

Equality highlights

2012 - 2013

*Celebrating equality and diversity
at Sheffield Hallam University*



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Breaking down barriers, *supporting all.*



Sheffield Hallam University is the UK's third largest university with over 37,000 students and more than 4,000 staff. In such a large institution, it is more important than ever to celebrate our diversity and demonstrate real commitment to equality.

I believe that no one at the University should expect any less than a high-quality experience, as a student or staff member without artificial barriers holding them back. But there are always new challenges to overcome.

That's why I am pleased that this report has chosen to highlight those projects and individuals, working and studying here, who are really helping to make this a reality.

The report focuses on the 2012/13 academic year showing where progress has been made at the University in terms of equality and diversity, and highlighting where we are aiming to make future progress.

It is important that we have clear and transparent plans for equality and diversity and we value people who champion fairness and keep us focused on what still needs to change. So, who inspires us to do better?

This report offers the views and experiences of five role models, individuals who are making a real difference to the lives of students and staff alike. I hope that their stories will encourage you to make a difference by supporting and participating in activities around equality and diversity across the university.

Liz Winders
Secretary and Registrar

This edition

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Here we report on some of the activities related to equality and diversity in the 2012/13 academic year. We've tried to pick out stories that reflect the successes we've had, but also our plans for how to respond to the challenges that lie ahead.

Role models p.10 - 14

In this section, we present people who are involved in promoting the agenda of equality and diversity for both students and staff every day at Sheffield Hallam. We've asked them to tell their stories and share what drives and motivates them in the hope that they will inspire others.



Equality Challenge Unit Conference 2012

Key members of the Sheffield Hallam staff attended a national conference on equality in higher education to discuss and reflect on progress within the sector and the challenges that still lie ahead.

The bi-annual Equality Challenge Unit Conference held in Nottingham on 20th November 2012 was attended by members of the Equality and Diversity Team and Beryl Seaman, University Governor and Chair of the University audit committee. The key areas of focus for the conference included how equality policies could improve the recruitment and retention of higher education staff, how to govern more fairly, and the use of positive action in enhancing diversity. All found it inspiring,

with one member of staff stating that it 'served as motivation to meet new equality challenges posed by the changing HE environment'.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) equality and diversity training



The equality and diversity team have been involved in shaping the selection criteria for researchers featured in an influential national report on Sheffield Hallam's research, to help to ensure it contains the fairest possible representation of all students and staff.

The Equality and Diversity Team have been working in collaboration with the Research Support Team to support Equality and Diversity issues for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014. REF is the new system for assessing

the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, replacing the Research Assessment Exercise and placing new emphasis on social, economic and public policy impact, as well as academic significance.

As part of the University's commitment to this process, five REF Equality and Diversity training sessions were held for senior staff responsible for making decisions about staff selection. These sessions comprised of presentations and group work to examine fictional case studies. The aim was to provide staff with a clear understanding of equality considerations and to have confidence in decision-making with respect to the selection of staff for the REF. In total 77 staff attended the sessions including all Research Coordinators, members of the University's REF Implementation Group, Pro-Vice Chancellors and the Vice Chancellor.

Board of Governors Equality and Diversity Workshop

In June 2013 a workshop for the Board of Governors on Equality and Diversity was held.

The workshop was an opportunity for the Board to engage with this important aspect of the University's work and included time for the Governors to discuss case studies and equality priority projects with members of staff. At the workshop the Chair of the Board Geoff Dawson

highlighted how equality and diversity is integral to the University's mission.

"It is not only about the business case or legal drivers for this work, it is because it is the right thing to do".



More departmental awards for women's equality in the sciences

The number of departments gaining national women's equality awards continues to grow, indicating that working to address issues impacting on women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) subjects is firmly on Sheffield Hallam's agenda for the future.

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It has been a good two years for redressing the gender imbalance in STEMM subjects at Sheffield Hallam. In April 2012, our psychology and bioscience and biomedical research departments were recognised for improved standards with bronze and silver Athena SWAN awards. Building on this success, in 2013 the departments of architecture and planning and engineering and maths achieved bronze departmental awards.

