



The DEI Beacon

NDC News & Resources
February 2024

From the CEO

Standing Against the Backlash

As the leadership team and I continue to work in support of our Vision of the Future (as outlined [here](#)), we are often reminded of the vital importance of DEIB. And to be sure, sometimes those reminders come in the form of opposition and adversity.

When the *New York Times* recently published an article chronicling the efforts of conservative activists to undermine DEI in Texas's public universities, I felt compelled to craft a letter to the editor in response. In [this letter](#) I made the case that attacks on DEI in fact represent strikes against equality for **all** Americans.

It's an argument that probably needs to be made again and again nationally. This necessity prompts all of us — friends and supporters of the NDC, and of DEIB generally — to bear in mind that we should articulate the principles we stand for and not permit



our opponents, by our silence, to define our values and objectives. Stated plainly, we cannot let misinformation and misperception to muddy the waters by presenting DEIB as something that it simply is not. DEIB advances opportunities for a majority of America.

That the original article and my letter both appeared in January, as the NDC embarked on this transformational year, is also a good reminder that profound change doesn't happen in a vacuum, and there are ever-present real-world stakes in this work.





Honoring Black History

As we near the conclusion of Black History Month, it is apt to recall that no important advances, in the workplace or in society at large, are possible without intention and vision. Indeed, Black History Month itself, which educators in many states now must approach strategically in the face of renewed resistance, did not spring magically into being in 1976, when it was recognized by President Gerald Ford. It was only after decades of effort, and with further impetus provided by the Civil Rights Movement of the previous decade, that the simple idea of highlighting Black achievement and excellence became an accepted practice.

To be sure, throughout the year the NDC is honored to celebrate multiple communities, but in the spirit of my letter to the *Times*, we cannot let these celebrations be portrayed as some form of narrow privilege or even exclusion. Instead, we must assert why particular months, holidays, and commemorations are significant for *everyone*

as they reflect our *collective* history and experience.

This Black History Month has seen [civil rights organizations actively take a stand](#) against the anti-DEI tide. The NDC is proud to join them, both this month and all year long in this work. Indeed, expanded partnerships with nonprofit groups and enhancing opportunity and economic mobility are key parts of the Vision of the Future. With this in mind, it is paramount to reflect upon and acknowledge how DEIB has made a positive impact on both African-American business leadership and lives more broadly. By the middle of last year it was already [reported](#) that since 2020 41% of U.S. corporations had seen growth in representation of Black executives on their leadership teams. In short, progress has been real and tangible — let us continue to build upon that.



Celebrating Past and Future

Part of building on momentum and success means making sure that Black History, as well as the stories of other communities, are continuously celebrated; special months should merely signal added emphasis, not an annual checklist item that appears in disconnected isolation.



Consistent with this, you may want to periodically check [the NDC calendar](#) for upcoming events. For example, in August, the NDC is proud to host the National Black Men in Leadership Conference, and we'll follow up by presenting the Black Empowerment Summit the following month. We hope that you'll join us for these and other opportunities to come together, empower each other, and lay the groundwork for victories yet to come.

Yours in Partnership,

Anika Rahman
Chief Executive Officer



Leadership Spotlight: Dawn Hooper, Chief Financial Officer

As the NDC embarks on a new era of growth and possibility, financial stability and stewardship are paramount.

Fortunately, in CFO Dawn Hooper, the organization has the consummate professional. Like all the members of the leadership team, Dawn is impeccably credentialed, with a Masters in Accounting from the University of Tennessee and 15 years of financial leadership in the nonprofit world alone. She specializes in collaborating with team members and peers, using system enhancements and process improvements to streamline business systems.

“The nonprofit sector allows a financial professional to connect to something bigger than the numbers.”



Dawn is a leader away from the workplace, too. A licensed CPA, she is active in multiple committees in the Texas Society of CPAs as well as current Chair of the Texas Women’s University College of Business Advisory Board. She also leads two networking groups — one for female nonprofit CFOs in the North Texas region, and the other more personal, for Christian women who want to have hard conversations about topics affecting the church today. She lives in McKinney with her husband of 35 years, two adult children, her precious two-year-old granddaughter, and a small fur baby named Ragamuffin.

It is an honor to spend some time with her in this inaugural installment of our series of conversations with those guiding the NDC on its transformative path.

What first drew you, personally, to DEIB?

Dawn Hooper: I’ve been aware of challenges with racial diversity for most of my life as desegregation changed the trajectory of my education starting in fifth grade. This was due to violence at the local public middle school that had been desegregated. I can point to many other uncomfortable racial discussions in the years after that. I think DEIB issues came back hard for me in the last ten years because of two things: having family members who identify as LGBTQ and having my eyes opened as to how different my experiences have been compared to my friends of color after the George Floyd murder. Despite much legislation and many years of attempting to improve equal rights, my diverse friends are still marginalized

In addition to those significant personal experiences, what professional experiences do you bring to the NDC?

