

DIVERSITY OFFICERS COLLABORATIVE

A UNIVERSITY-WIDE DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE



The Diversity Officer's Collaborative (D.O.C.) was established to maintain an ongoing method of collaboration for system-wide diversity officers. The D.O.C's mission is to:

foster collective ownership of diversity, access and inclusion efforts across the four-campus System to achieve equitable outcomes for faculty, staff and students.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
ELVIRA ABRICA, PH.D.



*Assistant Professor & Higher Education Researcher
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Appointed: 2021*

Elvira Abrica, Ph.D., is a higher education researcher and assistant professor at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research focuses on issues of equity and access to higher education for historically underrepresented groups across various post-secondary institutional settings, with an emphasis on community college and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) contexts. Her work is funded by the CENTER for the Study of Community College, National Science Foundation, and the University of Nebraska Research Council. It appears in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice, Journal of Applied Research in the Community College, Race, Ethnicity, and Education, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, The Review of Higher Education, Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE) Journal, and The Urban Review.

Professionally, Dr. Abrica has worked in institutional research and assessment across both four-year and two-year institutional contexts, specializing in qualitative data collection, analysis, and reporting for institutional improvement. Dr. Abrica received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
CANDICE BATTON, PH.D.



*Assistant Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs
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Appointed: 2020*

Candice Batton is Assistant Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs at UNO. In that capacity, she works to advance the mission and development of the faculty with the goal of excellence in teaching and scholarship. Diversity, equity and inclusion are central themes in her areas of responsibility which include faculty recruitment and searches, retention and advancement, and recognition and honors as well as faculty professional development and the Center for Faculty Excellence.

Batton joined the faculty at UNO in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice in 1999 after completing her doctorate at Vanderbilt University. She is an Associate Professor and served as School Director for eight years before joining Academic Affairs in 2015.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
MARCO BARKER, PH.D.

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*Vice Chancellor, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
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Appointed: 2019*

Dr. Marco Barker is the inaugural vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Barker leads the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, which shapes the campus policies, protocols and practices needed to advance diversity, equity and inclusion. He works toward fostering an inclusive, equitable and welcoming campus by collaborating with campus partners, allies and the community.

Barker previously served in diversity leadership roles at Westminster College, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Louisiana State University. He is a certified qualified administrator for the Intercultural Development Inventory and holds a doctoral degree in educational leadership and research from Louisiana State University.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
JONATHAN C. BENJAMIN-ALVARADO

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*Assistant Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs
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Appointed: 2016*

Dr. Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado was named assistant vice chancellor of student affairs at UNO in October 2014. A native of California, Alvarado received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 1997, and M.A. from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in 1992.

Benjamin-Alvarado is the chief student affairs officer with oversight of diversity, inclusion and equity. He has been instrumental in the creation of scholarship and pathway programs serving first-generation students and under-represented groups. Benjamin-Alvarado is also a professor of political science and serves on the boards of the Nebraska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Humanities Nebraska, Project Harmony—Connections, the Salvation Army and Film Streams.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
RICHARD J. BISCHOFF

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*IANR Associate Vice Chancellor for
Faculty and Academic Leader Success
Mabel Lee Hall 135
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Appointed: 2018*

Dr. Richard Bischoff is the IANR Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty and Academic Leader Success at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He received a Ph.D. degree from Purdue University in 1993. He was an Assistant Professor in the College of Education (Marriage, Family and Child Counseling program) at the University of San Diego before coming to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1998.

Prior to accepting his current role, he was the Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy program and Department Chair in Child, Youth and Family Studies, College of Education and Human Sciences. His research and scholarship expertise is in rural mental health disparities and global mental health.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER
STACEY C. COLEMAN

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*Office Associate II, COPH Office
of Public Health Practice
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for Public Health
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Appointed: 2016*

Stacey Coleman has been in the University of Nebraska system since 2006, first working at the Career Center on the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus and currently within the College of Public Health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Coleman has a bachelor's degree in fine art, and is currently on the path to get her master's in public administration from UNO.

Coleman is the chair of the Diversity Council. Coleman is passionate about contributing to her community and has spoken at various events and community organizations, and is currently a mentor with the Hope Center.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
DR. GWENDOLYN COMBS

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*Associate Professor of Management,
Director for Faculty Diversity and Inclusion
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Appointed: 2020*

Gwendolyn Marizett Combs serves the University in both faculty and administrative roles. Academically, she is an Associate Professor of Management in the College of Business. Administratively, she is the Director for Faculty Diversity and Inclusion in the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor; and coordinates the work of the three UNL Chancellor's Diversity Commissions.

Combs teaches various courses in human resources management and advises students interested in careers in that professional field. Her scholarly publications and conference presentations are framed more specifically within the areas of recruitment and selection, individual identity and inter-group behaviors, workplace equality, and organizational environments for diversity and inclusion. Additionally, she assists organizations in developing and integrating human resource programs/policy, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and diversity training. Combs received her BA from Wellesley College in Massachusetts, her MBA from Washington University in Missouri, and her Ph.D. from University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER
LINDA M. CUNNINGHAM

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*Division Director, Employee Relations,
Organizational Development & Diversity
2001 Administration Center
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Appointed: 2016*

Linda Cunningham is the division director of employee relations, organizational development & diversity. Cunningham is a dynamic HR practitioner with extensive experience in several aspects of human resources including employee relations, training and development, and reward and recognition. Cunningham's expertise also includes diversity and inclusion, cultural competency in healthcare, and leadership and management coaching. She is passionate about helping individuals make the most of their talents and resources.

