



Milestone Highlights UOS's Dedication to Diversity

The UOS Diversity Council is entering its ninth year and is also enjoying the unique distinction of being the longest running diversity council at Harvard. Over the years, the group and its dedicated members have channeled UOS's diverse culture and fostered a greater sense of community and understanding.

The roots of the UOS Diversity Council stretch back to 1999. Then, Harvard President Neil Rudenstine wanted to ensure the University's large workforce reflected what was becoming a highly diverse student population. During the same time, Vice President for Administration Sally Zeckhauser was receiving feedback from various VPA departments suggesting more focus needed to be placed on diversity. "This was a situation where strong signals were coming from both the top down and the bottom up," said VPA Director of Special Projects Sue Shefte. When Mr. Rudenstine formally asked the University Vice Presidents to develop a strategy to embrace and promote diversity, Ms. Zeckhauser was ready to act. She organized a VPA-wide committee of about forty people to study the issue. It was from this committee that the various VPA departments, including UOS, formed their individual Diversity Councils.

The first meeting of the UOS Diversity Council took place in March of 2001 at the Harvard Faculty Club. Associate Vice President for Facilities and Environmental Services Tom Vautin challenged council members to build on the foundation laid by the VPA-wide committee and develop a comprehensive UOS plan. "UOS is



Members of the 2009 UOS Diversity Council.

an extremely diverse organization,” explained Tom. “Our employees come from all over the world, speak many different languages, have a wide-variety of backgrounds, and even work in highly diverse settings. Creating the UOS Diversity Council was a very important step in helping bring people together.”

Manager of Mail Services Betsy Shortell served on the original UOS Diversity Council and feels the group creates a

“UOS is committed to creating a work environment that is fully inclusive, and encourages cross-cultural understanding and acceptance”

social bridge for employees. “I like it because the council connects people from all levels of the organization, many of whom wouldn’t necessarily interact on a routine basis. Plus, there’s a great sense that the group really makes a difference.”

Throughout the last nine years, “the difference” Betsy speaks of has been clearly evident. There’s been diversity training for managers, employee outreach, and the newsletter that you’re reading right now was born from the Diversity Council. Also, the department barbeques, the annual Pot Luck Lunch, the Shadow Program, and the recent visit to Blackstone by the Family Van resulted from the council’s efforts.

Current member Paul Dedomenico of Administration & Finance was a bit skeptical when he first signed on last year, but he was pleasantly surprised by the council’s positive impact. “Many good things come out of the Diversity Council meetings,” said Paul. “I think the barbeques and other events really do create a sense of community even in an organization as large and decentralized as UOS which is a hard thing to do.”

Dozens of UOS employees have served on the council through two year terms. The group meets on the second Thursday of each month, and once a year gathers for a more intense weekend-long retreat. During these meetings, all members check their job titles at the door. “No matter what your job is here at UOS, when the Diversity Council meets, everyone is on a level playing field,” explained current member and EH&S Environmental Engineer Mohamed Omar. “This gives everyone the sense that their voice really matters and it ultimately creates a situation where the best ideas rise to the surface.”

This coming year will undoubtedly provide a new set of challenges for the Diversity Council. However the group will tackle them with dedication and a clear focus on creating a more inclusive work environment. In the end, their hard work will ultimately make UOS a better place for all.



The Diversity Council organized a visit by The Family Van which offers free health screenings



Throughout the summer each UOS department sponsors a barbeque where all UOS employees can mix and mingle

The Original Diversity Council

- ◆ Mary Maloley
- ◆ Jyoti Rana
- ◆ Betsy Shortell
- ◆ Charles Gordon
- ◆ Eileen Labao
- ◆ Fernando Iglesias
 - ◆ Joe Griffin
 - ◆ Jeffrey Smith
 - ◆ Tom Vautin
- ◆ Dayle Delancey
- ◆ George Cosgrove
 - ◆ Ron Morales
 - ◆ Susy Bunanta

For more information on the UOS Diversity Council please visit
[***www.uos.harvard.edu/diversity***](http://www.uos.harvard.edu/diversity)