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### Equity & Inclusion Matters - Issue 5

Otterbein University

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# EQUITY INCLUSION & MATTERS

Otterbein's Office of Social Justice & Activism: Making the Invisible Visible

Issue 5 - November 2018



## diversity CALENDAR

November 14 & 28

Social Justice Ambassadors Unpacking Racial Terror in America Series (4- 5 pm in Library 118)

- Nov. 14: Racial Terror and the Great Migration
- Nov. 28: Black Veterans and the Ideology of White Supremacy

November 14

Queer Giving: Launch Event for LGTBIA Emergency Fund (4 - 5 pm in Science Center atrium)

November 15

FreeZone! Discussion: Bi and Pansexuality (9 pm in 46 W. Home St.)

November 17

Finding Comfort in Discomfort: A Cross-Racial Dialogue on Race and Racism (9:30 am - 4:30 pm in Roush 114)

January 21

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 23

MLK Convocation (3 pm in Cowan Hall)

## Otterbein reaches most diverse class in history for fifth consecutive year

Otterbein's new class of students that began in August 2018 is the University's most diverse class in Otterbein's 171-year history, for the fifth year in a row.

The class of approximately 590 students represents 25 states. Regionally, the class represents 64 Ohio counties. Forty-five students have enrolled from Columbus City Schools, thanks to outreach programs to the district's graduates, which boast a 94 percent retention rate.

Otterbein also has 19 new international students this fall and two international scholars, representing 10 countries.

The students come from Australia, Brazil, China, England, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan.



*Veteran Michael Newman stands proudly with his Otterbein diploma.*

Other statistics include:

- Overall diversity at Otterbein is 20 percent across all classes.
- This fall's first-year class exceeds 23 percent students of color, or 139 students.
- Thirty-four percent of the entering class is eligible for the federal Pell grant.
- The class's average GPA is 3.57.

## Otterbein proudly celebrates gender-neutral initiatives

Often, college is a place where students can learn about themselves and grow as individuals. For some, it's the first place they can truly express who they are. Each year, Otterbein celebrates National Pride Month and welcomes, celebrates and supports members of our LGBTQIA+ Cardinal community.

"When the rest of the world saw black or white, male or female — all that Otterbein looked for at its founding was a bright mind, a compassionate heart and skilled hands ready to go to work and to make good," said former President Kathy Krendl.

At Otterbein, LGBTQIA+ students will find gender-neutral housing and restrooms all across campus, a student-led organization called FreeZone! and a gender-neutral sorority, Tau Delta. The Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies program and FreeZone! work to offer programming and opportunities for students to socialize and communicate about the issues that matter to them. The Tri-Iota Honorary Society works to encourage and support scholarship

bisexual, transgender and ally students and to acknowledge their achievements and contributions to the University." Otterbein offers Lavender Graduation as an open environment for friends and family to show their support and celebrate with their loved ones in the LGBTQIA+ community. At the celebration, each student receives a cord, amethyst stone and has a chance to reflect about their experience and thank their support systems.

Otterbein also supports the LGBTQIA+ community with a gender-neutral email naming convention, designed to eliminate the "forced outing" of a student or employee if their chosen name and identity is not reflected in

“When the rest of the world saw black or white, male or female — all that Otterbein looked for at its founding was a bright mind, a compassionate heart and skilled hands ready to go to work and to make good.”  
former President Kathy Krendl

and excellence in WGSS, as well as embody the values of plurality of thought, egalitarianism and social justice.

Each spring, Otterbein holds a Lavender Graduation ceremony. According to the Human Rights Campaign, a Lavender Graduation is "an annual ceremony conducted on numerous campuses to honor lesbian, gay,

institutional records.

Beginning two months ago, students will also have the opportunity to earn the Otterbein LGBTQI Scholarship. This endowed scholarship made possible by our donors committed to equity and inclusion will allow for students to apply for this award and make their Otterbein education even more accessible.



### Fall series explores diversity & sports

The Office of Social Justice & Activism hosted a four-part fall series exploring issues of diversity and sports entitled "Under the Lights."

Issues such as the relationship between sports, socioeconomics and community service and the successes and challenges of women in sports were examined.

In another segment, sports and cultural diversity were discussed, exploring the ongoing plight of Native Americans and African Americans within sports.

In the final session sports and sexual orientation, with Columbus Blue Jackets staff counsel Peter Lovins, leading the discussion, explored legal cases of discrimination within sports.

## HR department, Academic Affairs, building new bridges

The Otterbein human resources department, working closely with Academic Affairs, is building relationships with new Ohio groups to recruit diverse students, faculty and staff.

Marketing and Communication Director Roberto Ponce has been instrumental as well in establishing new partnerships.

The initiative, called Building Bridges, is tapping the associations of Hispanic and Black nurses, and Hispanic professionals, to bring diversity to campus.

"We are working with the Hispanic Columbus Chamber of Commerce, which just invited Roberto Ponce to speak at a meeting where Richard Cordray will also be speaking," said HR Director Scott Fitzgerald. "We hope, over time, we become a valued partner in these communities

that will aid both in student and faculty and staff recruiting."

