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DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

DEI work requires grace, empathy and an appetite for structural change

Striving for a diverse, equitable and inclusive society is hard work that can produce tangible results if you bring grace, humility and big thinking to the mix. Leaders at Cook Group, Indiana University and the IU McKinney School of Law discuss how their organizations have embraced change.

Q: Why should organizations care about DEI?

KAREN BRAVO: Organizations should focus on DEI for pragmatic and idealistic reasons. Pragmatically, demographic changes have brought a wider range of racial, ethnic and other backgrounds to Indiana and the nation. Organizations that do not value DEI will miss out on innovation and creativity and will

experience decline in their appeal to prospective employees and clients. A just society requires that we create equal opportunities, address systemic barriers to access and success, and recognize and reward achievement.

JAMES WIMBUSH: As one of the nation's leading research universities, IU values the multiple perspectives diversity adds to the learning environment and depends on diversity to achieve excellence in research and

innovation. Diversity is foundational to scholarly inquiry, and rigorous peer review leads to new discoveries. Thus, in teaching and research, diversity drives our success.

PETE YONKMAN: Cook is committed to removing barriers that prevent individuals and communities from reaching their full potential, including making sure opportunities are equitable for everyone. We firmly believe that DEI needs to be part of our day-to-day business and embedded in our culture and values, not just something we pay lip service to when acts of social injustice are publicized in the media. Like many organizations, we know our DEI efforts are a work in progress and we don't have it right just yet.

Q: What are you doing to keep DEI a front-burner issue in your organization?

PETE YONKMAN: Creating pathways and removing barriers is nothing new for us. For the past 30 years we've worked with Stone Belt, an organization that prepares, empowers, and supports people with developmental disabilities. Today, 75 Stone Belt employees manufacture components of medical devices for Cook.

Last year we announced a new manufacturing facility in an area of Indianapolis where manufacturing jobs have been disappearing for many years. Soon after, we heard from our neighbors that the area was a food desert. So, we partnered with two entrepreneurial organizations—Goodwill, and Central Indiana Community Foundation—to build a full-service grocery store called the Indy Fresh Market. Not only will the store provide jobs and future educational opportunities for residents, it will bring a much-needed food source to the community.

Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts must be integrated into our day-to-day business practices. It's not an afterthought or a separate program, but rather an authentic extension of who we are and how we do business.

KAREN BRAVO: We are consistently addressing the challenges of and providing messaging about the



JAMES C. WIMBUSH
Vice President for Diversity,
Equity, and Multicultural Affairs
Indiana University
jwimbush@iu.edu



PETE YONKMAN
President
Cook Medical and Cook Group
pete.yonkman@cookmedical.com

importance and role of DEI to the law school as we seek to fulfill our mission of service to the state of Indiana. A year-long DEI strategic planning process was undertaken by our school's diversity committee, which is composed of faculty, staff, and students, and led by our assistant dean of diversity and inclusion in partnership with professor and former Indiana Supreme Court Justice Frank Sullivan.

The events we host also help keep DEI at the forefront. A current example is the Sept. 10 commemoration of our alumnus, Mr. J.B. Stradford, a survivor of the Tulsa Race Massacre. Further, our commitment is displayed on our walls, thanks to the revamping of our art collection and the ongoing diversification of images displayed at the law school.

JAMES WIMBUSH: IU has dedicated leadership across the institution focused on keeping diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of the school's policies, practices, and structures. From student access to timely graduation and faculty and staff recruitment and retention practices to the procurement cycle, IU continuously assesses and removes barriers to create a deep sense of belonging for all community members.

Q: How does your organization facilitate open/safe discussion of DEI issues among employees/associates?

JAMES WIMBUSH: IU has multiple avenues to encourage open forums around diversity, equity, and inclusion at the university, campus, department, program, and student level. Surveys, reporting mechanisms, town halls, listening tours, and dedicated spaces offer community members the opportunity to share, learn, and grow. In addition, the university is in constant discussions

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with local, state, national, and international experts who bring their knowledge and experiences to IU campuses through symposiums, guest lectures, and speakers.

KAREN BRAVO: Patricia Kinney, our assistant dean of diversity and inclusion, in collaboration with the diversity committee and colleagues on campus, has spearheaded a variety of initiatives. These include listening and educational programming in which faculty, staff, and students are invited to participate. The programming encourages members of our community to hear about and understand the experiences of other members of the community, become acquainted with ways to discuss fraught topics, and to recognize that we are all works in progress. No one of us has all the answers, and each of us has fallen short and will continue to do so. The ability to both self-examine and to give grace—i.e., not to immediately assume ill intent—helps to foster constructive conversations.

Q: Please share some examples of successful DEI initiatives within your organization.

