To the KSU Community,

I want to take this time to offer my sincere gratitude for your support and well wishes as I begin my official tenure as Kennesaw State University’s Vice President & Chief Diversity Officer. Many have asked me, “What’s next?”

As we continue to grow, my top priority for the campus is for us to create an inclusive environment where each student, staff, and faculty member feels an authentic sense of belonging; where there is true excitement about the opportunities for individual and collective success. This goal requires all of us to work together as fellow Owls; each of us doing our part to create a strong community where no one is excluded. There is much work to be done, so I hope you'll join me in ensuring KSU is a campus that feels like home.

This month, I am particularly excited and proud to celebrate Black History Month with the campus. Black history is my history. It is personal to me. Without the heroes that have shaped African American history in this country, and across the diaspora, I would not be where I am today. During this month especially, I honor those who came before me and blazed a trail.

Yours in Service,

Sonia J. Toson
Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer

1. Recognizing and honoring Black History Month
2. The Blueprint: #BacktoBlack Recap
3. Student Diversity Trainings Kick Off at KSU
4. Staff and Student Highlights
5. Leader Lines & More!
Black History Month is an important time to recognize and celebrate the achievements, struggles, and contributions of African Americans throughout history.

Black History Month began in 1976 as a way to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of African Americans and their contributions to the history of the United States. It was originally established as a week-long celebration in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, an African American historian and founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). The celebration was officially declared a month-long event in 1976, and has been observed every February since.

According to the ASALH, the 2023 Black History month theme is Black Resistance, which acknowledges the efforts, contributions, and accolades of African Americans in economic success, education, faith, entertainment, medicine, and politics despite the "historic and ongoing oppression, in all forms, especially the racial terrorism of lynching, racial pogroms, and police killings since our arrival upon these shores."

One of the best ways to celebrate this month is to learn more about African American history and culture. You can also read books, listen to podcasts, recognize and support African American leaders, artists, and entrepreneurs who are making a difference in your community, and use your voice to speak out against racism and injustice.

During this month, we honor the African American heroes and sheroes who have made a difference in our world by honoring the past, looking forward, and working towards creating a more equitable and just society for all.

To read more about this year's theme and previous ones, please visit, ASALH.org.
Kennesaw State University President Kathy Schwaig has named Sonia Toson as Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), following a nationwide search. “Sonia has been a champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion at KSU for more than a decade, working collaboratively across our campus with students, faculty and staff,” says President Schwaig. “I look forward to partnering with her to further our mission of building a stronger community.”

Dr. Sonia Toson, who has served as KSU’s Interim Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) since August 2021, and officially assumed the position on Feb. 15th, 2023. On the position of CDO, Toson said, “I am excited to serve KSU, my home for the past 14 years, in this impactful role,” Toson said. “Advancing equity, inclusion, and an authentic sense of belonging across our campus is a privilege and honor.”

You can read more about Dr. Sonia Toson and her role as Chief Diversity Officer, here.

On Friday, Feb. 17, the Black Musicians Coalition hosted The Blueprint: #BacktoBlack, an evening dedicated to Black History Month through music and artistry, including choral, jazz, orchestra, gospel, and even an interdisciplinary performance.

The Black Musicians Coalition out of the Bailey School of Music, is a student organization whose mission is to positively influence the experiences of Black students at KSU’s School of Music. Formally recognized last year, the Coalition has won numerous awards, including Student Group of the Year, and the Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion Award from the Division of Student Affairs in the student group category. “We created this interdisciplinary production to invite all Black creatives to create and share their brilliant ideas with the world,” says President Sydnee Goode. She added, “it’s important that Black musicians have a safe space to just...be.”

Harrison Long, Interim Dean of the College of the Arts, says, “We are so proud of Sydnee and all the student leaders of the Black Musicians Coalition. ‘The Blueprint’ is a wonderful, collaborative celebration of Black History Month that engages students from across our College and KSU.”

The Blueprint kicked off the Bailey School of Music’s Black History Month festival entitled, ‘Moving Forward Together.’ Tyrone Jackson, the faculty advisor for the Black Musicians Coalition and a music professor at KSU, explains that “we are all on this journey together. The things that happened in the past—for example, slavery—and the collision between the two cultures produced the music of the blues, which led to jazz and R&B, and then rock music. That’s the music that came out of suffering, the music that we export to the globe.”

Read more about the Black Musician Coalition and the Blueprint here.

