



Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Transforming the Springfield College Community in Spirit, Mind, and Body

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Hello and Welcome!

New students, we are so glad that you are here—and returning students, welcome back! Members of the Student Affairs Diversity Task Force will be bringing you this monthly newsletter to keep you in the know about diversity initiatives on campus and in the community. In this issue, we will be hearing from the new vice president for student affairs, and learning about the SEAT at the Table Week events.

Meet Slandie Dieujuste, PhD, Vice President for Student Affairs



What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

Diversity is the recognition of our individual uniqueness, which includes our lived experiences. Inclusion puts the concept of diversity into action by creating an environment where we all can thrive. To paraphrase Steve L. Robbins, the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is not about numbers. It's about real lives that suffer from the pain of exclusion. To me, an inclusive environment enables us to show up authentically without fear of injury or victimization. It is one that values the experiences of the majority as well as the few.

What are your goals for the Division of Student Affairs in regards to diversity and inclusion?

I am still very much learning about the culture of Springfield College and student affairs. The Division of Inclusion and Community Engagement has not only done a good job leading the work of DEI, but they have empowered many across the institution to also

engage meaningfully in this work. We know that inclusion is not a natural occurrence of diversity but one that must be actively fostered. Part of this fostering of inclusion is a movement towards being more equity-minded. To me, one way of doing this is to consistently engage in a re-evaluation of structures that negatively impact us and our students and radically work towards dismantling those structures. One of my goals is to collaborate with my colleagues in a way that builds upon the good work we have done this past year to build structures that benefit us all.

A second goal is to work with the Student Affairs Diversity Task Force on various initiatives ranging from the reviewing of policies and protocols that can potentially adversely impact traditionally marginalized students to the development and implementation of a robust DEI training curriculum for staff and students.

I also would like to create opportunities that move us beyond the sharing of space to the sharing of intimacy. If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught us is the fragility of life and work and the importance of celebrating each other's humanity. My goal is to continue to foster an environment where staff and students feel seen and heard. I thrive in spaces that value people and their contributions and intentionally seek to create such an environment.

Can you give us some examples from your past experiences of how you have promoted diversity and inclusion?

I have actively engaged in DEI work at each of the institutions that I have served. I will share two recent successes from my last institution. I created a Multicultural Center that allowed us to better respond to the needs of BIPOC students while fostering a more inclusive environment for all students. I also served as the co-chair of the LGBTQIA+ Equity Team, and worked with my colleagues to implement a number of programs that supported and celebrated our LGBTQIA+ students. We worked with the national organization, Campus Pride, to conduct Safe Space and Train the Trainer training on campus. Soon thereafter, we launched a safe space training curriculum for faculty and staff that included three mediums of instructional delivery: face-to-face, remote learning, and self-paced. We also created a mentoring program and signature events that celebrated our LGBTQIA+ students. As a result of our successful advocacy for students, I was awarded the prestigious Marguerite Donovan Student Development Award and honored by the Student Government Association.

Brianna Kirk, assistant director for student activities and late night programs, contributed to this Q&A.

Take Another SEAT at the Table!



(S)ocial justice, (E)quity, (A)ccountability, (T)ransformation) (SEAT) at the Table

Week is a conference of educational experiences across media, pedagogies, and practices, dedicated to deconstructing oppressive systems and transforming our community toward equity for all. The conference is scheduled for Oct. 17 through Oct. 23, 2021. A SEAT at the Table Week is organized by a unified body of community members from multiple schools of thought and cultural backgrounds, who work collaboratively to share governance and responsibility of educating our community on topics related to social justice, identity, power, privilege, positionality, and radical community care.

I spoke with Felicia Lundquist, the director of Multicultural Affairs, about her work with Charisse DeVecchio to make this conference a reality once again. When asked what she would like attendees to take away from the conference, Lundquist responded with hope that those who attend will build authentic relationships and understand that the work done in each session is shared governance filled with empathy and perspective taking. Hopefully, through community awareness, the sessions will place power in marginalized voices.

Lundquist also hopes that presenters will gain opportunities from their sessions. From their efforts, she believes presenters will be able to share their gifts, improve communication skills, and learn from their audience with each session. In turn, students will be able to empathize with the idea that administrators are human and make mistakes in this work as well.

DeVecchio and Lundquist were chosen as the recipients for Advocacy Program of the Year Award for A SEAT at the Table and were recognized (virtually) at the National IMPACT Conference. This award recognizes a campus-based program which models student-led advocacy work which has in some way contributed to making their campus and communities a better place for everyone. They also presented a session called Take a SEAT (Social justice, Equity, Accountability, Transformation) at the Table at the 33rd Annual National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE 2021), which was recently held online this past May.

This was an opportunity for the team to spotlight Springfield College, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the Springfield College community at large for the continuous commitment to our mission to educate the whole person in spirit, mind, and body for leadership in service to others, along with learning, growing a culture of care that prioritizes safer spaces, access, diversity, equity, and inclusion, while simultaneously highlighting powerful and ongoing DEI initiatives taken as we offer insight to the intervention in the systems of oppression we face in our communities and institutions.

“Activism is a form of scholarship” Lundquist said. When questioned about those who may be hesitant to attend the conference, she suggested that even if someone is not “politically minded,” their identity is political. She invites everyone to get personal and prioritize taking an active role in cultivating change.

“Take the call to action! Register and show up. Come take a seat at the table with us!” Lundquist added.

Taylor Alston, community director for the Office of Housing and Residence Life, contributed to this article.

Student Affairs Diversity Task Force

Taylor Alston, Community Director; **Diana Curtis**, Graduate Assistant; **Charlene Elvers**, Director, Center for Service and Leadership; **Allison Gagne**, Assistant Director of Housing and Residence Life; **Nicole Gauthier**, Assistant Director of Career Advising, Student Outreach, Innovation, and Generation; **Brianna Kirk**, Assistant Director, Student Activities and Late Night Programming; **David McMahon**, Director, Spiritual Life; **Isaac Weitzman**, Assistant Director of Career Advising, Exploration, and Diversity Initiatives; and **Robert Yanez**, Director, Housing and Residence Life

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