Cunningham holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Care Management from Bellevue University.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER
SHIRLEY F. DELAIR, M.D., M.P.H.

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*Associate Dean, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Chief, Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Director, Pediatric Residency Global Health Track
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
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Appointed: 2020*

Dr. Delair is an associate professor of pediatrics and chief of the UNMC Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases in the Department of Pediatrics. She has been a member of the faculty at UNMC since 2010, moving to UNMC after completing her pediatric infectious diseases fellowship at UCLA. She received her MD from Universidad CES in Medellin, Colombia, and completed her pediatric residency at Saint Joseph’s Children’s Hospital, in Paterson, New Jersey. She also received a Master’s of Public Health in Epidemiology from the UNMC College of Public Health.

Throughout her time at UNMC, Dr. Delair has been a leading advocate for the importance of health equity in her clinical work, research, teaching and mentoring activities. In her new role as the inaugural Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at UNMC College of Medicine, Dr. Delair plans to continue this work in collaboration with partners throughout the University to foster diversity, inclusion and equity in our organizations.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
CHARLESETTE (CHARLIE) E. FOSTER

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*Assistant Vice Chancellor for Inclusive Student Excellence
102 Gaughan Multicultural Center
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(402) 472-5500 | cfoster2@unl.edu
Appointed: 2016*

Charlesette Foster is assistant vice chancellor for student affairs at the University of Nebraska Lincoln. Foster’s role includes serving as director of the Jackie Gaughan Multicultural Center and Office of Academic Success and Intercultural Services (OASIS). Prior to assuming that position, she served as a counselor with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. With CAPS, she served as the outreach coordinator.

Foster joined the university in 2001 after coordinating a therapeutic foster care program at the University of Alabama’s Brewer Porch Children’s Center. In that role, she managed a multi-county program that served emotionally disturbed children in the care of the state of Alabama.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
Nkenge Friday, Ed.D

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*Assistant Vice Chancellor,
Office of Diversity and Inclusion
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Appointed: 2019*

Dr. Nkenge Friday serves as the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Friday works to engage all citizens in supporting and recognizing inclusive excellence through organized partnership and community building. She has researched the influence of global nationalism on higher learning and the role of higher education for resolution in conflict ridden cultures.

Previously, Friday has worked as an Associate Dean and Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Marietta College. There, she directed a cultural climate assessment that led to the formation of the inclusive excellence initiative - One Marietta. This initiative introduced the college’s first multicultural student center and the establishment of five-full tuition scholarships for historically underserved students.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY
MARTONIA GASKILL, Ph.D.

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*Associate Professor of Education, Director & Advisor,
Instructional Technology Master Program
President, UNK Faculty Senate
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Appointed: 2020*

Martonia Gaskill is an Associate Professor of Education at UNK. She received her Masters from UNK and PhD from UNL both in Instructional Technology. She served as Director and Advisor for the Curriculum & Instruction Masters Program for several years before her recent role as the Director and Advisor of the Instructional Technology Masters Program at UNK. Martonia mentors undergraduate research and has recently focused on mentoring minority students interested in pursuing research and graduate school.

She has been an active member of the UNK Faculty Senate since 2014 serving in several roles in the executive committee, and in many Faculty Senate standing committees. Martonia is a member of the UNK College of Education Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Social Justice Committee and a member of the Nebraska Department of Education Future Ready Nebraska Council.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY
JUAN C. GUZMAN

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*Director, Multi-Cultural Affairs
116 Nebraska Student Union
Kearney, NE 68849
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Appointed: 2016*

Juan Guzman has been the director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs at the University of Nebraska at Kearney for the last 12 years. Guzman started his college career with an associate's degree at Central Community College. He continued on to UNK, where he received his Bachelor of Science degree in education in 2002. Guzman then worked as an assistant director for Enhancing Access to Higher Education.

In 2005, Guzman received a master's degree in counseling and school psychology, with an emphasis in student affairs. He completed a second master's in Spanish literature in 2017. Guzman's passion is to serve his community and to help students achieve their dream of obtaining a college education.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
CECIL L. HICKS, JR.

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*Associate Vice Chancellor Diversity, Equity,
Access and Inclusion
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Appointed: 2016*

Cecil L. Hicks, Jr. is a proven leader with 20+ years of experience in the public and private sector. Hicks has held leadership roles in the financial industry, city government, non-profit and higher education. Hicks currently serves as assistant vice chancellor and director of human resources for the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He oversees employee relations, payroll, benefits, employment, compensation and human resources information systems.