Athena SWAN is a national scheme that recognises commitment to advancing women's careers in STEMM in higher education and research. The organisation grants bronze, silver and gold awards to institutions that can demonstrate increasing levels of good practice in recruiting, retaining and promoting women in STEMM in higher education.

Sheffield Hallam joined the Athena SWAN Charter in 2008 and gained a bronze university award in August 2010. Our central self-assessment team continues to meet regularly to oversee progress and to ensure Athena SWAN principles and the action plan tie in with Sheffield Hallam's Equality Priorities and Corporate Plan aims and objectives. We submitted our University bronze renewal application in April 2013, which was successful.

International Women's Day

This annual event was the catalyst for a day of lectures by inspirational women in academia.

To celebrate International Women's Day on Friday 8th March 2013, the Women Professors Group at the University organised a number of activities to recognise the achievements of women at Sheffield Hallam, and in other academic institutions to inspire future female academics on this career trajectory.

Inspiring women who gave talks included esteemed academic Dianne Willcocks CBE, former Vice-Chancellor of York St John University and former deputy principal of Sheffield Hallam University. There was also a talk by Jane Rogers, professor of writing at Sheffield Hallam and author of award-winning *The Testament of Jessie Lamb*. And from the sciences there was a presentation and discussion from internationally recognised biomedical expert, Professor Munevver Sokmen from Karadeniz Technical University in Turkey.

Finally, Laura Tabili of the University of Arizona, offered a historical perspective for the day with her public lecture in the Cantor Building on women and migration history.

A mentoring scheme to increase the number of female professors at Sheffield Hallam

In September 2013, sixteen aspiring female professors at Sheffield Hallam University embarked on ASPIRE, a new mentoring scheme sponsored by the Women Professors Group and supported by the HR Directorate.

Recent statistics show that just 22% of Professors at Sheffield Hallam are female, a statistic sadly reflective of the current gender imbalance at a professorial level found throughout the UK higher education. Reacting to these findings, the ASPIRE scheme has been set up at Sheffield Hallam, seeking to increase the number of women professors at the University and to close the gender imbalance in the ratio of male and female professors.

ASPIRE hopes to achieve these goals by supporting an increase in the number of applications for

professorships from women and encourage those who are not successful at first application to act on feedback and reapply. It also wants to make it easier for women to navigate and understand the reader/professorship route with wider networks of support and access to other female and male professors who can act as mentors.

All female academics at Grade 8 or above from across all four faculties were invited to apply to the scheme. Fifty-two expressed interest, with twenty six ultimately making an official self-nomination. In parallel to this, thirteen Professors (both male and female) volunteered to be mentors. Matching was carefully considered, with the main selection criterion being evidence that achievement of Professorship was feasible within the next few years.

Although in its infancy, support and enthusiasm has been evident since the launch of the scheme was announced at this year's International Women's Day (above). An evaluation is also underway to measure the impact that the scheme has on various measures of self-esteem, wellbeing and job satisfaction.



Older people's champion collects doctorate

Professor Dianne Willcocks, champion of older people and a former leader at Sheffield Hallam was presented with an honorary doctorate this year.

A former Sheffield Hallam University assistant principal who oversaw the development of its acclaimed library has praised her former employers on returning to the city to collect an honorary degree.

Professor Dianne Willcocks CBE was the first of 16 honorary doctorates this year when she took to the Sheffield City Hall stage on Monday during the graduation of students from the faculty of development and society.

Professor Willcocks, who worked in the leadership team at Sheffield Hallam from 1993 to 1999 and was part of the team who created the University's Adsetts Centre, is Emeritus Professor at York St John University and vice-chairman of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

She was also a founder member of Yorkshire's first Lifelong Learning Network, Higher York, and a member of the HEFCE board for three years, chairing its widening access and participation strategic advisory committee.

Her early research looked into age-appropriate living arrangements and citizenship in old age, an interest she pursues actively within JRF where she supports work on loneliness and dementia.

She has also been named Older People's Champion by York Older People's Assembly.



Disability studies seminar boasts largest audience ever

Disability Studies staff and the Disability Research Forum continue to draw a large crowd for their events surrounding disability, boosting the profile of disabilities in the University.

