

Meet the Council!



Tawanna Jackson

“I chose to be a DEI council member because I want myself and others within the workplace, and the community to be treated as their own unique self without consequences, detriments, or losing one’s own self.”-Tawanna Jackson

Since being on the council I have learned of biases that I did know existed within myself, which cause me to identify and work on those things. I also learned that in many cultures we are alike in many ways but may culturally express it differently or have a different way about doing things.

Shawna Hodge, DEI Director

I never had to consider my race/ethnicity until I left my community, which is where I was faced with the painful reality that there are people who consciously choose to judge a book by its cover. With these encounters, I always felt compassion for their missed opportunities to not only embrace difference but to make the personal choice to see beyond stereotypes. The DEI Council provides the opportunity to open all genres of books.

As the DEI Director at UCP Heartland, I am now in an incredible position and space to help educate others on the importance of embracing difference (the whole person). We are empowered each time we choose not to whisper, but instead lift our voices for each of our pieces that make us whole. The UCP Heartland community is full of diverse and talented individuals with a common goal of inclusion. “One day we will experience a world where being different is not so different.”



Tina Kyle

I chose to be a member because I wanted to be part of a group of people coming together to make a difference to our little part of the world. To accept, educate (myself and others) and acknowledge everyone’s differences that they bring to the table. To make people feel safe and appreciated for who they are and what they believe.

I have learned so much from being a member of DEI that I can utilize not just at work but in everyday life and to pass on the knowledge to my children as well. Knowledge is the key to acceptance and acceptance do not mean you have to agree with something but that you can respect and embrace the differences and still have a good relationship with them. Also, that there is more diversity and discrimination than I ever realized just because I was not exposed to some.



Richard Elliot

I wanted to be more educated about differences in individuals' cultures and learn more about others.

I have learned to understand differences is to learn and respect individual's differences and background.



Denise Bennett

I am a council member because I am trying to grow as an individual and in this one area, I would like to learn more about and have more understanding and sensitivity to people that do not necessarily look or act like me.

I have learned how prevalent "micro aggressions" are. I have learned that as a society we pick up on these and they become part of our culture. When we become aware and communicate the effect of these on the group, we are helping other people from continuing the cycle.

Layella Tosingilo

As a new member of our DEI council, I look forward to the many lessons I will learn from my peers. I have already learned the value of multiple perspectives and the importance of hearing and understanding different life experiences. Even in a professional setting, there is space for your worldview to be known and shared – it is a learning tool, and we are all better because of it.



Emily Love

Why I wanted to be a part of the DEI council:

I really wanted to be an active part of helping make UCP Heartland a more inclusive and equitable space for our team as well as the clients and families we support and serve.

What I have learned while being on the council:

I've learned how vastly diverse our staff are. It's been really neat to see and hear about all the walks of life we come from and all the perspectives that are brought to the table. The conversations have really challenged me to think outside the box and really see not only others' perspectives, but the reasons behind their thoughts and feelings on various topics.