Hicks is a member of the Chancellor's Cabinet, as well as UNO's Strategic Planning Committee and UNO's Diversity Strategic Committee. In 1990 he earned his Bachelor of Science degree from UNL in business management with an emphasis in human resources and is a 2010 graduate of the UNO Executive MBA Program.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY

TONI HILL

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*Associate Professor, Family Studies
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Appointed: 2017*

Dr. Toni Hill is an associate professor in family studies, and serves as the program director for the early childhood and family advocacy (ECFA) degree and certificate programs. Hill graduated with her Ph.D from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Before coming to UNK in the fall of 2010, Hill taught courses focused on children, families, additions and violence at both UNL and UNO while completing her graduate studies. At UNK, she teaches a variety of courses, including parent education and aging adult courses, as well as two original courses that she developed. Hill is very active on the campus and in the local community mentoring student research activities and volunteering with an Alzheimer’s coalition.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY

GILBERT HINGA

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*Dean, Student Affairs
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Appointed: 2016*

Prior to serving as dean of student affairs at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Dr. Gilbert Hinga served as vice president for student affairs and dean of students at Hastings College from 2012 to 2014. Hinga served at Tarleton State University for nearly 10 years as associate vice president for student life and as assistant vice president for wellness and career development.

Previously, Hinga was at Miami University for nearly a decade where he served as assistant director for multicultural services. Hinga’s experiences in mental health and wellness span over 20 years. Hinga earned his Psy.D. from Wright State University and his bachelor’s degree in psychology from Warren Wilson College.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER

GIOVANNI JONES

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*Employee Training & Development Specialist,
HR, Employee Relations, Organizational
Development & Diversity
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Appointed: 2019*

Giovanni Jones started her role as Employee Training and Development Specialist at UNMC in 2017. Giovanni helps design and deliver campus training and development solutions focusing on building internal awareness and accountability for diversity and inclusion.

Giovanni began as a schoolteacher in middle, high and postsecondary levels as well as in the nonprofit sector. She currently serves as the Secretary for the Omaha Public Schools TeamMates Chapter and as a Mentor for the College of Saint Mary’s African American Mentoring Program. Giovanni has a B.S. degree in Middle Level Education specializing in Language Arts and a Master’s degree in Educational Administration with a supervisory certification from UNL.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER
EMILY MCELROY, MLIS

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Dean
Leon S. McGoogan Health Sciences Library
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Appointed: 2019

Emily McElroy is the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Director of McGoogan Library. Before her arrival in 2013, McElroy was associate university librarian at Oregon Health & Science University. A native of Illinois, she has worked at a variety of academic institutions, including New York University and the University of Oregon.

McElroy received her Master's in Library and Information Science from Dominican University and a Bachelor of Science degree in History from DePaul University. She worked as a VISTA volunteer in Kansas City and Chicago, which contributed to her lifelong interest in public policy, community organizing, and histories of inequality.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY
SHARON OBASI, Ph.D.

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Associate Professor & Program Chair, Family Science
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Appointed: 2021

Biography Pending



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY
MARY J. CHINNOCK PETROSKI

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Chief Compliance Officer
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Appointed: 2016

Mary Chinnock Petroski became UNK's chief compliance officer in June of 2017, after serving as UNK's human resources director for three years. The Office of Equity and Compliance is responsible for ADA/504, FMLA, Title IX and Affirmative Action/Equal Employment. Petroski serves as co-diversity officer.

Prior to joining UNK, Petroski was the manager of employee relations, training and professional development at the University of Wyoming for nine years. A 1977 graduate of Nebraska Wesleyan University and a 1987 graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Law, Petroski worked as a private practice attorney specializing in employment law before beginning her career in higher education.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER
SHERITTA A. STRONG, MD, DFAPA

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*Assistant Professor, Psychiatry
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Appointed: 2020*

A psychiatrist at UNMC and Omaha Native, Dr. Strong is an award-winning distinguished fellow of the APA. She is the pre-clinical director and block co-leader in medical student education. In her many roles, she is the faculty advisor and mentor to an inclusive student group at UNMC (GRADS), involved with the faculty committee of SHARING, and provides care at Charles Drew Health Center. Nationally, she served on a panel for diversity & inclusion at the women's empowerment conference and co-led a workshop on microaggressions.

Furthermore, Dr. Strong has received several awards locally and nationally including the NCNW Women in Medicine Award, the UNMC's Alumni Early Career Award, and the APA's national education award. She is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Omaha Chapter of the Links, Inc. In her spare time, she enjoys basketball with her husband and teenage sons.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
STANCIA WHITCOMB JENKINS

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*Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer,
University of Nebraska System
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(402) 472-5270 | sjenkins@nebraska.edu
Appointed: 2016*

Prior to the University of Nebraska, Jenkins spent 14 years at the University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC). While there she developed and executed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Department of Justice to address diversity and inclusion concerns and implemented a "Chancellor's Lecture Series" on the nation's changing demographics and the impact on education, economics, and business.

Jenkins holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Advertising from the University of Kansas, and a master's degree in public affairs with a focus on business and government relations from Park University. She is also a qualified administrator and interpreter of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) designed for intercultural developmental of individuals, group training, and organizational change efforts.