

# TAMARA D. GRIGSBY OFFICE FOR EQUITY & INCLUSION NEWSLETTER



## EQUITY, POLICY, AND ACTION

### WORDS FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion is glad to present our first newsletter about Equal Opportunity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice in Dane County. Our Office for Equity and Inclusion is uniquely positioned to bring you current information on Community Outreach, Targeted Business Goals, and County Employment. We strive to meet the challenges of injustice with the facts, innovative policy recommendations, and action.

The Dane County Executive and Dane County Board of Supervisors worked to mobilize the efforts of Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Contract Compliance, and Racial Equity and Social Justice in Dane County by establishing our Department. As employees we stand on the shoulders of many County volunteers, equal opportunity advocates, and elected officials that work tirelessly to promote and elevate solutions to address issues of injustice and discrimination.

For so many reasons we are certain that this is a time for renewed energy and action. To address immediate challenges and highlight our success we developed this newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading our updates and stand firm in our shared commitment to equity and inclusion.

Sincerely,

Wesley Sparkman  
Director, The Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion

## NEWS, IDEAS, AND INSIGHTS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY,  
EQUITY, INCLUSION,  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE  
IN DANE COUNTY.

DANE COUNTY  
PROCUREMENT  
SEMINAR, ADA IN THE  
WORKPLACE, AND THE  
DRIVER'S EDUCATION  
SCHOLARSHIP  
PROGRAM.

# ABOUT THE OFFICE FOR EQUITY & INCLUSION

The Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion is Dane County's agency in charge of Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Contract Compliance, and Americans with Disabilities Act and Civil Rights Compliance functions. The Office is named after the late Tamara D. Grigsby. Ms. Grigsby, served in the State of Wisconsin Legislature from 2005 to 2013 representing the 18th Assembly District in Milwaukee. She was known as a voice of strength and commitment to fairness for all of Wisconsin's residents. The cornerstone of her work was racial equity, inclusion and fairness for all. Ms. Grigsby worked as the Community Relations Director for County Executive Parisi. She was instrumental in developing a series of county public policy initiatives in 2015 known as "Access to Opportunity." She co-led the Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative, facilitating critical dialogues around equity and policy with county staff.

In 2015, The Government Alliance on Race and Equity conducted a Racial Equity Analysis of Dane County Government. That report recommended that Dane County, "create infrastructure for overall implementation of report recommendations by creating a new office for racial equity and social justice." The Office for Equity and Inclusion has been charged with meeting many of the goals and recommendations contained in the report.



TAMARA D. GRIGSBY

The Office for Equity and Inclusion furthers Dane County's ongoing commitment to addressing racial, gender, and disabilities disparities. The creation of this office represents the County's long-term commitment to addressing these issues and institutionalizing the work of raising awareness, eliminating disparities, and achieving equity.

In addition, the office serves as a resource for all County departments around issues of equity, disparities, conflict resolution, and best practices.

## VISION STATEMENT

Dane County as a community with equal access to opportunity and a County organizational structure that is rooted in equity and inclusion, revealed through hiring, contracting, and service delivery.

## MISSION STATEMENT

To provide and promote excellence in public service through the development of an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable county government.

## DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

In compliance with Public Health Madison & Dane County in response to mitigate the COVID-19 spread, OEI is taking all necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of the OEI staff. Most staff are working remotely and will be checking emails and phone calls regularly.

All messages will be returned as soon as possible. OEI is asking for your patience and thank you in advance for your cooperation.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

PHONE: 608-283-1391

FAX: 608-266-2138

EMAIL: [OEI@COUNTYOFDANE.COM](mailto:OEI@COUNTYOFDANE.COM)

OPERATING HOURS: 7:45 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

# MANAGER OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

MANAGER, CARRIE BRAXTON

The Manager of Equal Employment Opportunity executes the functions of equal opportunity and affirmative action, by enforcing Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is imperative that interested applicants be recruited for hiring and retention within Dane County employment. Therefore, there is constant reviewing of reports, meetings and seeking ways to assist in the ongoing process. Not forgetting to assist with promotional opportunities as well.