DDIE Welcomes Sonia Toson as Chief Diversity Officer

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You can read more about Dr. Sonia Toson and her role as Chief Diversity Officer, here.
This month we are proud to highlight one of our former students Vanessa Sunar. Vanessa was an Achieve Atlanta Scholar and an active participant in the KSU community. Serving as a member of International Peer Leaders, Vanessa was also Vice President of Membership for Women in Technology, a Peer Mentor for AILS, and the Engagement Coordinator for Phi Eta Sigma Honors Society. During her undergraduate career, Vanessa continuously thrived in the classroom. Majoring in Information Technology with Data Analytics Concentration, she competed and received 3rd Place in Undergraduate Category for the Fall 2022 Analytics Day. Upon graduating Summa Cum Laude in Fall 2022, Vanessa pursued an internship as an Analytics intern in Spring 2023. Following the internship, she will start her position as an Application Developer.

The Diversity Ambassador Program serves to expand the reach of the Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence. Through their commitment, DAP Students provide a unique experience for students who wish to take an active role in creating an inclusive culture and community at Kennesaw State University and beyond.

We believe that this training will create a more positive and welcoming atmosphere for everyone at KSU. If you or your student organization is interested in hosting a training, be sure to visit our website or contact Ellori White at ewhit117@kennesaw.edu.

This Spring, the Diversity Ambassador Program (DAP) kicked off its new peer-to-peer training to promote diversity and inclusion in the Kennesaw State community.

The training, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Basics, focuses on fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels accepted and respected regardless of their differences.

Working with other student leaders such as Resident Assistants, Strategic Outreach and Diversity Initiatives Peer Leaders, and Orientation Leaders, DAP students train their peers through engaging activities on key terms, social identities, and intersectionality that will help them gain awareness on how to navigate with other students from different backgrounds and cultures. They’ll also develop skills for hosting inclusive programming.

VANESSA SUNAR

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Identify definitions and applications of key terms in connection with diversity, equity, and inclusion

Analyze the ways our personal identities and views can impact our responses to cultural ideologies and perspectives

Test and apply understanding of definitions through engaging activities and scenarios

Receive tools and resources to promote an inclusive environment

For more information, contact,
Ellori White, @ewhit117@kennesaw.edu
STUDENTS!!

DO YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR DIVERSITY?

LOOKING TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE KSU?

WANT TO LEARN ABOUT DEI?

JOIN THE
Diversity Ambassador Program

GAIN SKILLS
MAKE A DIFFERENCE
GET INVOLVED
FOSTER COMMUNITY

APPLY HERE!

For Questions contact Ellori White
Email: ewhit117@kennesaw.edu
BEING REACTIVE INSTEAD OF PROACTIVE IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Moving from a reactive to proactive stance is one of the most difficult challenges of life on the tenure-track. As a new faculty member, you might be sitting in your office, waiting for the welcome wagon to arrive and indignant when an entire semester has gone by without a single invitation to lunch or coffee. This is why we recommend that you experiment with the following strategies.

1. Adjust Expectations
2. Connect with Someone the Old Fashion Way: By phone!
3. Ask People for Advice
4. Talk about your Research

Of course, there are no magic tricks or overnight solutions for transforming the ivory tower, but reimagining faculty life is a muscle we have to exercise. If you don’t regularly engage with your vision for what academia is, you’ll be subjected to what academia prescribes for you. The resources we have provide concrete strategies for how to write every day and plan out your project goals, but in addition to this, it’s so important to have regular conversations with yourself about what it is that you want. For more insight on how to become more proactive in your career, visit Get Out There & Shake it!

DDIE CALLS UPON THE EXPERTISE OF THE KSU COMMUNITY IN RESEARCH GRANT OPPORTUNITY

This academic year, six researchers carrying out five projects were recipients of the DDIE Faculty Research Grant. Their work will improve engineering recruitment and retention, evaluate the inclusiveness and diversity of the built environment, train nurses to support diverse patients, mentor rising Latinx educators, and understand the impact of grief and loss on BIPPOC graduate students. More information on the researchers and their work can be found on the DDIE website.

The Faculty Research Grant calls upon the expertise of the Kennesaw State University community to produce a positive impact on campus diversity, equity, and inclusion. Those researchers whose work intersects with the priorities and mission of the Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence are invited to apply for a research grant to use over the course of the 2023-2024 academic year. The application for the grant opened on February 15, 2023, and will close on March 17, 2023. Check the DDIE website for more information and watch KSU Today for announcements.

