

**“Passages to Inclusion”**  
May 14, 2003  
Sponsored by SEPCO and SCC

The morning began with Keynote Speaker Dr. Edwin J. Nichols, Clinical & Industrial Psychologist. He immediately, went into action by showing the audience how easily we can become distracted on our journey, or “Passage to Inclusion.” He divided us into levels of education; Bachelors, Masters or higher; then into subsets of what type of university/college we attended; were the university’s Catholic or Jesuit?; were they Agricultural or Ivy League?, he then proceeded into eliminating various individuals based on, where they attended college and if their background was from what might be considered an aristocratic or a common background. Since, not all in the audience were educated equally, people began dividing themselves up, the mood went from inclusion, into exclusion, choosing people more of their likeness and some even started boasting about their background and what school they attended. Dr. Nichols, then thank us, for participating in his simple experiment, and proved his point of how easily we get caught up in separating ourselves, whether it be by race, education, gender or our own micro-inequities of how we perceive ourselves and others. This quickly established the importance of why it’s imperative that we stay focused on nurturing diversity, and brought everyone back to the reality of why we were truly there, to learn or re-learning the importance of growing in a diverse and changing world.

Listed below is a summary of each session attended:

**Micro-Inequities: The Power of Small**

Speaker: Chase Hawkins of JP Morgan Chase

In this session, the speaker explained the importance of what messages we send out unconsciously, e.g., when we sit across someone speaking to us, and we start to yawn or fold our arms close to our bodies; we may be cold or tired from something, but the person speaking may think we are bored and uninterested with what they have to say, this immediately can cause a mis-understanding and a breakdown in proper communication. He went on to explain; the ***Primary Dimension of Diversity***: which consists of; *Age/Gender/Sexual Orientation/ Mental&Physical/ Ethnic Heritage/and Race*, these elements represent, essentially the first layer of what we base our opinions or impression of the people we encounter.

He proceeded to explain, the next layer of elements we based our perceptions on; the ***Secondary Dimension of Diversity***: which consists of; *Social Class/ Economic Status/ Communication Style/Religion/ and Education*. We all have these micro-inequities, that reinforces our actions based on our perception of a particular person or situation. He attempted to bring to our attention that our perceptions and labels have a dramatic impact on the people we interact with on a social and work level. Even the most subtle behavior, whether positive or negative bring about either growth or decline in productivity, morale, and commitment. It is essential to raise the awareness and understanding of issues and to continue skill building to modify behavior, that can cause these negative or positive effects. In a nutshell, basically, we need to pay closer attention how we come across, even if it means paying closer attention to what we do/say/react and try to think outside of the box when it comes to approaching a person or situation.

## **Harnessing the Power of Diversity:**

Speaker: Dr. Edwin J. Nichols

In this session the speaker wanted to familiarize us with the “Philosophical Aspects of Cultural Differences,” this was quite a unique session in that the speaker used a chart, that literally outlined each group of people by: **1) Ethnic Group:** (European /Euro-American)(African, African-American, Hispanics, Arabs) (Asian, Asian-American, Polynesian) (Native American) **2) Axiology:** (a group’s value system) **3) Epistemology:** (a group’s way of knowing and recognizing things), and **4) Logic** (a group’s reason to an answer). The speaker, walked us through each group and explained, essentially how each group, generally, thought; processed information; interacted with other groups/members; and what their highest values and beliefs were; For example; lets’ take the issue of time and value , For the **European/Euro-American**, Time is given a value of A----to----B, “time is money”. The highest value lies in the object or obtainment of the object. Relationships are not as important as obtaining and measuring the object. Now let’s look at the other ethnic groups: For the **African, African-American, Hispanics, Native Americans and Arabs**, time is perceived as a spiral, it gets done when it needs to get done, but it’s never late. The highest value for this group lies in the relationship and trust, and **not** the object. For the **Asian, Asian-American, Polynesian**, Time begins and ends at the same point, in other words time is related around keeping the group cohesive, it’s about the team and pride shown not for just one member but for all members, their highest value systems lies in the cohesiveness and consensus of the group. Although, these are very general views, it does become a useful tool when dealing with international business affairs or when attempting to understand someone from a different background. If you are trying to understand the mechanics of why certain people tend to value things differently, this serves as a vital instrument. For example why is it so important: Person **A:** (African-American Female) to discuss a report with you before proceeding with it b/c she needs this afternoon off to spend time with her family, Person **B:** (Euro-American Male) just wants the report done and on his desk first thing tomorrow, no questions asked. Person **A:** needs that value placed on the relationship and that interaction, before she proceeds “*it will get done, when it gets done, but it’s never late.*” Person **B:** just wants it over with “*time is money*”. Solution, person **A:** should set time aside to have the discussion and Person **B:** will give you your end result b/c you valued her relationship with you and trust her to complete the report on time, therefore she values your time. In conclusion, including people rather than excluding them because of who they are, creates a healthy understanding among diverse groups of people. Progress grows through efforts, different perspectives and changing ideas and recognizing that our greatest resource is the human resource. “***The Bottom line is; you waste people, and you waste money.***” Dr. Nichols

On a more personal note; I strongly maintain that Dr. Nichols should be brought to one of our Diversity Meeting’s. If there is anyone that can make a greater impact on a more intellectual level and translate why diversity equals progress, and stress the importance of achieving cultural competence; which is the capacity to extract from others, the uniqueness of their different problem-solving skills, and point out that this is the value added element, Dr. Edwin Nichols is the man for the job.