The Berwick's Royal Border Bridge in the United Kingdom is lit blue to raise awareness about Autism and the impact it has on families in honor of World Autism Awareness Week.
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GREETINGS!
FROM THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT
& CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

As you may recall one of our goals last academic year was to break down silos that exist so that addressing diversity was truly a campus-wide effort. We started on a small scale by increasing the number of groups and departments who receive funding from our office in order to support diversity endeavors from specific disciplines. This year, I am pleased to share that we continued to pursue our goal by completing more programmatic collaborations.

Partnering with both departments and student groups, we have carried out everything from care package drives to in-depth workshops addressing race. I am proud of us as a campus community for working together to address a wide array of issues.

In the coming academic year, we will shift our focus on social justice and student engagement. We look to build on our collaborations so that diversity and inclusion becomes an everpresent norm in the lives of our students, faculty and staff.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rénard Harris

Dr. Rénard Harris
Associate Vice President & Chief Diversity Officer
Office of Institutional Diversity
Call Me MiSTER Faculty Advisor
Below are some moments captured from last month’s workshop on “Race and Educational Advancement.” Don't miss the last workshop of the semester focused on "Microaggressions & Disabilities." We hope to see you at noon on April 11 in RSS 251 - lunch will be provided!

**WORKSHOP RECAP**

**PROGRAM RECAP**

CofC Professors Unite to Honor the Legacy of Black Veterans

OID hosted a dialogue between Michael T. Owens and Dr. Anthony Greene on February 28 focused on Owens’ ongoing work to tell the story of Black World War II veterans. This event commemorated Black History Month 2018 and was held in Alumni Hall. Owens is an adjunct professor of English at the College while Greene is an assistant professor in the African American Studies Department.

During their dialogue, the professors touched on the lesser-known contributions and experiences of Black veterans throughout American history. Owens is the author of Burned: Conversations with a Black Word War II Veteran. To learn more about his work, check out the February 2018 edition of The Bridge Builder or visit his website www.voicespseak.org.

*Left to Right: Owens & Greene on stage in Alumni Hall*
CNN Political Commentator

B A K A R I  S E L L E R S

Inspires CofC Students

Throughout this academic year, the Office of Institutional Diversity has given students an opportunity to share their vision for a better campus community. OID explored this idea a bit further when it hosted a student-focused luncheon in Hill Art Gallery on February 28 featuring Bakari Sellers.

During his speech, Sellers reflected on his time in the state house and encouraged students to move past their differences in order to create the kind of change they want to see on campus. He also challenged them to become more involved in the Charleston community given the College’s unique positioning within the city.

Sellers is a former member of the South Carolina House of Representatives and currently serves as a political commentator on CNN. He is the son of, Cleveland Sellers, Civil Rights activist and former President of Voorhees College.

Bakari Sellers delivering the keynote address.

CofC Students make time for a photo op.

CofC staff members were on hand to listen to Sellers and support student leaders.
This by-invitation-only event commemorated the College’s 50th anniversary of integration and provided student leaders with an opportunity to discuss diversity issues that matter most to them through two rounds of table topics centered on three questions: (1) where are we, (2) where do we want to go, (3) how do we get there.

Ten Topics Discussed
Collaboration to Improve Overall Campus Climate
A Broader Diversity Narrative for Students of Color
More Conversation about Disability Awareness
Strengthening Allyship for Feminists of Color
More CofC Pride for Current Students and Alumni
Meaningful Interest Toward International Students
Collective Impact for Support LGBTQ Students
Civil Conversations on Politics and Free Speech
Religious Diversity
Multicultural Greek Life at CofC
The following faculty and staff members also took time out of their busy schedules to serve as sounding boards during the discussions:

**Dr. Gibbs Knotts** (Political Science Department Chair)  
**Edie Cusack** (Director of the REACH Program)  
**Dr. Claire Wofford** (Assistant Professor of Political Science)  
**Dr. Hollis France** (Director of the Gender Sexuality Equity Center and Associate Professor of Political Science)  
**Lynda Keller** (Assistant Director of MSPS and SafeZone Coordinator)  
**Carson Lance** (Assistant Director for Fraternity and Sorority Life)  
**Deronda Corbin** (Coordinator for Fraternity and Sorority Life)  
**Dr. Kendall Deas** (Director of Diversity Education and Training)  
**Anita Gadsden** (VP of the Black Alumni Council)  
**Amanda Genovese** (Program Director for JSU/Hillel)  
**Michael Adeyanju** (Director of Executive Communications)  
**Jessica Stone** (Student Services Coordinator for the Center for International Education)

The primary goal of this event was to provide a forum for students to discuss ways they could work collaboratively with OID and other campus departments to move the College forward regarding diversity.