KAREN BRAVO: One example that springs to mind is the microaggression initiative led by members of the law school's Black Law Students Association. Dissemination of materials encapsulating their experiences with microaggressions provided educational and growth opportunities to our entire community. Another terrific example is an initiative we call Third Floor Thursdays. This initiative creates a safe space for students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in law schools to share and process experiences and address shared concerns. By communicating challenging and joyful experiences, students gain tools to help them more successfully navigate spaces that they [may] experience as hostile or unwelcoming.

JAMES WIMBUSH: Indiana University has been striving for decades for a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive learning environment for people from all backgrounds. This work includes, but is not limited to:

- Our Anti-Racist Agenda, which we use to review and assess IU's policies, procedures, and culture and ensure an open and supportive environment for everyone;
- The Pandemic Health Disparities Fund, which addresses health disparities among communities of color. Across five campuses, \$1 million has been distributed for mental health support services and to pay for pandemic-related emergency expenses, such as food, shelter, and internet service;
- Our Social Justice Research Fund supports the research necessary to achieve real and lasting racial justice in our community and across our state; the fund supports 31 start-up funding grants;

- The Health Resources and Services Administration grant, which helps the IU School of Medicine better educate medical students to care for underserved populations;
- IUPUI's new path to promotion and tenure. This enhances equity, inclusion, and diversity among faculty and aligns with the university's strategic goal of creating a more welcoming and inclusive place for all; and
- IU Bloomington's recruitment and hiring practices. The practices are producing significantly more diverse tenure-track faculty hires. The percentage of underrepresented minorities rose from 19.3% in 2019 to 39.9% in 2020.

PETE YONKMAN: One recent example of our efforts includes using a business need to expand our manufacturing capabilities. We decided that rather than adding those jobs to a community where we already have an existing footprint, we could use the business opportunity to partner with a community that could truly benefit from having the work. The community at 38th and Sheridan in Indianapolis has some of the highest levels of unemployment and poverty in the state and hasn't seen real opportunity in a long time.

Q: What should people know about the hard work that goes along with DEI efforts?

JAMES WIMBUSH: For most individuals, it is not a lack of caring or the absence of a desire to be better; instead, it is a lack of the historical knowledge needed to understand our society's structural racism and inequality. People want to learn. They are hungry for information when it comes to DEI efforts. Most people honestly want to move forward but often fear making a mistake. We have to bring back the notion of compassion and empathy as we continue to learn together.

PETE YONKMAN: Businesses don't fully understand the power they possess to make dramatic improvements in their communities. Now more than ever, people and communities are looking to businesses to be agents of social change. Every job opening, capital equipment investment, or new facility can impact a community that needs help. Philanthropy is great, but real opportunity is better.

With our project in Indianapolis, we wanted the construction site to reflect the community. So, we set a goal of 100 percent of the work to be performed by local, minority-owned businesses. When we announced this, we were told it was a nearly impossible task and that most projects could only reach a 15-25 percent level. By joining with partners who shared our goal, our construction partners are 97 percent minority-owned businesses, and 3 percent veteran- or woman-owned. Now that the goal has been

met, we're seeing more organizations strive for these previously unheard-of goals of diversity on a job site. Sometimes standards exist to be broken.

KAREN BRAVO: DEI initiatives call for us to examine ways in which organizational structures or practices are barriers to success for all members of our community. We have inherited a world constructed by our ancestors and predecessors and it is very easy to perceive our present reality as a just, necessary, and inevitable default.

But questioning learned assumptions and established practices is hard work. I have been surprised how hard it is. It is inherently difficult for an individual not to take things personally. As a result, they may not hear this message: "You are not being attacked. You are being asked to be open, to help identify and examine ways in which our organization may be inadvertently undermining our mission."

While I've been surprised at how much I did not (and do not) know, I'm encouraged by the depth and breadth of information and analysis being produced by researchers and scholars from a broad range of fields.

We can do this—we have the capacity, together, to make the world a better place, to leave a legacy of justice for our descendants.

Q: How do you measure the success of your efforts and hold yourself and your employees accountable?

PETE YONKMAN: We work hard to be active participants in our communities, to build a shared vision of success. Companies don't exist in a vacuum. We are part of a shared ecosystem and if one group is left behind, all of us will suffer. Over and over we hear our neighbors say they want their communities to have easy access to quality health care and education; food security, adequate infrastructure that supports a healthy lifestyle; safety and security for their families; jobs with potential for upward mobility; and safe, sanitary and affordable housing. If we can add our voice and resources to those of our neighbors to meet these objectives, then we will have achieved success.

KAREN BRAVO: Measuring "success" is a work in progress. It requires humility and going beyond numbers. We must first define success, and we have to define it differently across the continuum of time. Success tomorrow will not be the same as success two or 10 or 50 years from now.

If we were to measure numerically, we would matriculate and graduate classes that more closely reflect the changing demographics of the state

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A National Leader in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Indiana University is one of 15 institutions receiving INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine's prestigious 2020 Diversity Champion Award. Out of 5,000 colleges and universities across the country, IU is the only institution in the state of Indiana honored.

