and that my ideas will be valued and that when I do those things, which is being authentic, that's me, right? It's what I need, what I want and how I want to contribute, that's authentic. If you can't do that and you can't do that in an environment where there is no negative consequence where it won't hurt your career, you don't belong.

So, I think having that kind of information is wind at our backs. Those are the kinds of considerations and conversations that are going to drive change and I hope that I added a little value to your conversations today and that you're really hopeful that you are going to be able to make diversity count instead of trying to make diversity count. So thank you very much, I am sorry that I ran late.

Barriers to Diversity & Inclusion

This panel discussed the barriers to diversity & inclusion. Panelists included Lilia Arroyo-Flores, Edelman; Dr. Kenn Gaither, Elon University; Tonya Veasey, Open Channel Group; Dr. Brenda Wrigley, Curry College; and moderated by Judith Harrison, Weber Shandwick.

Judith Harrison: So good morning everyone. I'm so glad to be here. I would rather stand out here and just kind of walk around, but I broke my foot recently so I'm going to just lean here. I'm fine. It's a message from the cosmos that I must wear high heels at all times. That's what this was about. Because I was not wearing heels when I broke my foot, so clearly I know what I need to do going forward. No question about it. So anyway, Heide is a tough act to follow. I have learned so much from her. She is just one of the most amazing people I have ever met and she touched on something that is incredibly important and that is belonging. It's something I wasn't even going to mention, but I think it really holds true and I am personal example of it. I feel that if I did not have that sense of belonging at Weber Shandwick I would have not been able to create the job I have. It was what I wanted to do.

The role did not exist, but I felt strongly enough that people, the management there, would accept that I wanted to do. That I just said, raised my hand and wrote probably 25 endless memos about what we should be doing, but after everybody got sick of reading what I wrote, they said, "Would you like to do this?" and I said, "Yeah, uh-huh." So here we are years later and I couldn't be happier. So I do believe in that sense of authenticity and feeling that you can ask for what you want is incredibly important. I so echo that. As you know, today's political and cultural state is just so divisive. It is so profoundly segmented that it has really ignited and increased urgency under one of the most important issues



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facing our country and our industry today and that is diversity, equity and inclusion. D&I in public relations has always lagged far behind the changing demographics of our stakeholders.

Acknowledging the problem and putting it on our to do list for some time in the future when we didn't have so many other pressing things to do and the moon was in Aquarius and what have you, was basically seen as acceptable for many years. Nobody admitted it, but that is what was done. Everybody just kind of kicked the can down the road for the future. Advocating for diversity of thought which quite frankly is a phrase that often makes me want to tear my hair out, was the industry's way for a long time of acknowledging the need for diversity without actually having to do anything about it. Just like, "Yep, there's a problem," but how do we get diversity of thought? With diversity of people. That's kind of how it happens. So, at this point and not a moment too soon, the industry is actually developing a bias toward action as opposed to a bias toward talk and to me this is like a gift from God.

It is an amazing and wonderful thing. As far as I'm concerned at long last we are really owning the obligation and the opportunity to cast as wide a net as possible for talent. To leverage the different backgrounds and perspectives that people bring to the table to create innovative solutions for our communications issues and to create inspiring high-performance work places where everyone feels welcome. Everyone's voice is heard and everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute, to advance and to grow. Our lack of diversity in this business is not intentional, clearly, but it is far from harmless. So this barrier to diverse workforce development exist. They have to be identified. They have to be examined and then they have to be shattered and so that is one of the reasons that we're here, to get started on this process in a serious way.

So my esteemed colleagues on this panel are here to help start this process. So you've heard a little bit about them and what they do. You've heard a little bit about me. What you have not heard is that in addition to my work at Weber Shandwick, I also am President of New York Women in Communications, which exists to advance the careers of women in every marketing communications discipline at every stage of their career and I'm also President of the PRSA Foundation which drives diversity and inclusion from a racial and ethnic perspective with the public relations arena and as you may have heard, we recently published a groundbreaking book called *Diverse Voices, Profiles and Leadership*. I am so proud of it and so happy to be working with Ron Culp and others on this Board that created this project. It consists of interviews with about 45, mostly senior people of color throughout the public relations industry, including CCOs of Johnson and Johnson, WinNovo and other companies.

The idea is that the people profiled in the book, and Kim Hunter who is sitting right here, the people profiled in the book really talk about their career journeys. They talk about their successes. Also, about some of the obstacles that



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they have run into because they are multicultural people in a largely, let's say breathtakingly homogeneous business because that is the way it is. The idea of the book is to provide several things. One, is to provide guidance and hope for young people, for students and young professionals who would follow in these senior leaders' footsteps. Also to provide PR educators with information about the history and contributions of diverse people within the PR space, and also to provide organizations with real concrete ideas for building inclusive organizations where people from all backgrounds can thrive. So I am truly proud of it and I'm very glad to talk to with you about it and just wanted you to know that you can go to diverseleadership.net or Amazon to find this book and I of course highly recommend it. Not that I'm the least bit biased.

Now that we've gotten that done, I want to start talking with our panel about what the barriers to diversity and inclusion in the industry are. So let's start with barriers to recruitment, hiring, retention and promotions. These barriers exist for marginalized groups at several levels. Starting from internships and really going all the way up through senior levels. Could you elaborate on some of the specific obstacles you've observed at one or more of these career stages? I know Lilia you have a particular strong POB on this one.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores:

Oh yes, for sure. So good morning everybody. Lilia. Really excited to be here and just to build a little bit on what Judith was talking about. Clearly it's a passion point of mine. I'm on the National Board of Directors for HACE, which is the Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement and I feel that I am in great company today. I feel like there's a lot of people, Judith, Heide, who have been pioneers in this space where actually are the ones that are making the traction and opening the door for future advancements in innovations and really getting multicultural talent. We're giving them the spotlight. We're really opening those doors. So, to answer your first question, the way that I thought about this is more holistically. There's clearly challenges and barriers across all specific phases. From coming in as an intern to entry level, mid-level and then higher. I thought about the barriers that kind of go across all stages for people of color. I want to start off just with the fact that let's just be real. There's still a lot of politics in play at workplaces, so let's just start with where people recruit from.

There's a lot of places that still go to the same well. They're going to the same universities, the same colleges, and a lot of times it's because that's where the c-suite attended themselves and a lot of times there's just not a lot of multicultural students to recruit from those particular schools. Secondly, from a political standpoint, as interns, internships...I'm sure in all organizations there's a limited number of interns that you can bring in and then you've got the political factor of, "Well the client's son would like the internship. The COO's neighbor would like the internship." It's just a reality. That's very your number one. I also think that second barrier is more operational and this is financial. It's a reality again that we have to deal with. When you want to open a new position, you've got to go through a lot of financial red tape. The CFO is right



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there, chatting with you and a lot of times you cannot fill a spot, I'm sure all of you can relate, until the scope of work is assigned.

Well guess what happens when that scope of work is assigned? The work comes in immediately and the team that you had is not enough. So everybody's feeling pressure and then the line when you finally get to start hiring and pipelining, they going to come in and hit the ground running. So again, our industry just does not have a lot of multicultural talent inherently in it. So what we need to do if we want to bring in multicultural is go to other industries. You cannot expect people to come in and hit the ground running. They going to learn the processes. They going to learn what all the work is about, what their expectations are. Unfortunately, that time is not allowed. I've seen this happen multiple times at different places. What happens is you will bring in someone and everyone's like, "Yeah, we've got a multicultural person, new employee." They're not set up to succeed and at the end of the day, it's sad to say but I've seen it time and time again, the person gets fired because well they just weren't meeting the criteria of the work.

That's the financial challenge. I also think just as you start thinking about getting promoted to different levels, one of the key things is a cultural aspect. So I'm Mexican-American and there is two cultures that I think about, an ask culture and a guest culture. The ask culture is very American. You kind of grow up with the expectation that you will ask for what you want. It doesn't mean you're going to get it, but you are expected to ask. I'm Mexican-American, but culture is very much more about guest culture. So you don't necessarily ask for it, what you do is you do your very best and then good things come to those who do their very best, but you don't ask for it. My parents, amazing people, wonderful people, love them, the best intentions, immigrants, factory workers gave me the best advice that they could. They said that when I started, they said "Put your head down. Do a great job. Work hard and you will get promoted."

It took me a while to get in there and then realize, "Oh wait. I going to ask for what I want." and I still feel uncomfortable this day. I really going to prepare myself to do that, but culturally I think Latino, I've had conversations with my Korean friends, very much guest culture. So you've got to figure out how do I ask for what I want to move on. So part of that is that and then the last barrier that I thought about and it's something that multicultural people in general have a hard time doing is finding advocates. To navigate your way you've going to find people who are in those closed-door rooms, where they're talking about promotions, where they're talking about layoffs and you need to have people in there banging on the table for you as a multicultural employee. I think it was Heide who said this morning about how the likelihood of you getting up to more senior levels and it gets slimmer and slimmer. If you're a white man, it's a lot higher. If you're a white woman, it's a lot lower, but still higher than for multicultural people.



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That is a very, very true thing and what happens, I saw a study I think it was from the Center of Work Life Policy done a couple of years ago and it was about that gap about as you get more senior, the proportion of men to women goes like, like you start at the same level entry level 50% male, 50% female at entry level roles. Then what starts happening, the male percentage goes up as you get more senior. The women's goes down. I feel like that's very relevant to multicultural as well and so recognizing that we cannot do it alone, we've going to find those advocates that are going to push for you.

Judith Harrison: Absolutely and thank you so much. That was really thorough and so you gave a lot of information in that answer. I appreciate it. Wanted to make sure that we got everybody on the panel who wanted to contribute to that.

Tonya Veasey: I'd like to add just something to that. So I grew up the youngest of 10 kids and the only, I think someone just said, "Oh Jesus." So growing up the youngest of 10 kids, the first to go to college, we've heard this story before and I think this is very relevant when it comes to internships. So I didn't have anyone to help me navigate college nor how to pivot from college to landing a job. So when I graduated, I was a pretty good student and I had a piece of paper, but I didn't know what to do with it and I think there's so many students of color that find themselves in that same situation. I just as something very personal to me have always opened myself up to, if you want to talk to me then I will put 30 minutes on my calendar to talk to any student who's trying to figure out what to do next.

I think that what has happened many times is I get calls from Moms and Aunts and all of that are they're like, "Tonya, can you talk to my daughter or my son because they're in the process of graduating from college," and I meet with them and I realize they have no idea what to do and it's almost too late because they are in their last year of school and as we all know, this is an internship game to a certain level. So one of the things I took upon myself is my office is in Fort Worth, close to Dallas and I called a lot of my colleagues from Fleishman Hillard, some of the big guys and I said, "Hey here's a problem. I'd love to host an internship boot camp." Actually I got the idea from another agency in Boston and said, "Hey I called your CFO and said can you talk me through what you all did?" So what we do now is we identify minority students that are freshmen and sophomores, and we're very intentional that they haven't quite got to that spot and I have a day-long panel discussion.

Then what I do is I invite a lot of my colleagues to come in and do mock interviews. We talk to them about the process. "So this is what you should be doing," and I keep tabs on them of how things are going and when they get to that junior year, senior year, then they have a better idea of what they need to do. So I think that's one of the barriers.



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Depending on where you are of not understanding how to even get into the industry even though you know you want to do it but how do I get into this industry?

I think the other thing is and Pat Ford and I have had this conversation before is the importance of having a sponsor. To me, having a mentor is different from having a sponsor so, and it took me a while. It took me several years within my career to realize that what I really needed in my career, I need mentors and I have lots of them, but what I really needed in my career was a sponsor. Someone who's going to be at the table and a topic comes up about, we're looking for a multicultural agency or we're looking to ask someone to come and speak to an organization and that person says, "Oh, I know someone," right?

That's the difference and they then help me get through the door. To me, that's the difference between me calling my mentor and he giving me good advice on what I should do next or me calling my sponsor and my sponsor saying, "Oh, I hear what you're trying to do, let me make some phone calls" and I think-

Judith Harrison: That's usually important.

Tonya Veasey: And I think as you get into various levels of being an executive, I think what we need more is more sponsors versus more mentors.

Judith Harrison: Absolutely and I want to make sure I get to everyone but I also want to condense this so that we have enough time for all the questions so I know Ken, you had something to say on this and Brenda as well.

Dr. Kenn Gaither: Very briefly, I've been in academia for a longer period of time than I was in the industry and one of the things I've noticed in academe is we have a preoccupation with skill and we are constantly told our students need be able to do this and ultimately what they need to be able to do is to be a unicorn.

So they need to be fluent. They need more than one language. They need to have done study abroad, they need to know business, they need to know media analytics. So, we check off all these things that students need to be able to do and in doing so, we separate students who could be great advocates for the industry because we're putting up so many barriers and many of those are artificially created, they're well-intentioned so I'd like to suggest that one of the things we should focus on is not just the skills but the mindset. So if we hear from the industry, if you can tell us what you need and we can train the rest of these skills. That speaks to mindset and that's where I think we can really get some of these great students who have been pushed out and their now in business or they're in some other area. In addition to the skills let's also talk about that mindset and these great multicultural students who are waiting for the opportunity because they do have that mindset. They are ready to hit the ground running and they will learn quickly, they need that opportunity.



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Judith Harrison: That's a great point, thank you. Brenda?

Dr. Brenda Wrigley: Quickly, unpaid internships area a huge issue and I wish we could convince every place looking for an intern to pay them because that automatically shuts out a lot of different students. And in many cases they do produce work product and if they do that it is illegal not to pay them so I've had many conversations with agencies and corporations and try to get them to understand, that is critical.

Judith Harrison: Frankly, I'm shocked that's still going on. I find it disgusting and it's, we shouldn't even be having this conversation in 2018 and so from my perspective if any organization asks you for interns and is not willing to pay, bye-bye.

It's not even worth the conversation. It's really not. So moving right along. You can see I'm a tad passionate about that, it's just ridiculous. Anyway. As we've been talking about an inclusive organizational culture is really essential to creating a diverse workforce. As I have always said, diversity without inclusion is absolutely meaningless. It does nothing for the workforce that you are trying to bring in the door, it doesn't really enable you to leverage their different experiences and backgrounds to look for solutions for your communications problems because you're not listening to them. What happens is that we have this constant revolving door of diverse talents in the industry and I attribute a large part of that to our not understanding, or at least not executing well, on creating inclusive environments. So, my question to all of you is, what should companies be doing to create these environments in which diverse talent and people from every background can thrive and it's not sort of a clique-ish sort of thing where everyone, as Heide, was saying, is asked to come in and assimilate and be just like us.

The idea is for us to bring people in and listen to them. How do we do that?

Dr. Brenda Wrigley: Well, I think in the research I've done. One of the things that often is missing is that the CEO and top management do not make a strong commitment and when that doesn't happen, you can do every kind of program you can think of, but people sense that that's not really a priority and it just doesn't happen.

Judith Harrison: Good point. Tonya, I know you have something on that, too?

Tonya Veasey: So I think for me, the one work that I think about often is, "intentional". Being intentional, right? And I think we also have to be very careful that we don't water down diversity and inclusion and I would add equity into that and what does that really mean. I think sometimes as a way to be able to convince people that you're actually doing diversity and inclusion, you've added so many other topics to the discussion, that we're not really focused on what's really going on in the industry. I can tell you 80 percent of the time, when I'm talking to my colleagues or even clients and they are talking about diversity and inclusion,



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what they are really concerned about is race equity and the lack thereof in their organization and so I think sometimes what happens is there's many groups that are disenfranchised but I think we've watered down diversity and inclusion that we've forgotten about what we really need to see happen in our industry. I think we need to be intentional and be honest with ourselves.

Judith Harrison: And when you say, we've watered it down so what should we be focusing on as opposed to what you feel we're focusing on, what do you think?

Tonya Veasey: So, for me and I think I said it, I think if 80 percent of the people are lacking a diverse multicultural workforce, then that's what we should be focusing on.

Judith Harrison: As opposed to diversity of thought.

Tonya Veasey: As opposed to diversity of thought or all the hazel eyes people need to feel welcomed and so for me, it really is about let's, if we want to see the needle move, then let's really attack the problem.

Judith Harrison: Absolutely. Anyone else?

