

National Supplier
Diversity Conference
Marriott Hotel Keystone Crossing
Thursday, June 7, 2007
noon

17.5 minutes

Good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today.

My special thanks for offering me a platform to talk about this very important issue.

Supplier diversity is certainly a priority at Purdue University.

It is personal priority of mine as President of Purdue.
I believe success in this area is not only important to our universities, --

- it is also essential
for this nation.

It is essential for America to succeed in all aspects of diversity in order for this nation to fulfill its founding vision as a land where all people truly are created equal.

The National Association of Educational Procurement plays an important role not only for universities but for our nation.

It has a history that reaches deep into the early 20th century.

Since the 1920's, this has been the non-profit professional association dedicated to serving higher education purchasing officers in the United States and Canada.

NAEP's mission is to facilitate the development, exchange and practice of effective and ethical procurement principles and techniques -

- within higher education and associated communities.

Currently, more than 1,500 colleges and universities are members.

Congratulations to everyone involved with the National Association of Educational Procurement.

This conference today is a wonderful opportunity to meet the goals of the association.

It brings us together to share knowledge and ideas.

And, these meetings help to reinvigorate us for the challenges ahead.

Conferences recharge our batteries and inspire us to new heights.

Working together we can accomplish a great deal.

Congratulations to the leaders of this conference and to all of you for participating in this program.

This is the premier event for large and small higher education institutions that want to succeed in supplier diversity.

As it says on this conference website, "higher education can and should set the bar for diversity in all areas: --

- "students, suppliers, faculty and administration."

Higher education should always set a shining example for the rest of society to follow.

Diversity is one of the most important issues at Purdue and at universities throughout the nation.

Indeed, it is one of the most important issues in our nation and world.

But it has a special significance at universities.

Since American society is highly diverse, --

- universities, --
 - which prepare most of our future leaders, --
 - must reflect that diversity.

Diversity is important for everyone on our campuses.

It is not for the benefit of minority students alone.

Diversity is a tide that raises all ships.

It is vital to the learning environment.

All of our students, faculty and staff benefit tremendously –

- through interaction with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures.

I believe diversity is more than an issue of tolerance.

Diversity is a celebration.

All people, no matter where we live or who we are –

- have one thing in common.

We are all different.

When we talk about diversity we are talking about celebrating our differences –

- and the strength that emerges from different people working together for a common purpose.

Jerome Nathanson described the democratic way of life as --

- "a growing appreciation of people's differences – not merely as tolerable, --

- "but as the essence of a rich and rewarding experience."

Our objective on our university campuses is celebrate the rich and rewarding experience -

- **that grows from bringing people of many backgrounds together in one place -**

- **for the purpose of learning**

In the years ahead, our students will live and work in an increasingly globalized world -

- where they will need to interact with a wide variety of people, cultures and customs.

Diversity on our campuses prepares students for their future.

Diversity on our campuses also helps to break down stereotypes and misinformation -

- that are the breeding grounds of intolerance.

Martin Luther King Jr. said: --

- "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects us all"

It is a major role of universities today to promote understanding -

- to bring diverse groups of people together so they can explore their differences, -

- their commonalities -

- and learn from one another.

And there are other compelling reasons for universities to reach out to minorities.

America – for all its greatness as a land of opportunity –

- has not always treated all people equally.

Our government and most of our major institutions have recognized –

- that complex historic and social forces have denied some of our people –
 - many of the benefits –
 - that most Americans take for granted.

The impact of this over the centuries has been significant –

- and we will live with the consequences for many years to come.

As someone who has spent his entire working life on university campuses, --

- I understand that education is the best tool for giving people the ability –
 - to take control of their lives and become productive citizens.

I believe most educators understand this enormous power for positive change.

Affirmative action is an important effort to insure that this power for change reaches –

- all sectors of society.

An America in which everyone is able to take full advantage of the benefits of education –

- will be an even greater nation than it is today.

Diversity is among the overarching initiatives in our Purdue Strategic Plans.

This means it is part of everything we are working to accomplish in our land grant college missions for learning, discovery and engagement.

It is part of student and faculty recruitment, staff hiring and promotion, university contracting, procurement, graduation rates, research . . .

Everything.

In order to accomplish any of our goals, we must first be successful in diversity.

What is diversity?

The easy answer is that diversity is bringing together people of different ethnicities, nationalities, religions and philosophies.

Diversity involves sexual orientation. It involves gender. It involves age. It includes people with disabilities. It is people with different skills and backgrounds.

But diversity is really more than all of this.

Diversity is an attitude.

Diversity is a feeling within a community.

It is openness and acceptance.

Diversity is caring.

You can bring all the different people in the world together in one place and without a positive attitude and feeling, --

- without openness,
acceptance
and caring –

- you will not
have diversity.

The demographics of America are rapidly changing.

By 2050 there will be a complete shift in our nation.

Collective minority groups will become the majority.

By 2050, there will be 18 million more minority persons under age 35 than non-minority people of the same ages.

As this change is taking place it is impacting our nation's marketplace

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, the number of minority owned firms has grown four times faster than all U.S. firms.

Minority women are making an impressive mark.

As of 2004 there were an estimated 1.4 million privately-held firms owned by women of color in the United States.

These companies employed nearly 1.3 million people, generating nearly \$147 billion in sales.