In 2012-2013, Disability Studies staff organised a wide-range of events in conjunction with the internationally active group, Disability Research Forum (DRF). These events were designed to bring to Sheffield Hallam disability studies expertise from around the UK and internationally. Speakers from as far afield as Toronto, Canada and Cape Town, South Africa spoke at the events on subjects as diverse as the impact of neo-liberal policy and experiences of African disabled youth living in rural areas.

Thanks to their quality of speakers and breadth of scope these events, all were well attended. But October's seminar with Professors Michalko and Titchkosky earned the accolade of the largest audience ever for an education research seminar at Sheffield Hallam University.

Disability outreach scheme shortlisted for award

Sheffield Hallam's outreach scheme has been set up to make sure that students with disabilities gain the confidence, support and inspiration to make the transition from further to higher education at Sheffield Hallam. In 2013, it was shortlisted for a national award.

In April 2013 the Sheffield Regional Assessment Centre based at Sheffield Hallam University was shortlisted for a Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Award within the category of outstanding student services.

The nomination was for the transition work undertaken to raise aspirations of potential disabled learners moving towards higher education.

The disability outreach scheme provides activities and events to

- encourage students to disclose their disability early in the process so that the necessary support can be arranged pre-entry to university
- support disabled learners moving from further to higher education
- provide students with the confidence needed in order to apply for higher education



As part of the Disability Outreach Scheme, sixteen disabled student ambassadors were recruited with responsibility for raising aspirations and motivations of disabled learners applying for university and to raise awareness of the support available. The ambassadors support events and activities run by the Transition Officer to provide experience talks to students who are progressing towards studying in higher education. The ambassadors are acting as a positive role model for disabled students about how accessing support has helped them and by helping to meet student's expectations of life at university.



Student works with theatre producer to put gay British Asians in the spotlight

Final year English and Screen Studies student Chris Owen took the opportunity of a work-based project module to write and edit for a theatre production inspired by British Asian lesbian, gay and bisexual life stories.

As part of the project, arranged through the University's Venture Matrix scheme, Chris worked for theatre producer Bobby Tiwana, currently working on *Beneath the Surface* a production based around the narrative lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Asians living in Britain. The production is inspired by British Asian LGBT lives and the motivation behind the work is to increase visibility of this minority through theatrical fictions.

Chris approached the project with enthusiasm and professionalism from the start, developing an excellent working relationship with the client from their very first meeting. He quickly completed

the initial transcription offered by the client and moved onto transcribing further interviews.

Speaking about working with Chris and *Beneath the Surface*, Bobby said, 'As a freelance cultural producer of 15 years I am fully aware of the potential for learning through making connections, uncovering hidden opportunities and gaining relevant experience. This project is a rich resource for mutual benefits through a two-way exchange. If I and my project can be a conduit for skills development, learning and growth for others, whilst at the same time benefitting the project and me, this is a win-win situation.'

Sheffield Hallam out and proud!

Sheffield Hallam University staff were out and proud at Sheffield Pride on Saturday 6th July 2013.

Sheffield Pride, the city's annual Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) event took place in Barker's Pool in 2013, and Sheffield Hallam University was in pride of place, with stalls from both staff and students present alongside stalls from many other local organisations.

DJs and live performers kept everyone entertained and the City Hall opened its doors to offer bar facilities. Visitors to Sheffield Pride were able to sit back and enjoy the sunshine in a safe and inclusive environment.

Other organisations holding stalls included, amongst others Sheffield Centre for HIV, T-Boys, Irwin Mitchell and Fruit Bowl, Sheffield's service for LGBT young people.

Staff from Sheffield Hallam University's LGBT staff forum who ran the SHU stall have reported the event to be a roaring success, with a lot of interest in the University and are soon to begin planning for next year's event.





Working with local BME organisation to educate young people about the environment

Sheffield Hallam have been involved in a project with Sheffield Black & Ethnic Minority Environmental Network (SHEBEEN), the Peak District National Park and Imperial College London to promote a series of environmental educational activities.

Sheffield Hallam has been working with local Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) network SHEBEEN to offer educational activities related to developing understanding of the importance of freshwater management systems to young people. These activities are targeted at young adults from urbanised, rural and disadvantaged backgrounds, such as Black and Minority Ethnic and White working class communities.