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: I just had a quick point, I do feel like a lot of the inclusion part is always missed and I feel a lot of times it's put on the diverse people to actually try to make themselves, right?

I kind of feel, I look at senior management across different places that I've been at and I feel like many of them have never had a multicultural just an experience, So, my thought is, in order to create an inclusive environment, I feel they need to get some cultural experiences.

Judith Harrison: Yes, indeed.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: And so my feeling is that when you're looking, especially when you create management training programs, there should be some elements of culture to build their cultural competency because I just don't know that they don't know what they don't know so they need, so I feel like management training programs need to evolve to include a lot more cultural aspects and experiences within those trainings to then really start opening their eyes a bit.

Judith Harrison: Absolutely. Ken, did you want to say anything on that?

Dr. Kenn Gaither: One of the things that I think makes a difference, and this is moving to a little bit more to a possible solution is the need to have these painful conversations and to have them lead by capable, competent people who can take some of the workforce or some of the students, whoever we might be talking about and bring them in to the conversation. I think that part is missing but even if you don't have an especially multicultural work environment, if you're beginning to



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have those painful conversations and even crowdsourcing. Let's talk about why we are the way we are.

Have those conversations, use your employees and at some point of course, conversation is not enough. It does have to move to an action phase but I would suggest the conversation is the starting point and let's have people who are leading those conversations and an important part of that is listening and listening to the people you do have so if you're trying to create this cultural belonging, talking to those people and seeing where they are, how they feel, and then making changes.

Judith Harrison:

Absolutely. Nobody asked me since I'm the moderator, I'll ask myself. Judith, what do you think?

Well, here's what I think. I think that what we need to do number one, is to make sure that we are not looking at building diversity, equity, and inclusion as an HR function because then it's sort of off to the side and it's something that HR will handle and everybody else can just keep doing what they're doing, uh-uh. It does not work that way so it has to come the impetus has to come from the top but then you also need to be able to spread and engagement throughout the organization because it's great if the c-suite gets it and 99 times out of 100 they do but then the question becomes, how do you filter that down to the people who report to them and then the people who report to them?

And how do you create engagement, meaning that everyone understands that DEI is important for the, not just the organization but that it benefits them personally. It benefits them to be part of an organization that has this as a priority so it's really creating that engagement piece. It's creating education and it's creating accountability, which Heide was talking about before so she mentioned that she and IPG's leaders have tied senior compensation to diversity and inclusion. But then accountability has to go down the chain as well so what do we do to make sure that people are accountable for meeting diverse talents outside the organization?

Developing diverse talents inside the organization, making sure that diversity and inclusion is reflected in the work we do because it's great to have a diverse workforce but if the work product is not changing then you're really not accomplishing a whole lot so the idea is to make sure that you are not just speaking to multicultural audiences differently but that you are using Heide's crowdsourcing point, which is that the more diverse your group of problem solvers is, the better the solutions will be. You have to think of it from that perspective as well so that those perspectives get embedded into the work. That is critical.

Judith Harrison:

I've asked myself the question, I have answered it and we are going to move on so next. What are some of the barriers in PR education settings? And this is



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going to be a multi-part question. Do students from marginalized groups know enough about PR as a career choice? Are the contributions of diverse people throughout the history of public relations incorporated into the curricula? Are faculty diverse enough? How are all of these factors linked to DEI in the industry? Take it away Brenda and Ken and then I'll ask.

Dr. Kenn Gaither: I'll start with yes, no, and yes.

Judith Harrison: All right-y.

Dr. Brenda Wrigley: Well, where to begin. Academic institutions are even slower to change than is industry they are historically white and we cannot expect the HBCU to shoulder the load so we have to push pack at our administrators. We have to keep pushing for them not to just worry about percentages of students but about diversity in a lot of other ways. I think we need white students to be champions and to understand these issues even if, often, they are resistant.

Many of the institutions where I have taught have been enormously proud of the fact that they have 25 percent students of color and they clap and they say isn't that great? And I say, that's a tiny piece and it's not enough.

So I think we need to get white students to wake up and I think the textbooks, for the most part, are just not even inclusive of the kinds of stories of people who have helped shape this industry in a very meaningful way-

Judith Harrison: Which is one of the reasons I pushed for the book that I told you about early, that is really a main reason people need to know about the contributions of diverse people to-

Dr. Brenda Wrigley: And they don't.

Judith Harrison: Exactly.

Dr. Brenda Wrigley: At least not to this point.

Judith Harrison: Yep.

Dr. Brenda Wrigley: Kenn?

Dr. Kenn Gaither: I think one of the areas that we struggle with is the recognition that our industry is not widely understood, right so you were talking about, you want to pull your hair out with the diversity of thought for me, my pull my hair out moment, if I had any, was PR needs PR ,which is definitely true but it's a cliché. So, students don't have models. You ask a student name one famous PR practitioner, most of them will come up with the Bernays, the usuals, the white men, right? So there are no models and so part of what I think we need to be doing is, I like Lillia's example, is we need to be a giving culture where we are giving of ourselves. If



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we are diverse and we're getting out into the community, particularly into high schools and making an articulation of what we do and what public relations is, so we can at least partially serve as a model. Then secondly, coming back again to this idea of conversation, we need to have civil conversations that are difficult in the classrooms so we become models for civility which is sorely needed in society today.

Those are the people who will help affect change because they are able to hold multiple viewpoints. Some of them very difficult, those are the people who will affect change because it forces them to de-center themselves and to look at multiple viewpoints.

Judith Harrison: Two really, really important points. Getting young people out of high schools, I mean I've always said if I could snatch people out of kindergarten to come into this business, I would do it and I say that because the competition for great grads is intense. PR, as an industry is not known for its breathtakingly generous starting salaries so there has to be some level of engagement, you want to have emotional engagement as early on as possible.

Judith Harrison: So that when students do graduate and have, sort of an array of options, they want to be in PR.

Starting with high school, absolutely, great. Then the need for civility, preaching to the choir. Oh my God, absolutely. Yeah, that would be delightful on multiple fronts.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: Yep. Then I'll just add, you know, I can only really talk from my own experience, but I think that catching them early is really important, because the way I landed into this industry is a fluke. My parents, you know, what was in their head, was I know doctors make a lot of money, I know engineers make a lot of money, accountants, right. I'm the, I don't know what I would call myself. I'm the oddball in my family, because all my brothers and sisters are engineers or in the medical field. I ended up in advertising and now I'm in PR. My parents were like, what are you going to, what is that? I couldn't even explain it to them, right. You going to catch people early, because I felt forced to go into some other things. I tried them early on, that was not for me.

I think catching students early. I guest lecture now at University of Chicago and DePaul, my alma mater.

Judith Harrison: Love it.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: I go in, and this is just my viewpoint. I'm not academic, but I guest lecture from here and there. All my friends who are the instructors, right, who invite me to



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come in, are Caucasian. The majority of the class as I look around are, I don't see any diverse faces. It's a big problem. It's a big problem.

Judith Harrison: Interesting. I think about the pipeline issue and you know, there are diverse students who are knocking down doors trying to get into the industry. I see the pipeline issue as more of what we're doing to not bring them in, as opposed to they're not being willing to come in. I just look at it from that perspective.

With that what I want to do is thank you all for having such great answers to questions and I want to open up the floor to the audience to see if any of you have any questions you'd like to ask any or all of us.

I see someone there.

Speak up please. Oh excellent. Thank you.

Brianna Spears: Thank you. Again my name is Brianna. I'm a PRSSA National committee member. I just wanted to know, I know you guys talked a lot from the organizational standpoint what organizations need to do, but just for students of color, what advice would you give just for being able to break those barriers and going into organizations who have not quite been diversified yet?

Judith Harrison: Okay, I'll take it.

I think first of all, your being in PRSSA is absolutely great, that is a phenomenal start for you because you can network your way almost anywhere from there. I think that you need to find, you start out with a mentor. You're not going to start with a sponsor because a sponsor is someone who is going to put themselves and their reputation on the line to support you.

At this point in your career, at this point, you haven't earned that yet, but you will presumably at some point, but you can absolutely find mentors. You can do research about organizations to see where they stand on diversity and inclusion. You can look at their senior people and find out sort of what they've talked about, what they think, what they're doing. Really do your homework in terms of selecting the kinds of organizations that you want to be in. Stay with industry organizations, I think that is incredibly helpful. Be open to people and opportunities, which can come in the most random ways you could imagine.

Always be sort of, have your antenna up for opportunities and people who could help you.

You know how I became President of New York Women in Communications? I met someone 10 years ago on vacation in Budapest. We sat at breakfast and talked about our love of Mad Men. Had no idea what New York Women in Communications was. 10 years later here I am. She had been a President of the



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organization before and she said oh my God, we have to get you on the board. You just never know. You never know. Just keep that in mind.

Brianna Spear: Thank you.

Judith Harrison: You're welcome.

Tonya Veasey: Can I just quickly add to that? I know we're...one of the things I would advise you to do is to also always keep your word. If you're joining organizations or you're networking and you're meeting with people, if you tell them you're going to do something or be somewhere, then do and be. I will tell you that every position that I've had it's because people knew that they can depend on me, right. I think that's also important. Network, network, network, but keep your word.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: Can I wrap it up real quick?

Judith Harrison: Oh of course.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: Just to build on that point, make yourself indispensable. I think what people always forget, start with your boss, okay. Make your boss's life easier. Help them out, like what can I do to help? It goes so far, just to start, right. Make yourself indispensable.

Secondly, what I find and what I recommend to students, earlier in your, when you're in an entry level positions, is brand yourself. Write a brand mantra. What are you all about? What are the three key things that when you leave an impression, what are the three things you're going to leave behind? Because that becomes synonymous with you, right.

I highly recommend writing a brand mantra and then having those three things. When you start that work and you're networking with people, these three things rattle off very quickly and you start building your network and people know what to connect you with.

Judith Harrison: That's great advice. Any other questions?

Eric Winkfield: Yes. Thank you so much everybody on the panel. Actually I have a thought and a question. I really appreciate all of your comments and all of your insights on the panel. As a diverse person myself, and somebody who's someone who came from HBCU graduated and started my, really made a good mark in the industry myself, so this panel is really amazing to be able to hear. Perspective that I wanted to share is just around the last question that you asked Judith about how do try to increase pipelines and get more diverse candidates in the field.

Just wanted to tell you a quick story. In undergrad, a lot of the times, I went to HBCU, Florida A & M University. Sometimes HBCU fundings, sometimes the



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budget of HBCU is a very limited. The administration and the professors have to be very creative about how they allocate funds to create opportunities for students. There are 10 students, 10 classmates and I, so 11 of us.

We wanted to go to a conference in Atlanta. Our Dean only had enough money to pay for two hotel rooms and one tank of gas. Me and my classmates, we carpoled and drove at four o'clock in the morning and drove up to Atlanta and we split two hotel rooms. Five in one room and six in the other one because we just had to go to this experience, to this conference in Atlanta. Because we knew our future bosses, or our future internships or whatever we needed was going to possibly be in that room.

Just to kind of give a perspective. A lot of times HBCU's are located in areas that are not popular or they're not in major metropolitan areas. We have to get creative on how to get to those opportunities. One solution that I'll be able to offer is, maybe sometimes if we can find reasons or find ways to either bring programming or bring opportunities to spend time at the campus of HBCU, so you can see those diverse candidates. So you can see those students who are really passionate, who want to do those things. But a lot of times, these students are supporting themselves through school already. They're working two or three jobs just to have the opportunity to go and get an undergraduate education. Any opportunity that there is to cut a cost or provide an opportunity to those students who otherwise would not be able to have that, that is also awesome opportunity.

My question...

Judith Harrison: Thank you so much for that....

Eric Winkfield: Thank you. My question, we we're talking about how do you get more diverse candidates in education. Even though myself, I have started my career about two or three years in, but it is a passion of mine to be able to give back to those, so there are more African American men teaching in Public Relations. I want to understand and get some advice of what should I be doing in my career now, so I can be able to go back and do that and be that person?

Judith Harrison: Anybody want to take that? Brenda go ahead.

Dr. Brenda Wrigley: As a former department chair, I know I made point to look for people from underrepresented groups to come as guest speakers and to take part time faculty positions. You need to try that role on and see if you really like it. My hunch is you would. People can make so much more in the industry then they can make as a faculty member even at a full professor level. That's very difficult to attract people to teach from underrepresented groups. I don't know how to solve that problem, but I know bringing people in, at least on a part time basis,



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students get to see people like themselves, see possibilities and I think that's very important.

Eric Winkfield: I think I have a follow up question to that. I have colleagues who are just as qualified, if not more qualified than I am to be in academia, to also give back as a part time or adjunct faculty member. However, it's like they are already dealing with a lot on their jobs already, just being diverse talent. [inaudible 00:44:23] that red tape, and when they get home they're so exhausted on having to give. What is the advice that you would give to those young folks who do want to be a part, who want to give back, but also just have to deal with that situation at work?

Judith Harrison: I think they need to find ways to take care of themselves. One of the most important things to me, is not work-life balance, which absolutely does not exist, it's beyond unicorn level, I do think that finding ways to do things for themselves that restore them on a regular basis is critical to their being able to then find the energy to give back to others. If you can't do that, then you really, in the position that you're saying they're in, that they don't have anything left to give to others. They have to feel totally justified in giving themselves, no matter what that means to them. That's crucial.

James Shackelford: Hey Judith. I'm James Shackelford, head chair of PRSA national diversity and inclusion committee. Thanks everyone for the great conversation. I'm curious, because one of the things we've talked about through PRSA this year has been around measurement and I have mixed feelings around measurement for D&I. One of them is that you can't, you have to measure what we expect. The other one is that it does kind of potentially put some false barriers there. I'm curious what the panel thinks about measurement and is that something we, what can we measure and how could measure that in order to be able to measure our success for D&I and the industry?

Judith Harrison: I think that's a really interesting question. I think one of the issues that I have seen is that measurement is, we're not comparing apples to apples, and so that is probably the major issue. One company talks about, let's say their percentage of executives. But an executive in one company is not necessarily an executive in another. It becomes a very sort of complicated issue from that perspective. That is probably the first thing that comes to mind for me. I see, did you have you an answer? Oh.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: Can I interject?

Judith Harrison: Yes.

Lilia Arroyo-Flores: I'm a strategic planner, analytics, metrics, is just part of what I do. I do believe though that individual organizations need to set some metrics.

Judith Harrison: Absolutely.



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Lilia Arroyo-Flores: I know, I will just put this out there. I know HR gets very nervous. We've had conversations about it. We have set certain goals, right, that we want to reach. As a person that this is very important to, I'm very active, not only in the industry on the topic, but internally at my own organization. I am pushing for measurement. Knowing that it is not going to be easy, knowing that we'll have to see how things are panning out. I do think we have to look, especially at retention figures, because I do see that as a big...we cannot seem to retain and how do we figure that out? You going to measure it and test things and see if they are having an impact. I am all for measurement with knowing that we're not going to get it perfect. But you going to start measuring somewhere.

Judith Harrison: I didn't address the internal measurement. We've been doing that forever. It's really important to us, to measure how we're doing in terms of hiring. How we're doing in terms of promotions and how we're doing in terms of overall participation. Which is basically like a snapshot in time of your population. Who are they on September 30th, 2018, which could change on October first. But at least you have that, and we do that quarterly and I actually look more frequently than that to see how we're doing and to course correct if we need to.

I do think that it is much easier for organizations to figure out their own internal measurements, it's the industry that becomes extraordinarily complicated.

Keynote Speaker – Don Thompson

The keynote address was delivered by Don Thompson, founder & CEO of Cleveland Avenue, and moderated by Michelle Flowers Welch, founder & chairman of Flowers Communications Group.

Michelle Flowers Welch: Don, thank you for being here with us today and taking time from your very, very busy schedule. Don, I've had the pleasure of working with you at McDonald's for the past 15 years on marketing communications initiatives.

I'm really excited to talk to you about the D&I space and I know everyone here is pumped to get more information in terms of your experiences, and perspectives, and insights. Okay?

We already have had some wonderful content this morning. We were talking about some of the barriers. Specifically, barriers to D&I and public relations, but barriers to D&I exist across the various industries.