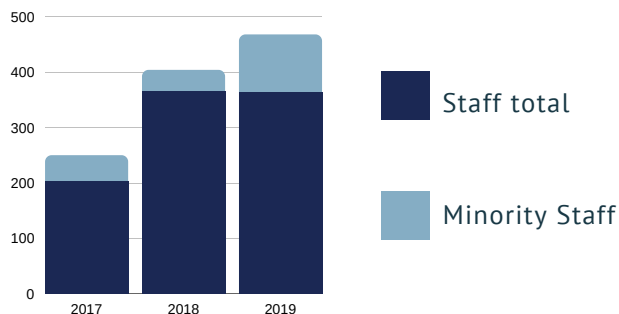


*Reviewing the hiring of staff is a large part of the job. Below are the last three years of hired staff and managers including minority staff. There has been an increase in the last few years.*

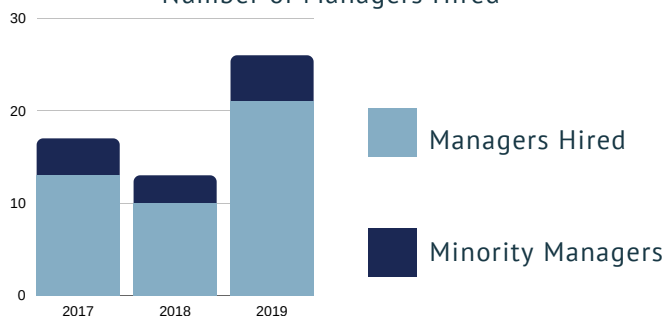
Some of duties in this role include:

- Approving requisitions for positions within Dane County employment.
- Handling complaints and/or investigations for Dane County employees.
- Departmental Interview Panels.
- Facilitating a section of the New Employee Orientation, which covers Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action, American Disability Act, Sexual Harassment Training as well as other trainings that have included Dane County Supervisors, Alliant Energy Center, Sheriff's Department.
- Staffing the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and City/County MLK Humanitarian Award MLK Humanitarian.
- Participating in partnering with other agencies and organizations such as: Wisconsin Women of Color Network (WVOCN) Inc., Madison Region's Economic Development & Diversity Summit (MadRep), United Way, Madison College, Freedom Inc., Big Brother Big Sister et al.

Number of Overall Staff Hired



Number of Managers Hired



# DIVERSITY RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST

## RODRIGO VALDIVIA

Rodrigo Valdivia is the Diversity Recruitment Specialist for Dane County. It is a dual appointment within the Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion and Employee Relations. Rodrigo began his role in January of 2019, after serving for three years as the Cultural Diversity Specialist at the North/Eastside Senior Coalition (now NewBridge), where he organized support groups for Latinx seniors from all over Latin America. He is proud to be serving in this role and considers himself privileged to hold the position. He acknowledges the work has been very challenging but highly rewarding. The connections he has made and the leadership skills he has acquired have had a tremendous impact on his life.

In his first year on the job, he took on several challenges including managing the County's Alternative Selection hiring process and making improvements to the Spanish bilingual exam. Alternative Selection, in accordance with the Civil Service Ordinance, is an exceptional hiring process Dane County employs to help people with disabilities and/or socioeconomic disadvantages obtain relevant job experience, so they may gain needed work experience and the self-confidence to advance in their careers. It also helps bring parity to departments through the hiring of racial and ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. As the Diversity Recruitment Specialist, Rodrigo is charged with maintaining the list of agencies that the County works with and handles all of the Alternative Selection recruitments in Employee Relations. He has presented on this policy and the procedures therein at the Dane County Supervisors Training meeting and regularly answers any questions a manager, supervisor, or director may have about it.

For the Spanish bilingual exam, Rodrigo gathered feedback from both the community and Dane County workers. He worked with the County's contracted grader to identify phrases and words in the exam that could be used to grade on vocabulary, grammar, register and style, position and function, and false cognates. He also posited suggestions that could help put the test taker at ease when taking the exam, such as increasing the test-taking time and making improvements to the setting so they could think and focus more clearly. Ultimately, his goal was to make the exam more objective and inclusive of all Latin American dialects as well as for English-born Spanish speakers.



Additionally, Rodrigo has worked with many community organizations including Centro Hispano, Operation Fresh Start, Madison College, UW-Extension and more. For example, he worked with Centro Hispano on their Caminos program, providing information about Dane County's employment opportunities as well as mock interviews and advice on job skills. He has also provided mock interviews to several cohorts of Operation Fresh Start's Strive program. Additionally, he assisted UW-Extension on their Latino Parent Workshops, presenting in Spanish on the various career pathways to working at Dane County.