Table leaders and faculty/staff advisors pose with Sellers (back row).
Students and Staff Work to Raise Campus Conscousness of Disability Awareness

Disabilities are seldom discussed on the continuum of diversity and inclusion but OID, Disability Services/SNAP and students Averyona Gainey (marketing assistant for OID) and Erin Day (SGA Campus Accessibility Liaison) are working to change that.

For the second year in a row, OID is devoting its final program of the school year to disability awareness. Last year, OID partnered with REACH to host a screening of the documentary Autism in Love. This year, it has embarked on a weeklong awareness campaign with the REACH Program led by Gainey.

The Bridge Builder (BB) caught up with Disability Services/SNAP, Gainey (AG), and Day (ED), to learn more about their work to raise the profile of disability awareness on campus. See the conversations below to learn more.

**BB: How does the Center for Disability Services/SNAP work to advocate for students at the College?**

**DM:** Our mission is to ensure equal access for all students, across all programs and services. One way that we do this is through determining “reasonable accommodations” for students with disabilities through an interactive process with the student, and often with their faculty. We serve as a resource to all members of our campus community and strive towards making students, faculty, and staff aware that the goal towards an inclusive campus is everyone’s responsibility. Sustainability, an institution-wide endeavor for the College, includes accessibility and social justice. We promote self-advocacy skills among all our students and assist them in developing strategies that will benefit them during their time at the College and beyond.

**BB: How can faculty and staff support the Center for Disability Services/SNAP or get involved with the department?**

**CK:** Many faculty and staff already support the Center for Disability Services/SNAP, and we value that partnership. By building relationships with other departments at the College, we ultimately strengthen the understanding that students with disabilities are all of our students. When we partner with other departments and individuals on campus, we support each other. This in turn equates to meeting the various needs of our diverse student population and enhancing the College of Charleston experience for our students. Collaboration opportunities could include programming, research, resource sharing, and solving accessibility challenges.
**BB:** What are some issues, projects, or initiatives that the Center for Disability Services/SNAP will be working on for the upcoming school year?

**AO:** Certainly, if colleagues have ideas for ways we can collaborate, we welcome them to reach out to us! Examples of projects that emerged unexpectedly this past academic year include: Anne Osowski, SNAP Services Coordinator, led a session at the Technology, Learning, and Technology (TLT) Con during Spring Break. She presented on the topic of universal design in higher education as it relates to instruction. Anne reached out to several faculty members: Cynthia May, Joe Carson, Allison Zaubi, Hope Florence, Kristen Ashworth, Meglena Miltcheva, and Thomas Spade to illustrate that no matter your field or subject area, there are ways to make your classes more inclusive for all students. Faculty members Jennifer Wilhelm and Kathleen Béres Rogers presented at the South Carolina AHEAD conference on the learning community class for first-year students: “What is Normal: Stories of Neurodiversity.” Drs. Wilhelm and Rogers collaborated with SNAP staff and students to develop class activities, and we hope to continue to support their growth of this incredible class. CDS works collaboratively with the Career Center on an ongoing basis to support students with disabilities in their transition to employment. We are excited to explore and support new student leadership initiatives around the issues of accessibility and disability rights advocacy, and hope to see them result in furthering our mission.

**BB:** What is your role as the disability awareness liaison for SGA? What are some of your duties and what strides have you taken to increase disability awareness at CofC?

**ED:** Honestly, the SGA Liaison Cabinet was terminated before it really got off the ground. I had goals to increase the communication between the students with disabilities. I have worked with current SGA president Alexandra Helfgott and SGA senator Leanna Conti to improve the resources provided to ALL incoming students at orientation, not just those in the SNAP/CDS orientation session. I want the campus to broadly understand the benefits to registering with SNAP beyond extended time on exams for those with learning disabilities. Additionally, I had hoped to create a safe space for students to discuss their challenges with peer. One struggle I have faced is that an organization like this would be most effective if student-run. Students would be more eager to attend fun events and discussions that are organized by students rather than faculty. However, I have yet to find a younger student who wishes to occupy this role after I graduate in May.
**BB:** What challenges have you faced while on campus at CofC and how did you deal with them?

**ED:** There are buildings on campus that are not ADA compliant, so students will mobility impairments, such as myself, legally should not have classes at these locations. However, I did not learn about this until my 6th semester (spring of junior year). I was appalled that as someone who walks with crutches and has a visible struggle, I was not informed of this for 3 years. I hope that increasing communication can lead to less ignorance of the great resources that this campus already has. I also would love to create a streamlined method of communication between students and Physical Plant. In the past, Physical Plant has sent out mass emails when parking lots/buildings are closed, but not when elevators are closed. On my first day of a computer science class at Harbor Walk East, the elevator was down. I had to climb four flights of stairs in the rain. When tropical storm Joaquin flooded RSS, the 1st floor of the building was closed, and also the handicap entrances. My class was on the second floor, and I would go up the stairs and often exit the building by taking the elevator down and dodging construction. I wish that Physical Plant could communicate when accessible entrances are blocked, elevators are not working, and when they are repaired. Freshman year, I had to meet with a professor in her office on the second floor of a historic building, of which I struggled to even open the heavy door while balancing on the tiny stairs. I wish the school had a protocol or meeting space for these types of situations.

