



March 2009

Carmaletta Williams, Executive Director for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Carmaletta Williams

Johnson County Community College, cwilliam@jccc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarspace.jccc.edu/mvoc>

Recommended Citation

Williams, Carmaletta (2009) "Carmaletta Williams, Executive Director for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion," *Many Voices - One Community*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <http://scholarspace.jccc.edu/mvoc/vol1/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at ScholarSpace @ JCCC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Many Voices - One Community by an authorized administrator of ScholarSpace @ JCCC. For more information, please contact bbaile14@jccc.edu.

CARMALETTA WILLIAMS

Executive Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Welcome to a new day, time and era at Johnson County Community College. There is much that is new at this institution. Our president has only been on the job a little over one year. We have a new division of Learner Engagement. We are in the middle of a massive campus-

wide reorganization plan. The board of trustees has added several committees to enhance student learning because "Learning Still Comes First" at JCCC. And, in addition to all that, there is a very active Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

There have long been "diversity committees" on this campus. Each has looked and functioned a bit differently from the other. We have had committees with almost a hundred people and some with only five. We have had committees that facilitated workshops and training and programming and others that were more theoretical and informing. We even had a "diversity committee" with no people of color on it. I'm still shaking my head at that one. Who in the world thought that was a good idea? Through all these configurations one constant remained – a strong commitment to diversity issues.

Now the work, ideology, energy and goals of those earlier

diversity committees have been acknowledged, respected and formalized with the establishment of this new office – the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI). The good news (there is no bad news) is that there is a very active, campus-wide diversity committee. The open, active, and informing communications of this group through the Diversity Discussion listserv have been instrumental in framing the office and advising the ODEI of the needs, interests and desires of the campus. Much of the programming in place for the next two years has come from this group. We are a working team.

Also integral to the work of the ODEI are the Strategic Initiative committees which address campus diversity. We are building an infrastructure to collaborate, in particular, with the two committees addressing diversity issues – the Diversity Student Recruitment and Retention Committee and the Diversity Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention Committee. Together we are focused on the implementation of the goals set and the work accomplished by those committees. The Strategic Initiative for Diversity – Student Recruitment and Retention has been transferred to the ODEI, while the committee working on the Strategic Initiative for Diversity – Faculty Recruitment and Retention remains under Dr. Dana Grove. Two of the ODEI Diversity Fellows have primary responsibilities to create alliances with the Strategic Initiative committees, so that we won't be

replicating efforts. They will also work closely with Student Services in their efforts to expand and retain the diversity of our student population.

Diversity Fellows are imperative to the success of the mission and goals of JCCC (see the JCCC Web site for specifics) as well as the ones of the ODEI (see the Diversity Web site for specifics). Kami Day, Shaun Harris and Samira Hussein set the bar high as the first three to serve the campus in this capacity. They were instrumental in setting the tone for this office, as well as developing the mission, goal, and objectives of the ODEI. Our vision of what diversity means on this campus and in this community is clear and strong. As we prepared to define diversity in ways to explain the exciting goals and objectives for JCCC, we began with an understanding that the concept had a long and varied history. From this history we extracted a process for leading our campus to greater understanding, respect, and acceptance of all people. This means that to ensure the survival and very growth of our campus, we had to acknowledge first our many differences, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, political ideology, personal interests, cultural practices, and world views. Then we agreed that instead of homogenization, we should embrace and find the beauty in our differences. Easily, then, we came to see our mission as to create and

nurture a campus climate where all feel safe and welcome, where difference is valued and respected, and where students, staff, faculty, community members, and guests experience the richness of all aspects of campus life. The pursuit of equity, we agreed, was separate from but not unrelated to diversity. It lives more in the realm of justice. As a goal, equity intends to ensure fairness and impartiality. An essential function of ODEI is to advocate for those who feel they have been maligned or suffered the stings of differential treatment. By being an advocate for them, we work to eliminate the underlying causes of factors that diminish our ability to feel justly treated and respected. An outgrowth of diversity and equity, then, is inclusion. To be included is to be made to feel a legitimate part of the whole. The sense of being integrated into the institution, its *raison d'être*, is the heart of inclusion. It is this tripartite purpose, we agree, that undergirds and motivates this office.

A bright, new day surrounds JCCC and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We are excited about our part in helping to create a new era on this campus. All of us, particularly our students, will benefit from the changes that abound. We invite all of you to join us and be part of this magnificent journey to assure that ours is a safe, inclusive, and respectful community.