SUCCESS WITH YOU IN MIND

UPCOMING NCFDD TRAININGS & EVENTS

- How to Develop a Daily Writing Practice
- Lessons Learned from Two Decades of Publishing with Undergraduates
- Mastering Academic Time Management
- What I Wish I would have Known before earning Tenure

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On February 13, 2023, the Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence announced the online version of their highly requested Inclusive Hiring Training. The training is now available to all faculty and staff members who are eligible to participate in the hiring process. Additionally, the training only needs to be taken once annually and participants will receive a certification upon completion.

To access the inclusive hiring training:

- Follow this link to access the KSU Inclusive Hiring Training channel: https://share.percipio.com/cd/HFIBa141A
- If prompted, log in with your KSU NetID and password.
- Click Watch to start the inclusive hiring training.
- Once complete, follow the directions below to download your completion certificate.
  a. Click your name to open the Personal Profile
  b. In the dropdown menu, click Activity.
  c. The Activity page will load. Locate the completed Inclusive Hiring Training.
  d. Click the Download Certificate button next to the course you wish to access a certificate of completion. Follow your device’s download settings to view and print your certificate.

If you experience any technical issues with the training module, please contact the KSU UITS Service Desk at (470) 578-6999 or email service@kennesaw.edu.
LEADING THE WAY

LEADER LINES

EACH MONTH YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO A SHORT QUOTE OR MESSAGE THAT HAS A SPECIAL MEANING FOR ONE OF OUR KSU LEADERS. THIS MONTH’S QUOTE COMES FROM VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF LEGAL AFFAIRS OFFICER, DR. NWAKAEGO NKUMEH WALKER

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. - Maya Angelou

On what this quote means to her, Dr. Nkumeh-Walker says, "This quote reminds me to appreciate the power each of us holds to shift our reality and be the change we may be seeking."

STAFF HIGHLIGHT – STACEY DIXON

This month, we are proud to highlight KSU staff member Stacey Dixon. Serving as the Director of Military and Veteran Services, Stacey Dixon loves bridging the gap for our veteran students by making sure they are honored, celebrated, and supported. As a veteran herself, Dixon said, "I experienced the transition back into the civilian community and into Higher Education. It is a difficult time adjusting after serving in the military. The MVS Team aims to increase awareness of the program to become more inclusive to our diverse student population. Thus, providing students with the tools needed to be successful at KSU and onward into their careers." When it comes to inclusion, Dixon has had her fair share of feeling 'left out.' When asked why diversity and inclusion matters to her, she shared, "I have battled most of my adult life with inclusivity as a black woman, military veteran, and now as part of an older generation. For too long, exclusion was an accepted behavior and practice that created hostile working environments." She continued, the fact that we now have the language to 'now' have the discussions about the 'why' is very important to me. Learning occurs, experiences are shared and appreciated, and the ability to foster new relationships through this sort of dialogue is why diversity and inclusion is very important to me.

NIGEL RICHARDS JOINS SODI AS A GRADUATION COACH

Nigel joined the Strategic Outreach and Diversity Initiatives team in 2023 as a Graduation Coach but he is no stranger to KSU. Nigel first found his wings in 2020, serving in the Financial Aid Department. After gaining priceless experience, Richards sought to apply his experience in a new setting, which landed him in SODI. While Nigel will primarily work with the THRIVE program, he also looks forward to meeting the vast population of students. He added, "Hopefully, I can be a river of knowledge to each of my students to better prepare them for their endeavors, and help build an already great culture."

We look forward to all that Nigel accomplishes within the Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence and at KSU!
The Division of Diverse and Inclusive Excellence
Spring 2023 Virtual Trainings

**FEB. 22ND**
Cultural Competence
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**MARCH 2ND**
Inclusive Community Building
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

**MARCH 27TH**
Inclusive Community Building
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**APRIL 7TH**
Fostering Respect and Civility
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

**APRIL 24TH**
Fostering Respect and Civility
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**JUNE 5TH**
Reflective Structured Dialogue
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
Whether just getting started or a diversity warrior, these resources are sure to encourage, inform, and motivate you to support diverse excellence here at KSU and beyond!

**READ** – BLACK BUCK BY MATEO ASKARIPOUR

**WATCH** – JOHN LEWIS: GOOD TROUBLE DOCUMENTARY

**LISTEN** – POD SAVE THE PEOPLE

Contact Us: KSUDIVERSE@KENNESAW.EDU