



Procurement Diversity Quarterly Connection

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Director's Note

Greetings,

First and foremost, I would like to thank all who participated in the year-long planning and the kickoff for the inaugural Diverse Supplier Development Program (DSDP) last month. We are excited to bring such a dynamic program to the small business community that we serve. It has been a pleasure working with Jisu Hong, the Associate Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation, and the rest of the team and partners that made it a success thus far--we couldn't have done it without you.

It has been proven that collectively, organizations rise when they diversify and lift others. Let's continue working together to address change and generate value--not just for small businesses but everyone we serve, including faculty, staff, and students here at the University of Illinois System.

I appreciate everyone's enthusiasm and genuine action to support the program. I am looking forward to developing our relationships.

Kind Regards,
Sharla

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New Program Boosts Business for Diverse Companies

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The University of Illinois System launched its new Diverse Supplier Development Program on September 2, welcoming the inaugural cohort of 25 firms from across the state. The program was created to help business owners from diverse backgrounds grow their companies and increase options for serving as public-sector vendors.

Through this program, small-business owners will partner with the University of Illinois System's student consulting teams to solve business challenges and build their talent pipelines. These company leaders also will have access to educational workshops during the nine-month program.

"Every day, our vast network of diverse suppliers helps the University of Illinois System fulfill its educational, research and outreach missions," U of I System President Tim Killeen said. "Through the Diverse Supplier Development Program, the U of I System is giving back to these businesses by helping remove some of the barriers to growth that many diverse businesses face. That will, in turn, benefit each community that these businesses call home and promote inclusive growth throughout Illinois."

Student consulting projects will be managed by teams from across the University of Illinois System, including the Magelli Office of Experiential Learning and Illinois Business Consulting from the Gies College of Business and the Brand Hub from the



College of Media at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, as well as project teams from the University of Illinois Chicago. The workshops will feature experts from across the U of I System and partners that include Chase for Business and the Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Center.

"The Diverse Supplier Development Program is another example of the University of Illinois' commitment to our state," U of I System Vice President for Economic Development Jay Walsh said. "I welcome these companies as they come alongside us in this unique program that will enrich us all. And I look forward to the program's bright future as we seek to serve more companies, engage more experts and involve a broader range of our brilliant student teams."

[Continued on pg. 2](#)

In the Spotlight



"Because we are extremely passionate about the R&E community. Our team works effortlessly every day to continue delivering the best possible technology for the best possible value, which includes responsiveness and always doing the right thing for our customers as staples to what we do." PIER Group owner, Amy Williams

PIER Group was founded in 2017 and includes a team with over 30 years' experience completely focused on the Higher Education (HiEd) community. PIER Group, which stands for 'Partners In Education & Research', was founded on the belief that partnerships make the world go round. PIER Group is a women-owned business that provides IT solutions solely focused on the Higher Education's Research & Education (R&E) community.

The company's mission is to provide innovative expertise and best-of-breed technology in the areas of campus infrastructure, research computing, optical networking and high performance computing while providing an unbeatable user experience.

University Contract

The University of Illinois is excited to announce that the PIER Group's punch-out catalog is now available in iBuy. The catalog incorporates products from over **3000 hardware and software IT manufacturers**. PIER Group has a team of senior level pre-sales consultants available, as well as an extensive implementation team to support large-scale network and HPC installations.

Company Success Measures

One way that PIER Group gauges its success is by customer feedback. It's typical for PIER Group to receive direct feedback from its customers to articulate the difference in working with PIER Group and how they appreciate working with a company that truly understands every aspect of what they do and what they are looking to do.



Business Challenges

The pandemic initially created very stringent social distancing and work-from-home regulations for PIER Group. This created a new paradigm of thousands of remote faculty, staff and students within the Higher Education community. PIER Group's team quickly adapted, working with universities to continue delivering leading-edge IT solutions that served

both on-campus, as well as remote users. The work-from-home mandates also triggered some critical manufacturing plant shutdowns. With workers not able to be in the plant, chip shortages and supply chain issues quickly evolved causing PIER Group to pivot. It's now typical for the PIER Group consulting team to begin consulting with customers a year or two in advance of any given project need. This allows applicable time for planning, ordering, delivering, and implementing... and **still hitting the necessary timelines** of any critical project.

Contact: Shop in iBuy or email PIER Group today for your hardware and software needs at contact@piergroup.com.

New Program ([Continued from pg. 1](#))

Companies participating in the program come from a variety of sectors including construction, information technology, consulting, retail and marketing. Nearly 90 percent of the participating firms are Black- or Hispanic-owned businesses, while 40 percent of the firms are majority-owned, managed and controlled by women.

Killeen was joined in welcoming participants at a virtual kickoff event by Illinois Speaker of the House of Representatives Chris Welch, state Rep. Carol Ammons, U.S. Small Business Administration Regional Administrator Geri Aglipay, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Sylvia Garcia, Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Larry Ivory, and Chase for Business Vice President and Senior Business Consultant for the Minority Entrepreneur Initiative Pamela Randle.

"We are incredibly grateful for the overwhelming support we have received from community, government and business leaders as our team has built this program," said Aaron Carter, U of I System assistant vice president of procurement services. "We have a responsibility to build and develop partnerships, business opportunities, and our communities. The value of this program is apparent by who is here today."

The U of I System accounts for 90 percent of the total dollars spent with minority- and women-owned businesses among all Illinois public universities. Over the last three years, the U of I System has invested more than \$85 million annually on goods and services with diverse businesses. The system also is the state's fifth-largest state-government customer for diverse vendors.

IT Vendor Roadshow

Six Business Enterprise Program vendors from the [IPHEC2140 – Information Technology Consulting Contracts](#) recently participated in the IT Vendor Roadshow at the Urbana-Champaign and Chicago campus. Each vendor showcased their capabilities to an audience of IT leadership and staff and was able to spend time networking and learning about the various IT departments' needs.

"It's been some time since we were able to meet in-person and be a part of a university event," Poonam Gupta from Iyka Enterprises commented. "We always look forward to putting a name with the face and learning about some of the university's unique IT needs," Gupta finished.

Shout out to the presenters: Iyka Enterprises, SLG Innovation, DivIHN, EKI Digital, RL Canning, and SNTial Technologies. Also, a special thank you to leadership and staff who were in attendance. The roadshow was a great way for the vendors to get in front of a larger audience in-person to make meaningful connections.

Plans for taking the roadshow to the Springfield campus and to departments in need of specific IT solutions are in the works. Email srclayb1@uillinois.edu for details.



Events

October 14, 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Office of Procurement Diversity is hosting a Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration with the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Join us virtually to learn about efforts to support and grow Hispanic businesses.

<https://go.uillinois.edu/HispanicHeritageMonth>