Advancing Diversity
American College of Healthcare Executives seeks to advance diversity, inclusion and culturally competent healthcare. This is rooted in the belief that individuals are endowed with unique talents and gifts, and we can play a role in helping each individual reach his/her full potential. And, it is more than that. It makes us all better at what we do.
As your Chapter President, I want to weigh in on the importance of diversity, garner your help to define a means of measurement, and create opportunities to advance the local chapter’s diversity effort.

Why is diversity important?
1. There is strong correlation between gender diversity on boards and corporate performance.
2. Openness to different abilities, demographics and experience broadens the potential talent pool.
3. Diversity of perspectives can lessen blind spots caused by implicit bias.
4. Treating all persons with dignity and respect is the right thing to do. Indeed, it is a moral imperative.

Defining Diversity
Assuming we can agree to the importance of diversity, we come to another challenge in trying to define it. Diversity is a very broad concept, including but not limited to: gender, age, culture, race, ethnicity, veteran status, socioeconomic background, education, profession, disability status, sexual orientation, personality types, decision-making preferences, communication preferences, urban vs rural, etc.

Within the context of ACHE of Middle Tennessee, seeking more diversity means more diversity among membership, educational program speakers, and among the organization’s board and committee members. As we become more aware of the value of and need for diversity, we begin to see more gaps and opportunities for expanding diversity. Therefore, you may begin to see questions interlaced in our program surveys asking about your perspective on diversity of our speakers and topics and seeking your suggestions.

Every one of us is unique and attempts to categorize individuals or group them together can work against the goal of helping the individual achieve his/her potential. People also self-identify and that diversity is not always obvious by looking at someone. I am a huge fan of Henry Gate’s television series, Finding Your Roots. In each episode he uses genealogy, family lore, and genetics to help answer questions that have left a gap in a person’s understanding of his/her place in the world. While I love the uniqueness of each person’s story, the show also has a way of showing us several universal truths.

- We exist today because of countless people before us who made choices and sacrifices that eventually led to our existence.
- We feel like we are outsiders to the world, and we want to belong.
- We want to be loved and appreciated.
- We want to make the world a better place and leave a positive legacy.

The other subtle recurring theme is that successes and challenges of previous generations have an impact for successive generations. Therefore, advancing diversity sometimes means providing extra help or access to populations that have encountered historical prejudices or inequalities so that future generations may reap the benefits.
Opportunities to Advance Diversity

At ACHE of Middle Tennessee, we are trying to be thoughtful and purposeful in our approach to diversity.

For many years, we have discussed and sought increasing diversity among our panelists and speakers. Bringing people together to hear from different experiences enriches our members’ knowledge and awareness. We actively seek out participants from diverse types of organizations. As a member, you can help us by submitting recommendations to the Chapter Program Committee for people we should consider for future panels or speakers. We are also partnering with other organizations on featured topics that cross over different networks of members, such as IT (TN HIMSS), nursing (TONE), finance (HFMA), and quality (TAHQ). We have heard from members, employers, veterans and students about their personal and professional struggles. This is how we shape programs that help students and veterans gain meaningful employment and succeed in the dynamics that can occur in the workplace.

The Mentor/Mentee program offered through our local chapter is another way we are opening doors to people. Matching people from several types of organizations and backgrounds has created wonderful cross-pollination of ideas. Matching Life Fellows with early and middle careerists has helped members better navigate their careers and provide meaningful relationships. As a member, you can volunteer to serve as a mentor, with a 6-month commitment to meeting with a mentee 1-2 times per month. Some of these mentoring relationships are focused on assisting the mentee in achieving a new role, a promotion or Fellow status. Other times, a mentor and mentee can share life experiences while helping someone discover his/her strengths, round out edges, and achieve full potential. The ACHE Career Edge site provides a great platform to aid in career guidance and can be an ice breaker for a new mentor-mentee relationship. Opening doors to others is a wonderful way to help advance diversity in our field!

Please reach out to me at our LinkedIn page (https://www.linkedin.com/company/achemt/) or website (www.achemt.org) to share your ideas for how we can advance diversity in Middle Tennessee. We want to be part of the positive change to advance diversity, inclusion and culturally competent healthcare.

ACHE’s Commitment to Advancing Diversity and Inclusion

At the national level, advancing diversity and inclusion remains a key part of ACHE’s Strategic Plan. Visit ache.org/DiversityandInclusion to learn more about ACHE’s Statement on Diversity, related policy statements and the Thomas C. Do- lan Executive Diversity Program.

Also, explore the Executive Diversity Career Navigator (edcnavigator.org), an online resource to inform and inspire healthcare executives at every stage of their careers.

Volunteers Needed

ACHE of MT is seeking 2-3 Fellows to participate in a state-wide effort to develop a Fellow Advancement playbook and Guide program. Interested Fellows can email Anna Pannier at apannier@mindspring.com.

Commitment estimated at a few hours/month.