

When DIVERSITY, EQUITY, and INCLUSION are MORE than Just a Statement

A Tribute to Mrs. Catherine Taylor-Core, An NCURA Legend

By Tanya M. Blackwell

In the wake of heightened social unrest following the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020, many companies and organizations went to great lengths making statements against racism and discrimination. Support for the Black Lives Matter movement was woven into mission statements across the country, and initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion erupted like many of us have never seen before in our lifetime. Suddenly, everyone was talking about those three words. But since the Civil Rights Movement, there have been leaders throughout our country that recognized the work was never done and that we still had work to do to ensure our diverse nation is a safe and inclusive space for all. One such leader, Catherine Taylor-Core, is an NCURA legend in her own right. Looking back at the **Catherine Core Minority Travel Award**, we can see how NCURA has a history of making sure diversity, equity, and inclusion are more than just words in a statement.

It was in 1998 that NCURA's Membership Committee elected to change the travel award program. The changes included expanding the award criteria to any minority, regardless of their institution, increasing the award amount to \$1,000, and renaming it to the Catherine Core Minority Travel Award. This name change was a fitting tribute to the woman who previously led the Minority Outreach Program to increase NCURA membership at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) within her region. Nationally, she served on the HBCU/MI Connections Committee from 1992 to 1994 and committed herself to promoting NCURA and its membership benefits by personally visiting these institutions. From 1994 until her retirement, Catherine Core served on the National Membership Committee. Naming the travel award after Catherine Taylor-Core serves as a reminder of service in action, and theories behind the benefits of diversity and inclusion in practice.

The purpose of the Catherine Core Minority Travel Award is to increase diversity of NCURA's membership by providing monetary support and an opportunity to attend the Annual Meeting to minorities who would not otherwise be able to attend the meeting. This opportunity continues the work of Mrs. Taylor-Core by showcasing the benefits of membership to minority research administrators. Recipients of the travel award have continued not only as NCURA members, but have also served as leaders that give back to the organization. For example, 2010 recipient Sandra Pena Logue currently serves as the Chair of the Professional Development Committee. She also co-chairs FRA 2022 and has contributed significantly to the organization since her award. As a 2014 recipient, I have chaired the Education Scholarship Fund, served on the Professional Development



Seated: Catherine Taylor-Core, her grandson Carlton. Standing: Laneika Musalini, Jamie Caldwell, Consuelo Jorge, Griselda Martinez

Committee, and served on program committees for the Annual Meeting. Led by 2017 recipient Laneika K. Musalini, NCURA's former Presidential Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, developed NCURA's new EMERGE Virtual Career Development Program, the 2021 DEI Webinar Series, the DEI Collaborate Community, NCURA's Volunteer Matrix, NCURA's Climate Survey, and more. The Task Force has since transitioned to the DEI Select Committee and has enlisted the talent of our diverse membership to gather resources and present information to help make our organization a safe, inclusive place for all members. There are so many more success stories of those who have been Catherine Core Minority Travel Award recipients.

These collaborative efforts highlight what it looks like when diversity, equity, and inclusion are more than just words in a mission statement. The theory that diversity begets diversity, and diversity improves outcomes is demonstrated through the example set by Mrs. Catherine Taylor-Core and continued through the leadership of those who have won the travel award named in her honor. ■



Tanya Blackwell, MSRA, CRA, joined the Department of Medicine at Duke University as a Grants and Contracts Manager in March 2021. There, she provides pre- and post-award support for the Divisions of General Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology, and the Center for Advanced Genomics and Precision Medicine. She holds a Master's in Research Administration from the Johns Hopkins University, was a member of the 2020 NCURA Executive Leadership Program, and was also recognized that same year as the NCURA Region III Rising Star. She can be reached at tanya.blackwell@duke.edu.