

## ON DIVERSITY

Workplace strategies for expanding inclusion

### A WHOLISTIC DIVERSITY APPROACH

# Making inclusion a core business strategy

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We all approach life through our own, uniquely different lens. Our upbringing, experiences, socioeconomic status, race, gender and work environment all influence how we see the world and how we react to it. Back in the 1980s and 1990s in the working world, we were trained to be color-blind and gender-blind and ignore differences. Largely, this was a strategy to reduce racism or sexism. Thankfully, our thinking has evolved.

At Harvard Pilgrim, we realize that there are new prisms through which to view and understand differences and move toward an inclusive society. By recognizing and acknowledging differences, we can and are creating value. This past year, we challenged ourselves to push our thinking further and search for new opportunities. So, we broadened our definition of inclusion and made it a core business imperative.

It's kind of like moving something from the category of "nice to have" to "need to have," and I'm proud to say it's working.

Let me share some of the steps we've taken. Our newly established Center for Inclusion Initiatives, led by Vice President and Chief Inclusion Officer Karen Young, reports directly to me and is a free-standing business unit. While diversity efforts have been around for some time, ours is unique because it is a company-wide, comprehensive commitment to put inclusion at the forefront of everything we do.

Under the center's umbrella, we have established six tracks intended to deliver on our inclusion business strategy. The tracks include marketplace connection, workforce development, supplier and vendor contracting, health care equity, community engagement and enterprise leadership. We have surrounded these tracks with robust thinking, staff resources and a determination to get results.

Our marketplace track recently produced Harvard Pilgrim's Eastern Harmony program that combines the traditions of western medicine with those of China and India – like

acupuncture, ayurvedic practices, herbal medicine and mindfulness. Eastern Harmony is now a plan that is available to employers who want to offer greater access to alternative health care approaches. While Eastern Harmony will certainly benefit Chinese and Asian Indian employers who told us they have long been looking for this kind of option, it also expands choice for our members at large.

Realizing that we have significant purchasing power, we have been exploring ways that we can diversify our vendor and supplier base. One recent evening we invited more than 100 minority and women business owners to our offices to learn about their products and services. We realize that we don't have to buy from national vendors to get the best value. In fact, oftentimes the best value is right in our own community, and we want to find

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that value through diversity.

Our work on health care equity stems from a number of unique specialty areas at Harvard Pilgrim. For instance, the Culture InSight team within our Harvard Pilgrim Foundation is working with the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center and a coalition of community groups to understand why Latina mothers living in Lawrence do not receive adequate postpartum care and well-child visits. This care is important in assuring that infants get appropriate developmental screenings and vaccinations.

The work of our Harvard Pilgrim Institute has uncovered several barriers to effective care for childhood obesity, including parents' low socioeconomic status and life in an "obesogenic" environment. They found that the patient-centered medical home model is a promising alternative delivery structure for effectively addressing the needs of these young patients and their parents. They have been evaluating best communication tools and other methods of approach.

In my view, inclusion isn't limited to race and gender. It includes sexual orientation, physical and mental

ability, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, primary language, gender identity and expression. I consider our veterans a group that certainly deserves an outstretched hand as they transition from the military back to civilian life. Not too long ago, state Veterans Affairs Secretary Coleman Nee and I hit the airwaves to talk about getting our returning veterans back to work. And, at Harvard Pilgrim, we launched an effort to outreach to veterans groups and identify opportunities to utilize their unique talents. That work continues as more of our veterans return home.

On the employee front, Harvard Pilgrim began offering coverage for sexual reassignment and related surgeries to our employees last year and we were the first in the area to offer a fully insured transgender benefit, enabling our customers to do the same. I am proud to say that for the second year in a row, we received a 100 percent rating for corporate equality from the Human Rights Campaign, America's largest civil organization that is working to achieve

lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality.

My team and I find it helpful to reach out to other employers to share experiences and results around our inclusion initiative. Most recently, we sat down with folks from EMC. Erin Motameni, senior vice president of human resources, and Jackie Glenn, the company's chief diversity officer, presented EMC's diversity and inclusion strategy and we discussed best practices and lessons learned through experience. I believe we have so much to learn from one another, and that continuing dialogue will push us all further toward our goal.

We are excited about the work of our six inclusion business tracks. In the year ahead, I expect new and innovative ideas from our Center for Inclusion Initiatives and I look forward to continuing ongoing discussions with our employees, customers, vendors and community leaders in an environment in which we can speak openly without fear of being misunderstood. Our goal, after all, is to get the best ideas on the table and implement them with adequate resources and support from the organization.

### SPOTLIGHT



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About the author: Eric H. Schultz is president and chief executive officer of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care. During his 27-year career, Schultz has taken an active role in defining and implementing changes leading to improvements and greater efficiencies in the financing and delivery of health care through greater consumer and physician engagement. Prior to joining Harvard Pilgrim, he was president and CEO of Fallon Community Health Plan, and held executive positions with CIGNA Healthcare, Prudential Healthcare and Nashville Healthcare Physician Group. Schultz was recently appointed as chairman of the board of AHIP.

Schultz holds an MBA in health career leadership from Yale University's School of Management, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from the University of Connecticut.

*This is a monthly series the Boston Business Journal will be featuring on diversity in business. If you have a column or story idea you'd like to submit, please forward your suggestion to BBJ Executive Editor George Donnelly at [gdonnelly@bizjournals.com](mailto:gdonnelly@bizjournals.com).*