



# UMB News

## Achieving EDI Through Data at UMB

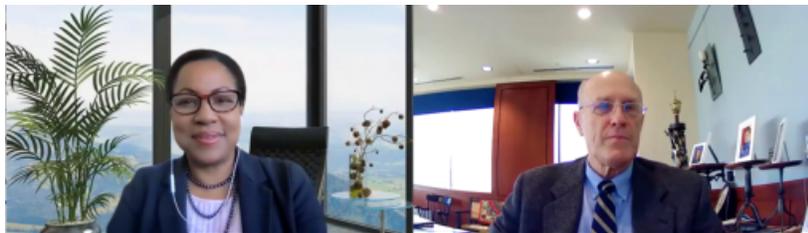
October 1, 2021 | By [Charles Schelle](#)

How does University of Maryland, Baltimore, (UMB) become more equitable, diverse, and inclusive?

It starts with data and a strategic plan to learn about people.

For the time being, it starts with UMB's first chief officer of equity, diversity, and inclusion (CEDIO) and vice president, **Diane Forbes Berthoud, PhD, MA**, and soon, the 2021-2022 President's Fellows. Forbes Berthoud took the helm of her newly created post in July.

To build toward her plan, she broke down the process into several steps for the next several months: scan, assess, synthesize, create, execute, and assess.



*Diane Forbes Berthoud and Bruce Jarrell*

In that scanning step, Forbes Berthoud is getting a handle on what data UMB has, what data UMB needs, and how it can be interpreted, which are just a few components. Data can reveal a wide swath of touchpoints on the human experience — representation by level/rank, recruitment, retention, progress over time, graduation ranks, morale, satisfaction, engagement, exposure to diverse faculty and courses, and more.

"Evidence-based strategies and decision making are core to this role and the effectiveness of the role — data-driven decision making," Forbes Berthoud said.

"That will be one of the ways that we move forward."

"Advancing Institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as a Strategic Priority," is the theme for the 2021-2022 President's Symposium and White Paper Project, and Forbes Berthoud provided the keynote speech for this year's kick-off on the topic at a Sept. 29 presentation. It also marked her first remarks to the entire campus population, serving as an introduction on her approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Forbes Berthoud reports directly to the university president in her role. This fall, as Forbes Berthoud detailed in an interview on "[The UMB Pulse](#)" podcast, she is hiring a director and assistant to help with EDI initiatives. It will certainly take a team and an entire University community to help make UMB a better place for all.

"She's here to help us to change our culture to be an environment where people feel that they belong, that they feel we care about their safety, about their progress in careers, about the development as individuals and many activities like that," President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, said in his opening remarks.

This year's President's Fellows selections were delayed given the timing of Forbes Berthoud's arrival in the summer. Students have an opportunity to apply to help research this topic and write a white paper that will be presented along with instructional recommendations to the campus leadership and community during the spring semester.

Traditionally, one student from each of UMB's seven schools are selected. A student will receive a \$2,500 stipend. Students can [apply here](#), and applications are due Oct. 17.

It will be a unique opportunity given that Forbes Berthoud is in the same "scanning" phase to assess where UMB is at, combing through data as the students will as well.

Forbes Berthoud outlined a CEDIO approach, as well as hers, is to lead, collaborate and partner to create a DEI strategic plan, where and with whom to implement the plan, creating accountability and using systems and an integrative approach.

"I'm well aware that any initiative, any program, any set of goals cannot be accomplished in a silo," she said.

That work reaches beyond working with faculty, staff, students and toward funders, community leaders, researchers — everyone who can contribute.

To that end, institutions can get stuck in a cycle where DEI is viewed as an "add-on" as opposed to integrating DEI practices and decisions into every function at a university — admissions, hiring, curriculum, facilities, community engagement, and so on.

"All of those things have elements of equity, diversity and inclusion with leadership, and partnership and knowledge sharing and acquisition, we come to learn that where and how we build buildings, where we put art, what kind of art we put up, the kinds of terms and phrases that we use in our speeches, the statements we make, the courses that we teach — that there are all elements of equity, diversity, and inclusion contained therein with exploration and curiosity," Forbes Berthoud said.

Here are some potential areas of focus for UMB that Forbes Berthoud identified:

Faculty diversity and development

Student engagement and development

Search committee training for key roles

Capacity building and partnership with DEI officers; overall capacity building

Data governance and structure

Once the work begins, that in of itself has to be inclusive and expansive.

**Laundette Jones, PhD, MPH**, assistant professor of epidemiology and public health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, posed a question asking for advice for under-represented minority faculty and staff who struggle to keep up with research programs while being invested in DEI efforts.

Scenarios like Jones described is sometimes referred to as "the minority tax" or "racial battle fatigue," Forbes Berthoud explained where the same people who are underrepresented are overburdened with doing the bulk of committees and service to advance these efforts while doing their core academic and research work.

"We need more senior faculty members or allies who are academically and positionally placed to do some work of mentorship, allyship, outreach, financial support, inviting people on grants, inviting to participate in things that we need," Forbes Berthoud said.

Forbes Berthoud encouraged this year's fellows to examine peer institutions' models and best practices, especially those with a hospital relationship, and deepen a conversation around assessment and addressing underrepresentation.

"Is there something we can learn from what they're doing that could inform what we're doing?" she asked.

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