Twenty-first century America is already vastly different from the last century.

And the differences will become more profound in the immediate years ahead.

As our nation is changing, so we must we change to meet the needs and opportunities of our times.

Universities must play a leadership role in diversity because the future of this nation will be shaped by diversity.

And the future rests in the hands of the students we are developing on our campuses today.

Supplier diversity is an important aspect of this.

It is not enough to increase our diversity enrollment and diversity hiring.

We must also diversify our purchasing activities to ensure equal opportunity.

To accomplish this, universities need to be proactive.

Purdue University created an Office of Supplier Diversity and hired Jesse Moore as its Director in January 2005.

I know Jesse is active in this organization and conference and we appreciate his leadership.

The creation of this office and the hiring of Jesse was a conscious decision on part to move our diversity efforts to what we called "the next level."

It was simply not enough to want to do better; it was not enough to hope for more diversity.

Diversity is accomplished only through aggressive outreach.

We gave this office a very high status and profile.

Our office of Supplier Diversity Development reports director to Executive Vice President and Treasurer.

This person oversees the entire non-academic side of the university -

- and is second only to the President.

The mission of our Office of Supplier Diversity is ensure that Purdue's supplier base reflects the racial and gender diversity of our region.

We do this through leadership and by building relationships.

At Purdue, our vision is to be a national leader in developing a diverse supplier base.

We have three primary activities underway to accomplish our vision and goals.

First, we are making certain that all constituencies are aware of Purdue's programs and opportunities.

We want minority and women owned businesses to understand Purdue's procurement process and to have access to the information they need.

We are helping them to learn about the resources available to help them compete.

Second, we are providing tools for Purdue decisions makers.

We want our staff to understand the importance of supplier diversity.

We want them to fully understand the resources available so they can help other people.

And third, we recognize that we can't simply wait for supplier diversity to happen. We must use outreach to accomplish our goals.

This includes broad community outreach programs and events focused on specific audiences.

Some of our outreach activities include partnerships with groups such as the Lafayette Supplier Diversity Coalition and Indiana Black Expo.

Since the Purdue Office of Supplier Diversity was established in 2005 we have sponsored three major relationship-building events.

One hundred forty people attended the first one in October of 2005.

At the third event held last November 400 people attended –

- nearly three times the number that attended the year before.

Some of the major accomplishment of our office since 2005 include:

- We created a data base and working relationships with 68 Indiana advocacy groups; and

- we established a minority and women business enterprise data base with nearly 1,000 companies;

Purdue's still-developing supplier diversity efforts have been recognized by various groups including:

- the Indiana Business Diversity Council,
- the Indiana State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce,
- Indiana Minority Business Magazine,
- the Purdue Black Graduation Association,
- and our County Commissioners who declared a "Supplier Diversity Days."

Our efforts are having an impact.

In Purdue construction, minority and women owned business enterprise participation has been in double digits the past three years.

The highlight was in 2005 when our \$43.5 million Neil Armstrong Hall of Engineering went to a minority general contractor.

In architectural and engineering services, our minority and women owned business enterprise participation has been running about one-quarter of the total spending for nearly three years.

We are also on track with procurement of goods and services.

In four and one half years our minority and women owned business enterprise spending has doubled from 4 percent to 8 percent.

We are pleased with our progress, but we have not yet reached our goals.

Our plans are to continue moving forward with this and do ever better.

Future thrusts include: --

- continuing to build relationships that result in successful business partnerships;
- continuing our work with other Indiana universities and the National Association of Educational Procurement to identify “best practices;”
- and continuing to provide training to staff in order to fully integrate supplier diversity into daily procurement and contracting activities.

I am a strong advocate of Strategic Planning.

I believe Strategic Plans are essential to increasing our supplier diversity.

We must be proactive and we must have a plan and a means to assess how we our progressing with that plan.

I am going to conclude with a brief story.

It is a fable, actually.

It’s in a book "Building a House for Diversity," by R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr.

His book begins with a story about a giraffe who wants to befriend an elephant.

The giraffe invites the elephant into his home.

And he is quite pleased with his own sense of diversity and acceptance in welcoming an elephant –

- which is so different from a giraffe.

Of course, the wide elephant can’t fit through the front door that is designed for a tall giraffe.

But after some quick carpentry to enlarge the basement door –

- the elephant comes in.

The giraffe goes off to answer a phone call, telling the elephant, "Please make yourself at home."

But every time the elephant moves, there is a large scrunch or crashing sound.

When the giraffe returns, he is amazed at the damage that the elephant has done and is quick to offer advice.

"Sign up for weight-watchers," he urges the elephant.

"And it wouldn't hurt if you'd go to ballet class at night to become lighter on your feet."

Simply welcoming someone different from ourselves into our home does not fulfill the promise of diversity.

Enlarging our door helps.

But these alone do not fulfill the promise of diversity.

If we are serious about diversity, we are going to have to build a house that is comfortable, accommodating and where everyone will feel welcome and at home.

If we are serious about diversity, we are going to have to redesign our policies and procedures to build them comfortable, accommodating and welcome to all.

It is a difficult challenge.

All worthwhile challenges are difficult.

But, I believe, working together, we can do it.

Congratulations for all you have accomplished.

Thank you very much.