ABOUT US

Dr. George Fair
Vice President for Diversity & Community Engagement
Dean, School of Interdisciplinary Studies

OUR MISSION

The Office of Diversity and Community Engagement strives to accomplish the fulfillment of the UT Dallas commitment to embrace, enhance and celebrate diversity at all levels of the University and our community through the efforts of faculty, staff, students, the executive leadership and community partnerships. UT Dallas aspires to be a leader in promoting diversity to reach the highest levels of excellence.

Arthur Gregg
Assistant VP for Multicultural Affairs
Director Multicultural Center

Contact Us

The Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, The University of Texas at Dallas, 800 W. Campbell Road, AD26, Richardson, TX 75080

Physical Location:
Administration Building
AD 3.207
Phone: (972) 883-4566
Fax: (972) 883-4565

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This year, the UT Dallas Department of Community Engagement celebrates its 10th year of operation. The office was created in 2008 as part of the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, and was established with the goal of strengthening the University’s connection to historically underrepresented communities in North Texas. Since then, the Department of Community Engagement has hosted hundreds of college access programs, reaching thousands of first generation and low-socioeconomic students and their parents.

The department launched several initiatives that have supported the University’s strategic priority to increase student diversity. In 2009, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board awarded the department a Work Study Mentorship Grant to hire UT Dallas undergraduate students to mentor high school students from Dallas and surrounding school districts. The student mentors help their mentees with completing admissions and financial aid applications, searching for scholarships, and finding the right college. Last academic year, the mentors assisted the 1,797 mentees to complete 423 admissions applications and nearly 294 financial aid applications.

The Diversity Scholars Program was established in fall 2010 to serve students with a record of academic excellence and financial need. The students receive a $5,000 scholarship that is renewable for up to four years of study at UT Dallas. The scholars also commit to participate in a student success program that includes monthly academic check-ins with a scholarship advisor, and programs and workshops to help students develop their leadership, cultural competence, and professional skills. The program has supported 213 students. In spring 2018, the 80 current scholarship recipients had a cumulative grade point average of 3.40.

These are only a handful of the initiatives the Department of Community Engagement has contributed to the impressive and evolving story of our University. There is still much work to be done and many opportunities to impact the lives of promising students in Texas.

The department will be hosting a 10-year anniversary reception on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the UT Dallas Jindal School of Management Executive Dining Room. For more information or to RSVP, contact the Department of Community Engagement at (972) 883-4546 or community@utdallas.edu.
National Coming Out Day 2018

Every year on National Coming Out Day, we celebrate coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBT+). This year was the 30th anniversary of National Coming Out Day!

Thirty years ago, on the anniversary of the second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, we first observed National Coming Out Day as a reminder that one of our most basic tools is the power of coming out. One out of every two Americans has someone close to them who is gay or lesbian. For transgender people, that number is only one in 10.

Coming out — whether it is as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer — STILL MATTERS. When people know someone who is LGBT+, they are far more likely to support equality under the law.

Beyond that, our stories can be powerful to each other.

GGC Book Club

The Galerstein Gender Center has hosted and facilitated its monthly book club, open to students, staff, and faculty. The 2018-2019 pick, Ijeoma Oluo’s “So You Want to Talk about Race,” offers a contemporary, accessible take on the racial landscape in America, addressing head-on such issues as privilege, police brutality, intersectionality, micro-aggressions, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the “N” word.

The GGC Book Club was kicked off in September 2018 with a meet and greet event that allowed the Student Book Club and the Staff & Faculty Book Club to get to know one another over some light refreshments. Subsequent book club meetings focused on various chapters of the book, and led to fascinating conversations that have further connected book club members to one another and their understanding of race, privilege and oppression, and identities they themselves hold. The 2018-2019 GGC Book Club will wrap up in March of 2019.
MEET KLARISSA

Meet Klarissa, the Newest Team Member of the Multicultural Center!

In fall 2018, the Multicultural Center team gained a new teammate in Klarissa Perez. Serving as the coordinator of Diversity Education, she hit the ground running during her first two weeks, presenting multiple Diversity 101 presentations to freshmen students in their first-year seminar courses. By teaching UTD students about diversity through classroom trainings, workshops and cultural events, Klarissa believes her dreams are becoming reality.

