January 3, 2017

Dear Colleagues:

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., one of my personal heroes, will be honored this month, as always, with a national holiday commemorating the anniversary of his birth. With Martin Luther King Jr. Day coming only a few days before the inauguration of a new president, the celebration of this remarkable person and his inspiring legacy feel more significant this year than ever.

I’d like to take the opportunity, as we honor Dr. King, to point out the important work taking place in our Office of Diversity and Outreach (ODO) toward making sure that UCSF remains a place committed to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. I’m devoting this entire issue of Expresso to the ODO because of the vital role it will play in protecting and promoting our values in the year ahead.

Specifically, this month, I write about:

- Stay Strong, Stay Hopeful: UCSF Office of Diversity and Outreach on its role in a new era
- Pomp and Circumstance: New Diversity and Inclusion Staff Certificate Program marks first graduation
- Byron’s Song: A staffer produces pure poetry, shining a light on a positive perspective

Of course, we at UCSF will continue doing all of the other good things for which we’re known. In fact, it is the effort each and every one of us makes in research, education, patient care, and building community — doing what we can to improve the lives of others — that will displace the darkness found in so many parts of the world today. Toward this end, one of our Global Health Sciences alumna, Laila Soudi, recently wrote to me and the chancellor about how we can contribute our online support for the hard work that NGOs are doing in the far reaches of the world like Aleppo. Here’s an organization that she recommends [1], but it’s one of many, and I’m sure you can find a cause that resonates with you.

If you’d like me to shine a light on any of those or other activities in this newsletter, please get in touch at ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu [2].

Sincerely,

Dan

Stay Strong, Stay Hopeful: UCSF Office of Diversity and
Outreach on its role in a new era

While many people are feeling anxiety about the state of the world, Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Outreach Dr. J. Renee Navarro remains hopeful and action-oriented.

?It?s a new year, a new opportunity. We?re always very optimistic, but also vigilant,? Renee says. ?We have so many creative, innovative, compassionate people here on our campus. I am energized by coming together with others and thinking, ?What can we do in a really forward-thinking and positive way???

Renee says the key is to reaffirm our core values, and make sure that UCSF remains committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We must live our values as an institution by creating an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. We must continue to hold conversations about things that are challenging, always remaining respectful in doing so.

Renee keeps that hope and optimism in part because she?s seen how times can improve. Born in Mobile, Alabama, she experienced firsthand the sting of Jim Crow. Her family moved to California, where she was raised, ultimately coming to UCSF as a medical student in 1982, and learning that our own history had its shortcomings.

African Americans on our staff had been forced to go to the basement to use the bathroom or eat their meals. In 1968, after Dr. King?s assassination, the Black Caucus was formed on campus, and the ?Basement People? were allowed to join the rest of the UCSF campus community. Renee credits the Black Caucus for their courage and former Chancellor Philip R. Lee for showing leadership in breaking down the racial barriers.

?I had the privilege of getting to know some of the individuals who put their own livelihoods on the line,? Renee says. ?We really do stand on their shoulders in so many ways. We owe them the responsibility to make sure the university is open and inclusive. As a public institution we take our mission very seriously. We?re part of the very diverse state of California. We need to have opportunities that are available across the spectrum of difference, and we have to work actively to engage people across differences. Because bias and discrimination are entrenched and often unconscious, they lead to having communities that fail to reflect the diversity of California.?

VC Navarro has led the Office of Diversity and Outreach (ODO) since 2010 when the role was first established. With a broad charge for faculty, learners and staff across the professional schools, graduate division and health system, the ODO works on many different levels. In 2013, the UC Office of the President issued a directive that all campuses conduct a climate survey. The ODO led that effort at UCSF, and we learned how much work we still have to do. The ODO is trying to make sure we recruit and retain a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. It works on issues of health care disparities. It seeks to ensure a climate of fairness for all, on issues of race, gender, gender identity, disability, LGBT status, documentation status and other characteristics that contribute to our uniqueness.

The ODO works to identify and implement best practices and coordinate efforts across the university and health system, but this is the work of all of us as members of this community. The School of Medicine Program in Medical Education for the Urban Underserved (PRIME) is an excellent example of building programs that are attractive to outstanding diverse applicants. Renee explains, ?Their core curriculum is really about health equity as it pertains to urban underserved communities. It?s also been an incredible driver for applicants from
Here are just a few of the ODO events and initiatives under way in the weeks and months ahead:

- Diversity and Inclusion Staff Certificate program [4], established in 2016. More information is available in the next story.
- Unconscious bias training and resources [5] if people understand how these biases slip into their daily interactions, they can then work to interrupt them. I’ve had the training, and it’s a real eye-opener.
- Diversity 101, quarterly ?lunch and learns? The next one is January 19 at Mission Bay [6]. Klint Jaramillo [7] will review concepts of bias and micro-aggressions and present Cultural Humility as a framework to support equity and inclusion.
- ?Honoring the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr: Leading Health Care Change Through Activism [8]? a special event that includes a panel moderated by Sharon Youmans, PharmD, featuring current student Andrea Quinones-Rivera (one of the founders of White Coats for Black Lives [9]), and distinguished alumna Pamela Alston, DDS; Gene O'Connell, RN, the former CEO of ZSFG; and David Smith, MD, founder of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic.
- Supporting our Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students ? UCSF has a handful of the several thousand in the overall UC system [10], and UC President Janet Napolitano avowed to vigorously protect DACA students. Read the systemwide Statement of Principles in Support of Undocumented Members of the UC Community [11].
- United in Our Differences (working title) ODO and University Relations are collaborating to produce a series of videos featuring members of our campus community who will provide illustrations of how they are living the UCSF values (professionalism, respect, integrity, diversity and excellence) and serving as allies to positively affirm all members of our community.
- VC Navarro is co-principal investigator on a new NSF Includes grant, Bay Area Regional Collaboration to Expand and Strengthen STEM (RECESS) to increase participation in STEM from groups that have been historically underrepresented in San Francisco and Alameda counties.

