

**Office of Procurement Diversity**  
**2017 Construction Summit**  
*“Building Your Future with the University of Illinois”*

Highlighting our organization and the work we do is key to learning our business and our customers’ business. This is one way we have remained a valued and trusted advisor.

This month, we are highlighting the Office of Procurement Diversity and their November **2017 Construction Summit**, to share how this group and the particular event brings value to the University of Illinois System community. The Office of Procurement Diversity—OPD for short, oversees the Supplier Diversity Program, which is committed to including diverse businesses in the university-wide procurement process. A diverse business is one that is owned by minorities, females, persons with disabilities, and veterans.

OPD holds the Construction Summit every year and is a major event for architects, engineers, design professionals, and contractors to attend workshops and learn how to:

- Become a successful proposer.
- Understand the U of I System’s bidding process.
- Meet the requirements for pre-qualification in Contractor Annual Prequalification System (CAPS).
- Build relationships with diverse businesses in the System community.

With representation at the event from approximately 110 businesses, it is obvious that supporting one another’s work and striving to achieve similar diversity goals is a priority. However, one of the challenges in supplier diversity is that people don’t think that diverse companies offer the services they need or are used to using the same company over and over. Businesses and university employees must remember to: trust the growth process and keep in mind that in order to grow, they have to seek out diverse companies. Yes, you can still use ABC, but you should also try 123. However, in order to try 123, you must first *know* about them.



Guest speaker, **Illinois State Representative William Q. Davis** said it best in his speech: “Have we fulfilled our mission? Not yet. This is the lip service stage. We have to do more. If no one knows who you are and your capabilities, then you will not be successful. You have to take advantage of CMS and support organizations. OPD can only do so much. It’s up to you to talk to the people you need to talk to; understand the basics such as prequalifications; look for gateway opportunities—help firms learn what contractors need to know and become that trusted partner.”

### Benefits of Participating



**Andy Billhymer, Jim Thomas and Greg Clark**

“Wesco is an Electrical Wholesalers supplier to university contractors. We are a national firm with an Illinois office on site. We are here today to support supplier diversity requirements and work to meet the state’s diversity goal. We strive to become more creative in promoting the diversity goals and facilitate many meeting and interactions to promote this initiative and these services. This event is a wonderful opportunity to communicate, network, and learn different processes. We are dedicated to building relationships with sub-contractors and public agencies. People trying to build WNBE come here.”



**Latonya Webb – Assistant Director of Contractors Administration, Capital Programs**

**What are the benefits of attending/presenting at this event?**

From an owner’s perspective, it is nice to be able to connect with current and potential contractors. Often contractors are intimidated by the total process from prequalification to submitting a bid. Becoming

prequalified to bid on contracts at the University of Illinois. It is great to be able to demystify the process of doing business with the University of Illinois. I enjoy explaining the process and answering questions.

**From your perspective, over the past couple of years, how has the Supplier Diversity Program progression impacted the university?**

The program assists the University in connecting with and maintaining good relationships with diverse vendors. It helps to ensure the University if making diversity in procurement a priority and helping to ensure opportunities are available to diverse businesses.

**What is one action or step that University employees can do to help achieve the University's diversity goal?**

Help remove barriers to participation by diverse businesses.

**How Can I Contribute?**

As trusted partners, managers, and personnel in the U of I System we can do more, too. We must take on more responsibility for making purchases and finding diverse vendors to provide services in our department. Every department can contribute. Whether it is buying your copy paper in iBuy and selecting the diverse supplier icon, or choosing a diverse vendor to supply your business lunch—every bit counts. There are many ways that we can achieve meeting this important goal. Email OPD at [procurementdiversity@uillinois.edu](mailto:procurementdiversity@uillinois.edu) for a list of vendors to meet your needs and to find out about other opportunities that will help you, your department, and the System grow.

[2017 Construction Summit Photo Album](#)