The project's objective is to help participants, as future custodians of these resources, to understand the importance of these critical ecosystems for health and emotional well-being. They are also encouraged to explore pathways into further education, higher education and employment

in roles that may have a positive effect on the environment in the future.

Most importantly of it is about bringing young people together to recognise and respect difference - and appreciate nature. The project has been recognised as a model of good practice by the Peak National Park and is supported by local MP Clive Betts for its achievements.

Narrowing the gap in honours achievement

Towards the beginning of the academic year of 2012-2013, we invited Dr Gurnam Singh (Coventry University) to speak at Sheffield Hallam University to help raise awareness to our staff and students of the sector-wide issue of the gap in 'good honours' achievement between black minority ethnic (BME) and white students.

Nationally, there has been an 18% difference in 'good honours' achievement between white and BME students according to the Equality Challenge Unit. Dr Singh is a National Teaching Fellow and was commissioned by the Higher Education Academy to conduct a critical review on the gap attainment issue. His presentation was part of Sheffield Hallam University's implementation of the MoRKSS (Mobilisation of Research Knowledge for Student Success) initiative, which is a programme funded by the Higher Education Academy to enhance the achievement of BME students throughout the sector. The event was well-attended with an audience that included colleagues from local colleges, neighbouring universities and local BME community associations.



Pat Morton **Director, Women in SET (WiSET) at Sheffield Hallam**

“The reasons for fewer women being involved in sciences are not biological. They’re cultural. And we’ve got to change that.”

It all seems a long time ago when I started out. I got good results at school and I knew I liked maths and science and so the careers advisor, who was quite ahead of her time, suggested I train to be an architectural technician. Everywhere I went, I was the only girl or later woman on the course – at college and at university but it was fine for me. It wasn’t always easy, but I was determined – I had my son at 18 and he came with me at 21 to university.

I qualified as a chartered building surveyor and was lucky to find work straight away. Once I was in my job I was able to encourage more females through student placements. And I had mentors there who really helped me to develop. I think that it is really important to have mentors in this sector. I never really realised it at the time but the people I worked with there were mentors.

I started working at Sheffield Hallam in 1991 and it was the first time I shared an office with a woman! Although we were able to attract some female students to the building surveying degree, it was always hard. It hadn’t really moved on. So we started getting involved in outreach, working with teachers to make their teaching more inclusive and encouraging to girls and women. From 1998 to 2011 we were involved in a range of European and UK projects trying to improve women’s experience and the number of women in view, so that women coming into industry had role models.

Now I head up Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Centre (WiSET) in the Centre for Science Education – it’s one of the University’s knowledge transfer research centres. We work to help schools and others to make the learning environment more supportive and to encourage girls to choose the subjects they need for careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). There are still issues with certain STEM subjects – and there’s a big drop off at 16. At every stage we are trying to challenge stereotypes on subject. It is after all a stereotype. Although you find women not involved in the sciences in some other countries, there are many countries where they are. So the reasons for fewer women being

involved in sciences are not biological. They’re cultural. And we’ve got to change that. WiSET are also supporting Sheffield Hallam with their own gender equality development, through the Athena SWAN Charter.

There are no easy solutions though. For example, people think that having a female role model out there is an easy fix for biased attitudes. But that’s only one step. Of course it’s important that women are visible but it’s about getting men on board too. The good thing about female mentors is that they have experienced things that men may not have experienced. But male mentors can change their attitudes by mentoring female students – so that can be very positive too. Being transparent and fair is most important. And giving female students support to apply for roles and making sure that recruitment is fair is important too.

Right now I am working on a project with the Adsetts team to catalogue a collection of papers and books on women in SET subjects from the 1970s and 1980s. The collection is from one of the projects that the University was a partner in until the funding was cut and they asked if we would like to give it a home. It’s a fascinating collection. The idea is it will create resources for future students who can learn about the history of women in the sciences and gender and science education. And one person who stands out in that collection, as a sort of role model to me, is science educator Dr Jan Harding.