Renee and her team are working on a lot more, so check out the ODO website [12], explore the possibilities, and get involved.

Pomp and Circumstance: New Diversity and Inclusion Staff Certificate Program marks first graduation

In the climate survey of 2013, one of the eye-opening results was to learn that UCSF staff often felt like they were taken for granted and treated poorly, “the bottom of the bottom,” according to Nakisha Rice, MA, an office manager in the School of Pharmacy dean’s office.

As part of the effort to start improving that situation, the Office of Diversity and Outreach appointed Élida Bautista, an associate professor of psychiatry and the former director of clinical training for the Multicultural Clinical Training Program in Psychiatry at ZSFG, to see
what programs could be offered to staff. In short order, Élida devised the Diversity and Inclusion Staff Certificate Program, and I was pleased to attend the graduation of its first cohort last month.

Twenty-one staff members from across the University participated, representing a wide spectrum of jobs, levels, and departments as well as all walks of life. They met twice a month, for two-and-a-half-hour classes, and had some intense conversations. They also had homework, including some challenging reading assignments.

Among the exercises was a session on microaggressions, which are those brief, everyday exchanges that convey denigrating messages to individuals because of their apparent group identity (please take a moment to check out these MTV videos on microaggressions [13] ? they convey the concept perfectly). People in the class told about things they had experienced or witnessed at UCSF or elsewhere, and then talked about how they processed the experiences. ?What are their go-to places?? Bautista said. ?What tools do they have to address it when something comes up, when it?s directed at you or a patient or another staff member? How do you respond? How can you be an ally? They got some real hands-on practical tools.?

Members of the class found the program extremely rewarding. ?People were shy at first, but once we started reading and engaging, everybody opened up,? Nakisha says. ?It?s really great to have a diversity of voices. I?m black, and I?m queer, and I don?t have to put that aside. It?s okay to bring all of that. This is a place devoted to honoring diversity.? 

The program has clearly succeeded in creating a group of people conversant in the language of diversity, and who can help spread that message throughout the University. At the graduation ceremony, Lisa Cisneros, senior director of strategic communications in University Relations, said, ?Given what is going on in the country and the world, it is more critical than ever that we build a cadre of those who understand and appreciate the many backgrounds and backstories of our diverse community.?

This month, the program will expand, and two new classes will commence. Please consider participating in the year ahead, and recommending this opportunity to others.

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Byron’s Song: A staffer produces pure poetry, shining a light on a positive perspective

Byron Decuire, a registered respiratory therapist at ZSFG, participated in the Staff Certificate program described above, and at the graduation he read a poem he wrote expressing some of his feelings. Because the poem conveys the struggles he faces, as well as the positive message of how he was transformed by the Certificate program, I am sharing here so that others may be inspired.

Walking through life consciously unconscious. Crawling through people while looking up for acceptance. I feel like I do not qualify for the same space. I crawl wanting to stand up but fearful of bumping into people. They walk around me like I am a barrier. They step over me like I am an obstacle. When I stand up they say, ?Where were you?? ?Excuse me, you are in my way.? I am consciously aware of
their unconsciousness. They are aware that I am aware of their uncomfortable feeling. They want to speak but don’t. They want to say, ?thank you, ? but have never spoken to a black man before. They want to say, ?Tell me a story about how it is being black.? Then they will understand better. I feel I am like their shadows, trying to catch up to them and pull them back into my Darkness. I can hold them there, captive within their own shadow.

I live in a world where I have to make conscious choices moment by moment. I navigate a world that has created barriers to prevent me from walking freely and openly. I live in the shadows of others and come out when it is safe. I recede into my unconscious where it is safe. I plot my escape to the light and recede again. I attack people with my words. I pleasure people with my calmness. And then Boom! They are magically aware.

I stand upright now! I make people aware of my presence. I thank people for theirs. I look to engage now and listen better. I understand better how the power of silence becomes insidious and pervasive and twists us into submission.

I submit to you I am dedicated to raising awareness of the Unconscious and bringing equality to all of those that crawl on their knees, scared to stand up and be heard.

Thank you, Byron.

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**Dan’s Tip of the Month**

?Being alive means having a purpose?? This is a quote from a pretty amazing video, *You’ll Be My Arms, I’ll Be Your Eyes*, [14] which I happened to see on the GoPro channel on Virgin America while flying east last week. The brief documentary tells the story of Wenqi Jia and Haixia Jia, two lifelong friends whose bond became stronger as a
result of their individual tragedies? but that’s far from the entire story. Free up some time (just ten minutes) and check it out? you will not be disappointed, and I’ll bet you will want to share it with family and friends!

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[5] https://diversity.ucsf.edu/resources/unconscious-bias
[6] https://calendar.ucsf.edu/event/introduction_to_diversity_and_inclusion_9877
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