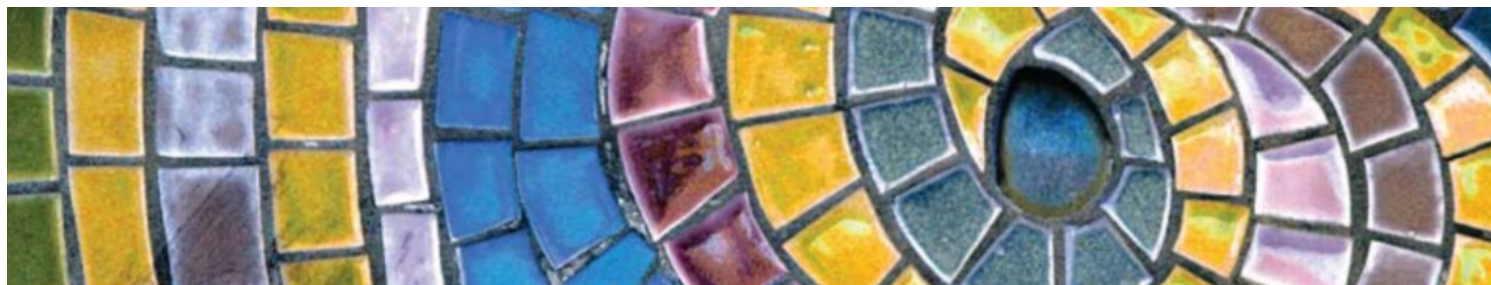


Office of Business and Financial Services



Procurement Diversity Quarterly Connection

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Director's Note

Greetings,
The Office of Procurement Diversity is pleased to bring you the second edition of our Quarterly Connection newsletter.

I hope you find this issue informative and useful whether you are a diverse business owner, part of the University of Illinois System, or one of our valuable partners.

We are here to help maximize relationships and opportunities and want to use the newsletter as a tool for doing so, but we can't do it without you. So feel free to [email](#) us and share comments or suggestions on newsletter content that would be helpful and meaningful to you.

Kind Regards - Sharla

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UIS Chancellor
Susan Koch



Diverse Business Opportunity Fair Held Downstate

Another first of many diverse business opportunity fairs goes down in the books. It was an honor to hold the Chief Procurement Office and Higher Education Diverse Business Opportunity Fair in the state capital and on the University of Illinois at Springfield campus. UIS Chancellor Susan Koch kicked it off with a warm welcome in support of the event. She spoke about diversity on campus and gave tidbits of information to encourage the vendors in attendance.

State Representative of the 99th District Sara Jimenez also spoke and gave closing remarks that echoed the message shared throughout the day to help motivate and show support to the business professionals.

The downstate event featured more than 15 State of Illinois public universities and colleges

gathered to meet and network with small and diverse vendors throughout the state. Public schools from as far north as Western University and far south as Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and Kaskaskia participated.

Not only were the Illinois public universities in attendance, but several assist agencies and prime vendors were also on site to meet business professionals.

The Chief Procurement Office plays an important role in vendor diversification in public higher education. One of its main priorities is to work cooperatively with the state universities to increase participation in higher education procurement by minorities, women, persons with disabilities and veteran-owned firms.

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In the Spotlight



FARO Associates, LLC - New UI Connection

Olga Camargo is the founder and CEO of FARO Associates, LLC, an independent, woman-owned business providing clients with creative financial solutions. The Minority Business Enterprise, or MBE, is headquartered in Chicago.

With a combined 45 years of experience, the experts at FARO Associates have excelled at delivering high-quality, tailored financial services, insurance brokerage services, investment advice, and served as trusted operations consultants to businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies across industries that include education, construction, and healthcare.

Camargo sat down for a Q&A to share how she started her business, and the lessons she has learned while working with the University of Illinois System.

How did your business get started?

After coming across so many workplaces that lacked inclusive employee benefits and retirement programs, I saw the

grand opportunity to assist employers to make a difference for today's diverse workforce, and take better care of our nation's employees. Given my experience as an investment fiduciary and a plan sponsor consultant, and by virtue of the countless, culturally relevant financial literacy sessions that I have delivered to frontline staff at numerous organizations especially within minority communities, I knew that I could help employers and the financial services industry by building their cultural competency.

I have walked the halls of healthcare facilities, nonprofits, businesses, and colleges, and spoken with many employees whose stories reminded of me of my parents' journey, and I knew of their unique financial literacy needs and the kinds of financial products and services that could make a difference for them. I believe that being raised within a minority community, understanding firsthand the financial struggles faced by many families, and the barriers - some systemic - that prevent people from advancing. Owning this story, allows me to better assist employers to more effectively meet their employees' needs. Our business exists to positively promote financial well-being for everyone.

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IT Firms at Your Service: KRS102 Contracts

Does your University of Illinois System department have IT needs but you are unsure what vendor to use? Are you planning an IT project and want to consult with an expert? If so, use the KRS102 contracted vendors in the iBuy punch-out catalog!

KRS102 is part of a state program designed to give businesses certified by the State of Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) Business Enterprise

Program (BEP) an opportunity to provide quick access to web developers or programmers for specific projects and services.

All 10 categories, along with vendor information, can be found on the IT Consulting Contracts page.

If you have questions, please email the OBFS Procurement Diversity at procurementdiversity@uillinois.edu.

Tools You Can Use



Vendors: Don't let your certifications lapse! Mark your calendar to begin the recertification process no less than 90 days prior to expiration.

