

Diversity Trailblazer 2017 Award Speech

Thank you to the award committee for selecting me for this award. I am incredibly honored to accept it. In fact, this is easily one of the highlights of my professional career. But I do have many people to thank who have made it possible for me to receive this....

First, I am thankful to have a Dean like Amy Reynolds who has expressed her commitment to diversity and inclusion in college level staffing and programming that is directed towards students, faculty, and staff. She is raising the standard at Kent State by making talk about and the work of diversity an everyday norm in our college. Commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion are just basic expectations in CCI.

I also have a supportive Director in Beth Graham who has allowed me to leave faculty meetings early to give Green Dot presentations, attend Women's Center Advisory Board meetings, and other DEI committee meetings. Importantly, Beth (and Amy and others) also explicitly and wholeheartedly supported my diversity work in their reviews of my tenure and promotion file.

All of this is to say that I am lucky to have leadership in my school and college that enables me to do diversity work. And we know from management and organizational communication research that if we want to encourage our colleagues to engage in proactive and creative thinking around things like diversity, our leadership needs to support that thinking and that action through different kinds of tangible evaluation and reward processes.

I am also incredibly grateful to my colleagues in the School of Communication Studies who have let me slack on committee work in our School and allowed me to work in the service of DEI. If you don't already know it, I work with some of the most amazing colleagues in Communication Studies. They get that this stuff is important.

Of course I can't forget to thank my beautiful family who have tolerated my crazy work schedule as I try to balance my research, teaching, and service and integrate diversity initiatives throughout these different areas.

I don't want to minimize how elated I feel by receiving this award with what I say next...but, honestly, it's not very difficult to do what I do. The staff of DEI have created an amazing infrastructure of comprehensive programming and numerous possibilities to infuse diversity work into all parts of our campus community. And I believe that now more than ever, as an institute of higher education, we are obligated to answer their call. Everyone in this room can do something whether it's focusing on our internal efforts to create a culture of caring at Kent State or our external efforts directed towards creating a more equitable, respectful, and just society for everyone.

So the message I want you to take away from this is that Kent State makes it easy to do diversity work— whether it's joining a diversity action committee in your department, inviting a Green Dot overview talk to your area or organization, attending yourself and encouraging your students, friends, and colleagues to go to an event sponsored by one of the DEI centers, focusing your research on some aspect of diversity and sharing it with our community, including a note on your syllabus or powerpoint, partnering with a community organization that is focused on social change, hanging a poster in your office or your dorm...the possibilities are endless.

As we celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr in 2017, we all know there is no better time to do the work of diversity than now. Thank you.