“I aspire to be the representation I wish I had in my undergraduate years. One of the absolute best ways to help [others] overcome challenges is by sharing personal experiences. As a first-generation, Hispanic female, I felt like the pressure of being successful was overwhelming, and not knowing how to be that was nerve-wracking. I strive to be what I needed when I was a student, for our students. I desire to help students feel they are a part of their campus, as well as diverse individuals.”

Recently, Klarissa participated in the first, First-Generation College Student Day celebration held by the Multicultural Center, November 8, 2018. This date marked the 53rd anniversary of the signing of the 1965 Higher Education Act, which has helped millions of low-income students become the first members of their families to earn college degrees. The Multicultural Center invited students, staff and faculty who identified as “first-Gen” to share their stories and tips on how to navigate college life via its social media channels.

This fall, Klarissa will be completing her master’s degree, adding another milestone to her first-generation journey. The Multicultural Center looks forward to the amazing work she will continue for students of UT Dallas.
“Although there’s nothing ‘mad dog’ about him,” Laguna said of his beloved canine companion.

Mattis, now 8, has been a service dog for UT Dallas student and Marine Corps veteran Carlos Laguna since he was a puppy. Mattis was specially trained to interact with his owner—licking his face, whining or even tapping him with a paw—whenever Laguna had a nightmare or became anxious.

“He gives me a check to remind me that I have a decision to make. He helps pinpoint my anxiety. He knows when to intervene,” Laguna said.

Laguna shared his experiences during a Service Animals and Veterans panel Nov. 14 at UT Dallas. The panel featured dog trainers from nonprofit organizations that provide veterans with service dogs, and representatives from the UT Dallas Military and Veteran Center (MVC) and the Office of Student AccessAbility.

The MVC and the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement sponsored the event.

When Carlos Laguna, a senior in the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication, was medically separated from the Marine Corps after serving with Operation Iraqi Freedom, he continued to experience debilitating flashbacks, blackouts and anxiety.

Those symptoms eased when he connected with 8-month-old German boxer service dog Mattis, named after Laguna’s former commander in Iraq, now U.S. Secretary of Defense Gen. James [Mad Dog] Mattis.

Panelists explained that service dogs are not the same as emotional support animals, which are considered merely therapeutic. Service dogs are trained to do specific tasks, such as picking up things or turning lights on and off, to mitigate their person’s particular handicap. Because they perform essential tasks, they often wear vests indicating that they are service animals.

Volunteers with Canine Companions for Independence and K9’s for Freedom & Independence brought service dogs-in-training and shared proper etiquette for approaching a dog on duty.

• You don’t have to ignore or avoid eye contact with a service dog.
• If you want to pet a service dog, always ask the handler—then respect their answer. Some don’t mind when people pet their dogs; others prefer their dogs not be touched.
• Do not engage in “drive-by petting” as you walk past a service dog.
• If it’s a guide dog whose handler is using its harness, consider it to be working, and avoid contact so you don’t distract the dog.

“Think about it. You don’t pet a wheelchair, so don’t pet my service animal when he’s working,” said Kerry Tate, director of the Office of Student AccessAbility.

Panelists explain how service animals assist military veterans. From left are: Lisa Adams of the Military and Veteran Center; Janeen Baggette, founder of K9’s for Freedom & Independence; student veteran Carlos Laguna; Kerry Tate, director of the Office of Student AccessAbility; and Maria Bruno, training manager of Canine Companions for Independence.

Mattis, now 8 and sporting a gray muzzle, wears a vest that was specially tailored for him from one of Laguna’s old military shirts. He accompanies Laguna everywhere, even to classes at UT Dallas. Thanks to Mattis’ faithful attention, Laguna said he hasn’t had any flashbacks or blackouts in several years, and he’s learned to recognize his stress triggers. “Mattis has really helped control my anxiety levels. He’s even helped me learn patience because he would shut down if I got irritated,” Laguna said. “Mattis chose me, I always say. He came up to me and put his head on my lap. He hadn’t done that with anyone else. The trainer told me, ‘I guess you’re stuck with him.’”

—Robin Russell
“I am currently a senior political science major, and I am a cross country student-athlete for the University. Diversity and inclusion are very important to me and hit home at a very personal level. For my career goals, I see myself taking one of two tracks after law school; I would either become a lawyer and work towards more inclusion and tolerance, or I see myself working in public policy. For the former, this could mean becoming a civil rights attorney or an immigration lawyer, and for the latter this means I would become a politician or be an aid to a politician because much of the change that happens in our world comes from government.”