I've been fortunate to work for 15 years in senior finance roles in nonprofit organizations where quality and efficiency have been core to every aspect of the work. I've also been fortunate to work with a great Professional Employer Organization (PEO) for many years, and it has given me the foundation for overseeing the human resources function at the NDC. It also fills the gaps for expertise we do not have within our team. The NDC is at a pivotal point where investing in both technological and process infrastructure are required to serve our stakeholders now and in the future.

Since my arrival, we are almost done implementing a robust accounting system that will allow more in-depth reporting and transparency than ever before. And we are currently engaging every individual in the organization's first bottoms-up budget process. With the move to our current PEO, we have also been able to upgrade our HR resources and benefits for every employee.

What you're describing sounds both ambitious and necessary. What are some core values that you bring to that work?

In my field of finance, **integrity** is of the utmost importance. I must be trusted to provide timely and accurate financial information to management, board members, and other stakeholders on a regular basis. Plus, it's important to be as **transparent** as possible with as many stakeholders as possible, including employees and donors. In some cases,

that means being able to parse data to be appropriate to the person receiving the data. The new accounting system is but one change we have already made to ensure my team can be trusted to accurately know and report financial data in a timely and transparent manner.

Speaking of your team, what is your vision for it?

I want every team member to feel valued and feel comfortable in their job. I also want my team to be the trusted resource for everything financial and HR at NDC. The finance team is only myself and two accountants and we are all new to NDC. Plus, we have a fantastic Coordinator of People and Culture who reports to me. I successfully developed my previous small finance team to focus on efficient processes and complete cross-training to service a complex multimillion-dollar nonprofit organization.

As we wind down, what words would you offer to other leaders — and future leaders — in DEIB?

Financial leadership in the nonprofit sector is similar in most respects to the for-profit sector. However, the nonprofit sector allows a financial professional to connect to something bigger than the numbers. For me, that is making our community more equitable by working to ensure access and opportunity for everyone. I would encourage any financial professionals who are not satisfied with their current career path to consider using their talents with a nonprofit organization that fulfills your personal passion for your community!



What We're Doing: March Symposiums

For Women's History Month in March, the NDC will host 13 Women in Leadership Symposiums (WILS). These events offer attendees an opportunity to observe, learn, network, and hear different perspectives from a diverse mix of women executives who have made the climb up the corporate ladder. Over the past 15 years, we have hosted two million such attendees worldwide.

By bringing together successful women leaders, we hope to educate, inspire, and encourage attendees to reflect on their own goals and status as they strive to advance in their organizations.

The theme for 2024 is "Leading with Heart: Empathy, Ethics & Excellence." Despite advances over the past several years, women continue to be underrepresented in the C-suite and executive leadership teams of businesses.

More information [here](#).





Learning & Consulting

Recognized as one of the eight best diversity and inclusion certifications of 2022, 2023 *and* 2024 by the Academy to Innovate HR (AIHR), and with 1647 graduates to date, the [NDC Certification Program](#) is set for another banner year.

The program prepares professionals to lead successful diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies for organizational excellence and innovation in today's global landscape. The experience blends theory and practice during a five-day intensive curriculum and in ongoing professional development through the NDC Graduate Network. Graduates are recognized as a National Diversity Council Certified Diversity Professional (NDCCDP).

As for formal objectives, upon completion of the five-day program, participants will:

- Recognize diversity, equity, and inclusion as drivers of business success and employee engagement in the 21st-century workplace.
- Possess a broad range of knowledge and skills to perform at a high level as DEI professionals and bring value to their organizations.
- Gain access to a reputable and reliable community of professionals through the NDC Graduate Network to encourage continued learning as the DEI field evolves.
- Enhance their credibility with the National Diversity Council Certified Diversity Professional (NDCCDP) designation in acknowledgement of their professional growth.

Upcoming course dates include...

- March 18-22 (Eastern Time Virtual) ■ April 22-26 (Chicago, IL) ■ May 13-17 (Mountain Time Virtual)



Join Us!

Our next [National Chapter Meeting](#) will be held on March 29, 2024, and the topic will be "Achieving Representation in Leadership."

Tackling the issue of insufficient diversity in leadership is a key part of fostering a workplace that is inclusive and equitable. Despite numerous organizational initiatives aimed at enhancing DEIB, a national deficiency in representation persists, particularly at the executive levels. This session aims to shed light on how leadership behaviors represent both challenges and solutions in the discourse on diversity.

Keynote speaker Lisa Hernandez is the Vice President of People and Culture at [Robert Morris University](#). In this capacity, she oversees Human Resources, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, and Title IX/Student Equity. Lisa is passionate about creating a positive experience and sense of belonging for both students and employees.

#YouBelongHere

Have you checked out our [media page](#) lately? There you'll find the latest news in terms of the NDC and DEIB generally, press releases and statements, information about the #NDCVoices series, and any issues of this newsletter you may have missed.

...and, as always, your donation is not only appreciated, but vital; it is your support that enables all the important work referenced throughout this newsletter. Thank you!

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