Jan was working from the 50s onwards trying to get girls to be more involved in the sciences, and her work expanded from the UK all the way out to the Sudan. Which is incredible! As part of understanding the collection and the cataloguing process I went and interviewed her the other week. She’s a very strong minded woman, but then she had to be because she was trying to get more girls to do and enjoy physics and chemistry and there was not a lot of interest in that at the time. And what she was saying then, is exactly what we are saying now. But then people didn’t listen. Now they are starting to.



Peter Smart

Manager of the Support Worker team,
Chair of the Disabled Staff Forum

“I disclosed my disability for the simple reason that if I don’t, who else will? How else can I, and others in my situation, get the support we need?”

I found out that I had dyslexia quite early on. I have an identical twin and neither of us could read or write very well, so our head teacher thought we needed to be sent to a specialist school. This was rural Suffolk and it was a bit behind the times. Fortunately my parents found out about dyslexia and we were eventually referred to an educational psychologist who diagnosed us.

When I reached high school, I was eleven but I had the reading age of a five-year-old. I used to ask my seven-year-old brother for spelling and reading help. One way I had for learning new words was by just writing them over and over, learning them like phone numbers! I have jot books full of words like then and of repeated hundreds of times.

In my first year of A-levels I did really well and was predicted As and Bs, but I had a disastrous second year which ended with two Es and a D. It didn't occur to me at the time that it was anything to do with my dyslexia. I was devastated - I knew the subjects and couldn't understand why I hadn't got the grades. It was only years later I realised it was my strategies for coping with my disability that were woefully inadequate. I had the same experience when I finally got to university – good grades to start with and then it got increasingly difficult. Eventually I accessed support, but it was almost too late.

It's important to understand that people with dyslexia can actually benefit in life from it. For example, a lot of research has shown that dyslexics are better at lateral, innovative or creative thinking, as well as reasoning and problem solving. The important thing is that you develop coping strategies for things that are harder, so that they don't stop you from making the most of these skills.

Coping strategies are an important part of what the Support Worker Team offer students. I have a lot of coping strategies I've developed myself, but it's taken a long time and it could have been so much

easier. I only accessed the help I needed at crisis point but I wish I'd accessed it earlier on.

I've noticed it's common for people with invisible disabilities to be reluctant to get support, and there are a lot of reasons for that. Many people don't want the disabled label partly because they fear the stigma and prejudice from others and partly because of their own prejudice about disability, or simply because they don't want to be looked at or treated differently. And for staff with these disabilities there's a feeling that it could be detrimental to their career, especially in an economic climate where everyone feels vulnerable.

I disclosed my disability for the simple reason that if I don't disclose, who else will? How can I, and others in my situation, get the support we need, if no one admits they have a disability? I also disclosed to increase awareness of my disability and its impact on me and others.

Awareness of disabilities is a big thing - it's the biggest barrier faced by many people with hidden disabilities. It's not quick and it's not local because the issue is with society, not with this institution. But at the university there's definitely a growing awareness and consideration of disabled peoples' needs thanks to things like the disabled staff forum and our work with disabled students. Most importantly, we're getting listened to and having less non-disabled people making decisions on behalf of disabled people. "Nothing for us without us" is one of the Disabled Staff Forum terms of reference.

I hope that my personal experience can encourage students and staff reading this to access the support they need early on. Sheffield Hallam has the biggest internal support worker service for students in the country. I have a team of eight who manage 130 support workers, providing 40,000 hours of support a year. We're here, we've been there and we're ready to help.



Maxine Greaves MBE Equality and Community Engagement Manager

“As a single parent you have to make decisions that enable you to progress, but also to serve as a role model to your children.”

My personal journey into higher education was a traditional one, to a point. On the pathway to university I decided to have a family. After having children my partner encouraged me to get back into education. I got a place at university through a Mature access programme. I discovered going into higher education gave me opportunities that my partner found hard to relate to and during that time we parted.

However, this only served as an opportunity for me as I found out that as a single parent, my choices became clearer and focused. As a single parent you have to make decisions that enable you to progress, but also to serve as a role model to your children. It is this experience that drives me on to support people who might encounter similar difficulties in life by inspiring them to aspire to pursue learning opportunities not for only their own benefit but as well as their children.

