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Undergraduate Diversity Scholar Program: A Proactive Approach to Creating an Inclusive and Multicultural Workforce

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What Is the Undergraduate Diversity Scholar Program?

The University of Kentucky (UK) Libraries approved a statement in September 2013 confirming its commitment to cultivating and encouraging diversity and inclusivity in its personnel policies and in its collections, programs, and services. The library subsequently developed an Undergraduate Diversity Scholar Program to provide two students with a paid internship in the 2014/15 academic year. UK undergraduates interested in diversity issues were encouraged to apply. Applicants were evaluated based on their work experience, volunteer or service activities, recommendations from two referees, and an essay about their belief in the benefits of a diverse society. The successful candidates started the inaugural Program in Fall 2014 and developed and/or led activities and research that promoted the benefits of inclusivity and multicultural awareness in the UK community. They also explored career options in academic librarianship through working in several different library units. Additionally, they received mentoring on building their résumés and preparing for future employment.



Inaugural Undergraduate Diversity Scholar interns Ebony Davis and Nathan Moore

Hands-on Experiences with Library Operations

The diversity scholars gained opportunities to better understand library operations by working in different units:

- Reference: August – September 2014
- Cataloging: September 2014
- Federal Depository Unit: October 2014
- Oral History: October – November 2014
- International Games Day: November 2014
- Special Collections: February – March 2015
- University Press of Kentucky: April 2015

Goals of the Undergraduate Diversity Scholar Program

- Create a workforce that better matches the diversity of UK's students and faculty
- Provide additional assistance to UK Libraries' efforts to promote diversity by assigning work such as preparing multicultural displays and special projects
- Give library faculty and staff the opportunity to train and interact with members of diverse populations
- Introduce undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to meaningful work in a research library
- Foster a desire in the diversity scholars to consider a career in academic librarianship following graduation, either at the staff or professional level
- Have the diversity scholars share their knowledge of and interest in UK Libraries with other students
- Encourage others of diverse backgrounds to apply to the Undergraduate Diversity Scholar Program

UK Libraries Diversity Task Force coordinates and oversees the program, which has been approved for continuation in the 2015/2016 academic year.



UK President Dr. Eli Capilouto congratulates Nathan Moore at UK Libraries Spring Gala.

Diversity Scholars' Research Projects

As part of the program, each diversity scholar pursued a research project of their own interest. Ebony Davis designed an oral history project in which she interviewed African-American faculty and staff members at UK. She had conversations with three employees and identified several parallel themes in the interviewees' experiences. One major finding was that each of the three subjects had a mentor who guided them as they pursued their opportunities. Nathan Moore conducted research on the Works Progress Administration Ex-Slave Narratives. He found that the works, particularly in passages describing folklore and religion, painted a picture of slaves that were far from being passive but were actively engaged in resistance.

Diversity Scholars' Comments



Ebony Davis created an online diversity guide for UK and a digital display for the Hispanic Heritage Month.

"The first couple of weeks of my internship have made me realize my abilities in performing new tasks. My first tasks were coming up with a list of possible displays, training to work with LibGuide, and discovering a topic for my research project."

--Ebony Davis



"I learned to have a greater appreciation for library science, as someone who loves books and someone who will be researcher in the future. It also piques my interest in library science as an option for employment."

"I learned that there are multiple jobs that can be handled by a librarian, and that they are all quite important to knowledge production and preservation. I also learned that there really isn't much diversity in library science, furthermore underscoring the need for this program."

--Nathan Moore



Nathan Moore shares his thoughts at UK Libraries Spring Gala.

Supervisors' Comments

"We wanted the Diversity Interns to gain basic understanding of Oral History mechanics and the value of first-account interviews in research through indexing interviews... Each intern has gone on to become an oral historian, and they're using oral histories to further their own research. If that's not success, I don't know what is."

--Kopana Terry, Oral History Archivist

"I think the first year of our Undergraduate Diversity Internship was a great success. It was a two-way street in that both the students and the librarians had their horizons broadened. On the one hand, we were able to introduce our diversity students to the world of academic libraries and, on the other, they brought a number of important diversity issues to the fore for us. I personally learned a lot from the way they looked at issues and approached problems; they occasionally challenged some of my assumptions. It was always inspiring to be around such thoughtful and hard-working students."

--Peter Hesseldenz, Business and Economics Academic Liaison