2022 DiversAbility Summit

This year's theme:
Mental Health + Well Being
A Part of the Equity Equation

Resource Fair
9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Keynote and Panel Discussion
11:15 AM – 1:00 PM

JSOM Atrium
JSOM Davidson Auditorium, JSOM 1.118
Greetings Comet community members and friends,

On behalf of the University of Texas at Dallas leadership and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, it is my pleasure and honor to welcome you to the 2022 DiversAbility Summit.

This year’s Summit has a special focus on mental health and well-being. This subject is crucial to conversations around disability and accessibility, and yet is often mired in misconception and inequity. The barriers we are working to tear down around disability more broadly cast long shadows of stigma on mental wellness. I am so proud of the leadership of Rosie Peterson, director of Employee Equity Initiatives, and Kerry Tate, director of the AccessAbility Resource Center, to explore these topics with the complexity and expertise they deserve.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. We take this time to highlight the many ways disabled employees add value to our organizations as well as challenge the ongoing misperceptions about disability and accommodations. We focus on the remaining barriers to access in education and employment and work to properly contextualize access as a matter of equity. While this is not the only time of year that we discuss these concerns, October is an important month for these conversations.

The speakers and panelists you will hear from today range from expert advocates to students leading the next generation toward equity. I encourage you to engage with an open heart and willingness to learn, and in the end, I hope you decide to join us in the journey of breaking down biases around mental health.

I want to extend a special “thank you” to Rosie, Kerry, Jasmine Johnson and the rest of the Employee Equity Initiatives and AccessAbility Resource Center teams for making this event possible. I also want to thank our partners and sponsors, our guests and friends, and all of you in the audience who took the time to be present with us today.
In October, Americans observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month by paying tribute to the accomplishments of the men and women with disabilities whose work helps keep the nation's economy strong and by reaffirming their commitment to ensuring equal opportunity for all citizens.

This effort to educate the public about the issues related to disability and employment began in 1945, when Congress enacted Public Law 176, declaring the first week of October each year as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week. In 1962, the word “physically” was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. Some 25 years later, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).

The mission of the Universal Access Employee Resource Group (UAERG) at The University of Texas at Dallas is to be a strategic partner with the university and to advance the inclusion and engagement of all employees with disabilities. We aim to do this through advocacy and education, and by promoting the formation of a community among employees with or without disabilities.

We recognize that people with disabilities are at greater risk for marginalization and exclusion, and frequently experience barriers to participation and access; it is our intent to advocate for an equitable campus community, groups like UAERG are needed.
The DiversAbility Summit is an annual event focusing on education and workforce challenges among individuals with diverse abilities. Through a partnership with the Office of Equity and Compliance, the Office of AccessAbility, the Office of Human Resources and Procurement Management, the Career Center, and other partners, the DiversAbility Summit has included research presentations, seminar discussions, and on-hand activities to explore best practices and create partnerships between faculty, staff, students and the broader community at UT Dallas.

UT Dallas began the observance of NDEAM in 2015; our first topic at the time was to take a deep dive in with a discussion of universal designs for assessable access. Our focus was to promote the consideration of Universal Design to be a part of the initial concept of new construction of a building. Our expert panelists encouraged design discussion for the broadest possible range of users. The panelists provided six distinct perspectives: student, faculty, staff, veteran, advocate, and caretaker roles. The summit focused on individuals with disabilities but emphasized applicability to the general user population. The other topics featured during NDEAM include “Why some Employees and Students don’t disclose their disability?” We also partnered with the Career Center and a corporate sponsor to hold student job fairs from 20015 to 2019 before the COVID Pandemic. During that time, eighteen students were either hired as full-time workers or given intern opportunities. Other topics speakers covered are: “Increasing Access and Opportunity: While facing a COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Change.”

This year’s focus will shine a light on Mental Health and Well-being. In addition, panelists will have a question and answer discussion to identify professional resources and when and how to self-advocate for those resources. The first featured speaker will be Kim Williams, Assistant Vice President of Community Engagement H.C.A. Houston Healthcare. Kim’s talk will focus on Mental Health and Well-being in the Workplace. Our presentation will offer best practices to recognize the need for self-care and available resources for employees.
Program Agenda

Resource Fair (9:30 AM – 11:00 AM)

- Employer / Booth Check-in
- Resource Fair
- Break

Keynote and Panel Discussion (11:15 AM – 1:00 PM)

- Opening Statements
  - Bruce August Jr.
    Director, Multicultural Center

- Welcome & Introductions
  - Yvette E. Pearson, Ph.D., P.E., F.ASCE
    Vice President, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
  - Jonathan Hartmann, Ph.D.
    Lecturer I, Arts, Humanities and Technologies
    Development Chair, Universal Access ERG
  - Paul Voelker
    Mayor, City of Richardson