So, my first question to you ... I'm going to continue that conversation. Is, you ascended to the president and CEO of one of the most iconic brands in the world, McDonald's. Now you have formed Cleveland Avenue, which is a private equity inventor firm that deals in the food service.



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I'd like to know what were some of the barriers that you were challenged with on your journey as an African-American man in corporate America? We just heard this morning about the astounding statistics that prevent that sort of ascension.

You had to have faced some of these barriers and we'd like to hear more about what they were and potentially how you handle some of them.

Don Thompson:

Okay. Well, good morning everyone. As I said to Michelle, it's always good to see Michelle. She is absolutely stellar and represents all of us very well in the PR space, so I appreciate that.

Also, I know the prior person talked about Al Golin. Just real quick, Al was a very dear friend in June ...he was a good person. So, I would start there relative to barriers.

The first thing, and you all will know I am slightly different in my perspectives around D&I. I believe in action. I'm also ... With all do respect, I had an uncle who once said something to me and I took it to heart. He said, "Don't host pity parties and don't attend them."

So, I'm not a pity party attender. I always looked at ... There's always been barriers. Someone once asked me one day ... They said, "Don, what's it like to be an African-American CEO?" I said, "You know? I don't know if I know, because throughout my life every morning when I wake up and look in the mirror it's the same guy looking back."

While you look at me and I'm very different, I look at you and you're very different. Every last person in this room is diverse. You come from different places, you got different backgrounds. The barriers, I think to entry ... My first barrier, I have to say was my own mindset.

I walked in a lot of rooms where I was the only one who looked like me. I walked in a lot of rooms in the US, I walked in a lot of rooms around the world. If I walked into a room with Putin and I went up to see him it wasn't a whole lot of people looked like me.

But, I think one of the greatest challenges is when you walk in that room, who are you facing first? Are you facing you before you even got in the room saying, "I know they going to be looking at me thinking this. They're going to be thinking that, they're going to be thinking this." Because, you can take yourself out of the game real quick.

I walked into rooms and I learned to walk into rooms and say, "You know what?" It's kind of like the Batman movie with the Joker when he said, "Wait until they get a load of me."



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I kind of walked into the room thinking, "You know, you may not know me yet and I don't know you, but by the time this conversation's over we will know each other and we will decide whether or not we might be able to be beneficial to each other."

Whether that be in business or in life. That is a complete and a total shift from walking in thinking about the barriers. I want to right size barriers. Barriers are doors of opportunity, but most barriers start with us and they start with a reflection of who you are, who you see that you are.

I was raised by my grandmother, she recently passed away at 103. She raised me from two weeks old. Barriers. I mean, this lady she lived at a time when there were real barriers. My barriers are walking into a room with people who didn't look like me. That's not a barrier, that's an opportunity.

She would have loved to have had that barrier through a lot of her life. There's a lot of people who came before me on whose shoulders I stand that would have loved to have had that barrier. So, my first thought is ... The first barrier is myself, the second one is I'll call it being competent and understanding and aware of the situations around you.

Someone referred this to me once as calling it, "Read the tea leaves, Don." Know what room you're walking into, know who you're walking into that room with. Again, don't call them barriers, call them opportunities. There are some people who've done some crazy stuff over their lives, but when you walk in that room walk into it as an opportunity.

I always believe, one walk in confident. Two, walk in ... Face me first before I get in that room. The third thing was understand the situation you're walking into and try to educate yourself as much about that space as you can.

Michelle Flowers Welch: You have an incredible sense of confidence and self-awareness that unfortunately I do not see in lots of today's young people. How do we instill some of that? I don't know if others agree with that, but I don't see the level of confidence.

I sometimes have people at my agency who don't want to present, who don't want to stand in front of the client, who don't want to be the vocal one in a particular meeting, and I'm always trying to infuse that in them.

Give us a ... I know your grandmother did a heck of a job and if we could all take that master class we would. What are some of the things that you would share with people here today to really help infuse that sort of confidence and self-awareness in some of today's youth.



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Don Thompson:

I think, Michelle. One of the things is there's a responsibility. I think most people, particularly younger people ... First of all, they're brilliant and some of you in the room have no idea how brilliant you are.

You outshine the competence, and the intellect, and the world views that I and many who came up with me we ever had. Encyclopedia? Yes. Internet? No. Not when I was ... No internet. Black and white rotary dial? Yes.

So, the first thing is the mindset is so strong and so I think we have to engage them in ways, one by ensuring that we're not trying to place them where we are, but we're trying to show them a pathway to where we are.

One of the things I believe that we can all do and this incumbent on us, is as someone said earlier serving as mentors and mentees. There was a conversation about sponsors. A lot of the folks just need somebody to put their arm around them and say, "You know what? I want you to go to reception with me. You don't have to do a thing, I just want you to go with me."

You know? In their mind it may be, "I don't know if I have the right clothes to wear. I never been in that situation before." Don't worry about the ... Answer the questions before they even get there. Take away some of the demystification.

"You know what? Don't worry about the clothes. I'm going to be wearing this, you wear that. What you got on right now. We're going. We're going to go at 6:00, you're going with me, and I'm just going to introduce you to people."

They need access. They need access to surroundings that are different, that help pull them out of their current state of mind. Number two, exposure. Once they've got access and they understand, "Wow. You know, I actually can stand in this room and I'm actually okay here."

Then, they need a little bit more exposure. The next time it's about, "You know what?" To your point, Michelle. "I want you to be able to present this little piece here or there."

Sometimes we try to jump them too fast too quick, and they're carrying all this other stuff about entering the room, and we're talking about presenting to the room. Let's at least bring them in the room first, get them acclimated a little bit.

It doesn't take them long. They're very quick learners though, so I think just putting your arm around, exposure, access, some opportunity, and being that person that they can talk to about all of those things that they don't know if they can talk to you about, because there's a lot of that too.

"I got some fears here, but if I say it then it means that I'm afraid. If I don't say it I'm not afraid, but I don't know. If I walk in the room and someone asks me a



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question and I don't know the answer ... Oh. I got to know all the answers. If I don't know all the answers I can't walk in the room."

I didn't know 90% of the answers when I walked in the room.

Michelle Flowers Welch: Same here.

Don Thompson: So, I think it's those kinds of things, Michelle and I think all of us can do that to help them along.

Michelle Flowers Welch: Okay. I'll slow down, because I do just push them in there and say, "It's time for you to make this presentation. You've seen it before, so-"

Don Thompson: But, you had to do that too though, because you built your business.

Michelle Flowers Welch: I did. I did, because I worked alongside Al Golin and that's exactly what he did. He pushed me right into that water. I was the only African-American there for probably a long time. I'm glad that it is now more diverse, but yeah. I got pushed right into that water.

Let's talk a little bit about helping leadership understand the importance of D&I. We had some robust conversation about that as well and I actually in the 80's had conversations with Al about the importance of it.

So, what would you say in terms of things that we can share to really, really help our organizations understanding its importance?

Don Thompson: I put it in two buckets. One, what is it and what's incumbent on each of us to do? Two, how do you ready an organization, so to speak? I'll say organization, I won't say another person. I'll say treat each person as an organization, because there's a lot of stuff going on in there.

I've always believed and Pat Harris was mentioned earlier who brought me to McDonald's. Her and a guy named Mel Hobson. I call her the mother of McDonald's from a diversity perspective, because Pat's just phenomenal.

There's several steps and I think here's where we also have some gaps sometimes. If you skip a step, in my estimation organizations fall backwards. Number one ... And, some of these are going to sound so basic you're going to say, "Don, get out of here. There's no way you got to do that."

Number one, I would say is understand ... Better yet, be aware that there are differences. Now, a lot of ... "Come on, Don." No. I mean, people in organizations need to be aware that there are differences.

How can you tell when they don't? You can talk about D&I all you want to, if I look on your website and I don't see people of different genders, and races, and



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young and old ... If I don't see that, you're not aware. So, don't tell me you're aware if in all of your materials you pay no attention to the fact that your consumer base is hugely diverse.

If the whole notion behind what you do ... I'm at a reception and I look at and listen to a lot of stuff. You play the same genre of music across the whole thing; your drinks are the drinks that old guys used to drink when it was a smoky room.

Everything you set up ... Because, you know what? If you ever want to understand an organization ... This is going to sound really ... Look at the bar when there's a reception, because typically seniors have picked what goes on that bar at some point in time and everybody's trying to please them.

You can tell the youthfulness or youthful spirit of it. I just say one, be aware that there are differences. Number two, accept the differences so that you can get to the next point, which is, "I'm aware now and I accept it."

That acceptance place is hard for a lot of people. There's a lot of people who will say it, but to truly accept it means that you're now willing to do the third part, which is you understand that differences can be used for a broader business advantage.

Because, once you understand that and you really believe it, then you will leverage differences. Because, if you don't understand, if you don't accept it, if you're not aware of it accept it, understand it. Why in the world would you ever leverage it? It wouldn't make sense to you.

So many people try to jump straight to, "Oh. We're doing this, and we're doing that, and we're doing this to enhance or diversity." Why? Why are you doing it?

I'll give you one quick story on leveraging diversity. I was a director of operations in one of our regions in the United States and at that time we had an African-American employee network ... A black employee network it was.

There was a Hispanic employee network, there was a women's network, we had ... at the time we called it, it was the gay and lesbians network, it was called back then, that was in the '90's.

And, what was really interesting, is I walked by a room, and there was a movie called A Color of Fear, I don't know how many of you have ever seen this. And we were going to go into the mountains, with the diversity networks, and we were going to talk about the Color of Fear, because they had started to do this. So, I walked past the room, and there's about six white guys from our region, sitting in the room. And I walk in and I said "Guys, what's happening? What's



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going on?" They said "Don, we just don't know." I said "What do you mean you don't know?" They said "Well, who's speaking for us?"

Now this is in Denver, and Denver was on a mile front end of a change, relative to Hispanic influence and an influx of people, in terms of diversity. And so, when they said it, I said "What do you mean?" They said "Well, you got all of these networks, but nobody's speaking for us." I said "You know what, you're absolutely right. We should have a white male network."

Somebody ... a couple of you are ... when I'm ... I went back and I told the other networks this, and they thought I had lost my mind. And I said "You either are supportive of diversity and inclusion, or you're not." If you're in the state of California, state of Florida, are you supportive of African Americans and Latinos, or are you supportive of diversity? Be careful, that our true support, is not ethnic or gender related, versus being diversity and diversity of ideas related. Because when you make a change and a switch, what you do is you, minimize the impact of what it was you said you wanted to do.

I never asked for a handout as a CEO or African American. Don't give me a handout, give me an opportunity to sit at the table. because if I get an opportunity to sit at the table, you'll see what I do. Be careful, but I think companies need to be able to leverage diversity, that will open the doors to all of us, if they truly leverage diversity.

And so, I think those are some of the steps, Michelle, that we need to go through.

Michelle Flowers Welch: I have one final question, and then I'm going to open it up, because that all sounds absolutely strategic, focused, great to put into a plan. How do you then though, make sure that it lives beyond the plan, lives beyond a specific leadership mission, and philosophical approach? And it's part of the DNA of a company, so that no matter what management looks like, no matter what the C-Suite is comprised of, it is a part of that company's culture.

Don Thompson: That's the toughest one. So I mentioned, there's the organization, and there's the person, there's us. One of the things that I tried to do as CEO, was ensure that all of our team reflected the demographics of the population. I see Bridget here, who, headed Communications for McDonald's, and she and I worked very, very closely together for years, and Heide there.

So, the truth of the matter. I failed at something, and I'll tell you what it was. My focus was so much on getting us there, we had, I don't know, 50% of the officers were women, we had, at one point, I think the numbers roughly, I did pay attention, was 25 African American officers and 19 Latino officers. We were a very, very, very, diverse organization. The franchise body was extremely diverse, the employee base was more diverse, and I felt really, really, great.



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Truth be told, what did I and Pat and Bridget and others around us, what else did we do, Heidi, to install that institute that, so that it was so deeply imbedded in the culture, no matter who the leader was, that would of been there? I look back today, and I say as part of what I failed, is not as many today. Nowhere near as many. So people can say, "Well, you didn't fail, others came in and changed it." Institutionally, I didn't do, what I needed to get done. Now what was that? I don't know.

Michelle Flowers Welch: That was going to be my next question.

Don Thompson: That one ... I wish I could sit here and I could say "Man, I wanted broader geographic diversity, international." We did that. All of us brought in people from around the globe, we did a lot of things. What happened was the focus got off of it. And I will not say it's malintent, I will just say, it is no intent. If you don't intentionally have, each and every day, the fact that you want to strive to be a very diverse organization. If there's a slate of candidates, it better be a diverse slate. It doesn't say you're going to hire A, B, but if it's not a diverse slate, you can't even start there.

If you're going to look at media, you better have some folks across the landscape, that can support you, they're from all walks of life, and understand the various cultures. Today, a big part of that is also, generational gaps and generational changes. But how much do we institute them, Michelle? I don't know. What would we have done differently? Man, we could probably sit up all night trying to figure it out, but my intent is to try help figure it out, because I think there are some things ... intentionality, institutionalize intentionality, is probably where the gap is for many organizations, when they go through change.

Michelle Flowers Welch: One really, really quick question. Was there the accountability in terms of, compensation tied to D&I metrics? I know Heide Gardner mentioned that, and I said "Hooray!" because I think that might be one thing that has got to happen, and really, truly move the needle. So was that a part of the process?

Don Thompson: That is not what got us to the levels we got to. So here's a ... for many organizations, let's just assume, that you tied compensation to it, and I know there's some that do. Ours had compensation tied to it, because there was a black man sitting in the CEO office. So, if you come to talk to me, and you don't have diverse folks, and you look at our team, and our collective team, if you looked across it, was very diverse. If you looked across that team, and you didn't see ... you were bringing slates of people that didn't look like that, whether it was Bridget or Gloria, or myself, or Jose Amario, or Jason Gonzales Mendes, or Kevin Cook or Jeff Stratton, white guys. If they saw that, they'd be like ...

So, it was institutionalized, and so when it came up, I didn't have a percentage of the salary, that was a part of it. Here's the only thing I worry about, when we



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talk about time compensation. For a company whose revenue streams are based on A, B, C, D and E, if you're going to tie my compensation to it, and you're going to put 5% of my compensation at risk, go ahead, put five at risk. There's another 95.

So my perspective is, I don't think it's a bad thing to do, but make no mistake, it is not the golden hand. What has to happen is, it has to be an intentional support of broader diversity, and, then that should flow through all of your systems. Training systems, hiring, recruitment, retention. One of the reasons people don't stay, is because they don't feel comfortable when they get there. Do you have a way of orienting and acclimating people into your culture, that lets them know, you can bring all of you, to this business?

I used to say that to all of our folks, "Whoever you are, whatever you eat at home, whatever you do, however you speak, bring all of you to work." Because you can't do the chameleon thing, it doesn't work well. You walk through the door, and you're a different person, you walk out the door, you're somebody different. At some point, there's some stresses there. I need all of you, I need every last ounce of who you are, when you come through that door, because that's what makes us better.

So I think that ... I think compensation, again, I don't think it's a bad thing at all, I think sometimes we overrate it, based upon what the real breakdown in most bonus systems are.

Michelle Flowers Welch: And with that, I am now going to open up the floor to questions. We got about maybe, 10, 15 minutes.

Speaker 1: We have about 10 minutes or so.

Don Thompson: All right, thanks. It was great to see you all.

Choni Lin: I'm here to save the day.

Don Thompson: Hi, how are you?

Choni Lin: Good, how are you? My name is Choni, and I just graduated college. So I guess on the traditional pyramid of stages of your career, we're on the ... I'm on the lower end. So, I've been in situations where, I guess, I don't know how to leverage diversity. I've done the, you know, be aware, accept and understand, but, for example, I've been in interviews where, people look at my resume, and immediately go, "Oh, so you can help with our clients that don't speak English?" Since I'm bilingual. And, so my reaction is that, I can obviously offer you way more than that. So I guess in that case, do you have any advice for people that are in their entry level ... I guess, earlier stage of their career. How can we take actions to leverage diversity? When we don't have the platform to be with everyone else, at the table.



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Don Thompson: The one thing I'd say to you Choni, first of all, you do have leveraging experiences, it's called your life. Because I think you've probably looked like that all your life too, huh?