“As a recipient of the Diversity Champion Award, Indiana University truly stands out and sets the bar, serving as a model of excellence for other institutions.”

Holly Mendelson, Co-Publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine



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and the country. Our faculty and staff would be similarly reflective of those changes. Qualitatively, successes would be equally shared, and inquiry, acceptance, celebration of difference, and appreciation of the contributions of diverse contributors would be the norm.

JAMES WIMBUSH: Indiana University uses a number of tools to measure the efficacy of its DEI work. And IU campuses consistently receive the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award and Diversity Champion Award. IU was one of 15 universities in the country to be recognized in 2020.

Also, Campus Pride, a national non-profit network of student leaders and campus groups devoted to improving college life for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer students across the country, recognizes IU year after year as one of the top LGBTQ-friendly colleges.

Internally, we use many tools to measure our diversity, equity, and inclusion work. This includes our diversity assessment, which serves as a baseline measurement for IU in diversity achievement and progress over a five-year period for each campus. This strengthens our strategic planning efforts. We also distribute an annual report with data and metrics and conduct climate surveys that measure and assess strengths and weaknesses around diversity and

inclusion efforts for students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Finally, our annual reviews for employees and faculty include diversity, equity, and inclusion metrics.

Q: How can an organization impact DEI in its community beyond its work environment?

JAMES WIMBUSH: Leaders and employees of any organization must continuously ask the question: "Who is not at the table? Are we making decisions without a genuine understanding of the situation? Is there diversity in leadership? Who can bring about change if we are committed to diversity? Does the community feel comfortable here, and have we invited them in to be a true partner?"

One must cultivate community partnerships and form consortiums to discuss these issues in a sincere way. That includes coming to the table as equal partners to develop relevant and possible solutions.

PETE YONKMAN: Businesses have the opportunities, skills, and resources they need to support themselves and community—if they think creatively about how to use them. For example, if you have job openings, consider what barriers might exist for people to take advantage of that opportunity and think about how to remove them. Does someone really need a

four-year degree, or can you offer on-the-job training? Can you think differently about accepting applicants with criminal backgrounds? Can you consider a location that has a high poverty level and high unemployment?

The Indy Fresh Market was a follow-up to starting a medical device manufacturing facility. We never meant to get into the grocery business. We're partnering with other organizations to help address a need, by bringing our expertise, skills, and resources together to make a positive change.

KAREN BRAVO: We can do so by sharing our experiences—both the difficulties and the triumphs. We can demonstrate that we are all learning. Additionally, to impact DEI, organizations must provide leadership in the community by engaging in concrete activities. I am proud that the law school's extensive *pro bono*, clinical, and experiential programs have deep and broad impact in the Indianapolis, Indiana, and global communities.

Q: How do you respond to perceptions that DEI initiatives are discriminatory and divisive?

KAREN BRAVO: My response is that the removal of barriers and the creation of more just societies is the very essence of anti-discriminatory. Much depends on one's starting

point and perspective. Inherent in the perception that DEI initiatives are discriminatory is the belief that our current structures and reality are "natural" and just. Humility and inquiry, however, lead to a thirst to learn, to compare, to imagine different futures and pasts.

Fundamentally, DEI efforts ask us to imagine and build a future where all members of our society are viewed and treated equally and as deserving human beings, where the efforts of all are recognized and celebrated, where barriers to happiness and achievement are not created and reinforced due to unalterable characteristics such as one's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ableness or other attributes.

JAMES WIMBUSH: It's important to share stories, narratives, data, and history continuously. Beliefs will not change overnight. There are many cultural beliefs and values in our country regarding race, gender, etc. Understanding that change is personal is paramount because individuals believe they must give up something (beliefs, values, identity, etc.) to grow.

There are many ways of being. When this is understood, personal growth occurs, which sparks behaviors and attitudes toward embracing notions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. ●



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It's possible to do good business and do good in the community, too.

Pete Yonkman
President, Cook Group
and Cook Medical



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Karen E. Bravo was appointed Dean of the IU McKinney School of Law on July 1, 2020, and is the first person of color and second woman to lead the school. She is a well-known international law scholar and an expert in the study of human trafficking. Prior to joining the faculty in 2004, she practiced corporate law with international firms in New York and Massachusetts and worked on rule-of-law reform initiatives in the Republic of Armenia.



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James C. Wimbush is Indiana University's vice president for diversity, equity, and multicultural affairs; dean of The University Graduate School; and Johnson Chair for Diversity and Leadership. Under his guidance, IU has prioritized the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty, staff, and students and the timely graduation of students while maintaining a learning environment where people of all backgrounds can thrive.



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Pete Yonkman is president of Cook Medical and Cook Group and is actively involved in community issues, including adult education, substance use disorder, workforce development, fostering start-ups, and creating a business culture that supports entrepreneurs. He believes that industry has the potential to be the greatest agent of social change; its power just hasn't been realized yet.

Content paid for by Cook Medical, Indiana University, and IU McKinney School of Law.