

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

Fostering Inclusion: How I've Evolved as a Professional



*By Kris Fenn, Alternative Breaks Coordinator
Lowell Bennion Community Service Center*

My experience participating on the student affairs diversity council and its certificate program have moved the crux of my student engagement work towards that of inclusion and empowerment. My undergraduate education outside of the University of Utah lacked exposure or training around social justice issues such as race, gender identity, ability, religion, etc. While I always supported and felt passionate about social justice and equity issues, I had yet to address my own identity and how that affected my movement through the world. The SADC's certificate program and my involvement on the committee allowed me the space and safety to think critically about my identity as a white, able bodied, agnostic, cisgender woman.

The SADC certificate encouraged me to continually evaluate my language, my programming practices, my assumptions, and broadened my awareness of how systemic oppression can be engrained in our culture and institutions. What I have found helpful about the SADC committee and the training program is that it has provided me a space with supportive colleagues to question and actively grow with my peers on the issues of diversity and inclusion. I feel comfortable acknowledging concerns around diversity with other staff as we navigate how best to serve our student population in the most inclusive ways.

The impact on my work with students has been staggering. We have moved our programming to a point where diversity/inclusion training is required for all student leaders, staff partners, and is a

linchpin theme as we address community impact in action and dialogue. We are prepared to accommodate students of all abilities in the program as best we can, and even have a reserve to cover extra expenses for ADA accommodations. All of our student leaders and staff partners are Safe Zoned and have explored their own identity and how it relates to the issues they volunteer on as well as their participants. As a result, I have observed students evolve in their leadership abilities. Students once expressing fear to address topics such as race or religion are now facilitating trainings on awareness/inclusion, and even holding each other accountable for inclusionary practices. The implementation of this theme in our programming has developed a tight-knit community of student leaders/volunteers that welcome any and all identities on their Alternative Break trips. I believe this is due, in part, to the

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How I've Evolved as a Student Affairs Professional, cont.

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strong example many student affairs staff who have attended the SADC trainings with me are setting.

I now recognize that in my identity I move through and navigate the world differently than others – and in many ways easier than other identities. This realization has caused me to adapt and evolve my interaction with both students

and the communities in which we work. I look forward to continuing my journey to be an inclusive student affairs professional through Bystander Training this spring, and perhaps a doctoral degree which would further train and enlighten me on social justice issues and best practices. I thank the SADC committee members for their work and dedication to meeting me where I am at, and moving my needle forward.

Reflection on The Importance Sharing Personal Experiences

*By Michael Bard, Assistant Registrar,
Office of the Registrar*

I've been in Student Affairs since August 2007 and on the Diversity Council since 2011. It's been an honor to be working in higher education and with such great people. I've learned a lot by attending the diversity seminar series, our council meetings, and the modules. One thing I've learned is the importance of sharing both my own personal experiences and who I am.

I spend a lot of time inside my own head. I usually see myself as the quiet observer, knowing very little, having even less to say, but always learning and trying to contribute. I've been amazed by the remarkable stories that people share. I think each time someone has shared his or her struggles, biases, thoughts, or personal journey... I've benefitted greatly. I've also admired the courage, patience, and kindness that are shown in those moments. It has been inspiring to me both personally and professionally.

It inspires me to move outside of my comfort zones more often. My comfort zones can feel incredibly important to me in many ways. I rely on them to feel successful, stable, safe, organized, and also to cope with various anxieties. Yet, I am constantly required to step out of my comfort zones. For example, I am often uncomfortable and feel very awkward in social settings or when interacting with groups of people. I feel particularly uncomfortable when I'm around people that I'm less familiar with. These things provoke a lot of anxiety. These have been feelings that I have struggled with ever since I can remember. I'm often not sure how to respond or where I should fit in to any given conversation or situation, and then afterwards I am constantly wondering if I was successful.



To make an analogy, social interactions can feel like I am trying to make my way through an unfamiliar dark room to get to the exit. Preferably, I would like to do so without making a mess, stubbing my toe, or looking like a complete buffoon. Once I'm out of the room, I can take a deep breath, calm down, and then I run through all of the events to determine how I could have done better. I look for the lessons each time and I set myself rules that may help in future wanderings through those dark rooms. I've not always been kind to myself in that process, but I am learning to be more gentle and patient. At times, it's also made me a nervous wreck, fearing failure, fearing rejection, and fearing that I may disappoint those whose trust I've earned. It takes a really long time for me to open up and get to know others. I eventually feel more comfortable around people who I've been around long enough to learn their behavioral patterns,

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The Importance of Sharing Personal Experiences, continued

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preferences, and communication styles. In other words, I consciously memorize things about others that help me to navigate their world... because I often feel like a traveler among a foreign society.