Choni Lin: Yep, yep.

Don Thompson: So, here's the-

Choni Lin: Maybe a...

Don Thompson: So the first thing I'd offer to you is, if you're in an interview, and someone makes certain comments to you that way, there's two things you need to do, especially in interviews. One, don't associate the entire company with the interviewer, number one. But number two, you need to then do some checking at a different level, to see whether or not ... if culturally, that organization feels that way, then shake the dust off your feet, and go to the next organization. Because if you feel that they really don't have a grasp, and that they would not be willing to ... I'm not saying that they're going to open up with open arms, but I am saying that you see the pathway, for you to be able to be a productive compliment to that organization. If you see that pathway, you go hard at it, regardless of who's saying crazy little stuff. If you don't see that, then go to the next company.

And why do I say that? Because you have way too much to offer. My first day out of college when, my first job, I never forget the first day I went in, and it was taped to the middle of my desk, was a white cross. That was my first day. I peeled up the white cross, and as an electrical engineer, naturally I had a pocket protector. But I peeled that up, took out my protector, took out my pens and stuff, and I got started. That was an organization ... that was one person, who did that, that wasn't the organization. And I went on great relationships, great, great, great career ... that first part of the career.

So I would say to you, be who you are, authentically you. Let that shine through, when you're talking to the companies. And the companies that will value you, completely, are the ones that are going to extend a hand. Those who have some other issues around that, if you think it's the end of your ... because you came to that company for some reason, you did your own homework. So there was something you saw, that took you to that company. If you think this is a crazy interviewer, bypass them, find someone else in the company, which you can do, especially today, and talk to them.

If you think it's an organizational piece, and you can ... today, you can do a lot of fact finding. If you think it's an organizational piece, go to the next organization. That would be my thought.

Maura Ferrell: Hi, my name is Maura Devine ... or Maura Ferrell, actually. And I work at Kivvit, a PR firm here in Chicago. I was wondering, what could we do at agencies, like



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today, this afternoon, or tomorrow, you know, Monday morning, when we get to work, to change this? We have an issue with recruitment and keeping minority candidates. And I just wondered ... I loved the bar story, I loved those tactical things that we could do right away. Look at our holiday party, look at our snacks, just your culture of an agency.

And then my follow up question is, what do you do to your Diet Coke, to make it taste so good?

Don Thompson:

The second one's a secret, but no, we can talk ... the ... I think the first one, I think you answered it already. If you're having difficulty keeping them, talk to them and ask them why they're leaving. And when I say talk to them, I don't mean the cursory, "So you're leaving us, why are you leaving?" "I got a better job" "Oh, we're so happy for you," blah, blah, blah, and that's the ... I mean talk to them. "What could we ... you know what, is there anything we could have done different? So you're going to be gone, there's going to be some other people coming in, tell me what you would change to, change our environment a little bit." Ask things that will put you at some level of humility but open up the doors to receive true input and feedback.

I think the other thing is for the existing folks that are there, have from forums and some sessions, and try to do it-

- as informally as possible. But get a group, a very diverse group of people together and say, "Hey look, how do you think about the way we do this or the way we do that." Pose to them ... one of the things we did was ... it sounds real crazy but ... McDonald's was very kind of formal. And one of the things we looking at was the jeans policy. Now, I'm from the old school. Today I wear jeans every day. Now that I left and we are in the venture capital space, I'm Mr. Jeans and I love it. Shirt out, I love it. But back then, if I wore jeans they were going to be creased. I mean, I had a crease and they laughed at me for that. So I wasn't supportive.

But what we ended up doing through some coaching and council of several people was we turned the whole dress policy over to the young professionals in that work. And what they came back with ... I mean, I said I would abide by, and it ended up being fine. We ended up going with casual for those who weren't being with clients or suppliers and if you weren't visiting restaurants. It actually worked very well. I say that because sometimes what you've got to do is talk to those who are most impacted or most vulnerable relative to the decision you're going to make, but who have the least voice. Because they'll give you great insight. The Diet Coke is basically the three-stage filtration system and the water. And we calibrate the syrups every day.



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Nadia Felder:

So my point has to go ... First of all I'm Nadia Felder. I also just graduated from college, so I'm happy to hear that there's somebody in here like me. My point has to go to something that you said, two things that you said. One, don't give me a handout, give me a seat at the table. Powerful, perfect for me to hear. Another thing that stuck to me was bring all of you to work. Don't be a chameleon. And it's funny because in college, and I graduated from a HBCU, the best one, FAMU. But one thing that they hesitate on teaching us is don't bring all of you, shockingly.

So when you said that, it brought me back to my classroom, and they said, "You know ..." You used the chameleon, I'm using the turtle. They used the turtle example. So turtles have shells, obviously, right? And they come out just a little bit, right? So I'm going to reveal a little bit of my culture, enough for you to know that I'm different, but I'm not going to give you all of me. Because then I might scare you, right? And so they teach us this at HBCUs. And it's a culture thing, you know? It's a culture thing. Our cultures are different. So if I show you all of my culture, and I tell you to accept me, that's frightening for you at some times. So I just want to know, you know, is it necessary for us to assimilate sometimes, just to get the seat at the table. Just to say, "I'm here." But, you know, give you ounces of what I really bring.

Don Thompson:

There are a lot of letters in the word assimilate. So here's what I mean when I say, "Bring all of you." Bring the essence of who you are. Understand the culture that you're going into. And man this is ... You've got to believe that that culture is complementary to your personal values. And in seeing that and understanding that, bring all of you. Now, what I didn't say was slap people with all of you. This is different. You know, I'm going to dress the way I want to dress, look the way I want to look, when I make my turns, when I say my stuff, you going to understand who I am up in it. That's not what I mean. What I mean is the essence of who you are as a bright, strong African American woman who is competent, capable, has her degree, and is able to help this company move forward, bring 110% of it.

What you don't want to bring, in my estimation, and this is something I also said. If you get to the point where you feel like, "You know, they all speak very different." Excuse it, if it offends anybody, but if Don Thompson had walked in the room and said, "Hey guys, how are you today?" That's not me. Why am I doing that? You know what? Initially I wasn't part of the country clubs, but guess what? That didn't make me less effective. Am I in one today? Guess what, I'm in one today. After 20 something years, they got me. But even there, I am the way I am right now.

And so I would say, when I say, "Bring all of you" ... Life, you will go through changes. You will evolve. Hopefully with companies you will grow. I can speak in the boardroom, I can speak in the neighborhood, I can speak with my family on Thanksgiving. I have not changed that fundamental nature of who Don is. Has it



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changed at all over the years? Absolutely. Are there things that I could do when I walk in the room that would slap people with where I grew up and all of that? Yes. That's not a part of me being in that room. You are at that company to help that company move forward. That's why you're there. But you're capable, competent, strong, secure in yourself. Bring that. And when you bring that, then they're forced to reckon with all of us for what we actually bring. Not what we talk about, what we bring to the table. Because a company wants results.

Michelle Flowers Welch: That's a great answer. Don says he will stay five more minutes. Five more minutes.

Matt Towson: Really quickly, I'm not an alumni but I hate Ohio State, so Boiler Up.

Kevin Saghy: What?

Matt Towson: A question I have ... I'm in corporate, I work for Discover actually. And you mentioned your diversity groups and we actually sort of copied you, I believe. A person who used to work for us came from McDonald's and started the employee resource groups. And at the time, it was one of those things done that, "Discover's making a commitment to diversity." But what I've noticed with the groups, and we call them employee resource groups, is it's almost like there's now a fight for attention. And our marketing team is working with the pride group, but they're not working with the bold group, which is the African Americans. Hola was on a marketing initiative and was getting all of this attention, that's our Hispanic group. But then our generational leaders group wasn't getting attention. And it's almost like it's created even a little bit of divisiveness. And being in the department that funds some of their programs, I'm just trying to get an understanding of what you believe the central purpose of a diversity group should be for a company.

Don Thompson: This is ... first of all, thank you. A phenomenal question. And I would also offer to all of us. If you're not having discussions like this one then ... Remember I was talking about accepting and understanding and leveraging? If you're not having any of these conversations, you're way down on the spectrum. Because the other thing that true diversity and inclusion brings out is conversation, and a lot of conversation. And so what I would offer is that I can tell you ... I don't know if there's a right answer, but I will tell you how we attempted to do it.

Don Thompson: All of the affinity groups ... There were two things. First of all, on the budget side, everyone got the same budget, you know, effectively. And then based upon the size of the group, we'd kick more money in here, there, or the other. But that was a budget for that. The budget was really very ... It was tertiary. What we asked all of the various groups to do, one, I accepted and appreciated them. And I think your leadership teams have to and need to understand that. For what I expected of them and what I wanted at a minimum, which was this...whether we like it or not, even in a very diverse world, there are



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commonalities and common journeys that some of us share. It is very supportive for organizations to have, and I will always believe in, diversity, affinity, networking groups. Because there is that piece.

Don Thompson: Now, what I would offer, is along with that piece, there should be an openness. So this is tough. But we asked our groups to do two different things. One is be there to support each other. But before you support each other, I want to make sure you're supporting the company's goals. Because if it's not for the company, you're not going to be here. You've got to support the company's goals, you support each other clearly, and the other thing is bring strategies, perspectives, and thoughts as to how to grow the business. So each one of the groups brought forward their thoughts about what we should be looking at a company level also.

Don Thompson: I would attend a lot of the meetings to go to speak to the groups, to hear from them, to sit in on little round table chats, and so I think that it is ... I think one, very, very important that you have them. Two, leadership needs to be present, expectations need to be set. But also included in those expectations, don't get to the point where as a corporate entity you try to control everything that happens within an affinity group. And I've seen that, too. You know, we don't know what they're doing in that room. Exactly. You don't need to. Because whether it's in that room, whether it's in the room sanctioned by you or not, they're in the room. They may be at a bar down the street or at a church around the corner, they are in the room. What you want to do is leverage the differences and diversity of what comes out of that group.

Don Thompson: The other thing we do is we have collective groups. So we take the leadership from each of the affinity groups, and we'd have a meeting with all of the leaders together. And talk about strategically what they thought, challenges they were facing, things they were bringing to the forefront. And it could be anything. What we tried to do was demystify what was happening in the room next door.

Don Thompson: I also asked all of our senior leaders, we would do what I called the road show tour. So we would have a big, big meeting where all the affinity groups would be in the meeting. But they would have their breakouts. And myself and our senior leaders would walk from room to room and just go in and sit with them for a while and say, "What can we do to help?" And they would have, you know, 15, 20 minutes with us. And then we go to the next room. And then we go to the next room. So to show them that support as well, also shows them they don't have to be down the street, around the corner, at the church in the back in the basement. They can be right here, right out front, and help us understand what they need.

Michelle Flowers Welch: Don, thank you so very much for your candor and transparency and sharing with us experiences and insights that are really going to help us inform the rest of the day. We appreciate you taking this time.



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Don Thompson: Oh, Michelle, my pleasure. And I hope you all have a great conference and a great day. And don't put too much on yourself relative to trying to change the world relative to how they view each and every individual in it, who are all very diverse. But if you live ... Live it yourself. Check you first. Live it yourself, and then help incrementally move it forward, and just be who you are. Everything else going to work out.

Michelle Flowers Welch: Thank you again.

Develop & Implement a Strategic Diversity & Inclusion Program

This panel discussed ways to develop and implement strategic D&I programs. Panelists included Rosa Ambriz, PRSSA National; Calmetta Coleman, Chicago Urban League; Dr. Natalie Tindall, Lamar University; Flávia Vígio, HBO Latin America; and moderated by Hope MacGregor, Ketchum.

Nilanjana Bardhan: We're going to move on here. This is our second panel for the day. This panel is titled Developing and Implementing Strategic D&I Programs and our panelists today, our second panel panelists, are Rosa ...

Rosa Ambriz: Ambriz.

Nilanjana Bardhan: Rosa Ambriz, current PRSSA national vice president of external affairs. She's a senior at Texas State University. We have Calmetta Coleman, who's senior VP of external affairs for the Chicago Urban League. We have Dr. Natalie Tindall, who is associate professor and chair of the Department of Communication and Media at Lamar University. We have Flavia Vígio, vice president of communications for HBO Latin America. And we have Hope MacGregor, VP and director of human resources at Ketchum Chicago, who's going to be moderating this session. So, without much ado, I'm going to turn it over to Hope.

Hope MacGregor: Okay. Great. Mic is on. I can hear it. I am so thrilled to be part of today's session, and really, I think this is all about us and why we're here today in this room as leaders and representatives of our organization. I had the pleasure of attending last night's Plank dinner in recognizing the mentors within the industry and also working with these wonderful ladies who ... we've been prepping and just sharing our own stories around diversity and inclusion within our respective organizations. That said, why we're here today is understanding that the D&I expectations are not going away. It's infiltrating our culture. It's infiltrating our companies and businesses, and we're seeing many more. Within the PR industry, I'm seeing clients ask for more diversity in talent. They're asking for more diversity in thinking.

We are seeing that media companies, as well, are also looking at how can they diversify their content so it resonates more with the masses. Also, governments



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are making changes as far as making sure that there's representation on leadership boards, et cetera. I think, that said, it's understanding that things are changing, and we are part of the solution. I think we want to make sure that you all get some information regarding the strategies that are working, the questions that we are asking, and understanding what it takes to be successful. We're all in it together, and I think we can all agree to that.

We talked about diversity, inclusion and not understanding. It's different for every organization, so there's no one-size-fits-all. But I think what we agreed to as a panel is that it's about the impact that we want to make. We talked about measures of success earlier, but what is that impact that we want to make at that organization? How can we, as leaders, continue that momentum knowing that it's hard and knowing that you have to keep your foot on the gas?

That said, I would love to start off. I think one of our panelists in the earlier forum talked about one of the strategies when it comes to diversity and inclusion is listening. We have benefited from this session, so thank you, Plank Center, for putting this together and giving us a time to focus on this topic, but I would like to ask each of the panelists – what have you heard from your time here already that is informing a future strategy or potential at your organization?

Rosa Ambriz:

What I've learned so far is the business transformation aspect from not skills but the mindset. So, a lot of us students – I represent a student organization of 11,000 members – and a lot of us are faced with, “Hey, you have to have this certification, you have to have this type of education, you have to be top-tier GPA.” That's very limiting when you're trying to be jack-of-all-trades and master everything, and yet the mindset, the mental health, that work-life balance that we talked about earlier is not complemented in that. I think working with that mindset and respecting that, but also as a millennial, Gen Z-er, being open to those possibilities and being open to that professional guiding you.

Calmetta Coleman:

One thing that I will say, my organization is a little different. I'm with the Chicago Urban League now, where we focus really on trying to help ensure equality and equity in workforce and housing and a number of areas. One of the things that we have been thinking about already is how do we recognize this problem, actually, because the woman at Kivvit who spoke earlier – you guys may have heard from – approached us recently about this problem that they were having with retaining minorities and particularly African-Americans. Because we do a lot of work around workforce development, we were already starting to think about how do you address this problem because it's not just in PR. We see it in professional services in general. A lot of the things that I heard today in terms of how do you approach that in an effective way can really help inform that strategy for how we can help other organizations.



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One of the things that I heard, not quite in this way, was really around proximity. Someone said that the considerations that go into who gets the internship might be that the client's son wants it or the neighbor's kid or something like that, which really helped me think about how we can help bring the people who are in the organizations who make those decisions in closer proximity, because that's really what that's about, to the talented individuals who can really help diversify their organizations.

Dr. Natalie Tindall: I picked up two things. One is the internship boot camp idea, and I think that has so much value and so much weight. There was something similar to that that Ketchum used to do in the – I'm dating myself – in the 90s and 2000s when I was a student at Florida A&M University. Rattler, all right. Then also, there's a real need to have discussions about first generation students in public relations and the socio-economic outcomes and decisions they have to make. I think that that is something that's clearly imperative from what I've been listening to, and there's no research really on that. We've done research on race. We've done research on gender. But in terms of first generation status and the expectations and the limitations and the barriers that they face is something we definitely need to do more work as an industry but also as PR researchers, as well.

