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MARYLAND EQUITY & INCLUSION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM'S INAUGURAL CLASS GRADUATES

First Cohort Learned How To Address Challenges in Strategic and Innovative Ways

Baltimore, MD – The first cohort of the Maryland Equity & Inclusion Leadership Program (MEILP) graduated after a rigorous year of interactive activities, small group discussions, networking opportunities, and dynamic speakers focusing on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. The class was comprised of 33 professionals from the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

After the death of Freddie Gray in police custody in Baltimore and many other similar incidents across the county as well as increase in acts of hate and bias related to race, gender, sexual orientation and other dimensions of difference, the MEILP was created out of great need as a joint venture by the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) and the University of Baltimore's Schaefer Center for Public Policy. The goal is for program participants to take a deeper dive into these important issues and to build capacity to address diversity, equity, and inclusion issues and challenges in more strategic, innovative ways so as to improve their respective workplaces.

MEILP graduates have expressed an overwhelmingly positive response to all that was learned throughout 2017. "This has been an amazing experience. I couldn't be happier that I was included in the process in the initial program," remarked one participant, who concluded, "It's definitely going to make me a better person; I think it already has." Another participant stated, "From a personal level, I am encouraged to keep fighting not only at work but at home for equity and justice for everybody that needs it; and to speak for the voiceless. Professionally, I am reminded that I have more resources than I thought I did when I came in the door, and I plan to tap into those resources when I leave."

In another powerful reflection, one graduate remarked, "I appreciate the program for being a space, an intentional space, to talk about issues you may not necessarily get a chance to really talk and dialogue about in day to day life, especially if you're not working in the diversity, equity and inclusion world. It's been refreshing to have this space and learn from others who are also encountering some of the same challenges."

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As part of the program requirements, participants were tasked with identifying a particular diversity/equity challenge or need in their respective organization and then developing a project plan, idea or initiative to try to address that challenge. Participants were encouraged to use what they learned in the program and to go beyond the usual surface level efforts to combat bias and inequality in workplaces. With that in mind, they pushed one another to think creatively and to act dynamically to create new and different projects. Some examples of innovative project ideas include: a new partnership with the City of Salisbury and the City of College Park to reduce implicit bias in the hiring of both city's employees; a Diversity & Inclusion Manager Toolkit for employees of the American Red Cross; a veteran recruitment and retention action plan for Charles County Government; an inclusion-based onboarding system for T. Rowe Price employees; and an accelerated job skills training and workforce placement program to provide apprenticeships and jobs in the natural resources field for underserved and underrepresented populations through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Graduates are now tasked with returning to the organization where they work and the communities where they live to apply all that they have learned, while also serving as alumni ambassadors for the next MEILP class.

MEILP was made possible thanks in large part to a number of program sponsors, including:

- the Annie E. Casey Foundation,
- the M&T Bank Charitable Foundation,
- the PNC Foundation, and
- the T. Rowe Price Foundation, Inc.

Supporting partners, who also hosted on-site program sessions, included:

- the Baltimore Jewish Council,
- Bon Secours,
- Johns Hopkins Medicine Office of Diversity & Inclusion,
- Maryland Nonprofits, and
- the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture.

The University of Baltimore is a member of the University System of Maryland and comprises the College of Public Affairs, the Merrick School of Business, the UB School of Law and the Yale Gordon College of Arts and Sciences. *Learn more about the University of Baltimore's [Schaefer Center for Public Policy](#).*

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) represents the interest of the State to ensure equal opportunity for all through enforcement of Title 20 of the State Government Article and Title 19 of the State Finance & Procurement Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. MCCR investigates complaints of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and state contracts filed by members of protected classes under federal and state law. *Learn more about the [Maryland Commission on Civil Rights](#).*

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