I also have some difficulty in verbally communicating my own thoughts and feelings to others. Again, this is particularly true around those people I am less familiar with and in large groups. In those situations, my brain feels like its processing power is eaten up and I have a harder time formulating my thoughts into words without considerable effort. I think part of this is because I work so hard at trying to read other people's various social cues, nonverbal communication, tone of voice, sarcasm, irony, and other non-literal word choices. I often end up feeling like I am paced differently than others, that I'm the last one to get a joke, or that I completely missed some part of the conversation. It is something that I am very self-conscious and sensitive about. I often feel anxious that people will unfairly make judgments about my intellectual abilities.

There are many other quirky things that I've generally been afraid that people would discover. I really feared that others would learn of my background in the special education system, which I attended until I was in seventh grade. I have a lot of gratitude for the assistance that I have received from my parents, teachers, counselors, and others. They helped push me to achieve. When I transitioned out of the special education system and into mainstream schooling, it was very difficult. However, over a few years, I was beginning to experience some academic success. The transition from high school to college in 1999 was full of difficulties, and I dropped out after my freshman year. Years later, though, with a little more life experience, I re-entered school and graduated with honors in 2007 earning my bachelor's degree. It took me a while to

appreciate just why my parents were so proud of that achievement.

My experience within Student Affairs has lit another fire within me. Recently, I attended a seminar on disability and I felt compelled to join the conversation in a way that just weeks before seemed unlikely. I publicly shared just a short moment's worth of my experience with special education, anxiety disorder, OCD traits, and a mild autism spectrum disorder, still commonly referred to as Asperger's. Just a moment before, the speaker was talking about the stigma, embarrassment, and shame that many people feel and that prevent them from talking openly about their experiences. As I had realized years earlier regarding my sexual orientation, I had now learned that I had the power and ability to share these experience too... and perhaps lessen the intensity of fear or anxiety that another person may be feeling.

At first, walking out of that session, I worried a little about whether I did the right thing or not. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that I had, even if I felt clumsy and uncomfortable. By putting more of my cards on the table, I took a little of the bite out of some fears that had been carrying with me for so long. I stretched and grew a bit, however small that growth was. I realized again that I could be an advocate for others and myself.

I've again committed myself to further growth, learning, development, and involvement. Although I have a great deal of anxiety at times, I've taken additional steps outside of my comfort zones. I have no doubt that it will pose some personal challenges, but in the supportive and accepting environment that I've experienced within Student Affairs and the Diversity Council, I feel that I have a good deal of moral support in obtaining those goals.

Reflection in Poetry



By Carol MacNicholl, Disability Advisor, Center for Disability Services.

Every human has a story.
Every story is unique.
Everyone is unique.
There is no room for judgment.
Don't mess with assumptions.
Stand back.
Think before you say something.
Everyone is equal.

What's in a Name?

The National Congress of American Indians produced this ad to run during the Super Bowl, but at \$8 million a minute, they couldn't compete with soft drink

companies and car makers. We'd encourage you to take two minutes to watch. [filmsforaction.org]



Reflection on Privilege and Becoming an Ally Advocate

By Andrew Kahrs, Assignments & Occupancy Coordinator, Housing & Residential Education

The term “social justice” was a term that I became aware of during my freshman year of college. I had signed up to take a freshman seminar class on the Civil Rights Era – a class that provided me with a new lens in which to view the world I thought I knew. I had always known that there was a history of oppression of groups of people in this country by reading history books but had not really made the connection to what that means for me and my identity. Further self-exploration in this class led to the term I was completely unfamiliar with – that of white privilege. “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” to me revolutionized the way I saw my own identity and how other people experienced oppression due to their identities. The idea of my own white privilege was completely new and shook the ground I walked on. As I was presented with hundreds of effects of white privilege, the way I viewed my world changed drastically.

White privilege became something I was embarrassed about. I felt guilty. I felt like I won the lottery the more I learned of others’ experiences. As time went on, I became more aware that the reason I felt joined in the fight for social awareness & social justice was my own identity was presenting itself. In my early 20s, I decided to “come out” and explore what it meant to have a different sexual orientation than everyone else (well that I knew personally). Learning about other gay men and women and their “coming out stories” helped me gain the confidence to be myself despite being “different”. I always thought it was important to always be learning about yourself and others - specifically how my own experience could be used to help other people.

Working in student affairs at the U has been instrumental in my development as a better advocate for social justice - not only for LGBT folks like myself, but for many oppressed groups. Until my position in Housing & Residential Education, I have never felt completely comfortable to be my true self in the workplace. To have them know me, respect me and care about my experience and to celebrate the diversity of all has truly been excellent.