“I am a senior biochemistry major and psychology minor in the UTD graduating class of 2019. I have been involved with the SDAC since spring of my freshmen year, and have been lucky to be a part of a driven discussion and take action to further diversity on campus and across the nation. Besides the SDAC, I am involved in research on campus and service-based organizational work, primarily with UNICEF at UTD. I love participating in on-campus events and have greatly enjoyed the experiences UTD has offered me. I look forward to wrapping up my senior year with the SDAC. Besides schoolwork, I spend most of my free time with my family and friends and enjoy reading, napping, and doing mehndi (henna).”
STUDENT DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

“| Viktor Vasilev |
---|---|
**Secretary** |

“I am a pre-med student at UTD majoring in biology. As a sophomore, I am not only involved in SDAC but am also a member of Delta Tau Delta Fraternity. In my free time, I enjoy working out, spending time with friends and volunteering. My interests outside of college include football, kayaking and watching TV crime shows.”

| Nicole Peters |
---|---|
**Historian/Marketing Chair** |

“I am a speech pathology and child learning development double major in the graduating class of 2021. I am part of the UTD softball team, a Residential Life peer advisor, and a member of NSSLHA. I’ve really enjoyed being a part of SDAC and helping make a difference here at UTD. My other hobbies include: hanging out with friends, playing sports and spending time with my family and pets at home in Allen.”

**Purpose**

The purpose of the advisory council is to provide the students’ perspective, input and advice to the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement. The council addresses the elements of student diversity, concerns, activities and programs to increase awareness and understanding of each other, and to move beyond simple tolerance to embrace and celebrate the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

**Goals**

- To provide student perspectives on key school issues
- To highlight major institutional diversity achievements and concerns at UT Dallas
- To support new diversity programs, initiatives, and projects
- To improve public perception of diversity at UT Dallas
- To create effective communication with the multiple campus organizations at UT Dallas

**Visit www.utd.edu/diversity/partners/sdac/ for more information**
ERG Signing Day is an annual event sponsored by the Department of Diversity and Community Engagement. The mission of ERGs is to create value by attracting, developing and retaining faculty, staff and students from diverse demographic groups while providing educational awareness, professional development, and enrichment to the UT Dallas culture. ERGs are great resources and provide opportunities for the next generation of leaders.

The event was hosted at the UT Dallas Activity Center and drew faculty and staff from a variety of departments. Over 200 people attended, and ERGs collectively registered over 130. There is an ERG for everyone. Signing Day is just one of the University’s many efforts of building and fortifying an inclusive campus culture.
EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

We saw an increase of 20% in ERG registration, primarily for UT Dallas Women ERG and UT Dallas Young Professionals. The event also saw great support from vendors such as: Logotricity, BB&T, UPS, Arias Geoprocessionals and UTD TechStore. UT Dallas ERGSs count 286 of the campus community among their members and hope to count more in the future.

Hot dogs, chips and beverages were served.

410 Line Dancers and Radio UTD provided the entertainment for attendees.
The Multicultural Center
800 W. Campbell Road
Richardson, TX 75080
Student Services Building, SSB 2.400
Phone: 972-883-6390
Fax: 972-883-6101
www.utdallas.edu/multicultural/

Galerstein Gender Center
800 W. Campbell Road
Richardson, TX 75080
Student Services Building, SSB 4.300
Phone: 972-883-6555
Fax: 972-883-6558
www.utdallas.edu/gendercenter/

Institutional Diversity Initiatives
800 W. Campbell Road
Richardson, TX 75080
Administration Building, AD 3.207
Phone: (972) 883-4560
Fax: (972) 883-4565
www.utdallas.edu/diversity

Community Engagement
800 W. Campbell Road
Richardson, TX 75080
Hoblitzelle Hall, HH 2.406
Phone: (972) 883-4546
Fax: (972) 883-2440
www.utdallas.edu/community/

For more information contact Rosie Peterson at rpeterson@utdallas.edu
The University of Texas at Dallas is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action University. Individuals who need special accommodations to attend, please call The Office of Diversity and Community Engagement at 972-883-4566. Texas Relay Operation: 1-800-RELAYTX.
Save the Date

THE 10TH ANNUAL
DIVERSITY AWARDS
CEREMONY AND SOIRÉE

April 18, 2019
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
The Davidson-Gundy Alumni Center