

Monthly Strategic Plan Featured Initiative

## Center for Diversity and Inclusion

February 2020 marks one year of BVU's Center for Diversity & Inclusion, which has introduced a variety of programming and collaboration with campus constituents from staff and faculty to students and local businesses. Several events hosted by the CDI include heritage months, Diversity & Inclusion week, interactive displays, and Lunch & Learns.



Three branches make up the CDI: spiritual life, multicultural engagement, and international services—which Ebony King, Senior Director of Diversity & Inclusion advises. A variety of student organizations exist within each area, led by a secondary advisor.

King says, “One of the most important accomplishments of the CDI is the way it has brought an overall awareness to what diversity and inclusion means. To have an actual space for the Center in the hub of campus shows the importance the University has placed on diversity and inclusion efforts.”

King also mentions how welcoming the CDI feels because it is in a place that most people on campus walk past, and the glass walls open up the space so anyone can see the activities happening and be drawn in.

Another outcome of the CDI is the creation of Diversity Fellows, which was founded by four faculty members after being selected to attend the Diversity, Civility, and the Liberal Arts Institute Conference by the Council of Independent Colleges in June 2019. This highly selective conference inspired the group to create a diverse (gender, race, tenure, experience) cohort of faculty and staff who will eventually “graduate” and become official members of the BVU Diversity Fellows Advisory Council. Through training, the Council members will have the skills to assist students of all walks of life.

Student favorites have proven to be Lunch & Learns, giveaways, and displays. Another unique draw is Fresh Fridays; students may sign up to play any type of music they choose (as long as it's "clean") from 3-5 p.m. every Friday. This activity gives them an opportunity to relax and unwind at the end of each week. Step Afrika!, Gospel Lee, and the True Black History Museum are a few special events that also encourage student involvement. These events are made possible through a collaboration between the CDI's programs and different student organizations.

"Building the Center, as opposed to keeping it at just one staff member and one office, shows the growth we've had. We can focus on everyone and make a greater impact," says King. "All the different identities we try to cover are so vast, and with a one-man office this would be impossible. We've created an environment on campus where it's not taboo to talk about diversity, because it's become a normal part of conversation."

Looking ahead, the CDI will celebrate Women's History Month in March. The month will include a Female Student Leaders table display, a performance by poet Ebony Stewart, and two Lunch & Learns. Keep an eye on BVU news for more information.

**Initiative:** Invest in and Focus on Diversity Initiatives

**Initiative Description:** Open a Center for Diversity and Inclusion and launch a 5-year diversity plan.

**Success Metric:** Increase student, staff, and faculty participation in diversity & inclusion training. Conduct campus climate survey and use survey to determine next steps. Repeat survey in spring 2023 and compare results to see if programmatic efforts have improved campus climate.

**Initiative Owner:** Senior Director of Diversity & Inclusion

**Cabinet Sponsor:** Vice President for Student Success (primary), and Provost