

A Guide to the Governor Ralph Northam, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Records, 2019-2021.

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2019-2021.

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Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically.

Historical Information

Governor Northam created the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in May of 2019 to assist in the development of a sustainable framework for the continued promotion of inclusive practices across Virginia state government and creation of a measurable, strategic plan to identify and address systematic inequities in formal and informal policies and practices within Virginia government. The Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) position was created to head this office and served as a senior level staff member who reported directly to the Governor. The Office was tasked with determining the best ways to tackle racial inequity; working with state agencies to ensure continued promotion of inclusive recruitment, hiring and retention policies and helping to facilitate conversations between agencies to address inequities; developing and implementing a sustainable, measurable strategic plan; and facilitating ways to turn feedback from state employees, external stakeholders and community leaders into a concrete equity policy.

In December 2019, Governor Northam appointed Dr. Janice Underwood, Ph.D., to serve as Virginia's first Chief Diversity Officer. Prior to her appointment, Dr. Underwood served as Old Dominion University's Director of Diversity Initiatives and as the chair of the ODU President's Task Force on Inclusive Excellence. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Hampton University in Psychology and Behavior / Learning Disorders, and in 2015 earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction for Old Dominion University.

Other staff members included Alaysia Black Hackett, Deputy Chief Diversity Officer; Mona Siddiqui, Assistant Diversity Officer and Senior Policy Advisor for Immigration and Refugee Affairs; Yewande Austin, Special Advisor to the Chief Diversity Officer; Kimberly Cain, Special Advisor to the Chief Diversity Officer; Dymon Bailey, Special Assistant to the Chief Diversity Officer; and Omer Yusef, Special Assistant to the Chief Diversity Officer.

Scope and Content

Records, 2019-2020, document the activities, discussions, policy decisions and recommendations of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This series includes correspondence, reports and strategic plans.

During the Northam Administration, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) led the One Virginia efforts to create a statewide strategic plan to advance visible diversity, equity and inclusion across state government and held five community forums where Virginians could provide input into Virginia's first ever Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence. The One Virginia Plan served as a blueprint to institutionalize equity across state government, address structural and systematic barriers to access and opportunity and promote inclusive practices. The Chief Diversity Officer also led the Health Equity Leadership Task Force which helped to increase access to personal protective equipment to vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Co-Chaired the Governor's Executive Team on Immigrant Integration which assisted with the settlement of Afghan refugees.

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