Welcome from the Director

Welcome to the first edition of the Purdue University “Catalyst”. This electronic newsletter emanates from the Purdue University Office of Supplier Diversity and will inform you of activities, initiatives and strategies designed to increase the participation of minority and women-owned businesses in the procurement processes of Purdue University. It will also provide information to other opportunities that exist throughout the state of Indiana.

Our mission statement for the Office is stated above, "Provide leadership and develop relationships that will result in Purdue’s supplier base reflecting the minority and women-owned business profile of its region." Even though the office has been in existence barely 18 months, there have been much activity and some major successes. The first minority prime contractor firm, Smoot Construction, was awarded the contract to build the new Neil Armstrong Engineering Administration Building and is due for completion in 2008. The first female was selected as architect-of-record, Brenner Design, and was awarded the contract to design the new Mann Center. The multimillion dollar ERP project has 2 Indiana firms, Professional Data Dimensions and Prairie Quest Consulting as MWBE partners. Concerto, a certified joint partnership between Office Max and Guy Brown, a minority business enterprise, is the primary supplier of office supplies to the campus. Most recently, a minority firm purchased the assets of a longtime vendor to the university and stands to increase their revenues significantly while hiring additional employees.

This is a good start but it is just that, a start. We have structure activities that bring MWBE’s to campus to meet with the actual buyer who handles their products and services. This eliminates a lot of wasted time trying to find the right person to market your products or services to. In the two events held, we have had over 250 MWBE’s from across the state take advantage of the opportunity to meet face-to-face with staff that makes daily decision that impact the purchase of over $300 million dollars in commodities and services each year. The next session is scheduled for November 15 and 16 and with limited space; the available spaces are quickly disappearing. If this is something that would help you and your business, you had better sign up right away. In the past we have had four separate sessions for specific industries each lasting 2 hours. That provided the opportunity to learn how to do business with Purdue and meet with the purchasing staff. This time we are expanding the program to include some of the larger employers in the Greater Lafayette area. Companies like State Farm Insurance, Caterpillar, Tate & Lyle, Ivy Tech College, the cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette, Lilly Tippecanoe Labs, and of course Purdue University will all have representatives and buying staff present to meet with the attendees in search of good quality firms to do business with. Is this something that you can afford to pass up? There have been contracts awarded to attendees at past sessions and I’m sure that there will be contracts awarded in the future.

This past summer we had seven prime contractors from the Greater Lafayette area travel to Indianapolis to take part in our "Construction Connection" and there they met with over 70 minority and women-owned businesses that were looking for the right people to talk with about subcontracting possibilities. We plan to repeat that effort annually and watch it grow and reap many benefits for minority and women construction firms.

Next summer we are planning a conference that will bring to Indianapolis over 200 higher education professionals who have responsibilities to increase their universities spend with minority and women owned business firms. Keep your eyes on this newsletter and as we finalize planning you will get all the information concerning the conference. It will be a tremendous opportunity for MWBE businesses that are capable of doing business on a national level.
As you can see we have been busy and there are no plans to slow down. Take some time and browse the links of this newsletter. See what we are doing and we welcome any suggestions you may have to make it even better. Initially we will publish quarterly but soon hope to have monthly updates. Between scheduled publishing dates we will be using this format to notify you of any important information such as bid dates and activities from around the state that we think are important enough to contact you. We promise to be prudent and not just send you notices to fill your email inboxes.

Number 1 Way to Get Diverse Suppliers

Relationships build business. Knowing this, Wachovia is introducing itself to California’s communities of color as it sets up banking centers throughout the state. How? The bank is inviting local business owners of color to supplier-diversity seminars, where Wachovia and other corporations tell how small-business owners can become their partners.

The Details: Wachovia, No. 21 on The 2006 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity® list, last week sponsored its first Minority Enterprise Growth Summit in Long Beach, Calif., featuring Wachovia’s supplier-diversity team, along with supplier-diversity officials from Disney and Sempra Energy, No. 19 on The 2006 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity list.

The three companies couldn’t be more different. While the two on the Top 50 were forthcoming about their numbers and detailed their spend with communities of color, Disney clammed up. Sempra and Wachovia spent 21 percent and 6 percent with business owners of color and women business owners in 2005 and set their goals at 25 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Both companies also require their vendors to spend a certain percentage with business owners of color and women business owners.

The Problem: When companies won’t share their data, there is no way to gauge their commitment, said Raul Medrano, organizer of the growth summit and owner of R.J. Medrano & Associates, a consultancy specializing in businesses owned by people of color and women.

Medrano was disappointed that Disney would not share its supplier-diversity goals. He added, however, that it’s OK if a company is not doing well with supplier diversity. Participating in the summit demonstrates a company is headed in the right direction.

"The emerging markets have emerged, and in California, people of color comprise 50 percent of the market, so corporations have to show interest in our communities," said Medrano. "Supplier diversity is not a social program or corporate welfare. It is an important business tactic for a company to access markets."

The Future: Wachovia hopes its summits—the second is being held in San Diego in November—will help it build brand awareness and business in communities of color as it builds its presence in California following its 2006 purchase of Westcorp, its auto-finance subsidiary WFS Financial, and Golden West Financial.

Sempra is a provider of natural gas to 5.6 million residents and distributor of electricity to 1.3 million customers through its Southern California Gas and San Diego Gas & Electric utilities.

"We’re the new kid on the block out here," said Lenny Spriggs, senior vice president and director of supplier diversity, corporate, for Wachovia. "So the growth summit is a way to introduce our commitment to MBEs and their communities."

Presidents of the business chambers of color said the growth summit speaks volumes about commitment.

"This sets a precedence corporate America should follow," said Jaime Rojas, president and CEO of the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, noting that Latino business owners comprise 25 percent of California’s small-business owners and that Latinos are 40 percent of the state’s population.

Rojas added that the growth summit endears the community to Wachovia, which is very important when conducting business with Latino business owners.

"They’ve gone into the market with open arms and Latinos do business in a family-type environment," said Rojas.

Who you know and how well you know them is why Spriggs said the growth summit was important.

"It’s about relationships," said Spriggs.
In The Spot Light

Current Business Partners:

**MBE:** Smoot Construction has won a $50 million dollar bid to build the new Neil Armstrong Hall of Engineering.

**WBE:** Brenner Design is an architectural firm that designed and furnished RAWLS Hall, the new school of management building on campus.

Future Business Partners:

**MBE:** Moralez Group, RLR, Global Perspectives

**WBE:** Floral Designs by Adam and Eve is a WBE right here in Lafayette, IN. Owned by Mrs. Paula Davis this company is poised to do business with Purdue.

Staff Kudos:

The Office of Supplier Diversity Development would like to recognize Carol Coddington, Angeline Delworth, and Sylvia Cotton for creating the business managers task force, whose work has helped developed the Office of Supplier Diversity Development.

These energetic and thoughtful Business Managers have provided valuable suggestions that have shaped the direction and activities of the Purdue University Office of Supplier Diversity Development. Their insight has saved countless hours of trial-and-error and has lead to quick implementation of supplier diversity objectives. It was this group that earlier on indicated the importance of including the Deans and Department Heads in the supplier diversity dialogue. Just as important was the suggestion that led to the development of the newly created Purdue Diversity Directory where minority and women-owned firms will be listed. This directory will allow everyone with a purdue.edu email address to search for minority and women-owned businesses to notify them of bidding or purchasing opportunities at Purdue. When you see these ladies, please thank them for all they have done to support the goals of this office and Purdue University.