

Diversity Statement Leon John, Jr., Ph.D.

One of my greatest achievements was to be asked to deliver the annual keynote address at Wilkes University, Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Focusing on Dr. King's message I delivered a message with the theme of communication and respect. Acknowledging and celebrating each other's intersectionality we can learn from one another.

Following this philosophy helps me to excel in my professional and personal life. As the Executive Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Cedar Crest College, a primarily women's institution, I have been able to use my privilege to enact change on a systemic level regarding policies and procedures that are rooted in traditionalism. It is important for me to use my knowledge, my influence as a member of the President's Cabinet, and to be positive among my colleagues and students. My doctoral research focused on how students of color persist at predominantly white institutions of higher education and how they succeed academically and socially. In conducting my research, I have been able to identify issues that growing populations of students of color face and the roles that faculty, staff and administration play in helping them persist and successfully matriculate. This research can also be inclusive of students from other underrepresented populations.

As a person of color, I understand the need to have my voice represented at the table. With our ever-changing narrative globally, more students are finding their voices and are feeling inspired to share their feelings, demanding change to a system that is rooted to a demographic than what they belong to. I currently work with students and faculty staff and administration to meet these students' needs by providing resources and educational development for my campus community. Student demographics are changing at a rapid pace, and students expect to receive an experience that celebrates their differences and intersectional identities. I bridge that gap through educational development for faculty/staff and administration to help build a sense of belonging for students,

As an adjunct instructor in Communication Studies, I instruct across the spectrum of age, class, race, gender, and culture, and I have found that no matter who we are, we all have much in common. Our differences are small intersect with one another. Through my coursework, I make full use of these opportunities to draw students closer to each other through accentuating our similarities and learning to appreciate our differences.

My unique perspective at predominantly white institutions has made me commit to pursuing further research as it relates to issues students from underrepresented populations face. As a result, I continue to present my research and offer professional development at several institutions of higher education on topics ranging from implicit bias to white privilege and allyship. As a first-generation citizen of the United States, and the son of immigrant parents, I recognize the need for an inclusive and equitable campus environment and curriculum. A campus community needs to celebrate their differences and share it with one another to ensure success and a sense of belonging.

"Love is justified by loving." Amanda Gorman