

Diversity Action Committees at Novant Health North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Georgia

Overview

Novant Health is an integrated network of 14 medical centers, three hospitals and hundreds of outpatient facilities and physician clinics throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Georgia. Novant Health is committed to hiring and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce. Rather than focusing on projects at its regional facilities or on isolated initiatives, Novant Health's leadership decided to institute systemwide best practices for diversity and inclusion.

Intervention

To lead this larger systemwide diversity initiative, Novant Health hired its first chief diversity officer and established the Department for Diversity and Inclusion in 2011. The chief diversity officer led the creation of Novant Health's diversity and inclusion strategic framework, which includes six pillars of diversity and inclusion. These six pillars help the organization to fulfill its promise to bring patients and consumers world-class technology, clinicians and care when and where they need it.

The pillars for diversity and inclusion have been transformed into six diversity action committees: workforce, care/operations, service-line planning, community involvement, supplier and marketing, and government relations. Novant Health's values — compassion, diversity, personal excellence and teamwork — serve as the foundation for the work of the diversity action committees. These committees are infusing diversity across the organization, so that Novant Health can react quickly in the changing health care field.

Each diversity action committee is chaired by an executive responsible for each business function represented by that committee. To promote synergy and teamwork and eliminate silos, there is an overlap of members across the diversity action committees. Novant Health also created an executive diversity council, chaired by the CEO, and a system diversity council, which serves as the steering committee for the diversity action committees and is chaired by the chief diversity officer.

The workforce diversity action committee is dedicated to providing equitable selection, utilization, development and retention of staff across the system. This committee consists of a diverse group of 16 employees from throughout the organization. The chief diversity officer also serves as a member of this, and every, diversity action committee.

Starting in 2012, each committee has developed strategies, tactics and metrics. Many of these metrics are tied to bonuses, so "what gets measured gets done; what gets rewarded gets repeated," according to Novant's chief diversity officer.

Results

To hire and retain a diverse workforce, the workforce diversity action committee has directed the collection of baseline data and milestones for relevant metrics related to leadership diversity. Recognizing the importance of transparency, this group has gathered and shared data with each facility in the health care system on the diversity of its workforce and how the metrics compare with national averages. This information has guided new recruitment initiatives, including the "So You Want a Job?" referral program, which has resulted in diverse employees recruiting their peers for

available positions. Novant Health also has expanded the reach of its external recruitment efforts, including, for example, through a presence at the local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pride festival.

In 2013, the workforce diversity action committee added an effectiveness clause in the health care system's search firm contracts. This clause requires that there is diversity represented in the top three candidates referred for job openings.

The workforce diversity action committee also achieved its goal to retain people of color and underrepresented genders at the same rate as the rest of the workforce, for all levels of responsibility in the organization.

Novant Health is working to ensure that diversity and inclusion are not isolated initiatives or projects, but an ecosystem that leverages diversity and teamwork to meet the needs of patients, consumers, employees, communities and stakeholders.

Lessons Learned

- Diversity action committees can serve as a mechanism for implementing change.
- Linking goals with incentives supports the implementation of goals.
- Requiring a diverse slate of candidates for job openings contributes to hiring diverse employees and increases workforce and leadership diversity.

Contact Information

[Novant Health](#)

Deborah P. Ashton, PhD

Vice President, Chief Diversity Officer

(336) 277-1167

dashton@novanthealth.org