

Building a Diverse Workforce: No Quick Fixes, but Perseverance and a Comprehensive Plan Can Yield Results

By Janet Clifford and Thomas J. Lynch, Jr.

Everyone associated with American healthcare and higher education understands the importance of enhancing institutional diversity. Thankfully, we have discarded the old “one size fits all” approach to health and education delivery and have replaced it with an understanding that powerful cultural forces affect our constituents’ ability to use our services.

To be truly effective, however, there must be a commitment to diversity in all operational areas, including recruitment. An excellent cover story in the January 2002 edition of *HealthLeaders* addresses this very issue by saying, “As the country’s demographics change, there is a pressing need for a healthcare workforce and executive talent pool to better mirror the communities being

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different angles. To facilitate an exchange of ideas and foster discussion, we are pleased to spotlight innovative diversity recruitment programs developed by three of our clients.

Wishard Memorial Hospital: A Multifaceted Program Encompasses Succession Management and Mentorship

Located in Indianapolis, Wishard Memorial Hospital is a 260-bed teaching facility affiliated with Indiana University School of Medicine and is rated as one of the Top 100 Performing Hospitals in the nation. In the past few years, Wishard has launched a number of diversity efforts, including those designed to boost workforce diversity.

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Janet Clifford



Thomas J. Lynch, Jr.

At Phillips, DiPisa & Associates, we are receiving more and more requests to partner with clients as they strive to achieve workforce diversity. Frequently, we are assigned to recruit senior- and middle-management level diversity candidates to enhance the organiza-

To meet the needs of the city's growing Hispanic population, the Hospital has launched The Hispanic Health Project. This program addresses critical health challenges for this population through initiatives in pre-natal care, smoking cessation, family planning, and STD prevention and education. In addition, the Hospital is teaching providers Spanish to break down language barriers and improve access to its services.

In addition to its access to care initiatives, the Hospital has become more aggressive in utilizing recruitment vehicles to achieve workforce diversity. According to Jan Lawrence-Stofer, Executive Vice President of Human Resources, Wishard secures recruiters to find multicultural candidates for executive-level positions and uses targeted advertising and associations to identify greater numbers of diversity workers across the board. At present, the Hospital is evaluating a plan to begin international recruitment. Lawrence-Stofer says, "Of course, this is complicated, and there are downsides – licensing can take months, housing issues are important, and cultural training is necessary – but such an effort could have tremendous potential."

Wishard has placed a heavy emphasis on training programs for diversity employees. The Hospital recently implemented a Career Center, which serves as a career development service "without walls." While open to all employees, helping minority staff develop advancement skills is a key objective. The entire HR staff has been trained to work with participants on career development, and as part of the program, a number of educational offerings have been launched, including a very popular "Lunch and Learn" series.

In addition, Wishard will soon be using succession management criteria to help identify and develop high potential multicultural employees. Stofer developed this program herself using experience she gained working in corporate settings but says this type of program can easily be initiated by using succession management criteria found in popular HR computer software packages.

Wishard has also implemented a mentorship program for diversity employees. While newly established, the program has 24 participants who are mentored by professionals at a level above them. Stofer says the Hospital's senior management has been very receptive of the effort and that half of the vice presidents are now serving as mentors. Her advice to other organizations interested in starting their own mentorship programs: "Develop a plan and realize this as a long-term effort. Also, make sure there is a dedication to the program at the highest level of the organization; these types of initiatives take a lot of work and a strong administrative commitment."

Boston Medical Center: Lessons from the Corporate World and Benchmarking Can Enhance Diversity

Boston Medical Center (BMC) is one of Boston's largest and most well-respected healthcare facilities. Formed six years ago through the merger of Boston City Hospital with Boston University Medical Center, the institution has over 500 beds and maintains a strong affiliation with the Boston University School of Medicine. Serving the city's most vulnerable and most diverse populations, BMC is constantly developing ways to better meet the needs of its culturally diverse patient base.

On the clinical end, BMC offers an astonishing array of services to help patients access medical care, includ-



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ing an interpreter services program with more than 40 staff that provides on-site translations in 17 languages. BMC’s diversity initiatives also include Birth Sisters, an innovative program matching pregnant women with supportive women from the community who guide new-mothers through the birthing process. Patricia Webb, Vice President of Human Resources at BMC, believes a planned, consistent effort is critical for any diversity recruitment initiative and that a successful plan will not revolve around quotas. “We deal with a diverse population of patients, and our workforce needs to be reflective of that,” she says. “But, it’s not about obtaining this percent or that percent; we simply want to mirror our patient population...”