According to Rodrigo, one of the most pleasant surprises of the role has been his work with youth and young adults. He spoke at Madison College's African American Youth Career Fair (the Hispanic and Latino Career Fair was cancelled due to COVID) as well as with LaFollette's Escalera Club and again with Operation Fresh Start. Rodrigo recognizes the importance of raising awareness about a career in local government with our youth and planting the seed to pursue the pathways that can lead to a long and fruitful career with Dane County. Furthermore, he recognizes the disadvantages that some groups may face and the importance of giving a voice to those who are marginalized. He believes that an inclusive organizational structure is for the benefit of all.

Rodrigo has stated that his role has been life-changing and has filled him with meaning and purpose. He would like to thank the incredible leadership and mentors he has had, including the Directors of Dane County's Office for Equity an Inclusion and Employee Relations, Wesley Sparkman and Amy Utzig, as well as the managers in those departments: Carrie Braxton and Theola Carter, and Kabura Mukasa, respectively. Their guidance has been nothing short of magnificent and they have inspired and allowed him to grow into the role and make it his own. He is grateful for their tutelage and is appreciative to work alongside them day in and day out to meet the needs of our public.

# CONTRACT COMPLIANCE SPECIALIST

## JOE OBY

Contract Compliance Specialist, Joe Oby, is responsible for coordinating and implementing the County's contract compliance program by ensuring contractors follow Dane County's compliance ordinances and all applicable federal regulations and state statutes. More specifically, the Contract Compliance Specialist:

- Promotes Targeted Businesses Enterprises (TBE) by increasing the number and percentage of contracting opportunities of TBEs with the County. This includes recruiting and certifying TBEs; monitoring and evaluating the County's procurements with TBEs, and conducting business engagement events;
- Ensures that County contractors comply with Title VI Civil Rights requirements. This includes a review of affirmative action plans, monitoring targeted business reports, and on-site contract reviews of county contractors; and,
- Conducts compliance-monitoring reviews, training, and complaint investigations relating to the County's affirmative action and Title VI requirements.

In early 2020, the contract compliance program collaborated with a local women-owned consulting firm to initiate a cohort pilot program for women and minority business owners in construction. This program conducted a comprehensive Construction Project Management course covering all aspects of a construction project from understanding business structure to closing out the project. This OEI pilot program provided participating business owners with the information needed to increase their capacity to compete for government contracts. The Compliance Specialist also participates in a working group with the City and State compliance and certifying specialists to enhance strategies and outreach efforts to the small, disadvantaged businesses in the area. This group has joined forces to ensure the Dane County businesses are fully engaged in contracting opportunities with local governments.

In March 2020, when COVID-19 impacted the Country, the compliance program shifted gears to provide a comprehensive listing of funding resources and options for targeted businesses affected by the shutdown's economic losses. In addition to federal and state dollars, Dane County provided \$10 million in grants - a program administered by Dane Buy Local - to small businesses experiencing the pandemic's financial burdens. The compliance program disseminated federal, state, and local funding information for targeted enterprises and provided guidance to help ensure these business owners were accessing these funds. In light of the pandemic, the contract compliance program is looking forward to and adjusting efforts to provide the County's targeted businesses with the best services.



## DANE COUNTY PROCUREMENT SEMINAR FOR TARGETED AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

In conjunction with the Dane County Regional Airport, Purchasing Division, and Public Works Department, the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) hosted the first Dane County Procurement Seminar at the Dane County Regional Airport in October 2019. This event was designed to give minority, women, disadvantaged, and emerging small business owners an opportunity to learn more about the County's procurement process and future contracting opportunities. Over fifty small business owners and community agencies, primarily from Dane and Milwaukee Counties, attended the seminar. Attendees networked with County staff and other local businesses while learning more about the County's airport concessions, public works projects, and purchasing contract opportunities. Additionally, business owners were informed about the benefits of becoming a certified Targeted Business and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and increasing their contracting opportunities with the County and State.

As a Wisconsin Unified Certification Program partner, the certifying authority of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises for the Department of Transportation's federally funded projects, the contract compliance specialist certifies DBEs in Dane County and businesses related to airport concessions.

For more information about the Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) or Dane County's Targeted Business Program. Contact Joe Oby at [Oby.Joe@countyofdane.com](mailto:Oby.Joe@countyofdane.com).