Upcoming Events

October 16 - Governors State University & Higher Ed Opportunity Fair

Calling all veterans and diverse business owners looking to do business with Governors State and other public universities.

November 1 - OPD Construction Summit

Learn what diverse vendors and suppliers need to know about working with the University of Illinois Capital Construction and Facility Service Projects.

Diverse Business Opportunity Fair Held Downstate (Continued from Page 1)

Chief Procurement Officer Ben Bagby encouraged the community's diverse businesses interested in partnering with State of Illinois public universities and community colleges to attend outreach events such as these. Bagby said the State has substantial opportunities for diverse firms to participate in the procurement and contracting process. He added, "It's important that diverse businesses know that the state values their business and are always looking for new ways to expand the diverse supplier network."

Bagby helped establish the Business Enterprise Program in 1984 and has been associated with it ever since. He has worked for decades to continually improve procurement policies and is committed to fostering an inclusive and competitive business environment that will help business enterprises increase their capacity, grow revenue, and enhance credentials.

"We are the solution to getting more diverse vendors," added Bagby. "Increasing participation in bids, welcoming competition, and increasing the vendors' interest is key."

Bagby proudly proclaimed, "Ask me," while pointing to his shirt that featured the same slogan across the chest to proudly demonstrate his commitment to the universities and vendor community.

The fair is not only designed for those that already have a business, but it is also tailored to those who are just starting out and seeking business opportunities. Those in attendance were able to take advantage of opportunities to speak face-to-face with multiple universities and entities, gaining a better understanding of what resources are available as they start a business.

Marcus Brown, from Champaign, recently started gauging the magnitude of the opportunities available at the University of Illinois, and wanted to see what services and products other schools were utilizing. "I want to start a business that provides something that the university doesn't already have; some-

thing that there is little minority participation in," said Brown. "There is room for all. I'm just trying to figure out what and where the best fit is for me. Attending the fair has been very helpful in getting the information needed to figure out my plan of business."

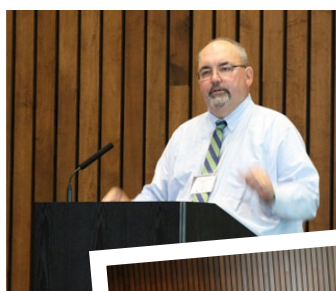
Kylie Gilmore from the University of Illinois at Springfield marketing department, was another first-time participant to the event. "So far it's going great," said Gilmore of her experience. "People are coming by, asking questions, wanting to know more about the different types of spending our department has, and what needs we have."

Illinois State University's Bryan Reid echoed Gilmore's excitement for the event. "Having all the schools here with a shared goal is motivating. It's important to support one another and work together to achieve that shared goal of increasing diverse vendor participation."

University purchasing, and other departments across the board, said that they thought these types of events were mutually beneficial to all parties involved, helping them connect with diverse businesses, and identify how to help a diverse vendor do business with their institution.

Attendees took full advantage of two workshops offered by the experts. Margaret van Dijk, State Purchasing Officer and Tracy Sullivan, Assistant Vice President of Procurement & Business Services, Governors State University presented procurement and the legislation that affects small and diverse businesses. Irma Lopez, Outreach Manager, State of Illinois BEP and Derrick Champion, Deputy Director, Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity presented the benefits of becoming certified by the State of Illinois Business Enterprise Program.

All in all, the event offered valuable information, shared useful resources, and cultivated connections that will be sure to benefit everyone in attendance.



In the Spotlight (Continued from Page 2)

What lessons have you learned from your experience doing business with the U of I System?

The No. 1 lesson that I have learned in working with the U of I System is that we all need each other at one point in life or another. I remember walking into UIC as a freshman in 1991, and just being proud of being there as a student with deep hopes of being transformed into a meaningful change agent. UIC gave me so many opportunities, including the opportunity to work for the Office of the Chancellor. Today I can say my life has come full circle with the U of I System. I am beyond words and can only say that it is one of the most extraordinary honors of my life to be called back home to work for faculty and staff that have the responsibility of delivering more change agents into our world.

The second lesson that I learned as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) is that you need to constantly talk to and update key individuals about your work and its impact, especially those individuals that can include you in opportunities where you can add meaningful value. FARO Associates was identified by prime companies that wanted to respond to the Illinois Public Higher Education Cooperative (IPHEC) request for proposal (RFP) for retirement plan monitoring/consulting services for IPHEC universities' 403(b) retirement plans. The opportunity had a Business Enterprise Program goal that included MBE participation. We worked on the response with Marquette Associates, and after a few days, our team had a proposal that we all felt very positive about.

Before responding to any RFP, a very important third lesson is knowing how to do business with the U of I System. Understanding the process is paramount. We participated in the pre-proposal conference call that discussed all of the state requirements for proposal responsiveness, and subsequent calls. We always made sure that our team participated, identified ourselves, asked questions during the calls, and that we debriefed after calls with the state to ensure everyone was on the same page. All was crucial to prepare an informed response; we also kept abreast of any addendums to the RFP. Our team was fully engaged, and had a complete understanding of the services needed.

All in all, I see the inclusive culture that the U of I System is building, especially with minority women vendors, like myself, who are competent and can offer additional insight to improve the system's current processes. All of this gives me hope that we are working collectively to address one of our nation's most pressing issues, the racial wealth divide, and that we can start right here in Illinois. This project speaks to me on so many levels including recognizing that Latino financial services companies like FARO Associates can make an invaluable contribution and difference for the U of I System's diverse workforce as they work to secure their financial future.