EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY

BOSTON UNIVERSITY’S SENIOR DIVERSITY OFFICER LEADS OUR DRIVE FOR FAIR ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.

AN INCLUSIVE PAST. A DIVERSE PRESENT. A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE.

From its beginnings, Boston University has strived to open its doors to all. Today, we are committed to becoming even more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. This pledge is one of five pillars in the University’s 2030 Strategic Plan. We aim for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) because we know that diversity—of ideas, of experiences, of approaches to problem-solving—leads to excellence.

University President Robert A. Brown established the position of senior diversity officer (SDO) in August 2020, as protests against systemic racism and police brutality placed a spotlight on long-standing racial disparities around the globe. This new role, however, was not created in a vacuum: the SDO builds on the University’s many existing DEI efforts, from the Howard Thurman Center for Common Ground’s work to promote unity among students to the Provost’s initiatives to improve faculty recruitment and make BU affordable for all.

“YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE POLICY AND PROCESS IN THE WORLD, BUT IN THE END, YOU HAVE TO HAVE INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.”

PRESIDENT ROBERT A. BROWN

THE SDO’S ROLE

The senior diversity officer acts as a liaison to the Board of Trustees Committee on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Established in September 2020, this standing committee reviews the University’s progress on DEI issues and recommends areas of focus.

The SDO also chairs two new campus committees that are agents for antiracist practice at BU and draw their members from the communities most affected by their work:

- The Community Safety Advisory Group (CSAG) recommends protocols and policing practices that maintain the safety and security of every member...
of our campus community. The committee includes the chief of the BU Police Department and faculty, staff, and students from across our campuses.

- The Antiracism Working Group (AWG) examines University practices and policies to remove systemic bias. The 18-member working group includes senior University leaders and faculty from a wide range of disciplines. Thus far, the AWG has formed two subcommittees to focus on specific areas of need: human resources (HR) and the University calendar.

THE TRANSFORMATION BEGINS

In her first year, the senior diversity officer created the committees and structures needed to make positive change at BU, and that change has begun. In 2021, the AWG’s Human Resources Subcommittee—charged with improving the University’s efforts to hire, promote, and retain a diverse workforce—collaborated with consulting firm Korn Ferry to conduct BU’s first all-staff survey in 25 years. BU’s 6,000 staff members are critical to our future success, and 75 percent of them seized the opportunity to provide feedback on their work climate, generating a tremendous amount of data. The University’s new Task Force on Workplace Culture is now using that data to identify opportunities to make BU a more welcoming workplace for all.

Meanwhile, the AWG’s Calendar Subcommittee spent months holding meetings and focus groups, examining the University’s observed holidays to ensure they support a truly inclusive campus environment. This work resulted in two significant changes to the University calendar: adding Juneteenth as an observed holiday and replacing Columbus Day with the observance of Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

COLLECTIVE REWARDS. COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY.

Increasing the diversity of our campus enriches the experience of every member of the BU community, making us more successful individually and collectively. It also requires the commitment of every one of us. “You can have all the policy and process in the world, but in the end, you have to have individual commitment to diversity and inclusion,” says President Brown. “I hope the community at large recognizes that we cannot continue the way we are. We have to push ourselves to be antiracist in what we do as institutions and as individuals.”

Whether you are a student, parent, faculty, staff, alum, neighbor, or friend, Boston University invites you to join us in this challenging but important work. If you’re unsure of the role you can play, reach out. The senior diversity officer aims to help every member of the BU community identify their part in this vital work.

Find DEI resources and contact information at bu.edu/diversity-officer.

MEET ANDREA L. TAYLOR

In her role as BU’s inaugural senior diversity officer, Andrea L. Taylor (COM’68) ties together two of the long-running strands of her life: her dedication to social justice and her commitment to promoting high-quality education. Prior to joining BU, Taylor was president and CEO of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. She was previously director of citizenship and public affairs for Microsoft and the founding director of the Media Fund at the Ford Foundation. Taylor is one of nine members of her family to attend BU and served as a BU Trustee from 2009 to 2020.