# BILINGUAL-SPANISH CLERK III

AZALEA ANGEL-PEREZ

Clerk III Bilingual-Spanish, Azalea Angel-Perez, is responsible for Administrative and General Office Support, Interaction with co-workers, management, and general public in English and Spanish. The Clerk also has miscellaneous duties as assigned from all of the staff in the office throughout the year. Azalea plays a critical role in the Department to other staff. Often, Azalea update staff on critical meetings and coordinating various meeting for staff with other Dane County Departments and the public. Azalea is the primary liaison for OEI and is the first contact that most individuals have when entering into the Department.

As the County fiscal year draws to a close, Angel-Perez is working to ensure that staff meet all end of the year deadlines and comply with procedures such as Blanket Purchase Orders, Requisition deadlines and IT Hardware & Software requests. Along with these end of the year tasks, the OEI Clerk is in charge of sending out a yearly Observed Religious Holiday memo and works with the City-County Campaign Online Auction for the Office for Equity & Inclusion.

Azalea is in charge of filling out forms for various sponsorships for online summits and conferences. She works with the MUNIS program (County Budget System) in order to set up requisitions, Purchase Orders, and processing invoices.

In addition, Azalea assist OEI staff throughout with scheduling meetings and information distribution for the Equal Opportunity Commission Committee, the OEI Advisory Board, Race and Social Justice Core and Leadership meeting (RESJ) and helps facilitate the administration of the Partners in Equity (PIE) Food and RESJ Grants. Azalea provides support to staff with planned events such as job fairs, New Employee Orientations, trainings, workshops, and assist with trouble shooting when issue may occur related to printing, IT, or facilities management.



# ADA COORDINATOR

ELLEN DERGE

In 1990 the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed. This year – 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of this ground breaking civil rights legislation. In summary, The ADA prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else, this includes employment opportunities. Per the ADA, public entities with 50 or more employees are required to have an ADA Coordinator.

In March of 2020, Ellen Derge started in the position of ADA Coordinator. It was an interesting time to start a new job given the Corona virus pandemic. She had previously worked at The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Dane County (ADRC) for 7 years. Her years of service with the ADRC gave her a strong background in working with and advocating for individuals with disabilities.



*The ADA prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else, this includes employment opportunities.*

As ADA Coordinator for Dane County Ellen has many responsibilities. However, her primary duties revolve around ensuring that Dane County complies with the ADA. In addition, she works with Dane County employees that may have disabilities and work to help find accommodations so they can continue to work their jobs and find success in their employment. Furthermore, Ellen works with Dane County employees to complete ergonomic assessments to make sure they can complete their jobs without injury or discomfort.

If you are looking for assistance from the ADA Coordinator, here's what you can do:

Call or email Ellen at **608-267-1520** or [derge.ellen@countyofdane.com](mailto:derge.ellen@countyofdane.com) with questions.

If you are looking for and accommodation please review the following policy and procedure:

<https://admin.countyofdane.com/documents/PDFs/ADA/Employee-Request-for-an-ADA-Reasonable-Accommodation--Policy-And-Procedure.pdf>

# MANAGER OF POLICY & PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

## DRIVER'S EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

THEOLA CARTER

In November 2017, Theola Carter joined the Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion (OEI) as the Manager of Policy and Program Improvement. Theola was previously the Bureau Director of Housing at the Wisconsin Department of Administration prior to joining OEI and has 25 plus years of State service. One of the programs that is administered by her position is the Driver's Education Scholarship Program.

When the State of Wisconsin eliminated driver education aid to school districts, many poor families were unable to afford to pay for private driving courses or may not have a car for students to practice driving. During the development of the County Executive's Access to Opportunity agenda (a plan to assist County residents overcome barriers to success for those trapped in generational poverty and victims of discrimination), it was revealed that many young people had not taken drivers education courses and never possessed a valid driver's license. A lack of valid operator's license posed a huge barrier to employment and could lead to situations with law enforcement due to driving without a license, which is especially true for many young black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC). As part of the Access Opportunity agenda, a pilot Driver's Scholarship project between Dane County and the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and CESA 2 was initiated in 2014.

*"The class is helpful with preparing for the permit test and knowing how to drive. The scholarship has definitely helped my family and I financially."*

*-Kiara T.*

This program was designed to assist poor and disadvantaged students gain access to driver's education instruction during the summer, learner's permits from the Department of Transportation-Division of Motor Vehicle (DOT-DMV) and access to vehicles for driving practice. In the first year of the program, education training was offered to fifty students from Madison East and LaFollette High Schools. In the summer of 2016, the program was expanded to serve 200 students from all four Madison high schools. Students who were of an appropriate age, who were eligible for free or reduced lunch and who proactively expressed an interest in the course were eligible to participate.