Flavia Vigio: Well, I have been thinking about a couple of things this morning. One of them clearly to me is that language is probably a barrier for what we're trying to do because even in this room, and a lot of us are used to dealing with issues around diversity and inclusion every day and for a long time, even among us, I think we can even discuss certain concepts and words and how do we call what. If it's difficult for us, it's certainly difficult for us to get the message across too. I think it's very difficult to bring that into conversations in our organizations or the organizations that we serve. That's probably an important and basic issue that I think, as we move forward, we could even try to address. How do we call things? How do we name things?

The other thing is that it's about context. Right? It's about perspectives. Diversity is about your perspective and how you see things. I was talking to my colleagues here that I didn't know I was part of a minority until somebody told me, and I didn't realize because where I come from, I'm not part of any minority. I'm just a regular person. Then all of a sudden, I'm put into a group, and I'm having to fight for my rights. I'm sorry. I had them already.

So, what Don was saying before, and Don really is everything that we see. It was such a great learning opportunity to have worked with him in the past, so everything he just said here was, again, very inspirational to bring back those memories. We have to be ourselves. We can't put the barriers in front of us because sometimes, they're not there. Sometimes, people are not expecting us to bring these walls in front of us. They're expecting us to bring the solution. Now that I am further along in my career, not to say older, and I'm looking at people that come in with a lot of ideas and suggestions and recommendation



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and impetus, and I just want not to be a barrier for these people. I want to allow them to bring all of that into their work. Well, these were a couple of thoughts that I had from this morning.

Hope MacGregor: Yeah. Thank you very much. As we talked as a panel earlier, as well, an area that we looked at and I think we talked about is marrying that passion and understanding from the panelists, how do you get your drive and inspiration in this space? It can be tiring. It can be frustrating. But what drives your work, either from your professional experience or from your personal experience?

Rosa Ambriz: Coming from a student perspective, I think with that question being originally where is your inspiration for this, it's not really inspiration. It's motivation. It's ambition. It's walking into a room and seeing that I'm the only Latina in a really white, male dominated field. It's being first generation, seeing that I have no reference point or no one else to fall back on and say, how do I do this? How do I prepare myself for this interview? What do I need to wear? What do I need to say? What research do I need to do? Who do you know, that sponsor, that mentor type relationship? It's very limited when you're going into an industry that has been already built by history and previously on dedicating themselves as resources to a certain type of group.

I think just stemming from that, coming from a daughter that's from an immigrant and a woman who's half-white, half-Japanese, I've lived diversity. It's who I am. I would have slumber parties and have friends over, and they'd be like, where's the pizza and the hamburgers? And I'm like, I'm rolling taquitos, and I'm rolling sushi. It's one or the other. You don't get the American food. I think just living that and experiencing that and being able to take those parts of myself and apply them professionally has worked, obviously on a different level because it's professional, but taking that experience and knowing, this is what I've witnessed personally as a person who lives diversity, who is diversity, and applying that and then being able to differentiate between the cultures. Japanese, white, Mexican. They're all very different, so how have I managed my identity through my life in that, and how can I apply that in my professional world and in my work ethic in my work that I produce?

Calmetta Coleman: I will say that I get my inspiration around D&I from reality. Several of the speakers who spoke earlier mentioned some of the numbers and the stats, and we all know it. This room is very different than what most agencies look like in terms of who's sitting here, so just recognizing that it's not only that we shortchange our clients if you're a PR agency, even though sometimes they are complicit in it, but the impact goes beyond that. So someone talked about different multi-cultural groups, and I know it's a problem among African-Americans, don't necessarily really know what a PR career path is. Growing up, I knew that there were journalists, which was why I became a journalist. I knew that there were firemen. You don't really see big PR people where that becomes an aspiration. Recognizing that that really shortchanges multi-cultural young



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people from potential lucrative career paths or just really having a way to really use their gifts. That really inspires me, knowing that we have to do better for all of us.

Dr. Natalie Tindall: I come to this work from a place of frustration. I have done diversity research and talked about public relations, diversity efforts, since I was in graduate school, and every two years, I say I'm going to quit talking about diversity and inclusion because it just feels like we're not getting anywhere. The conversations aren't going anywhere. The academic side and the practitioner side never talk to each other. So it's just incredibly frustrating, but at the same point in time, I work with students who look like me, and they don't see people who look like them in an agency, so that again is another source of frustration. So, I have to continue to break through, and I have to continue to work, not for myself, but for my students so they can actually be successful in what they intend to do.

Flavia Vigio: Well, I think that if you have a group of people that don't necessarily look like each other, you have a competitive advantage right from the start. If you have people who are able to give you different perspectives on something, it's such a richer conversation and you can give so much more to your company or whichever organization you're working for. Having different points of view in the room is just incredibly rich. That's what motivates me. I mean, I hate it when I'm in the room and everyone is agreeing. I'm sure I'm missing something. The more you have people with different perspectives, the better it is. I mean, you learn it from your personal perspective, of course, and then you're able to bring more informed suggestions. You're able to bring richer recommendations. It's just so much better. You're more creative when you're around people who challenge you on what your position is. It's so much nicer, also, to talk and work with people who are different than you than if everyone's just the same.

Hope MacGregor: Yeah. I think that's true. I think a lot of what we're hearing is about our identity, being able to bring our true self to the table, being able to be additive, I think, to the work and to the problems that we are all facing within our own workplaces. I think with that, and looking at the strategies that are working, there's some great successes, but really, I think, many of us are learning the most from our failures. So, I would love to hear a little bit about what failures have you seen and what did you glean from them? What has changed through those failures and how has that made things better?

Flavia Vigio: Oh. Want to start from this end?

Calmetta Coleman: I'm happy to start. I'll mention two things. One is obvious in that almost probably any person of color or clear minority group and probably women have experienced this too, be at an organization and be the only one, and you get all of the only one assignments.



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Rosa Ambriz: Yeah.

Calmetta Coleman: It's a huge failure. It's sort of the diversity and inclusion by accident, that they look to you because they think, "Oh, she's black. She will be able to handle this black account or be able to work on this particular subject." And perhaps, I could do a very good job of that but also, maybe not. What it really misses is that I can be so much more in so many other ways. I think that that is one. Another one that I would mention, I can't say that it was a total failure but one organization that I worked for, which was not a public relations or communications firm, had a diversity inclusion program that was all around mentoring and someone talked earlier about mentoring.

The idea was really admirable in that they very deliberately paired young, emerging, minority professionals with more seasoned, experienced, senior people in the organization to serve as mentors. That was a good thing, but again, it was talking to ourselves. And there's a value to that, but it could have been so much more because usually, that person wasn't in a position necessarily, while they might have been senior, because there are so few of them, you've kind of got to scour the company, and they may not even be in the line of business that you're in versus supplementing that with also having you connect with the people who are the decision-makers and in senior positions and who can be that kind of sponsor that you're talking about. So, I wouldn't call it a complete failure but one that certainly could have gone a step further. Excuse me.

Dr. Natalie Tindall: From what I see as an educator is that we don't evaluate the success of the student recruiting that we do. Our agencies don't do it. Agencies continue to go to the same five schools. They have tapped out Howard. They have tapped out FAMU to some extent. And then they say, "Well, we're done with recruiting black students. We've gone to the schools." There are other schools that have minority students, predominantly large, predominantly white institutions that have large students of color bases there, like your Texas State, like a UTEP, University of Texas El Paso. Georgia State graduates more African-American students in journalism and mass communication than any other school in the nation. But when I was a faculty member there, we never got asked to do anything. I think that is one of the problems is that people tend to stick with what they're doing, and they continue to do that for years and years but don't actually evaluate the success of their programming.

Also again, we continue to talk about this diversity pipeline, and I think the question always goes back to the talent. Everybody talks about the talent in the pipeline but we neglect to question: what exactly makes up the pipeline? The organizational culture, the values and those types of processes. Those things need to be questioned just as much as the talent. Some of the organizational cultures are toxic, and they need to be challenged. I don't think we do enough



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of that. We're always talking about talent is dripping out of the talent pool, out of the pipeline, but we never question the pipeline and how it's built itself.

Flavia Vigio:

One thing that I always want to make sure is that not only we are attracting talent, we're keeping them, and we are keeping them interested and keeping them wanting to come back. I think one of the things that we fail to do is when we let someone go because they had issues and their lives changed, then they can't come back. So, I think that is a failure of the organization to be aware and prepared for that. After McDonald's, before I joined HBO, I spent a few years with Golin. I recently saw the launch of the new program, which was already part of the agency mindset, which is making sure that if women go out to have babies, they are allowed to come back and protected. The agency has launched a campaign that I really, really like. It's called Have Her Back. It's just great because we have to make sure that if our industry is composed of 70% of women, I mean, we have to have enough women coming back. Thanks, men, for being there too and filling out the ranks, but we also need a lot of women if we can have them back once they've had babies.

Or, if we could just make sure that we are recruiting women enough then we'll be able to have great teams. We can't just have teams with people the that you haven't had, you have to have teams, you have to strategically plan for that.

Hope MacGregor:

Yeah, I mean representing the HR side and just hearing throughout the day, "Oh, it's HR's problem," or, "They're going to take care of it," or that's part of the training, and for those who don't know me, I actually came from the client side and spent 17 years on the client side and then moved to HR because I felt so strongly that HR was missing the perspective of the town, the individual. So, when I do my work, it's to make sure that I can empathize with the students coming in the door because I started as an intern, I know what that feels like to feel being a minority and working very hard. I think Lilia really struck a chord for me this morning when she said you're a first-generation immigrant, it's about bury your head, don't ask for anything, like just do your best job and you'll be recognized.

But that's not the case, right? We need to continue to push ourselves to do the asking, to empathize with each other and to welcome and encourage that discussion and understand where people's comfort levels are, to address the part of inclusion that we often miss within our organization, because I think, earlier we had talked about should it be inclusion diversity versus diversity inclusion, and I think they do have to work together but I think it's really important that as we discuss the strategies that are working, that we keep that in mind and continue to bring our whole identities and self and encourage others to bring that, as well, to the table.

I think you spoke about that work-life balance that doesn't exist, I can't remember who said that but it's true, and we don't actually talk about that as



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much anymore. We talk about how it is integrated. It's not about balancing it, is how do I integrate the pieces that I need into the work that I do, and so I'm curious, I know this is a little off-script for us, but how have you integrated your work in D&I within what you do every day. Because I think you have to make time for it. We all have jobs, but if we continue that energy around this topic, I think we can do a lot more.

Flavia Vigio:

I think it's part of who we are, Hope. I think it's just an extension of, I mean, my work is an extension of who I am. It's not that I just disconnect when I go home and I see my husband just sneaked in, he can vouch for that. So, he will certainly tell me if I'm lying but I can't, I don't disconnect. And I don't do vice versa, I don't disconnect from my personal life when I get to work. It's part of who we are. I think I'm this, and this is what I bring to work.

Rosa was just recently spending some time with us, I hope you enjoyed it and we paid you for your internship, but we got way more from Rosa than we gave her, so I hope that she'll be gracious in the future to help us some more. But right, Rosa, I think that's what we need to do, we need to just be ourselves and dedicate ourselves to what we love and I think by doing that, we just bring other people with us.

Rosa Ambriz:

Yeah, 100%. And I think, too, a lot of the – just the simple issue that I have and how I apply this outside of PRSA is – I have a part time job at a grocery store and I'm a checker, and I've seen that they're trying to celebrate diversity month, so they have this poster that says "Diversity" and it has food, it has all this different type of food and they're centered around that, and a lot of the educational system will do that. They'll have cultural day and then celebrate around food, but that's not what's important, that's not what we should be talking about, and on top of that you're missing the "and inclusion" part, right? So, it's just like you can treat diversity as a goal, but it should really be treated as a key component to organizational change, that's where it should be at. It should be part of who you are, it should be part of your organization, part of your company, things you're already doing and projecting onto other people to be reciprocated, that energy has to be reciprocated.

Rosa Ambriz:

Clap, it's-

Flavia Vigio:

It's the climate we bring, right? When we bring this, I mean it's like the tide. When the tide rises, it rises for everyone, so it rises for you and it rises for everyone who's around you. All of the boats come up together. I think if it's good for you, it's good for everyone. It can't just be individual, this has to be for everyone.

Hope MacGregor:

Yeah, absolutely. I think the other piece that we talked about, and I think I'd love to just dig a little bit more on this because I think this is something, it's a



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real problem and that is the retention. I think at our organizations and companies, whether it's enough students entering the programs, whether it's enough interns or senior-level executives at our own agencies. I think sometimes we're like, "Hey, we've got a lot of great candidates, but I don't think they're staying." They're not staying, they're staying for maybe a year, maybe two years, and you have to get to the root of why is that. So I'm curious to hear from the panel as far as what can help aid in that retention? What has allowed for that sense of belonging? Not just like I'm here to do my work and serve my role. What do you think, that's maybe not be done today, that could be done that could encourage that level of integration and of inclusion, feeling like I am part of this and who I see I feel like is me, and I can feel comfortable bringing myself to the workplace?

Rosa Ambriz: I will start with PRSSA, we started an international ambassadors program, and that stemmed from the fact that we had an issue with the international chapters not being connected with the U.S. chapters, and so the scholarships are in English, but they spoke Spanish. The resources that they needed, the booklet on how to develop a chapter was all in English, and then on top of that, they didn't have any representation within the U.S. when it came to national events. So, we started this program to have one representative from each region come to a national event, present to all the students, give them a taste of what PR is in Columbia, Argentina and Peru – they need to see that. They need to see that it's different, especially if we have members there wanting to intern outside of the U.S. and have those international internships. We're tapping into their networks as well, PR is not the same in Columbia as it is in the United States.

Rosa Ambriz: It's considered communications, it's not even a major, there's no PR professionals, and so I think what we did with that was really compliment the fact that there's a group of students that need resources and this organization, PRSA National, has three international chapters, but they're not given the resources that they need to include those people to give them a voice. So, by putting them in a leadership position, and giving them that platform that they need, that reflected into our organization and now we have the talk of rebranding into PRSSA International, instead of National because of that.

Hope MacGregor: Inviting perspective.

Calmetta Coleman: Yeah, so I'm going to start with what's probably the most obvious in terms of retention because firms do often wonder, "Okay, we can hire an African American, a Latina, but they don't stay." And the main reason that I have seen is really the lack of opportunity because quite often, people starting early in their careers, in entry level positions within PR, started with a group of, and let's be frank, it's largely white women, who're their same age, and they watch them one year, two years out, become vice presidents, become managers and they are still account coordinator. And at some point, maybe you ask about this,



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maybe you don't, it's quite natural also to just assume, quite frankly, that it is a lack of interest in diversity and if you can go somewhere else and feel like you're more valued, you will. Okay, that's just clear.

So, I think the way to address that is we have to actually be deliberate in trying to cultivate those people, cultivate leadership, and really help them see a path for themselves which means we have to be serious about building and creating a path for them and it can't really look like, which quite often it does, that so and so is just getting promoted because she looks like you. And at the same time, we can't ignore that we do have an affinity – I also worked at an organization where they had resource groups, but we call them affinity groups – people, you have an infinity for people who look like you, who share your culture, whatever it is. So we have to be aware of that, there's nothing wrong with that, but then we have to be very deliberate in moving past that.

Dr. Natalie Tindall:

To some extent I think that why people don't stay maybe because of diversity exhaustion. They are the person who is tasked to talk about diversity every single time they show up into a room. They are the person that is always on every diversity and inclusion committee. They are the person who is seen as the person who knows all about certain groups, and that becomes overwhelming to anyone who has been in that situation. And that's probably one of the reasons why some people leave or exit out.

Also, the research on this has been clear. Brenda Rigley did some of the preliminary research on developing ghetto 30, 20 years, 30 years ago, and it's still the same, there's still the same sticky floors, the same vaulted rooms, the same glass ceilings that we have and the research has been there, is we're waiting to mime it for you and talk with you about it, and bring it into your agency, so you can have those conversations. The work has already been done. We know why people are leaving, it's because the same things they identified 40 years ago in that report that Marilyn Kern-Foxworth identified with black practitioners in the 80's, the same things that Richard Waters and I found out with lesbian and gay practitioners in the early 2000s, we know what's happening, it's just a matter of we just need to be tapped and brought in and we can talk to this about you as well as create those questions in ways for you to listen to what these people who are exiting or getting ready to exit want to say to you.

