

Workplace, Workforce and Marketplace

An Interview with Diana Gueits-Rivera, Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Cleveland Clinic

EDITORS' NOTE As the Director of Diversity and Inclusion for the Cleveland Clinic, Diana Gueits-Rivera is responsible for partnering with leaders and caregivers throughout the enterprise to provide strategic direction to key enterprise diversity initiatives. In addition, she collaborates with professional organizations and community stakeholders to advance Cleveland Clinic's outreach to the Hispanic community. She has been prominent in advancing Cleveland



Diana Gueits-Rivera

Clinic's ranking as one of the top healthcare systems in the country for Diversity and Inclusion by DiversityInc., the American Hospital Association Equity of Care award, and the placement of their Employee Resource Groups as some of the top 25 ERG's and Councils in the country as awarded by the Association of ERG's and Councils. Gueits-Rivera was instrumental in the development and execution of ACTiVHOS, the first fully bilingual youth directed health and wellness program in Northeast Ohio, as an effort to combat obesity and asthma disparities in Latino children. In 2020, she led the efforts to transition the ACTiVHOS Facebook site to provide COVID-19 Spanish information as a benefit to the entire community. She sits on the boards of Hispanic Roundtable, Circle Health, and El Centro. She is a member of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, and advisor to the National Board of the Latino Medical Student Association. Gueits-Rivera holds a BA in Urban Studies from Cleveland State University, an MBA from Baldwin Wallace University, and Advanced Diversity Practitioner certification from Cornell University.

INSTITUTION BRIEF Cleveland Clinic (clevelandclinic.org), now in its centennial year, is a non-profit multispecialty academic medical center that integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. Located in Cleveland, Ohio, it was founded in 1921 by four renowned physicians with a vision of providing outstanding patient care based upon the principles of cooperation, compassion and innovation. Cleveland Clinic has pioneered many medical breakthroughs, including coronary artery bypass surgery and the first face transplant in the United States. U.S. News & World Report consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation's best hospitals in its annual "America's Best Hospitals" survey. Among Cleveland Clinic's 70,800 employees

worldwide are more than 4,660 salaried physicians and researchers, and 18,500 registered nurses and advanced practice providers, representing 140 medical specialties and subspecialties.

How do you define the role of Chief Diversity Officer and how important is it for the role to be engaged in business strategy?

Diversity and Inclusion is systems work, so it is critical for a Chief Diversity Officer to be involved in the business strategy of an organization.

Often times, strategies fall short of their maximum potential because that lens around understanding the forensics of the Diversity and Inclusion impact is not brought in early enough to be baked into an organization's strategy.

It is important for leaders to understand that Diversity and Inclusion is not just part of their social responsibility, community outreach, engagement, or education strategies. It should be a full partner in the ecosystem of their overall mission and work.

Will you provide an overview of Cleveland Clinic's diversity and inclusion strategy?

It is basically a systems approach. We look at the work through three core areas: workplace – the culture, policies, and practices that support inclusion and equity; workforce – all the demographic analysis, recruitment, development, and retention strategies; and marketplace – which looks at our full cycle of the patient experience, and our investment and connection with our communities. While this is a very simplistic statement, this is deeply significant work when you look at our overall footprint.

How engrained is diversity and inclusion in Cleveland Clinic's culture and values?

Inclusion is one of our core values and drives and complements every other value. It is critical to our aspiration to be the best place for healthcare anywhere and the best place to work in healthcare.

Will you discuss Cleveland Clinic's outreach to underrepresented minority communities and efforts to create opportunities that impact health engagement, health literacy, and cultural competence?

This is multifaceted work that we have been engaged in for quite some time. Healthy individuals beget healthy communities and our goal is to be a long-term partner with our communities in that endeavor. We have invested heavily in this space and know that there is much more to do. Cleveland Clinic's 2019 community benefit was \$1.16 billion,

demonstrating our commitment to creating a healthier population. We know that we must not only be thoughtful and deliberate with our actions, but also have some longevity resources applied to get us where we want to be.

How do you engage your employees in Cleveland Clinic's diversity efforts?

Our employees are critical to advancing this work. We have 11 Employee Resource Groups and 13 location-based diversity councils. Members of these groups serve as ambassadors of diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the organization. They support strategies in recruitment and retention, provide personal and professional development opportunities, impact engagement and promote cultural competence and health equity initiatives across the communities we serve. Several of them have been recognized and ranked nationally for their work to advance diversity and inclusion.

Is it critical to have metrics in place to track the impact of Cleveland Clinic's diversity and inclusion efforts?

Absolutely. It is imperative for any organization, but especially so in healthcare where we are touching and impacting the health and wellness of individuals. Metrics are an indication of how well we are doing. They signal to us when we lag behind, and happily, when we have achieved an aggressive goal. I look at goals with these three (T's) in mind – is it tangible (achievable), is it tactical (is the strategy sound), and finally is it trackable (what metrics will be assigned that denote we have achieved what we set out to do). As important as having these metrics, you also need to engage in consistent benchmarking to ensure that you are in step with other high-performing organizations in this work. This is part of the continuous improvement model for inclusion, diversity and equity work.

How valuable has it been to have the commitment of Cleveland Clinic's senior management in its diversity and inclusion efforts?

This is extremely valuable as we have deeply committed leaders who have been championing this work. They are a significant factor in our success. They lead, advise, sponsor, promote and use their influence to move us ahead. Without that sort of action and personal investment, this work falters and diminishes. Senior management must model that commitment so that others will follow. We know that it takes the whole village for this work to be fully realized and be meaningful for everyone. I count myself as extremely fortunate to work at an organization which models this every day. ●