Part of my work as the Equality and Community Engagement Manager here in the university is working in partnership with Voluntary Sector Community Organisations (VSCOs), and early years centres to raise awareness about higher education. This involves promoting inclusive opportunities to people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. For example, this was how we succeeded in establishing the First Start Sure Start Centre in Firth Park, an area regarded as one of the most socially disadvantaged. Parents were instrumental in defining and helping to develop the educational provision for their children in the area. It also gave them an opportunity to develop their skills base, knowledge and employability opportunities, and that appears to have worked for everyone because no matter their background, they all had a common goal – which was to do the very best for their children. This achievement was

a real honour, as I was surprised to be nominated for an MBE for being recognised for something I felt so passionately about. That’s why I’ve always had an inclusive approach, which involves creating an open dialogue with people who wouldn’t think that higher education is a goal they could achieve. We often have had students who choose Sheffield Hallam because they have had experience through pre-engagement events hosted in their community in the past, and that’s part of what we’re trying to achieve in SHU’s strategy – showing people that the university is an extension of the community.

For example, every year, we bring in a group of early years student practitioners from various backgrounds from Sheffield City College to the university who are considering going into higher education. The rationale behind this approach is to establish inclusive toolkits to help them in their field of work in the future. This means they have access to academics and are able to discuss with current students what university life is, and also it enables them build a professional network. The students who attend these events become confident to choose a university of their choice, and more often it happens to be Sheffield Hallam. The pre-engagement events has therefore empowered them to develop a good academic grounding and a positive experience at the university which helps them with their future career choices. Universities constitute as places to develop ideas put them into practice and to problem solve. You can say, ‘Oh, it didn’t work! But it’s not the end of the world! Here you learn to pick yourself up and start again. The university’s employability agenda is therefore important as it helps to ensure students have a clearer understanding of the realities of the world of work.



Linda Wilson **Senior Careers Advisor and active member of the LGBT Staff Forum**

“If you look at what most employers say surrounding LGBT it’s all about complying with law. But that should be a given! We want organisations to be more proactive.”

I realised I was gay at school and grew up in a very small town in the Midlands, and so I chose to go to Manchester to study because I knew a larger city would have a lesbian and gay community. Now Manchester’s gay scene is famous, but at that time it was still very underground. To start with, I didn’t come out at work. But when I started working in learning disabilities services there were people working there who were out and attitudes were progressive, so I came out, without it feeling like it was an issue.

But the experience of being closeted at work has always stuck with me. When you’re not out, you can’t really be yourself with your colleagues. And you can’t feel comfortable about what people are going to say to you, or say about you. The more people feel comfortable about coming out in the workplace, the more I think LGBT people will be able to succeed and the more employers will get from their LGBT staff. That’s why it’s everyone’s responsibility to change attitudes.

When I went for my first role here two years ago it was as an Employment Adviser. The first thing I noticed was that it was difficult to find out what it was like to work here as a gay person, from the website. In the end I thought it was probably alright because it was a higher education institution which are generally quite progressive on equality and attitudes. Then when I got here and started in the careers team I found we did have information for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) students but it was a bit out of date, although we did have the Starting Out Guide by Stonewall that gives LGBT students information about gay friendly employers in Sheffield and nationally. Having pointed some of these issues out to my colleagues, I was given the remit of developing more visible LGBT careers initiatives.

At the same time, I also became aware that there was a LGBT Staff Forum but it seemed quite hidden, and felt as if people weren’t very open about it. I respect the fact that this is

because there are some members who wish to remain anonymous. But it seems to me that this makes people who are out, more closeted. So we’re trying to change that now.

As part of the LGBT careers work, we’ve been invited by three other universities to take part in a pilot scheme to offer career mentoring to LGBT students. I think it’s really important to have schemes like this, because discrimination still exists against LGBT people. Stonewall tell us that 25% of lesbian and gay people do not feel able to come out at work, and one in five have experienced homophobia in the workplace, which I think is really high.

If you look at what most employers say surrounding LGBT it’s all about complying with law. But that should be a given! We want to encourage organisations to be more proactive. We think that the mentors who are chosen for this scheme can be positive role models within and outside the university, championing the rights of these students.