Flavia Vigio:

You guys are absolutely right. I think you covered the important points. I think, we have to keep in mind that we treasure what we measure, right? We have to keep those numbers in front of us. That's not just a reference, that's not just a number to be there, that's a number that we have to look at, we have to be honest about them, and we have to have senior management in our companies understand what they mean, understand what they mean from a recruiting perspective, from a retaining perspective, and from a consumer perspective as well. So, I mean, we have to be credible as brands today, we have to represent



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what we do and people are looking beyond what you say, thank God. So that's really important, you have to keep your work honest. It's not easy, of course, it's much easier said than done, but you do need, in our area, I think we do need that intellectual honesty with ourselves.

Hope MacGregor: Yeah, I think within your leadership organization too, right? It's like you can be inside but you want to also have the perspective of outside-in, what does that feel like, and ensuring that I think, you said deliberate, like I think when we're looking at strategies that implementing, like how can we be deliberate? Is it like making diversity and inclusion a topic of every senior leadership team meeting? Is it making sure that we are asking the questions and why are we waiting for the exit interviews? Why don't we do the interviews a little bit earlier? Why don't we have like a 30-day in? And I think these types of questions can help inform how we better understand, do the powerful listening that we should be doing, in order to activate and implement the right strategies.

Calmetta Coleman: Oh, may I add one thing on this point? Another issue that I think, a way that organizations can address this, is that we build these diversity and inclusion strategies or we have these ideas about how to retain people and quite often, the folks that are making those decisions are not representing any of that diversity themselves. You cannot build a successful program on how to retain, you know whether it's people with disabilities, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, whatever it is, without talking to them. So, they actually have to be a part of developing the program or the strategy for both bringing them in and retaining them.

Hope MacGregor: You know, that's absolutely true. I think I would say too as we're talking about the various strategies, what's working, is there anything that you would share as far as like how have you been able to sell in? We've talked a lot about leadership, creating what the impact is, but I think everyone is very well aware of these situations where resources are limited – resources in time, resources in funding, you know the example of the only enough money to have two rooms at a hotel for a conference or when you have to implement X amount for talent recruitment and can you visit all the universities that aren't on the typical list that you typically give referrals to. So you know that's something that's very real for many people in the audience, or how have you found within your experience of getting around that or helping to make the case or getting more funding, people resources, dollar resources to do what you want to do, which is right for your organization?

Natalie Tindall: In terms of recruiting to colleges that aren't in major metropolitan areas or who aren't the typical universities we typically recruit at, virtual career fairs, any kind of virtual thing you can do, coming in and talking to classes that way is a huge help and that's something easy, it's just Skype, we'll take you. We'd love to have you in our classes, we need you in our classes because our students don't take our word for it, they take your word for it. So-



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Flavia Vigio: Sign me up.

Natalie Tindall: Oh, awesome. Thank you. So, that's one thing that you can do easily and quickly and with very little cost is those types of engagements. Also, when we, agency tours, that's something that I did in Atlanta, something I know that people do at many different universities where people will actually come 4 or 5 hours away to come, just sit in your office and look at a cubicle because they never see a cubicle and a PR agent before. And they will sit there and talk with you and engage and that's a great opportunity and a great opening for you, as well. So, really just thinking creatively, with professors, brainstorming with us, brainstorming with departments, we have a lot of time, we would love to work with you, just tell us what you need, we'll find a way to make it happen for our department or for other departments as well.

Flavia Vigio: Can you guys tell me who are students here? Okay, you all please connect with me on LinkedIn because I do need your resumes. We are always looking for great talent, that's so important, and even if you're not a student and you want to connect on LinkedIn, please do.

But, talent is, it's not that it's rare, it's there, it's just it's sometimes you need to push people a little bit so they show themselves, you know? Rosa and we've all been in these internships processes recently and it's just so valuable. I think the more you show yourself, the more you can bring to your work every day or to the conversations every day. Maybe it's not a formal job interview, maybe it's just a conversation, maybe it's just coffee, maybe it's just an elevator ride, I mean just let's take advantage of those opportunities and get to meet people because we're here, I mean, I think we're here for a cause. I totally believe in purpose. I think what we're doing must have a purpose in the end, we're not just selling stuff, we're selling stuff because I hope you believe in what we're selling. So, that conversation is so important. I think we need to have more and more of that quality, honest, intelligent conversations. Just bring your own self to the conversation, I can't say any more than that, I'll just keep repeating myself because I think that's really important.

Hope MacGregor: Yeah, I think that's true. I mean, Calmetta said it earlier, it's about proximity, right? And if you're not exposed to people, it's very hard. I mean most of the resumes I get are referrals, it's from people I know, I've met with, and that goes a long way. But if you're not in those circles, if you're from a, your school is the first PR school program and you don't have that, so these types of opportunities are so critical as far as getting your name out there and understanding and learning and saying like, "What is out there, as far as an opportunity within the industry?" And it's not just communications, it's internal, it's external, it's digital, you know. It's like we work in so many different mediums, so I think there's so many opportunities that maybe we are limiting ourselves about how the words that we choose describe what we do. And so, I think it's really important that I think, for all the students, and all of us are students in our own way, constantly



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learning or really striving to do and to get as much out of this session and just the people that we're interacting with to.

I'm going to end with making sure that everyone here gets the last word, just to try to help with keeping with time. But, you know, if you had to leave your audience with just one piece of advice, like what would that be?

Rosa Ambriz: Well my audience is students and it's also professionals in the industry, hello. And if you haven't joined PRSSA, come talk to me so we can talk about that afterwards. But two things I think for my two different audiences – for students, be prepared and be open, but also make sure that a lot of what we see and what we're taught, from personal perspective too, is like you have to have this, this, this, you have to be this way, you have to have a certain thing. Don't be afraid to think different, don't be afraid to be creative, and we'll talk more about this later, but that's just from the D&I perspective, a lot of us growing up we're denied, we've been denied certain things so don't be afraid to be those other things, especially in this industry. And then for the professionals, be open to mentoring and sponsoring us students, especially us students of color.

Rosa Ambriz: We need it. It's rare for us to see someone come and talk and be the CEO or vice president of a company. It's extremely rare and it's magic. It does so much for us to have Flavia for me to see her in her position. It's inspiring and it motivates me to keep that and follow that and give that to someone else when I'm older.

Flavia Vigio: And vice versa. It's really important. We need the conversation.

Rosa Ambriz: Yeah, yeah.

Hope MacGregor: Calmetta?

Calmetta Coleman: So, I would say to both the students and the current practitioners, when you get that opportunity to be the one in the room, whatever form of diversity it is that you represent, knock it out of the park. I mean at the end of the day, it's really results. That's the thing that drives it. That's the thing that's going to be the decision maker that says, "This was a good hire," is to really go in and get results and then, finally, I'll say, because we were doing HBCU shout outs earlier, I'm a Dillard University alum. HBCU in New Orleans. Recruit there.

Natalie Tindall: I think everything we do, we have to be intentional and strategic. We talk about that in our classes when you build case studies and you build campaigns. If your goals aren't strategic and your objectives aren't strategic, you probably will fail, at least in my class you would. So, in this instance, when we talk about diversity and inclusion, we have to be strategic and we have to be intentional. So, it's really thinking about what exactly, what we can do, where we should be and what we want to be in the next three to five years, whatever that is. So, I think



that's the biggest thing. If anybody walks away with something today, it's really thinking about intentionally what are our diversity goals. How can we move the needle on those in a way that can be measurable, but in a way that is also ethical and responsible for both the talent and for the agency, the organization itself?

Flavia Vigio:

I mean I think to me it's a little bit more of what I think I've been saying and it's we have to be very honest about what we want to do. I think we have a lot of individual qualities and characteristics we can all add to the discussion. We're only a diversity when we're not among our groups. All of a sudden, I move here to the United States and I'm part of a diversity. I wasn't a diversity when I was in my hometown in Rio de Janeiro. So I'm like, "Okay, this is a new perspective for me and I'm going to learn from that because everyone will bring that to the table." So just bring that to the table. That's really important. It contributes to the conversation. It helps educate people and sometimes you have to have a little bit of patience because we don't see what we don't see. So patience and education, I know it's hard. I know we suffer a lot with people who don't want to be educated or have their own limitations, but we have to keep pushing and we have, I mean we're communicators.

We have to bring to the table the same issues that we want to get out there. It's just part of what we do. We are our own audiences in a way, so we have to make sure we can manage this because the audience outside is so much bigger and harder. So, this is part of what we do. We have to be honest about what we do and we have to be honest about what we're promoting. I have to give a big shout out to my mentor who's Bridgette, who's back there. We've been working together for a few years and she's always been an inspiration. So, that's really important. I mean find people who will mentor you and bring into that conversation. You have a lot to give too and they have a lot to give to you.

Hope MacGregor:

Absolutely. I think we're going to go to questions. Yes?

Audience #1:

Thank you all. So insightful and inspirational. Doctor Tindall, a question for you. We talked a little bit about the partnership between practitioners and EDU and one of the things, as well as others on the panel, but one of the things that I've been trying to promote and get our arms around is how do we measure inclusion? The numbers are always easy. We like, from a business perspective, what we can sort of measure in that way. Inclusion is harder to measure with numbers. So, I'm curious and you mentioned all the research that Brenda had done as well I think. I'm curious if you all have come across a model or if there's any research about how to measure those feelings other than qualitative, of course, to get it to the place where it's a business metric that you include just like you look at revenue and client retention and those sorts of things?

Natalie Tindall:

And this is where I go to my academic colleagues, throw it out to you guys.



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Audience #1: Or to Doctor Kim and Doctor Brenda?

Natalie Tindall: I haven't seen an actual model. I've seen people flirt with the idea of an inclusion base, sort of like a triple bottom line type of idea, but I haven't seen anything fully fleshed out, published anywhere that actually has that documented. So if that's a, does anybody else? Doctor Brown? Doctor Cooper?

Audience #1: I smell a partnership.

Natalie Tindall: I smell a partnership in the air if anybody wants to do it, but I think that is an opportunity to, at least for us to lead the way, especially in public relations, if we're talking about communication and talking about relationship building. This is a good way to model what we want or what other organizations want to see. So I think that's an opportunity.

Audience #1: Thank you.

Gabby Balayla: Hi. I'm Gabby. I'm from the University of Florida.

Natalie Tindall: Go Gators.

Gabby Balayla: So, one thing that stood out to me was, Calmetta, how you said that being the only one and having the only one job. So I'm from Venezuela and I cannot tell you how many people to this day tell me, "Oh you're from Minnesota?" and I'm like, "No it's Venezuela." It's a country. Yes, it's really sad, and it's really sad that we don't have cultural education and cultural knowledge. So my question is how do you think we can include cultural education in our field to be able to officially implement diversity and inclusion?

Calmetta Coleman: Oh, wow.

Dr. Natalie Tindall: I'm still trying to get over Minnesota and Venezuela.

Calmetta Coleman: So, you know, I would say that I think it all starts with what I've heard a couple of people talk here about, is bringing your whole self into the situation. So, you as the individual, you can only educate so much, but it's really about sort of sharing who you are, but more importantly, who you are and how it's effective to that organization. So I'll share a story. I started my career as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal. I was 23 years old. Every now and then, I would go to my mailbox at work and someone would have put an annual report from either Johnson, the hair care. Some people might remember, Johnson the black haircare company or something from Ebony/Jet. So, it was always some offering. They would never bring it to me. They would stick it in my mailbox and I'm like, "I don't cover that. I don't cover that," and so that I just had to just



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saying I would sort of take them at first because I was just so grateful to have a job.

Then I had to actually start saying, "Hey look guys. If you want me to do this, I will do this, but this really isn't my thing," and so you have to sort of overcome that sense of shyness and sort of being who you are and speaking out for who you are and what you can do. I was like, "I'm happy to do that, but that's not all that I can do," and I'm from Mississippi, not wherever.

Dr. Natalie Tindall: One thing, too, just to follow up is that in terms of the classroom experience and talking about building cultural awareness and diversity, ask your professors. Are there case studies about South America, Venezuela, that we can cover in class? Is there something that I can bring in? That also helps with that, too, because again, a lot of people just don't know that they don't know and I think that what we can do in a classroom since that is a safe space to have these types of conversations, you can bring up these types of issues and say, "This is how PR in Venezuela is done," or "I'm really from Venezuela. Let me show you where it is on a map," and you can actually have those conversations in class.

Hope MacGregor: I would add to that, I always think from the HR perspective of not assuming and every opportunity that we have at the agency, we want people to opt in versus just assume that that's what they want to do and I think that's really important is to say. It would be like, "Hey we have this great assignment. It's a multicultural assignment. Who's interested in this topic?" I don't care who you are or what your background is, but do you have that passion and why. That's what you want to marry. You want to marry the right project with the right interest and so we've been doing a lot more of that of just allowing people to opt in and not just assuming that, "Hey you're in this role. You're going to want it." I think that's important too.

Saam Malik Hassan: Hi. My name is Saam Malik Hassan. I'm from the City College of New York, senior. First, Gabby, funny little story to go with your story. I remember I was in kindergarten and we're all talking about where we are from, where our parents are from, and my parents are from Yemen, which is in the Middle East, and my kindergarten teacher literally walked up to the globe and she was like, "Show me," and as a kindergartner I didn't know what Yemen was, so I don't know if she ever thought Yemen was a real place. So, yeah, it happens. Yeah, see, I get it, but my question was and I kind of want to bring up an elephant in the room. Maybe it's an elephant in this room? But it's an elephant in a lot of places that do try to implement diversity and inclusion. It's basically I am a multicultural student so I apply for a lot of multicultural opportunities. I'm one of the scholarship recipients to come here.

So, as I'm doing these things or I'm applying these things or I'm getting these things, getting these opportunities, I have many white students in my class or white other interns that are in my internship and they'll be like, "Oh, yeah I can't



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really apply for that because I'm white, so lucky you," or like, "You're such at an advantage." So, when we talk about diversity and inclusion in a place like this for a summit about diversity and inclusion, I'm really speaking to an echo chamber, people who already agree. You guys speaking for like, "Yeah, that's true," but my question would be when you're in those spaces where you have a lot of white counterparts, white colleagues, white peers, white students who are looking at you with a little bit of resentment because when I see that or I feel that, I kind of take it upon myself to send them all these other opportunities I find because I'm like, "Don't worry. We're all in this together," and I put the pressure on myself so that they don't resent me in a way. So-

Flavia Vigio: Can I interrupt you?

Saam Malik Hassan: Yeah.

Flavia Vigio: I mean, forget about it. I mean no, it's yours. You earned it. You're there for a reason. If you're not good, you're not going to stay, but if you're there, you're there for a reason. Just take the best of the opportunity that you're given. Don't worry about everyone else. They're not going to worry about you. If they get the internship, they're not going to be thinking, "Well I got this because I'm white." No. I mean just take the best of your opportunity and bring it to your work. Show how good you can be. That's fine. Don't worry about that. It exists, we all know, but that's fine. You're supposed to be your best person to your work or internship or anything. Don't worry about that. They're not going to be worrying about that.

Saam Malik Hassan: So, my fear is I kind of think long term in a way where it's like, what I really don't want is I want these white students, these white interns to go in their careers and they become employers and hire other people and in the back of their mind is that sense of resentment over people who are hired when they're in college or later back then. I'm crazy. I think like that. So, it's like I would never want them to think that this is just basically handouts. Affirmative action is bad and stuff like that idea.

Flavia Vigio: No, you're just hurting yourself if you think like that. Don't worry about that. I mean, really. Other people wouldn't worry about you if they were in your position. It's just, you're talented. You're there for a reason. I mean, your employer is not a crazy person that is just going to hire you without any concerns about your talent. They're going to be looking at that, too, and there are going to be other people in your same position, your same minority or anything and you've been chosen for a reason. So don't worry about that. Just bring your best self. Do the best job that you can do. You're going to prove to people how talented you are. Don't worry about that.



