

Joi Sampson, Ed.D.,

Building an Inclusive Culture at Mercy



Photo provided by Joi Sampson, Ed.D.

Joi Sampson, Ed.D., Mercy's director of academic engagement, equity and inclusion, has a vision: to build an inclusive culture at Mercy College that supports student success and creates an authentically aware and equitable environment for work, study and research.

In her previous position in career services at Mercy, Sampson advised an array of students, including first-generation, low-income, veterans and other non-traditional learners with a desire to get ahead. In her new role, she is guiding both academic and administrative departments in the development of best practices in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Her aim is to ensure all students can learn and grow in an atmosphere where they feel a sense of belonging.

Sampson's academic and professional experiences have taught her the value of holistic, student-centered initiatives uniquely tailored to the individuals they serve. "My goal is to help students develop academic competence and equip them with the tools to combat injustice in our society," she said.

Already in place, with the help of Sampson, is the Mercy College Internship Grant Program that removes financial barriers to help students gain real-world industry experience, and Google/Techwise, a DEI initiative that prepares underrepresented students for careers in tech. "Mercy has the distinction of awarding more bachelor's degrees to Black and Latino students than many other private colleges of similar size," she said. "But true diversity and inclusion goes beyond numbers of graduates. We also want students to gain meaningful experiences during their college years so that black and brown students feel seen, heard and valued — that they belong. When that happens, students naturally take pride in their institution and themselves. Studies have shown a direct correlation between a student's sense of belonging and their success."

Moreover, diversity and inclusion programs, when



"UNSTOPPABLE": MercyManhattan by Synthia SAINT JAMES

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administered effectively, benefit the entire Mercy community in several ways. “First, it enhances collaboration to have more perspectives at the table,” said Sampson, adding that fostering a more equitable learning and working environment “...has been shown to boost morale and increase creativity, both of which can positively impact the institution’s bottom line.”

In any culture, addressing issues of inequity can lead to uncomfortable conversations that are not always easy.

“Establishing a culture that includes these challenging conversations will take a committed effort,” Sampson said. “But I’m happy to report there are allies across the Mercy community who have expressed eagerness to participate in the effort. We are optimistic that together we can effect positive outcomes that will continue to set Mercy apart from its peers.”

While Sampson’s position is still new, she is heartened by how much potential she sees for community building, citing commitments made by College leadership, faculty, staff and students alike. She looks forward to working with various groups to continue building on Mercy’s culture of inclusion. “The best part about working in this role is the opportunity to mold and shape it,” she said. “I’m excited about the future. As the adage goes, ‘We are stronger together.’”