I hope that opening the lines of conversation about disability advocacy, inclusion, and respect will help staff and faculty treat students well. Age and disability are NOT RELATED. My legs have been different lengths since I came out of the womb with bilateral proximal femoral focal deficiency. Yet, on the elevator, professor ask how I hurt myself, when I will be off crutches, or "what happened." The answer to these is I didn't, never, and I was born, respectively.

**BB:** What are your plans after graduation? How do you plan to take what you have learned from CofC with you?

**ED:** Regarding my plans for after college, I will be attending a PhD program in chemistry at either UNC, UVA, Duke, or Vanderbilt, decision to be made soon. Here at the College, student philanthropy and diversity conversations have been a priority to me, and that will not change even after I leave this great city. At the national meeting of the American Chemical Society last week in New Orleans, I attended the Women's Chemists Committee luncheon and the Women Chemists of Color networking event. Additionally, I plan to be involved with larger campaigns and non-profits that promote disability inclusion. In high school, I wanted to be "normal" and fit in, but now I want to use my leadership and passion to help everybody feel comfortable, safe, capable, and respected in their bodies. Following the DREAM has opened my eyes to all that is being done across the US, and I want to be a bigger part of it.
**BB:** Can you tell me about the campaign you are leading with the REACH Program?

**AG:** On behalf of OID, I have collaborated with the REACH Program to organize a campaign that sheds a little light on disability and how it’s approached. The campaign is called "Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Words, Change Your Actions". Beginning last year, OID has formed its final program of the year around disability awareness. I have teamed up with Arianne Bauserman, at REACH, to compose short videos starring fellow students, asking thought provoking questions. We have also created a t-shirt and flyers in hopes of gaining the campus' attention.

**BB:** What are the goals of the campaign?

**AG:** When forming this campaign, we were aiming for one common goal and that was to make students, faculty, staff and even community members more aware of the things that they think, say, and do when it comes to individuals with a disability. Many times we find ourselves not knowing what to say or how to act when around someone with a disability. We wanted to lessen the fear that might come from said encounters.

**BB:** How can the campus community get involved?

**AG:** From April 2nd - 5th, OID will be tabling in Cougar Mall and Rivers Green from 10am - 3pm. Anyone is welcome to come and participate in a Jeopardy-like questioning game. You'll watch a video of someone asking a "What would you do" question, you'll answer, then we'll discuss it. This gives the chance to openly talk about answers that are better than others and why. Also, on Thursday, April 12th NJAC will be streaming the movie "including Sam" and everyone is welcomed! Dr. Kendall Deas form OID will be leading a workshop entitled "Micro-aggressions and Disabilities" on April 11th so be sure to stop by!

**BB:** What do you hope the "take-away" is for students, faculty and staff?

**AG:** It is my hope that everyone who takes part in this campaign becomes more aware of their daily actions and thoughts. I want this campaign to shed light on the things we say and do that we might not really think about on a day-to-day basis. I also hope that through this campaign, individuals learn why the things we might initially say might not be the best and how we can fix it.
Period Project Update:
CofC Sends Ten 50-gallon Drums To Liberia for Women & Girls in Need!

OID thanks the following groups for their support with this effort:
Multicultural Student Programs and Services
African American Studies Program
Women’s Athletics
Women’s Health Research Team
Women’s and Gender Studies Program
Center for Civic Engagement
All Panhellenic Council Sororities
Student Health Services
Alpha Epsilon Delta Honor Society
CofC Marketing
CofC Alumnus, Ken Riley ('77)
*SPECIAL THANKS to CofC Equestrian Team for putting us over the top, literally!*

FINALS PLAYLIST
Here are a few motivational songs for upcoming Finals Week! Happy Listening from OID!

I Lived - OneRepublic
Rise Up - Andra Day
I Won't Give Up - Jason Mraz
All I Do is Win - DJ Khalid
We Are The Champions - Queen
Stronger - Kanye West
Survivor - Destiny's Child
Happy - Pharrell Williams
Uptown Funk - Vitamin String Quartet
Mi Gente - J Balvin Ft. Beyoncé
Eye of the Tiger -Survivor
Rise - Katy Perry
Feel It Still - Portugal. The Man
You Can't Stop Me - Andy Mineo