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- Saam Malik Hassan: Do you think there should be some level of why diverse inclusion isn't applied to white students? Let them understand because I think that's where the discrepancy lays. We're talking about it to employers and we're talking about it to students who want multicultural opportunities, but then the white students are like, "But why? How come they get it?" How can we implement more of that kind of education in mainstream? Not just to multicultural students but to employers.
- Flavia Vigio: It's not about just, I'll make one last comment. It's not about what minority you come from. It's who you are, and there's good and bad people in every minority. I mean there are people who are going to be resentful of you if they're from your same minority or from another minority. I mean don't, that's not what you should worry about. You should worry about just doing the best job and whoever isn't happy with that, well then they need to find something else to do and try another interview, another opportunity. Don't worry about them. Worry about what you bring to the job opportunity and to your career and how you can be better. They will learn, too, and there's good and bad people everywhere. I think that's what I mean. There's good and bad people everywhere. It doesn't mean that because you're a minority you were good. It doesn't mean because you were not a minority you're bad. Does it make sense?
- Audience #4: Sorry. I just wanted to invoke Don Thompson. Don't be your own barrier, first of all. Just a reminder of that because I think, sorry, but the other thing I was just about jumping out of my skin to say is that they will have opportunities that you will never have access to and have and so don't give your opportunity back.
- Saam Malik Hassan: Exactly.
- Audience #4: Because there are opportunities that you will not get. So, we all have to come to terms with who we are, where we are in this world, et cetera, but don't give up your opportunity for that. That's all.
- Calmetta Coleman: I would just say more directly to the point. Do not feel the need to respond to everything somebody says to you. You don't have an answer for that because there's nothing that you can say that will satisfy that person.
- Dr. Natalie Tindall: You can't talk reasonably with ignorance.
- Calmetta Coleman: You can't.
- Dr. Natalie Tindall: And the person obviously doesn't know anything about the history of affirmative action or the history that pre-dates why affirmative action was needed and also what the industry looks like and the percentages that are here. So, you can throw all of those facts at them, but as we are learning now facts



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don't mean anything to some people. So it's best to sometimes just remove yourself from the conversation.

Calmetta Coleman: Yeah, that's not your job.

Dr. Natalie Tindall: That's not your job.

Nilanjana Bardhan: I just wanted to say, real quick, that what we haven't talked about is also the fact that those who are historically privileged also need to educate themselves about what that is.

Flavia Vigio: London, is there any way we can continue this conversation online?

Nilanjana Bardhan: We have breakout sessions so we can have lots of conversation during because these are important matters and so please do continue these conversations and I'm going actually turn it back over to Hope to wrap this up for us. So, Pat can come recognize our sponsors and our scholarship recipients.

Hope MacGregor: Well, just thank you very much. My thanks to the panelists. Obviously, there's so much more energy in the room to keep the conversation alive and I would just encourage everyone, I mean these are conversations we want you to carry to your workplaces. We want these conversations to carry back to your own community, because I think that's where we can start making some inroads as far as creating more impact when it comes to diversity and inclusion. So thank you.

Sponsor & Student Scholarship Recognition

A special thank you to our supports - American Airlines, Discover, Golin, Burson Cohn & Wolfe and Interpublic Group - who made the Summit possible. Five students received travel scholarships to attend the Summit and further their professional development. The five students were Victoria Adebajo, State University of New York at Plattsburgh; Gabriela Balayla, University of Florida; Saam Malik Hassan, City College of New York; Brock Shine, University of Florida; and Andres Warren, West Virginia University.

Pat Ford: So, that's very important. So, first, I'd like to ask Matthew from Discover Financial Services and Rosa from Burson, Cohn & Wolfe to come up for a moment. We've heard earlier from a couple of our sponsors who we really appreciate. Golin, who sponsored our keynote address. And we didn't hear from American Airlines because unfortunately they couldn't fly in. Just saying. I think United was fully booked. No, I'm just kidding. No, we're very grateful and because also Ron DeFeo is from American Airlines on the board. So, they were a very important sponsor, particularly for our scholarship recipients. And then IPG, which sponsored our breakfast. And you heard from Kivvit and also



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Discover and American Airlines made it possible for us to have these scholarships, which I'm going to describe in a little more detail in a second. And then BCW, the new name for the firm I was in for 29 years, Burson, also sponsored one of our breaks. So, I just want to ask them to tell us what's your feeling was about this. And thank you very much for your contribution.

Rosa Nunez:

Well thank you, everyone. Thank you, Pat, so much for having us here. My name is Rosa Nunez and I lead diversity and inclusion for our newly formed Burson, Cohn & Wolfe or if you want to call it BCW to be sexy. We are the merger of Burson-Marsteller and Cohn & Wolfe. And we're so, so excited. We're now one of the largest full-service, integrated communications agencies in the world. So, super excited about that. But we're mostly proud about our people and how now we have an opportunity to create a culture that brings the best of both worlds and just kills all the bad behavior that has been taking our industry hostage for so many years. So, we have an opportunity to create a culture of inclusion that is the best in class, where people can just flourish and be their authentic selves at work every single day.

And creating opportunities for students of color, I heard a lot about HBCUs, and we actually launched a program this month that is not just a shopping spree where we just go and get rest and go back. We have a sustainable one-year program that we just piloted this month where we go, we merge our people with students, we coach, we provide mentorship, we look at their curriculum to see what skills are needed. We bring it back, we guarantee internships within organization. And now with the Burson summer internship, we guarantee 50% of the spot to student of color. So, we're doing a lot to create a culture that is just breaking barriers in our industry, and we are just disrupting the status quo. Thank you for being here.

Pat Ford:

And thank you.

Matt Towson:

Hi, I'm Matt Towson and I'm director of community affairs at Discover and obviously, we're very proud sponsor of this program. Our philanthropic focus is on education. So, to be able to sponsor scholarships for students to come and attend, this makes us proud and appreciate all the work that you guys are doing. I particularly have been impressed overall the morning of the session. Discover in multiple ways is dealing with D&I issues and we're very committed to trying to create a more inclusive culture. I can tell you from both a PR standpoint and from just a corporate standpoint how important this topic is. We're part of, here in Chicago, the financial services pipeline where we're dealing as a whole industry with an issue of trying to recruit more minorities to work in financial services. So, we have not only a pipeline issue where we're just seeing a lack of it because we are seeing a lot of diverse candidates and students being pushed into STEM programs, obviously. And I think that might impact the PR field as well.



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But when somebody thinks of going to work for financial services industry, it's not really exciting. But when you talk to them about technology and engineering and math and how those roles can be part of financial services, then they become more interested. So, we're trying to build a pipeline here in Chicago to bring more diverse candidates into our field. But from the PR perspective as well, and something that I've personally dealt with the past year, my department is in charge of corporate responsibility report that we produce every other year. And we've been doing it. We've only been an independent company now since 2007. So, we've been producing the report since 2011 and the first couple of reports were, "Okay, what are we doing for the environment? And what kind of giving are we giving?" And education, as I said, is our main focus, financial education particularly.

But then, all of a sudden, investors started doing shareholder requests and wondering what our data is on gender pay equity. And what is our data on minority hiring. And, "How many minorities do you have in management level?" So, just in the last five years, this has become a corporate issue, D&I. So, it's very important for us to come to something like this and hear everyone's perspective. But more importantly, companies are now going to be required to do this and companies need to be at the front of the line. So, anyway, thank you very much for giving us this opportunity.

Pat Ford:

Thank you. Absolutely. Thanks. Thank you. And I was just going to say the chief communications officer of Discover, Leslie Sutton, is on our Plank Center Board. So, thank you for that, too. Thanks. May I ask the students, scholarship recipients, to come up. So, as they come up, let me say, as we conceive this Diversity and Inclusion Summit and thought about how to make it consistent with the vision and the spirit and the passion of Betsy Plank, we had to build in more than just accidental participation by students. I think one of our messages here today that came up in at least three of the conversations that I counted was intentionality. And I think Don said, "Institutionalize your intentionality." So, what we did is we sent out a notice to a lot of universities and invited them to encourage their students to apply for a scholarship, which was supported in combination by Discover and by American Airlines, so that we could bring them here, they could participate in this and then become advocates themselves for some of the principles we're talking about here today.

And so, Kenon Brown, who's here and Gary McCormick ... Is Gary here? So, two of our other trustees and I had the privilege of reviewing about 40 applications we got from around the country that were so good and I've never been in – I've judged things like this over the years a thousand times – and I've never seen something where I wanted to give the award to everybody who applied. And it was amazing and also encouraging for the future of our business. But these are the five who were selected and for very good reasons, very good reasons. Can I say that Malik? And so, what we'd like to do now is a part of the application process, part of it was their background, part of it was a letter of



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recommendation from their professors. Thank you to those professors. And part of it was an essay or video by them on why diversity is important in our business and what it means to them.

So, I've asked them to just talk about that a little bit in each case. Don't give us the whole essay. They want lunch. But I think it's valuable and even more valuable that you answer this question now in reflecting on the conversations that have happened today and hearing from this array of people that are passionate about this topic. And so, with that, let me go down the table here and we'll start first with somebody you've already heard from, Malik from CCNY and he is an undergraduate at CCNY. And, in fact, why don't each of you in addition to answering the question quickly, just give your background, although their brief bio is in here. So, let's start with you Malik.

Saam Malik Hassan: Hi everyone. My name is Saam Malik Hassan. I'm from the City College of New York. Brief background, I'm double majoring in advertising public relations and political science with a minor in community change studies. I currently interning at a PR agency called BHI, entertainment PR agency. I was strategy intern at Y&R this summer. And I'm currently director of New York MSA Showdown, which is a talent tournament catering to 200 college students in New York with competition such as singing, songwriting, improv, short film, poetry, yadda, yadda, yadda. That's me. So, to answer your question quickly, because you guys do want lunch, what does diversity mean to me? And I was thinking about it a lot when you asked me. And I looked back on my essay and I was like, "Okay, let me see what's part I can take out, which paragraph I can reiterate." But if I can put it into really short words, it just means taking the pressure off. Take the pressure off of us.

And when I try to think of examples to give the audience, it would be when I was at Y&R NYC. Any workplace I go into, I pray five times a day as a Muslim. That's what I do. And the first thing I do is I go to HR, I go to my boss and I'm like, "Hey, I need a place to pray if you don't mind at least twice a day for like three minutes, if that's cool." Or I'll say in the interview because that's what I need to do and if you can't provide that, then I can be here. So, I went to my HR person and I was shaking because I'm always shaking. There's always pressure because I don't know what they're going to say. And what diversity meant there was, "Yeah, we already have a space for that. We have Muslim employees here. We have these three rooms booked at the roof." Has an amazing view by the way. And that's what you have right there. That's what diversity means to me.

Diversity means to me being able to talk to an intern and he's talking about how he's here because his mom knows the CCO, blah, blah. And he's from Harvard and true story. And he's the only other intern in my department. I'm like, "Damn it, pressure." And diversity means to me, me walking in, emailing the CSO profusely to have a meeting with him because I'm like, "Now damn, I got to compete." And then not only is he black, but we're talking and he's Muslim. And



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we go to the same mosque every Friday during work and we didn't even know. And now we go to the same mosque at the internship and go there and we see each other. And that's what diversity means to me. There's no linear definition I think to say what diversity means to me. It just really means whatever takes the pressure off, whatever it makes me breathe easily, whichever makes me just think about my skills, my confidence, and not have to over, like I was probably doing over there, double guess myself. Or like, "Do I got to do that? Do I got to compensate?" So, take the pressure off of us. That'd be really cool.

Pat Ford: That's very good. So, we already know from last night that West Virginia University is in the house. But we also have a great student here from West Virginia University, Andres Warren. And Andres, just tell them a little about yourself and then what does it mean to you?

Andres Warren: So, I was adopted from Cali, Colombia when I was six months old. So, I don't really know too much about my culture. So, that's why this has been incredibly important for me to attend this. And you guys are all amazing, honestly. I just have to shout out to the speakers and the last panel. Wherever Rosa is, you're a bad ass. I love it, I love it. So, for me-

Pat Ford: That's what's she was going for, Andrés.

Andres Warren: Yeah, you just have to hear it. So, for me, I grew up in a really small town. I was one of the only two Hispanic people in my whole town. The other one was my sister. So, I didn't know much. And diversity to me is just empowering. This is such an empowering thing for me and it's a craving now. I just want more diversity in my life because growing up it was just all white people around me all the time. So, on my name I even took off the accent in my name because no one could pronounce it. My parents' friends still call me Andre or Andrew and I've known them for like 18 years, 20 years. And so now just being here and seeing people that look like me and it makes me believe in myself more and empowers me to know – Like he graduated from my school and look at how well he's doing. He just won something the other day. And it just really-

Pat Ford: Milestones in Mentoring.

Andres Warren: It's really just empowering to me. It shows me if anyone can do it, I should be believing in myself more and from this and all these opportunities and the past two days, it's been incredible. So, thank you.

Pat Ford: So, Brock, and let me just say there's no connection to the idea that Brock and Gabby are from the University of Florida. It was a totally objective judging process. It was, actually. So, Brock, talk about your background and your studies and then what this means to you.



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Brock Shine: Oh, hi everyone. I'm Brock Shine. I'm a public relations major at the University of Florida with a minor in Japanese. I like to think that today I look a lot prettier than my photo that's in the programs. When I think about what diversity means to me, I guess I'd have to say that means action. And of course, actions speak much louder than words do. And it's been mentioned a couple times today during the panels. I think one of the biggest things we can work on with D&I is action. Not just talking about diversity, talking about doing things related to the diversity, but actually doing those things.

Brock Shine: Not just putting up an appearance like when I was in middle school, I used to take piano lessons. And I was a very, very bad piano student. Never practiced. Never did anything. And I would only go to the practices that my mom drove me to every weekend. I wouldn't practice at home. But, after a while my mom started really getting on to me. She was like, "You got to do those exercises. You got to do this. You got to do that." Because when I started playing piano, I really just did it as a look thing. I'd walk into school and be like, "Yeah, I play piano." But, I wasn't actually taking the initiative. And I think one of the biggest things we need to do together is take an initiative. So that's all I got to say.

Pat Ford: Excellent. Thank you. So, Victoria. Victoria is a student at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh. And I remember your entry and I'm delighted to have you talk to them about what this means to you. First, about yourself.

Victoria Adebajo: Hi everyone. First of all, I'd like to say thank you all for having us here, not only for myself, but for all of us. We actually all got really close and we're going to stay connected. So, this is really an amazing opportunity where we got to hear all your stories and I took notes. I'm going to really utilize everything that I learned today. My name is Victoria. I am currently a senior studying public relations and psychology at SUNY Plattsburgh. I'm also the president of my African Student Association on my campus, also known as African Unity. I'm also a head resident assistant in Macomb Hall Housing and Res Life. So, what diversity means to me is just going into a situation where I know I'm not the only one. Just seeing people that look like me but also think very differently from me. Because when you enter somewhere where ... So, let's speak about African Unity. Most of us are African. There is diversity between us because there are multiple countries within Africa. There are 54. It is a continent, not a country. It's a continent. So that does bring our sense of diversity. But I don't want to only see Africans. I want to see people from other walks of life that had different experiences and different knowledge that they had throughout their lives.

How do we expect to have one of our clients? And let's say I'm working on a Nike campaign and I want to target the audience of young black men. So, I may have the experience for working just being around that. But working in a firm that doesn't have those particular outlets to target those people. So, diversity isn't there. But not only in the sense of ethnicity, but also in just experiences



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that you had. Just gender and race. Everything is included. I just wouldn't be able to see diversity in a sense of not only my experiences but also working with others and gaining everything that they know and just actively taking in the knowledge that they're willing to give me. Thank you.

Pat Ford:

Thank you. So, full disclosure, Gabby is in my crisis communications class. She's doing well, so far, and we'll see how she does after this. And before I introduce her, I just want to make the point – there's been a lot of discussion about when you see a need related to diversity and inclusion, step up and have a bias for action. So earlier this semester, Gabby realized it was Hispanic Heritage Month and there was a broader Hispanic organization on campus, but there wasn't one specifically about PR. And so, she went online and found the Hispanic Public Relations Association and went to the department chair, Marcia DiStaso and me. I think about five weeks later, they not only have the first university chapter of the HPRA, it's already been accepted by the National HPRA's board. And they've got an executive board and they've already had a couple of meetings and that's kind of Gabby. So, take it from there Gabby. What else you got?