Right now, I’m lining up mentors from inside and outside the university, and working with the students union to advertise the scheme. For example, we have a really good relationship with Irwin Mitchell Solicitors whose head office is in Sheffield. Both Irwin Mitchell and Sheffield City Council are on the Stonewall Top 100 Employers list for 2013, the definitive list of Britain’s most gay-friendly workplaces.

We are also looking into ways of making things we do more visible, like our sponsorship of Sheffield Pride. And we are also in the process of updating the external staff information so potential job applicants know about what it’s like for LGBT staff who are out, to work here. Finally, as a department, we try to lead the way to be more explicit about providing careers and employability support for LGBT students, to ensure that they get the best help in developing a career after university.



Dr Manny Madriaga

Senior lecturer in research and evaluation

“We’re trying to turn conversation away from the cultural and background reasons why BME students aren’t achieving. Instead we’re asking, ‘What can we do to change it?’”

My father was a Filipino immigrant enlisted by the US military, and I was born in California. The military base I grew up on was a very multicultural place - it seemed like the US military stationed a lot of the interracial families there because the state was so liberal. That meant that many of my friends and neighbours were mixed race, and so we grew up very race-conscious.

Then I went to university in California and was lucky enough to have back-to-back former Black Panthers as university lecturers! These people had struggled for racial equality in the US and this really informed my sense of race, diversity and social justice. I can’t think of anywhere else in the US where I could have received such an inspiring education.

Following a PhD into race identity which involved me moving to the UK to study at the University of Sheffield, I started working at Sheffield Hallam University and there I have been able to marry up my research interests with projects around important issues of race in education on projects like MoRKSS.

MoRKSS (Mobilisation of Research Knowledge for Student Success) is a programme funded by the Higher Education Academy and is designed to close the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) degree attainment gap in England and Wales. The fact that BME students attain 18% less good honours degrees (1st and 2:1) than white students nationally is quite frankly ridiculous and needs to change. There is a good proportion of Sheffield Hallam BME students performing better than that which is good, but basically BME students often don’t get 1st and 2:1 degrees.

So with MoRKSS we are faced with the problem: what do we do in order to challenge this gap in achievement in the University and in the HE sector?

One thing we’ve looked at is how we can use data within the institution to share with course leaders and programme leaders. How can they have access to information about students on their course – the ethnicity of their students and other information that tell them about performance-related issues?

The second thing we’re doing is implementing different types of student-to-student mentoring schemes. One of the schemes running at the moment has second and third year students helping new students coming in to university to get used to student life. We’ve seen that these schemes really help people who are from families where they are the first people to attend university.

We’re also working with teaching staff to develop inclusive ways of assessing students. Instead of putting students in a hall for three hours to test their learning there are other ways to assess their knowledge, like vivas, presentations and all that sort of stuff.

And we’re doing some awareness workshops with staff so that they actually know about the attainment gap of BME students. Jaws drop with academics when they hear that there’s this problem not just out there, but in their own university. It’s raising awareness and raising the question what can we do about it. We know there’s no easy fix. But we’re trying to turn the conversation away from the cultural and background reasons why BME students aren’t achieving, because that’s not helpful. Instead we’re asking people, “What can we do to change it?” That’s the question that might make a difference.

Find out *more...*

If you've been inspired to make a difference or are interested in aspects of this report, such as the student and staff support networks, contact the Equality and Diversity team.

We're happy to help.

Telephone: 0114 225 6287

or email: diversity@shu.ac.uk

What did you think about Equality Highlights 2012/13?

Did you enjoy our first edition? Did you learn something new? Did you feel there was an important equality activity from 2012/13 missed? Did you feel represented? Did you feel inspired?

We would love to hear your comments, please drop us a line or call.

Next edition of Equality Highlights 2013/14

We would like this to be the first in a series, reporting annually on positive activities across our university. We want to develop this for and by our diverse community.

If you are involved in any equality good news stories; forums, conferences, activities, awareness raising, or if you wish to nominate someone for their commitment and dedication to equality please let the equality and diversity team know.

We want to include your voices.

Equality and Diversity Team

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