However, numbers are vitally important in evaluating the overall success of the program. An important goal for the Hospital is to raise the rate of diversity applicants to 25 percent across the board. Says Webb, “Each month we receive about 1,200 applications, and among these are many from diversity candidates who are seeking front-line service positions. But our diversity initiative applies to all levels within the organization – managerial and executive as well.”

In recruiting diversity candidates, Webb says the Medical Center utilizes a variety of strategies, including contracts with recruiting firms, relationships with professional associations (the National Black MBA Association and National Association of Health Services Executives, for instance), and outreach.

She says, “A lot of organizations say they can’t secure diversity management candidates, and that’s because

the traditional recruitment activities may not identify them. I recommend broadening the geographic scope of the recruitment effort and utilizing intensive outreach activities. These activities include working closely with select colleges and community organizations on a regular basis, years before you have a vacancy. When a job does become available, you have the contacts who can help you.”

In the area of college recruitment, BMC does not restrict its activities to the Boston area or even Massachusetts. Like many major corporations, BMC attends recruitment fairs throughout the country, placing particular emphasis on events in areas where there is a higher concentration of diversity candidates (such as Washington, DC, Virginia, and Florida). In addition, Webb makes an effort to accept speaking engagements at colleges in different regions to help spread the word about opportunities at BMC.

To groom multicultural candidates for future positions, the Hospital recently started two on-site training

programs. One is an internship program that allows college students to gain experience in administrative areas of the Hospital. Another is the Administrative Fellows Program, which provides new graduates of MBA, MHA, or other healthcare programs with an opportunity to gain critical work experience.

Like Jan Lawrence-Stofer of Wishard, Webb says starting a workforce diversity program takes organizational commitment and planning. She notes, “Before you start, you have to know exactly what you want to accomplish. Once you’ve determined your goals, it is also very important to figure out how to quantify your results, so they can be evaluated from year to year.” Above all, it is important to be patient. She says, “If your goal is to increase the number of diversity employees, you need to keep in mind that it will not happen overnight. This is an ongoing process, and your organization must commit to the continuing importance of the endeavor.”

Boston College: Workforce Diversity Through Outreach and An Innovative Employee Training Program

A prestigious, highly selective college located in a Boston suburb, Boston College (BC) is internationally known for its strong academic programs and its Catholic traditions. Boston College has also received widespread recognition for its commitment to diversity, a comprehensive initiative designed to achieve multicultural representation within its student body, academic programs, and workforce.

Robert J. Lewis, the College's Associate Vice President for Human Resources, believes workforce diversity is a critical component of the overall diversity effort. He says, "We believe our workforce must reflect the student population. ...Recruiting multicultural candidates is challenging, and sometimes the search has to be a little broader or take a little longer; but at the end of the day, it's worth it."

In addition to the familiar recruitment techniques (advertising in appropriate publications, contacting associations, and utilizing recruiters), BC places a strong emphasis on outreach. Lewis says, "Human resources asks managers to go out into the community and establish contacts and networks before positions become open.

In addition, we regularly hold diversity career forums on campus as a way for minority candidates to meet senior-level BC people. Advertised heavily throughout the community, these forums are quite successful; they normally draw 150 attendees and result in three to five hires a year."

Lewis emphasizes the importance of drawing on BC's existing employee pool as another way of achieving diversity. A couple of years ago, the College launched an innovative program to help multicultural employees enrich their professional skills and increase their

While the program is relatively new, Lewis says there have been several employees who have used their newly developed skills to secure better positions. He says, "People are not promoted because they went through this program, but the system gives them the opportunity to gain the skills they need to succeed at higher levels of the organization."

potential for upward mobility. Open to incumbent employees of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American descent, the University Affiliates Program provides accepted participants with mentors from the College's senior staff, monthly leadership seminars, and opportunities to meet with the College's business professors. To be eligible, an employee must submit a resume, an essay, and a written recommendation from his/her department's Vice President. A committee comprised of professionals from the BC community then reviews applications.

A note: In response to numerous client requests, we've significantly expanded the scope of our organization development programs. Our affiliated organization development experts are now available to help Phillips DiPisa clients with Employer of Choice initiatives, as well as other critical and sensitive internal issues (enhancing morale/productivity, reducing turnover/agency use, grooming staff for management positions, building trust after mergers/resignations, and addressing the needs of a multicultural workforce). For more information, contact Dan Phillips or Ralph DiPisa at (781) 740-9699.

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Phillips, DiPisa & Associates

62 Derby Street, Hingham, MA 02043

Phone: 781-740-9699

Fax: 781-740-9064

PhillipsDiPisa.com