Since 2014, the Driver's Education Scholarship Program has been expanded to several other school districts within Dane County including: Cambridge, Deerfield, the Dane County School Consortium, DeForest, Madison, Marshall, McFarland, Middleton, Monona Grove, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin Heights and Operation Fresh Start.

The program has had a direct impact on the lives of students and their families. Students often send letters of appreciation and statements to OEI letting the Department and the County Executive know just how impactful the program has been for them and their families:

*"The class is good and helpful. My mom is really proud that I won the scholarship."*

*-Daniela G.*

| Year         | Number of students enrolled | Number BICOP | Withdrew or Dropped | Passed classroom Course | Behind the Wheel | Acquired License |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 2017         | 179                         | 160          | 12                  | 145                     | 125              | 9                |
| 2018         | 195                         | 161          | 13                  | 162                     | 124              | 23               |
| 2019         | 233                         | 185          | 13                  | 215                     | 190              | 100              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>607</b>                  | <b>506</b>   | <b>38</b>           | <b>522</b>              | <b>439</b>       | <b>132</b>       |

Note: The County Fiscal year goes from January to December. The school year is August to June and covers 2 years. In addition, it is challenging scheduling behind the wheel for students due to demand; however, CESA is working with the school districts to more address this need.

To become involved with the program, School Districts must contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion and request to participate in the program. Districts may contact [Theola Carter](mailto:carter.theola@countyofdane.com) by email at [carter.theola@countyofdane.com](mailto:carter.theola@countyofdane.com) to inquire about the program. Participation is contingent upon available funding for the program.



# COVID LIFE – THE NEW NORMAL

Our world has changed, as we once knew it and we have entered into a new normal since the COVID-19 Pandemic. The month of October 2020, marks the 7th month that we have had to institute a new life, changing normal in our work and home lives.

Despite the pandemic, life goes on. Many of us, except for essential workers, had to adjust to working from home and using Zoom or GoToMeeting or some other platform to communicate with co-workers; accessing our work systems via Wi-Fi and utilizing email and cell phones has become a crucial tools for completing work and meeting deadline. And, when not focused on work responsibilities, we are confined in our homes with our loved ones and restricting outdoor activities to essential trips or meetings.

We are limiting the number of social events we attend and gatherings together, if at all, while wearing protective face masks, washing hands and social distancing. Let's not forget that our children are also making that same adjustment. They are attending school from home and getting connected with their friends and teachers via the computer, interacting with friends through a gaming app or other communication platforms and may be more anxious and restless than usual. During this time, it's good to keep a pulse on your physical and mental health and learn what causes triggers and stresses for you. Remember, take your mental health breaks, step out for walks, and get some type of exercise in on a regular basis. This is a time you can discover new interests and re-experience prior hobbies. If you believe you have been exposed to someone who has the COVID-19 virus, you should sequester and monitor yourself to see if you display symptoms. Call your physician or medical provider for instructions. If you are asymptomatic, you may go to the Alliant Energy Center to get a COVID-19 test and inform them that you believe that you have been exposed.

The Dane County Tamara D. Grigsby Office for Equity and Inclusion is taking precautions to ensure safety of our staff. All staff are working remotely. We do regular check-ins with one another. You may reach office staff via their emails or leave messages on their telephone voice mail and staff will return your message as soon as possible and we are asking for your patience as we all adjust to this new normal and navigate our way through the pandemic. In the meanwhile, we want to remind you to follow the public health directives:

- CONTINUE TO SOCIAL DISTANCE
- WEAR YOUR FACE MASKS OR SHIELDS
- WASH HANDS FREQUENTLY
- DON'T TOUCH EYES & FACE
- LIMIT TRAVELS TO ESSENTIAL TRIPS ONLY

Additional sources for information:

Public Health Madison and Dane County:

<https://www.publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus>

Wisconsin Department of Health Services:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/data.htm>

Wisconsin Hospital Association COVID-19 dashboard:

<https://www.wha.org/COVID19Update>

Dane County Mask Makers:

<https://www.danecountymaskmakers.com/>

STAY SAFE, BE WELL AND TAKE CARE THROUGH THESE TURBULENT TIMES!

 TAMARA D. GRIGSBY  
OFFICE FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

