

The Work Begins With Us

Moving diversity forward

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

⋮



Nadine Petty is UNH's new chief diversity officer and associate vice president for community, equity and diversity. She comes to us from the University of Iowa where she was the executive director of the Center for Diversity and Enrichment. Here she shares her thoughts on her new role with UNH Today.

What do you anticipate your first steps to be?

Context and information are important, so I am currently delving into reports, synthesizing data and meeting with campus community members to learn more about the current state of UNH regarding diversity and inclusion. It's critical to know the DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) highlights and gaps and to figure out existing pressure points. Collectively, this will inform future steps.

You implemented programming at the University of Iowa for underrepresented students – can you tell me about that?

Some examples include: 1) partnership with the Office of Graduate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (OGDEI) to establish a fund for grad student support, 2) partnership with (OGDEI) on "Grad School Jam Session" which involved a panel of graduate students from marginalized identities speaking candidly to undergraduate students with similar identities about the grad school process/experience from a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color) and LGBTQ+ lens, 3) partnership with Educational Testing Consultants to offer free online GRE prep courses and course materials to low-income students, 4) facilitated a guest lecturer/performer on Afro-Cuban jazz for Black History Month, 5) partnership with Division of Student Life to celebrate the one year anniversary of student advocacy/student leadership around DEI concerns on campus (cultural food, music, appreciations, etc.), 6) revised existing requirements of a racial/ethnic minority and first generation scholarship program to address issues of scholarship retention, equity and community connection.

Are those programs that would benefit the UNH community?

Perhaps. I have not been in my role long enough to tell, although I suspect a diversity scholarship for students (not specific to protected classes) might be a useful means of diversifying the student population.

In announcing your hiring, you said UNH “leadership appears ready and eager” to do the work needed to move diversity initiatives forward – can you speak to what that work would look like in tangible terms?

The President's Leadership Council met on Wednesday, Aug. 12 in an all-day retreat where we began to develop strategic initiatives to address main areas of campus DEI concerns.

I read that the Black population at UI is about 3 percent, with an Asian population of 4.5 percent. At UNH those numbers are about 1 percent and 2.5, respectively. Addressing racism on a campus that is predominately white comes with its own set of challenges; can you talk about those?

I would say addressing racism on any campus comes with its own set of challenges. Campuses with higher percentages of BIPOC students are not free from racism and often have higher instances of it. The difference is that on these campuses, students who are harmed by racism have a community where they can seek support, comfort and understanding. At a PWI (predominantly white institution), community building is incredibly important, but much harder to do.

Also, there is the difficulty of convincing constituents that resources and human capital should be allocated to initiatives that seemingly affect a small percentage of people, but DEI affects everyone. It's essential to our educational mission.

Excluding task forces, committees and such, what can UNH actively do to promote diversity?

Recruiting talented faculty, students and staff of color and ensuring there is a climate of support and an inclusive infrastructure are key. Universities do a better job of attracting diversity than they do retaining it, so building a climate that sustains diverse identities is important. The work begins with each of us as individuals. As members of the UNH community, we have to ask ourselves hard questions, be open to growth and development, and be willing to sit in discomfort during the process.

What do you see as your best asset?

I am strategic and action oriented. I'm also empathetic and come to UNH with a full bucket of grit.

- WRITTEN BY:
[Jody Record '95](#) | Communications and Public Affairs | jody.record@unh.edu

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



University of New Hampshire

UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.
The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).
Email us: unhtoday.editor@unh.edu.

[MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION](#) [CONTACT US](#)

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on YouTube

Follow us on Instagram

Find us on LinkIn

UNH Today RSS feeds

UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234

Copyright © 2022 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)

[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)