A great part of working in student affairs is the opportunity to attend SADC lecture series, SADC training modules and other events put on by SADC, ASUU and HRE related to the fight for social justice. In my 5 years here, I have learned so much at events and programs like these. It is a great way to continue to learn as issues evolve and languages change. Being able to be open-minded and to always try to be self-aware while working with students are things that requires constant “checking in” with oneself. These events and the experience of hearing experts talk about the real issues facing our students helps us be better allies for them.



Photo: Andrew Kahrs, Pursuit of Inclusion Award 2013

It is my goal to always make time to attend Utah Pride and Pride Week at the U events. I think it is important to get out in the community (no matter how busy life gets). It always helps me keep things in perspective and gives me a chance to focus on learning to be a better advocate - despite a lot of my time being at work and in school. I also had the opportunity to have lunch with Tim Wise a few weeks ago and gave me a great perspective of what it’s like to “live” as an ally advocate in everything you do. I look forward to continuing to be a positive force in the effort of inclusion here at the University of Utah.

Upcoming Women's Week & Campus Events

Fri. February 28

Edie Kochenour Memorial Lecture: "Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower" 12-2:30pm, OSH Auditorium
Lecture and symposium
[\[Register Online\]](#)

The University of Utah MUSE Project Annual Conference Keynote Event
12-2pm, Spencer Fox Eccles Business building. Special guest Wes Moore, author of the best-selling "The Other Wes Moore." [\[more information\]](#)

Wed., March 5

Gay Family Matters
12-1pm, 255 OSH
MUSE lecture speaker: Professor Elizabeth Clement, Assoc. Professor.
Lunch will be served.

Women's Leadership Summit
2:30-5:30pm, Peterson Heritage Ctr
The Summit aims for women students to feel more confident as leaders. To register, visit orientation.utah.edu.

Money Matters: Negotiating Salaries for Women Workshop
4:30pm, Career Services 350 SSB
Learn key strategies to negotiate your salary, and about the gender dynamics involved.

Thurs., March 6
Mentoring Matters: Honors College Creative Solutions Luncheon
12-1:30pm, SaltAir Room
Meet local women leaders for small group discussions and networking. Lunch provided. Contact rsvp@honors.utah.edu.

To the Unknown Goddess: The Music, Poetry, and Paintings of Barbara Strozzi, Veronica Franco, and Artemisia. 7:30pm, Gardner Hall, Dumke Recital Rm, Free

Thurs., March 27
Open Safe Zone Training
8:30-11:30am, 109 BEH S
Education of individuals on LGBTQ+ issues relating to gender and sexuality.

For information about these and other events, please visit: www.events.utah.edu.

Upcoming Diversity Seminar



"Good Medicine": Assisting American Indian Students Succeed through Self Exploration: Cultural Capital and Self Authorship as Foundations of Successful Student Achievement

Wednesday, March 19
12:00-1:30pm
Union Panorama East

Presenter: Kyle Elthebah,
TRIO Director

For more Info, visit:
sadc.utah.edu

Upcoming Diversity Modules & SADC Certificate Program

Are you interested in learning about issues around diversity? Do you want to interact with other Student Affairs professionals with similar interests? If so, consider completing the SADC Diversity Training Certificate Program.

This program will provide you with the opportunity to learn about issues of diversity in a safe environment, which will be essential to better serve our ever changing student population. For more information, visit: <http://sadc.utah.edu/trainings.php>.

Upcoming Modules

All Modules:
March 10, 9am-3pm

Module 1: May 7, 9am-12pm
Module 2: May 8, 9am-12pm
Module 3: May 9, 9am-12pm



For more information and recourses, please visit:
sadc.utah.edu

Debra Daniels, Co-chair Women's Resource Center
Kari Ellingson, Co-chair Student Development
Michael Bard, Registrar's Office
Karen Cone-Uemura, Counseling Center
Branden Dalley, Union Administration
Kris Fenn, Bennion Center
Marcy Healy, Conference & Guest Services
Scott Jensen, Housing & Residential Education
Trisha Jensen, Orientation & Leadership Development
Suzanne Jones, Registrar's Office
Chris Macias, TRIO

Carol MacNicholl, Center for Disability Services
Pablo Martinez, Office of Admissions
Kai Medina-Martinez, LGBT Center
Susan Miller, Campus Recreation
Sana Muller, ASUU
Rachana Patel, Office of Admissions
Cynthia Powell, Student Health Center
Valery Pozo, Career Services
Erica Rojas, Financial Aid & Scholarships
Belinda Otukolo Saltiban, Diversity & Inclusion
Adam Sibenaller, HRE, AREC