It takes all kinds to make a world. It takes solidarity and commitment, however, to make a world of difference. And it’s that kind of world – or represents and accommodates our diverse global community – that the Office of Institutional Diversity is for the College. Fortunately, it has exactly what it takes.

“There is a strong desire for a diverse campus on the part of the faculty, staff and students – and there is, I down, a strong commitment to changing the culture at the College,” says John O. Bello-Ogunu, the College vice president and chief diversity officer, and the head of the new OID. “There is a heightened awareness importance and centrality of diversity in achieving both academic and institutional excellence.”

That awareness has only grown since Bello-Ogunu came to the College in January, immediately meeting campus and community constituents and setting up a series of town hall meetings for staff, faculty and stu

“I could see right away that it was important that we open up the lines of communication, so we hit the gr with some outreach programs while simultaneously working on a programmatic agenda for this semester. says Bello-Ogunu, adding that, with programs like Diversity Week at CoC: Building a More Perfect and Campus Community (April 12–16), the OID hopes to provide opportunities for exploring the various asp impacts of human diversity and celebrating the College’s own diversity. “We are creating more opportuni in dialogue about our commonalities and discuss our differences in a positive way.”

Of course, it’s not all talk. The OID is putting together a strategic plan not only for improving intercultural relations on campus, but also for attracting and retaining a diverse student body, faculty and

“This will be a sustained effort over a long period of time. It will take an enormous amount of patience an steadfastness,” says Bello-Ogunu. “We will have to measure our success incrementally while focusing on

http://spinner.cofc.edu/heaportico/feature1.html 4/20/2010
the prize. And that prize is the day when we can boast of the College of Charleston as a model all-inclusive campus, where our cultural differences as well as our human similarities are seen as something positive.

Diversity is certainly a positive thing – not just for our campus, but for our students, as well.

"Diversity is essential to enhancing our students’ academic, personal and professional success," says Bell-believe that we have the ethical, moral and professional responsibility to prepare our students to become educated citizens who can function productively in today’s global village. If we want them to grow to be global citizens, we must present them with the intercultural realities of today.

And that means reflecting the world’s diverse cultures in the College’s community, its academic curricula and administrative policies.

"The overall goal is to integrate diversity into the fabric of life here at the College so that we can create an environment that is welcoming, supportive and nurturing for every member of the College of Charleston," Bello-Ogunu. "It’s up to all of us – the Office of Institutional Diversity exists to help you be the best you are all responsible for creating this community."

And it doesn’t have to be hard.

"It’s as simple as reaching out to people who are different from you, leaving your cultural comfort zone, a sincere effort to learn about other perspectives and other cultures. Staff can raise issues in departmental to help educate their colleagues. Faculty can engage minority students in informal conversations, especially classroom," suggests Bello-Ogunu. "Little things make a big difference."

Especially if everyone is doing them.

"That’s why we must create a culture of collective responsibility for diversity," says Bello-Ogunu. "Once in place and everyone has a part in it, we’ll no longer be sitting around talking about diversity as a strange but as something we’ve proudly embraced."

After all, Bello-Ogunu says, "Diversity does us all a world of good."