



Ally Relationships with Business Professionals of Color: *Lessons learned from research*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the African ancestors whose contributions to U.S. academic institutions have not been respected, appreciated, and honored.

We acknowledge that the land on which the University of Delaware stands is part of the ancient homeland and unceded traditional territory of the Lenape and Nanticoke people. We pay respect to Lenape and Nanticoke peoples, past, present, and future.



How we got started

- Juneteenth, 2020 webinar with over 1000 people
- Chat participants asked: “What can I do?”

**Addressing Racism:
Advancing Justice in Times of Crisis**
Friday, June 19th | 9:00 -10:30 am ET

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**LEADERSHIP *IN TIMES OF CRISIS*
WEBINAR SERIES**

CO-HOSTED BY

 Lerner Diversity Council **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE**  UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE LERNER BUSINESS & ECONOMICS



The What and Why of Our Project

- Our interest:
 - How does an ally show up in the workplace for underrepresented people of color?
 - What actions do allies take to make people of color feel supported and able to succeed in the work environment?
- Our process:
 - Interview successful Black male and female professionals to discuss turning points in their careers and the individual(s) they saw as an ally - someone that had a strong influence and contributed to their professional and career success
 - Interviewed the individuals identified as allies



There is no fixed way to be an Ally

- Relationships between Black professionals and those they saw as their allies were varied
 - Some were formal:
 - Sr. executive appointed the ally to mentor junior Black professional
 - Supervisor guiding their direct report
 - Many were organic
 - Situational – A problem led the Professional to seek help or the Ally decided to intervene
 - Strategic – The Professional made themselves indispensable to the Ally recognizing that the Ally's success furthered their opportunities
 - Talent recognition - Ally saw the Professional's strengths and sought to harness the strengths to benefit the organization



Key Ways that Allies help

- Provide a road map for success – often Professionals and Allies only understand this retrospectively:
 - *He taught me the thread theory*
 - *She was blunt about my shortcomings and told me I wouldn't succeed if I didn't change my behavior*
 - *She asked me to decide whether I wanted to be right or to be successful*
 - *He challenged me to get out of my comfort zone*



Allyship is relational

- **Building friendship** - Strong ally relationships grew from/and into strong friendships
 - I realized that we are often divided as far as who we spend time with outside of work... like who we have over for dinner... and we needed to overcome that.
 - We really connected over a hobby – fishing; and our families took a vacation together.
 - It is now as if we are part of each other's families.
- **Two-Way street** - Allies saw themselves as learning, as much as they were sharing – creating a more open relationship and equal playing field.
 - My ally was inviting me into new conversations, that made me realize that she really cared.
 - I knew I had so much to learn, and had to be open to learning as much as I could