- Keynote Presentation #1
  - Kim Williams
    Mental Health Advocate, Ally, Speaker

- Keynote Presentation #2
  - Erin Schrader, Ph.D.
    Assistant Director/Training Director,
    Student Counseling Center
Panel Discussion

Kacey Sebeniecher
Director, Student Wellness Center

Siri Wilder
Diversity Initiative,
Graduate Student Assembly
Doctoral Student,
School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences

Dylan Rafaty
Founder, North Texas Disability Chamber
Vice-Chair, Texas Governor’s Committee on
People with Disabilities

Kim Williams
Mental Health Advocate, Ally, Speaker

Erin Schrader, Ph.D.
Assistant Director/Training Director,
Student Counseling Center

Kani Mirza
Vice President, Student Diversity Advisory Council

Questions & Answers

Adjournment
Bruce August, Jr.
Director,
Multicultural Center

Bruce August Jr. serves as the director of the Multicultural Center and has worked at UT Dallas since 2010. He received his B.S. in computer science from UT Dallas and his master of education in higher education administration from the University of North Texas. He is currently matriculating through the PhD program in public affairs at UT Dallas.

He is a representative for District 4 in UTD Staff Council, the founding past president of the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance ERG, a former director for the Texas Association of Black Personnel in Higher Education Board, and volunteers weekly with various organizations.

August's passion is to pour into college students, as he believes their creativity and thirst for new knowledge will take us to the next level of higher education. He also believes in the education of our UTD community on the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion. In the words of one his mentors, Dr. Mona Hicks, Bruce believes that “people will support what they help create.”

Jonathan Hartmann, Ph.D.
Lecturer I,
Arts, Humanities & Technologies
Development Chair, Universal Access ERG

Jonathan Hartmann is Development Chair for Universal Access ERG. He teaches Professional and Technical Communication for UT Dallas.
Dr. Yvette E. Pearson is Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) at the University of Texas at Dallas. A Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Pearson is recognized globally for over 25 years in higher education, particularly for her work to advance sustainability, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. Her efforts have led to over $30M in funding for initiatives to support DEI in STEM and changes to policies and practices of global engineering organizations. Among her awards and honors are ABET’s Claire L. Felbinger Award for Diversity and Inclusion, ASCE’s Professional Practice Ethics and Leadership Award, University of Texas Regents Outstanding Teaching Award, the Society of Women Engineers’ Distinguished Engineering Educator Award, and ASCE’s President’s Medal. Dr. Pearson is a registered Professional Engineer, a Commissioner on ABET’s Engineering Accreditation Commission, and host of Engineering Change Podcast, which has audiences in over 70 countries on six continents.

Paul Voelker was appointed to serve as Mayor of the City Council in May 2015, was elected as Mayor in May 2017 and re-elected in 2019 and 2021 and has served on the City Council since 2013. As the official head of the government, he is the presiding officer, votes on all matters coming before council and represents the city during all ceremonial occasions.
**Kim Williams** is a healthcare executive with more than 25 years of experience in healthcare marketing, communications, sales and community engagement. Kim is also a mental health advocate, ally, speaker and panelist whose passion is to open the door for the hard conversations around mental health and close the door on stigmas. She serves as a NAMI Peer-to-Peer leader and is a trained Stephen Minister.

Kim currently sits on the board of directors for The Women’s Fund for Health, Education and Resiliency and is on the advisory board of Houston Philanthropy Circle. In 2022, Kim began serving as the co-chair of the Women’s Health Network of the Texas Medical Center and Greater Houston for the Greater Houston Women’s Chamber of Commerce. In 2021, Kim served as an Executive with Heart for American Heart Association.