Otterbein just joined the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, a national organization with a local chapter dedicated to helping Hispanic nursing students and nurses in the Hispanic community.



*Marketing and Communication Director Roberto Ponce forges new partnerships for Otterbein.*

"We will also be joining the Columbus Black Nursing Association," Fitzgerald said. "Both programs have mentoring programs to help nursing students and also can provide scholarships. They also have job posting sites where we can post positions."

Otterbein will also partner with Prospanica, another national organization with a

local chapter. Prospanica is the leading catalyst for Hispanic professional achievement. Its mission is to empower and enable Hispanic professionals to achieve their full

educational, economic and social potential.

**“We hope, over time, we become a valued partner in these communities that will aid both in student and faculty and staff recruiting.”**  
**HR Director, Scott Fitzgerald**

## from the DIRECTOR

On behalf of all of us in the Office of Social Justice & Activism and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, I want to welcome our returning students back to campus and new students to Otterbein University. The new academic year not only means new assets to our community, but new initiatives and another opportunity to build on the university's core values. It is a goal of the university that when we think of Otterbein, equity and inclusion come to mind. An inclusive excellence that intends to support a comprehensive and well-organized set of systemic actions that focus specifically and intentionally on fostering greater diversity, equity, inclusion and accountability at every level of university life.

The fundamental premise of inclusion suggests that we should intentionally integrate their diversity efforts into the core aspects of our institution, such as academic priorities, leadership, quality improvement initiatives, decision-making, day-to-day operations and organizational cultures, in order to maximize our success.

This means attending to both the demographic diversity of the institution and to the need to foster climates and cultures that provide every member of our campus community with the opportunity to thrive and succeed. In addition, we must focus on making excellence inclusive. This means ensuring that we do not reserve academic and social success on campus for a few. It involves the integration of diversity, inclusion and academic/educational quality to assure that they are recognized as interdependent. Therefore, the focus is on being inclusive about excellence.

We recognize both avenues of inclusion as essential for engaging, supporting and celebrating our faculty, staff, students, alumni and administration. As a result, we can continue to establish a welcoming and inclusive campus community that values and respects the identities, insights and contributions of everyone.

*Continued page 4*

# Knight '96 instills values in students she learned while at Otterbein

By Lauren Heberling '19

College plays an important role in the lives of young adults around the world, introducing them to new cultures and people from different backgrounds. It's a place that shapes them, challenges them and helps them learn not only about their given major, but about themselves. Otterbein University goes a step further, instilling values that become central to each graduate.

Rhonda Talford Knight '96 can attest to the support she received at Otterbein that eventually led her to becoming the vice president and inclusion manager for Huntington Bank.

"College helped to provide a deepened strength in my value system and made me realize my passion," said Knight. "The faculty believes in you and the students care about each other."

At Huntington Bank, Knight is focused on increasing workforce diversity, work place inclusion and community engagement. She delivers diversity and inclusion training and works to integrate inclusive leadership behaviors within the company. She also oversees three inclusion councils and eight business resource groups that are colleague-driven and give employees a voluntary space to discuss common diversity dimensions.



Rhonda Talford Knight '96

Knight is also the CEO and founder of The Knight Consulting Group, LLC. She works with clients to develop strategic plans that implement values of equity, inclusion and advocacy within

the workplace.

As a public relations major at Otterbein, Knight recalls her PR campaigns class project where she worked with the Columbus YWCA, a nonprofit whose mission is to eliminate racism and empower women. It was working with the YWCA that made Knight confident in her passion for diversity and inclusion.

"I am fortunate enough to do the work I am passionate about and what I love," said Knight.

Knight gives back to Otterbein by working with James Prysock, director for the Office of Social Justice and Activism. She forms relationships and educates students about the opportunities at Huntington and what it is like to be involved with a financial institution, not just a bank. She also works with students on developmental skills, face-to-face communication, and discovering their leadership styles, as well as connecting them to businesses owned by people of color.

## from the DIRECTOR cont.

Historically, demographics or numbers have gauged how effective we are in our efforts. We are moving beyond solely numbers toward an inclusive community that embeds diversity throughout the institution in all areas including committee service, policies, curriculum, pedagogy, recruitment, hiring, retention and evaluation.

This is certainly a long-term commitment and must have a comprehensive approach, embedding appreciation of all members and integrating best practices into the very fabric of Otterbein's organizational culture.

As you navigate your own experiences at Otterbein, think of how you can play an integral part in our mission. We all have a responsibility in this work and distancing ourselves from the duty would continue to perpetuate the Us v. Them mentality that placed us in this situation in the first place.

James E. Prysock III

## by the NUMBERS

**94%** retention rate of students coming to Otterbein from Columbus City Schools.

**23%** of students of color in the class of 2022.

**20%** of students of color of Otterbein students across all classes.

**19** new international students this fall representing **10** different countries.