Gabby Balayla:

Thank you. My name is Gabby. I am a junior public relations major at the University of Florida. I am the co-founder and president of HPRSA, the first ever student chapter of the Hispanic Public Relations Association. For me, diversity means a lot of things, but I am a person that comes from many different cultures. My background – I have a very wide background. I have family from Lebanon, Brazil, Israel, and I am Jewish Venezuelan, which is a very close community. So, I consider all of these parts of me very important in my life and they shape who I am. And, for me, diversity is being able to share that part of me and who I am with others to be able to effectively communicate and not only in the public relations field, but in life. And I think the best example of diversity and inclusion is this group of people. We didn't know each other until yesterday and I am so looking forward to stay connected with you and I have learned so much from them. All of our different cultures. And we actually found that we have so much in common. And it's about learning from different experiences, different backgrounds, different cultures, different mindsets and putting it into one thing. And now we are this amazing group of students who came and had the amazing opportunity to speak to all of you and be a part of this. So, thank you. Thank you very much.

Pat Ford:

So, to all of you, I would just say by all means stay together with each other. But there are a lot of people and it's been the points we made several times today. If you haven't already, find out their LinkedIn addresses. They're here. Everybody here is here. Let me see if this is true. I don't think anybody here is being paid to be here. They're here. They're here on a mission that is very important and involves all of you. So, there was a great piece of advice that I heard from somebody one time which was, "It's not enough to just get opportunities. You need to know how to seize them, and you need to take the initiative to seize them." And I think we've heard a number of examples of that



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today. So, I hope that this propels you to do that. And we're delighted to have you here. Yes, please Malik.

Saam Malik Hassan: I'm sorry. I wouldn't forgive myself if I don't say this. Shout out to my professor Lynn Applebaum, who has done incredible amount of work for diversity inclusion in the PR profession. She's the reason I'm here. She's the reason I'm in PR. The reason I'm into communications. Reason why I have gotten anything ever related to the PR field. So, shout out to Lynn Applebaum if you're listening somewhere. It's for you.

Pat Ford: She might be, but-

Saam Malik Hassan.: She's alive.

Pat Ford: Anybody else want to shout out to their-

Gabby Balayla: I want to shout out. I want to do a shout out to Pat Ford and to Dr. Marcia DiStaso. It was actually pretty surprising to me because I went yesterday to the gala and everyone was talking about mentors and the impact and just how great it is to have someone to count on and to rely on and to give you advice. And I am so glad that I could attend to this event and to that event with my two most important mentors. So, thank you so much.

Pat Ford: Victoria, please.

Victoria Adebajo: So, hi. Shout out to Michelle Ouellette. Thank you so much. She's my advisor. She's literally been with me since my freshman year in high school. She's been helping me throughout the whole PR process. She's the one that talked me into PR because originally, I came into college as an undeclared major. I did not know what I wanted to do. But she was always very supportive with me. And even adding a second major in psychology, she was just like, "Okay, now how can you use that to help you move further into PR?" So, thank you Michelle for everything. She's the one that sent me the email about this. And I was just like, "Okay, I'm going to do it just to make her proud." I was very tired and it was finals week, but because she said to me – literally it was finals week – but because she sends it to me, I was like, "You know what, let me give back to Michelle because she's done so much for me already." So, thank you. She's not here unfortunately, but she's going to see that video. Hello.

Brock Shine: I want to thank my mom

Pat Ford: That counts.

Brock Shine: My mother came here with her family of seven from Jamaica when she was a teenager. And she moved to New York City and everyone in her family, but



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especially my mom, did everything they could to grind and make sure that their children would be able to be in the position that I'm in right now. So, I couldn't have done any of this without her. And I really love my mom.

Pat Ford: Excellent.

Victoria Adebajo: Go moms!

Andres Warren: I obviously want to shout out my family if you're watching this, as well. I love you guys. And also, I would like to shout out Dr. Pressgrove at my school. She is really intimate about having diversity included in my college because in our profession and my major at my school, it is mostly white kids and girls. And so, she really thought this would be important opportunity for someone of a color background to be attending something like this. So, thank you for the push on.

Focus Group Findings

Led by Dr. Kenon Brown, The University of Alabama, and Jose Rivera, La Sierra University, the 80-plus attendees were divided into two focus group to tackle these questions: How can practitioners specifically contribute to making D&I part of an organization's culture and strategic vision? How can educators help diversify the pipeline and PR curriculum? What specific efforts can students make to prepare themselves to be champions of D&I? The attendees reconvened to discuss the findings.

Kevin Saghy: The question about diversity inclusion, like a day before, and I watched this unfold. And as a really good reminder of like you go up to the people that look like you, and you're comfortable with, you're friendly with and you may know. We'd always live it out. And I think on the practitioner standpoint, we need to build a process for outreach that forces us to get into the communities.

Go to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and really put ourselves out there and make this outreach and make sure that students know that they feel welcome. I went up to those two students, and the conversation we had made me so sad because what came out, is that they didn't feel welcome.

In that breakfast, they said we don't know if we belong, we're the only two black guys in here, and here I am telling them like you guys don't understand. We sit in board rooms and we talk about recruiting you and how valued you are, and how we need you in our walls. And that message was not getting through to them. They felt like they didn't belong and they were about to jump ship.

So, how do we bridge that gap as professionals? To actually tell these students that, no, we need you and we want you.

Jose Rivera: Thank you for that.



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- Julia Hood: I want jump ... Sorry, so do I, actually, because and I think it came out this morning, too, with the young man who was asking about, we talk as seasoned professionals about these issues, but – and we were just talking about this too – are we talking about diversity and inclusion among students? Among all the students? And not just to the students who we're trying to recruit, but to all students as part of their professional training.
- Speaker 3: This is a problem in our industry that you need to be aware of as professionals, surely, pragmatically. If they're coming out of these universities not even understanding that this is an issue in this industry, then we have a problem.
- Speaker 3: They're talking about PRSA, so while I'm having sessions at PRSSA saying D&I is a major problem, and what are you going do to change that? That's what I was doing.
- Speaker 4: I was at the PRSSA, too, and I was with five students and we all noticed a group of students huddling, but not mingling or talking. My students were all Latinos that year. And they said, "Oh, we think they're Latinos." So, they went over there and started using their language and immediately they started, I saw them blossom and get engaged, and my students took care of them for the entire week, translating, because they really could not speak English very well.
- Speaker 4: That sort of evolved to blogging and communicating virtually, they're friends now and then one of ours was a liaison down to Peru for their first conference, Laurie Vasquez, and that's what it takes. They had to take the first step, though, because they just did not know how to break that overwhelming number of people that they didn't know. Yes, I agree, we have to facilitate that more than we are.
- Speaker 2: Great. Thank you so much. And it seems like our group two is coming in. Kenon, did you want wrap up or do you have any?
- Speaker 3: I think we're just going like share our thoughts from the breakout session that they have a couple groups, once they start kind of filing in, it's happening.
- Speaker 2: We covered practitioners, be intentional. Somebody had their hand up?
- Speaker 4: I was going to go to students.
- Speaker 2: That's where we're going that's yes, perfect.
- Speaker 4: I can never get this mic- ... you're amazing, Eric. Okay, I'm going to literally stay like this. My sentence I'm going to share, but it goes along with my story and it actually happened last night. Today, I'm the famous girl for teaching everyone the word "Ubuntu," which is the South African phrase for I am because you are.



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Speaker 4: And that's the whole idea behind mentorship is leading the way, so someone else can do the same, right? I look to my left, and right before I go on stage I look to my dean and I say, "Dean, I'm going to teach an African word tonight but I'm really scared that I might be too cultured right now." She was like, "What?" And she literally looks at me and says how dare you say that you going to be too cultured, and I'm like this is my idea thinking again, I just graduated six months ago, I'm kind of new to the industry so I'm like let me go in with ease.

Speaker 4: And she's like no, say it over and over until they get it. I was like cool. So, it goes with the student words which were communicate, uncomfortable and belong. Perfect for this story. So, my sentence that I came up with was, "If you communicate and convince yourself of your values first, then you reduce the risk of being uncomfortable in companies down the road."

Speaker 4: I think just my experience today, just completely being myself in whatever room I go into I'm making it easier for my journey instead of having to assimilate to something that I know nothing about. Coming in as you are, so that you don't have to be uncomfortable later.

Jose Rivera: Thank you so much. Any on the educator label? I guess I'll have to take that since I'm an educator. Quickly, as far as education or educators are concerned for my perspective I have taught at a Hispanic serving institution, minority-serving institution, my entire career.

And definitely being intentional about two things. What some of the panel speakers said today about getting your mind right, is something that I think is very important. Making sure that our people understand, students understand that they are who they are, whether they are at their home or at their workplace. I definitely think it's important that we teach them that. We continue to perpetuate that idea and that they continue to be that, be that person that's going to wake up in the morning and realize they are who they are and let's go to work and let's get things done.

Dr. Kenon Brown: As my group files in, I'm just going to share some of the thoughts that came up with in our breakout session. What we decided to do, initially, is before we started brainstorming just really coming up with a definition for what diversity and inclusion really means.

Because I always like to define a topic before you start coming up with ideas for it. Where we really landed was with diversity, diversity is really more about having a variety, having a set of different backgrounds, different cultures, whether it's race, whether it's gender, whether is region, whether is sexual orientation, disability, whatever, just having a diverse set of people at the table, having different perspectives at the table.



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But inclusion is really taking it a step further and making sure that their voice matters. And also making sure that they have the power to speak up. Really being able to share those perspectives and really be able to share those different ideas, that's really where inclusion comes into place.

One of the things we discussed is you can have diversity without inclusion, but you can't really have inclusion without diversity. You can have different perspectives at the table, but if they don't feel empowered enough to speak up, then you have diversity without inclusion.

We decided to really kind of define this and then we came up with action items for students, for practitioners and for educators. And they really just kind of centered around three themes. I wanted to share those, and I actually want to give one person from each group an opportunity to just share their thoughts with it.

The first theme for our action items is really to set their proactivity and just really approach diversity and inclusion from a more proactive approach rather than a more reactive approach. Rather than waiting for those opportunities for diversity and inclusion to fall in our laps, really going out and hitting them head-on and trying to produce that diversity and inclusion from the start.

The second thing was really from learning from each other. Whether it's research on best practices in diversity and inclusion, just talking to each other and learning each other's perspectives. It just really kind of revolved around the theme of just learning from each other, learning about our successes with diversity and inclusion, learning from our failures with diversity and inclusion and just really building better action items and better action plans through that process of learning from each other.

The third thing that everything centered around was this idea of making diversity and inclusion more natural. And the way you do that is really through education. Educating people about different cultures, different backgrounds and just really making it to the point where it's not a forced issue at that point. Diversity and inclusion is natural to a group, is natural to an organization, it's natural to a university and just sharing those perspectives and just really teaching people about the importance of diversity and inclusion to make it more natural as you progress.

I want to start with the practitioners. I'm looking, I'm looking, there we go, all right.

Rosa Nunez: Hello everyone again, let me go ahead and stand up. We, as practitioners, have the amazing task of taking this job and making it work, right, in our agencies. I have no words for that. But anyway, one of the ideas that we have, not ideas but the things that we discussed is that diversity and inclusion has to be intentional, top-of-mind, you have to be really intentional about recruitment, and inclusion, and opportunities and promotions.



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Because our industry is so many years behind, that if we don't do it like this, it's never going happen. We also talked about awareness. How do we have the difficult conversations, the things that are happening outside our doors that impact the way our employees show up to work every day. And not just classify as taboo.

If we don't talk about the things that are happening, we're never going to be able to solve it. And then we talked about just being purposeful, intentional and create awareness. Letting people know what's in your mind, what's happening and how can they help. Thank you.

Dr. Kenon Brown: Okay, I'm going to put Dr. Horsley on the spot. Can you share your perspective from the educators?

Dr. Suzanne Horsley: Sure. We did talk about the fact that all of us who were in the group, raise your hand, we all come from very different campuses, the first thing we noticed was that our student populations are all very different.

That was the one of the first things we thought about, was how can we, we going to have to do this on a case by case basis, but maybe we're going to have to reach out to similar institutions who have had some success so that we can learn from them and be able to implement it back where we are.

We also talked about being able to start earlier, high school, reach out earlier. Nobody goes to high school and says, "I want to be a PR practitioner when I grow up." Being able to inform them about what this major and field can do for them. Anybody else want to have something? Ken, did you want to add anything? Anybody? All right thank you.

Dr. Kenon Brown: I'm going to put one of my students on the spot, so Gloris is going to speak for students.

Gloris Trujillo: I knew it. Well, as the students our conclusions were to learn more about different experiences, like don't be afraid to be out of your comfort zone. I mean, I'm a Latino but that doesn't mean I can't hang out with different groups, like different religious groups, like races, groups.

Also, don't be afraid to educate yourself and educate other people about yourself, your background. Challenge yourself to be part of different groups, what I just mentioned. Also, we talk about healthy competition, we can compete with each other but also, we're a group so we have to help each other to success all together.

Like Gabby mentioned, your success is my success. Try to have that thinking. That's all.

Dr. Kenon Brown: Thank you.



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Keith Burton: We're at the end. And on time, too. But time doesn't really matter when you're doing great work. A few things that I wanted to mention to you today. One of my favorite lines this morning was, we need more PR for PR.

In this area, and I think our group talked about awareness and the importance of listening and also creating awareness, but we need to build more public relations for diversity and inclusion and what we're doing, whether we're on the academic front, or on the corporate front or on the agency front.

One of the things that Plank Center determined a few years ago when we formed our work diversity and inclusion is that there are some great groups out working in this area already. Judith Harrison as you heard mentioned here today on the PRSA foundation along with Ron Culp, as a member over there, has been working actively for a good period of time on the D&I issues.

The Arthur Page Society has been working actively on diversity and inclusion. The Institute for Public Relations has its own outreach in this area. And so, as a board, we determined our goal would not be to create a new program but rather for the Plank Center in Mentoring and Leadership to be a catalyst with others.

I think that's an important thing for us to do. Ken, you were a part of that conversation along with other advisors when we talked about that. It wasn't adding more bulk to what was already there, it was adding actually more value, as we did this work, and so to be an important part of our work.

I love Don Thompson's comments about his confidence level but also his thinking about who he is when he said, "My first barrier was my own mindset." I think that's such a key issue for all of us, and you've shown today that you can, as we think in groups, overcome the mindset that we may have about who we are, we have to do more in this area, and I think the word intentionality is such an important part of that as we think about our work.

Bring all of you to this business. How many days do we go into our work or class, or wherever we may go and we don't bring all of us to what we're doing in terms of our transparency, or conversations with others about who we are and what we expect.

That's a very important part of it and I think that's been one of the great things about today. Then finally, bring the best of who you are. Understand the culture and also understand the essence of who you are. Meaning, know yourself. Get a greater self-insight on who you are, and ask for others to help you do that.

I've been so impressed with the students and the young professionals in the way you approached this, we can all learn from you all on this. So I hope you've enjoyed this morning. Have you enjoyed it? Has it been a good part of-



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I want to thank a few people, first of all our host, DePaul is a wonderful host for the work we do year in, year out. Whether it is the work we do in advance to the Milestones and Mentoring dinner or events like this. The team at DePaul and Ron, in particular, have been such wonderful hosts, let's give him a big round of applause.

I also want to thank the members of our board who are here, who have spent time today as well as in our planning, to be part of this. We have a wonderful board that is very dedicated to doing the things that are important. And really around two key concepts that I want you to keep in mind. Mentoring and leadership. And you noticed last at the dinner, the dinners is never about programming, the dinner is never about tactics and delivering PR programs. The dinner is about the people behind those programs and what they do to motivate, inspire and lead other people. Such an important part of our work.

As we think about that, the future, obviously we want to do more in this area, we'll look to you to help us do more in this area. I do need and I want make this point for Karla and Jessika, we do need your feedback today.

If you filled out those forms, please send them forward. If you haven't, spend just a minute or two completing those forms because that will help us plan for the future. And based on what you tell us we will do more in this area.

Let me also thank a couple of other groups, you've met some of them today our D&I advisory group. Very important to our work you saw them on the panel and participating here with us, and in particular, most importantly, let me thank Dr. Nilanjana Barden as well as Pat Ford for the work they have done in organizing and putting together this outstanding event. Please give them a big round of applause.



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