Kim’s educational accomplishments include a Bachelor of Science in Journalism with a minor in Marketing and specialization in Public Relations from Texas A&M University, and a Master's in Business Administration from Texas Woman’s University.
Erin Schrader, Ph.D. is a staff psychologist at the UTD Student Counseling Center, where she serves as an Assistant Director and the Training Director. Dr. Schrader earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Texas Woman’s University in Denton. She completed her postdoctoral residency at Texas Woman’s University Counseling and Psychological Services and has worked at the UT Dallas Student Counseling Center since 2015. Erin is a disabled psychologist and is passionate about disability identity and creating accessible and affirming spaces for disabled individuals, particularly within mental health and university settings. Her professional interests also include neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ advocacy and gender-affirming care, social justice and equity in mental health, and supervision and training.
Kacey Sebeniecher (see-ben-eck-er) is a Master Certified Health Education Specialist. She was worked for the Student Wellness Center at UT Dallas for 12 years and has served 6 years as the Director. Kacey began incorporating mental health education and prevention programming, services, and marketing into the Student Wellness Center’s services in 2010. She has been a certified suicide prevention instructor through the QPR Institute for 11 years, has recently become ASIST trained (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), and obtained the College and University Suicide Prevention Accreditation through the American Association of Suicidality in 2021. Kacey continues to assess emerging trends among college students in the US related to mental health with the goal to reduce the impact that mental health has among UT Dallas students currently and in the future.
Siri Wilder is a doctoral student in the Psychology program at UTDallas. She works in the Couples’ Daily Lives Lab, led by Dr. Karen Prager. She received her bachelor’s degrees in Psychology and English from Whittier College in 2017, and spent two years working as a research associate in social services prior to attending UTDallas. In addition to her research on couples’ post-conflict recovery and reconciliation, she has enjoyed teaching Human Sexuality and working on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in her committee roles.
Dylan M. Rafaty is a navigator, influencer, and disability rights activist committed to serving all people with disabilities in the cross-disability community. Because of his family roots, Dylan continues to devote his love for cultural diversity in communities since birth and is deeply well-connected across the globe due to his character, kindness, love for people, and passion.

He is a transformational leader, social entrepreneur, author, start-up executive who works across multiple industries and sectors in the United States and parts of the world to bridge alliances and collaborative partnerships. Dylan serves on many executive boards, including serving as Vice-Chair of the Texas Governor’s Committee for People with Disabilities and the Director of the United States International Council on Disabilities.

It's because of these roles that he values the importance of lifting communities, organizations, businesses, academic and government entities thrive while opening doors of new opportunities including gaining access to services so all people can have an overall, better quality of life.

Dylan’s successes include bringing in new, innovative ideas to the table, merging organizations, mediating, and bringing communities together to create systemic change for a common goal, creating successful events and advocating on numerous fronts with key legislators while building and maintaining new relationships. Lastly, in 2020, Dylan was inducted into the Susan M. Daniels Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame, named 2020 Oticon’s Focus on People Advocacy Award Winner, 2021 Dallas Business Journal's Leaders in Diversity Award honoree, and 2021 Plano Chamber of Commerce's Rising Star Award winner.
Kani Mirza is a first generation Kurdish-American double majoring in both Psychology, and Child Learning & Development. She is the Vice President of the Student Diversity Advisory Council, a research assistant in the Healthy Development Project led by Dr Shayla Holub, and a program facilitator volunteer for the Center of Children and Families (CCF) learning program, Play with Me. In her free time, Kani enjoys to intern and clinically shadow both a child and adolescent psychiatrist, and interventional cardiologist. She is currently in the process of writing a memoir regarding her family’s legacy as survivors of the Anfal Campaign (otherwise known as the Kurdish Genocide). Kani is a passionate advocate for cultural competence in mental health, particularly in empowering the acceptance and understanding of mental health, neurodiversity, and disabilities. One of her greatest hopes is to see an end to the demoralising stigmas that result in ostracization, discrimination, and devaluation of individuals.
Community and Campus Resources

Deer Oaks
www.deeroaks.com

United Rocks
www.unitedrocks.org

Segue Center
www.seguecenter.org

Spectra Therapies and Evaluations
www.spectratherapies.com

LifePath Systems
www.lifepathsystems.org

MentalHealth.gov
www.mentalhealth.gov

National Alliance on Mental Illness North Texas
www.naminorthtexas.org

AccessAbility Resource Center
www.accessability.utdallas.edu

Resources for Campus Accessibility
www.utdallas.edu/about-us/accessibility

Title IX
www.institutional-initiatives.utdallas.edu/equity/self-identify

Universal Access ERG
www.uaerg.utdallas.edu

Student Counseling Center
www.utdallas.edu/counseling

Counseling Center Resources Hub
www.counseling.utdallas.edu/resources

Center for Students in Recovery
www.utdallas.edu/recovery

Student Health Center
www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess

Graduate Student Assembly
www.gsa.utdallas.edu

Student Government
www.utdallas.edu/sg

Student Diversity Advisory Council
www.employee-equity.utdallas.edu/about/sdac

Employee Wellness Program
www.utdallas.edu/wellness

UT System Living Well Program
www.utsystem.edu/offices/employee-benefits/living-well

Eugene McDermott Library
www.libguides.utdallas.edu/mental-health-and-wellbeing

Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
www.odei.utdallas.edu/i-need-education
Thanks to our partners and vendors

Student Diversity Advisory Council
AccessAbility Resource Center
Student Wellness Center
Universal Access ERG
Employee Benefits
Deer Oaks
Segue Center
LifePath Systems
The Wellness Committee
The Center for Student Recovery
Spectra Therapies and Evaluations
National Alliance on Mental Illness North Texas