

Ralph E. Godbolt
Diversity Statement

I am a Black man in America. A Black man who grew up in a neighborhood in inner-city Pittsburgh that struggled with issues of poverty, violence and addiction. A Black man who at times struggle with guilt for being the one who “made it”, while my older brothers, friends and classmates were forced to experience first-hand the death and destruction that impacts far too many marginalized communities. I am also a Black man, that is forced to deal with implicit and explicit biases in work place. It is because of my experience as a Black man that I am committed to concepts of “diversity of thought and approach”, “relationships based on collaboration and mutual respect”, and the development and nourishing of environments where all individuals can “learn, contribute and thrive”.

I am proud to that I have spent my professional career advancing equity, diversity and inclusion. I am also proud that I recognize that diversifying a student body (along with faculty and staff), while important, is meaningless, if we are not supporting students, specifically marginalized students to graduation. As such, in my present role, I have developed a comprehensive equity and academic focused program that directly led to a 20% increase in the retention rates of marginalized students. In addition, because I recognize that food and basic needs insecurity is an issue of equity, I played a leading role in the development of the Basic Needs Shoppe, a comprehensive food and basic needs pantry. I also recognize that mental health is an issue of equity, therefore, I played a leading role in imbedding a mental health therapist in an office that directly supports marginalized students.

My commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion has also helped me to recognize that diversity in the curriculum helps to create a learning environment where all individuals can “learn, contribute and thrive”. As such, I partnered with faculty, staff and alumni to develop a course titled, Anti (Black) Racism, Equity and Social Responsibility. Due to the success of this course, I partnered with faculty to create two additional Black studies course and a Black Studies minor, all of which have been approved by the university’s curriculum committee. As a doctorate student and former faculty member at the Pennsylvania State University - Harrisburg, I developed and taught three courses, the first titled, “Living While Black,” focused on the unique experiences of Blacks in America. The other two course focused on hip hop culture.

At my present institution, I played a key role in the development of a bias response team. I am a proud and active member of the LGBTQA commission. I have worked tirelessly to recruit diverse students to the institution. I have also developed strategic relationships with community-based partners that have provided opportunities for students to engage in intense community service projects focused on marginalized communities.

I am also proud of my work outside of higher education. I have led community-based organizations, such as Special Olympics Philadelphia, that have worked to support individuals with intellectual disabilities. I have led organizations such as the COLOURS organization that

served the unique needs of low-income gay and bi-sexual Black men. I have also led efforts to reduce the number of low-income children who drop out of high school.

In conclusion, as a black man in America, as a husband to a Black woman, as a father to Black children and as a mentor and role-model to diverse groups of students, I am proud of my work as an advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion.