

## Episode 9: A Reflection on the First Year Transcript

**Speaker 1** [00:00:15] Hello and welcome to this episode of D&I Diaries, a podcast produced by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in the Biological Sciences Division at the University of Chicago. My name is Camilla Frost Brewer, and I am one of the program managers for diversity and inclusion in the division. And I will be one of your host for the show.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:32] And my name is Tobias Spears, and I will be your other host. And I serve as assistant dean of Diversity and inclusion in the division. Through this podcast, Camila and I hope to highlight and showcase diverse voices of everyday best years. We want to create a space to authentically and candidly share our DEI stories, where we get to know one another outside of our professional roles. And finally, we hope to engage a coalition of listeners who value Dei and increase interest in Dei work and conversations across the board. So without further ado, let's begin the show.

**Speaker 1** [00:01:13] Hello folks. As we begin this new year with D&I diaries, we wanted to take a moment to pause and reflect on this first year with our podcast. We've had huge successes, a few challenges, and a whole lot of learning to provide the best show and listening experience for you. We really aim to grow and improve from those challenges and build upon our successes. So today, Tobias and I are joined by Doctor Christina Roman, who is a part of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and was also a guest on the podcast. Go listen to our episode. So thank you for joining us today, Tina.

**Speaker 3** [00:01:47] Thank you for having me.

**Speaker 2** [00:01:49] Hoo! Tina.

**Speaker 1** [00:01:50] Excellent. So let's jump right in with some of our reflective questions, shall we? To begin, what was your favorite part of the podcast this year? What went well?

**Speaker 2** [00:02:01] That's a really good question, Camilla. And happy New Year to everyone. And, excited to be back. I wasn't on the last episode and someone had actually sent me an email and they were like, are you no longer part of the podcast? I was like, I'm part of it. But I, I wasn't available to to do the last episode. So, you know, your question is really interesting. I actually when I think about my favorite part of it, it was almost the finished product, right? It was going to listen to it in here. So many of our amazing guests and our amazing speakers. And, you know, when we set out to do the podcast, we were not necessarily thinking about diversity in a specific way. I think Camilla and I were thinking about sort of diversity in a really broad sense. Right? We wanted to have folks who represented different parts of the division in terms of postdoc faculty, staff, former student, student. And so when it all came together, I just think we had an amazing array of voices of people talking about their different life experiences. And it just highlights that, you know, listening to folks really allows the richness of community to come through.

**Speaker 1** [00:03:22] Yeah. I can't agree more. For me, one of the best parts, my favorite parts of the podcast, was getting to know our guests. I was a new staff member at the end of 2022, so being able to interview people throughout 2023 was a really wonderful opportunity for me personally, and it helped me understand the division a little bit better, and I think it provided an opportunity to understand some of our leaders or people we may not necessarily see on a regular basis, getting to know their deeper story. Why are they involved in Dei work, in their professional life as well as in their personal life? So that was

that was really special for me. And I think what went well was just the reception. I wasn't expecting that. I had set my expectations unreasonably low, I think, only because I didn't want to be disappointed. But excellent. So I'm glad they met those expectations. I just would get emails from people saying, oh, really loved the episode this this month. I can't wait to hear who you have as a guest next month. And that was just really, really heartwarming. And I think we're providing a unique program or initiative for this division that, like Tobias said, allows folks to be in community with others.

**Speaker 2** [00:04:48] Yeah, yeah. So I see question number two, which is asking, what do you think the podcast accomplished this year? Did it meet its desired outcomes? And I'd love to hear a little bit from Tina specifically thinking about Tina. You really focus a lot on the basic sciences. And so we wanted to make sure that the basic sciences folks were represented well in the podcast. And so do you think, you know, that it reached the community of folks over there? What, you know, maybe some of the things you heard.

**Speaker 3** [00:05:25] So working in the basic sciences of the BSD, I know the like personal stories of minoritized scientists in our division, but most of the division doesn't. And I think what the podcast did really, really well this this year was putting those people and those stories up on a platform so that they can be learned by a larger community. Right? Because like in the Black and Damia space, we know each other stories. We know what the experience looks like. But that experience hardly penetrates into like mainstream science culture. And I think the podcast did a really incredible job at like, lifting the veil of like, what our actual humanity looks like, in the sciences. So that was like really satisfying. Also, I loved how it was we were able to actually make our community feel seen and feel valued. Right? Like, it feels really good to get that email that invites you to, like, come be on an episode of the podcast. And knowing that, like, your experience is important to science, like, that's that's a feeling that I'm glad we were able to give people.

**Speaker 2** [00:06:30] Yeah, yeah. I also think that part of sort of being successful in this work, right, in the work of diversity, equity and inclusion, and I like to say the words because Dei has been co-opted to be used and it's that, you know, such a negative way. So diversity, equity and inclusion, part of doing this work really well, I think, is not only reinventing but also utilizing the tools of the day. And I think the podcast, right, as a mechanism for communicating, for learning about folks, for disseminating information, is just so relevant. And so having a podcast with the focus on Dei diversity, equity and inclusion really allowed folks to see that there's many ways to do the work. There's many ways to think about the work. There's many ways to, hear people's stories and promote people's voices. Like you mentioned, Tina.

**Speaker 1** [00:07:27] Well. Awesome. Thank you all. Moving into our next question, Tina, I want to dig a little bit deeper on what your experience was like being a guest on the podcast. Were there any highlights, things you learned about yourself or things you were especially satisfied? Was there maybe anything you wanted to change?

**Speaker 3** [00:07:46] Yeah. To me, what was most surprising was that, like, my truth was interesting to other people. Like, when when I was on the episode, I was literally just, like, speaking from my heart, talking about, like, what it was like growing up and, like, why I like my science. And the response I got from folks who were listening to it really surprised me. I was surprised that, like, just my story was that interesting and compelling. Like my episode was circulated beyond just the BSD into like my social community, which was like very much like an artsy, working class group of folks. And I was surprised that even they were able to find what I thought was just like my boring day to day, really, really interesting

and curious. And it kind of goes to show that while we might overlook our daily experiences as mundane, we are in an unusual place, and our stories actually are really interesting.

**Speaker 2** [00:08:41] Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:08:42] Yeah. Tina, thank you so much. I'm not going to lie, I had no idea that your episode reached other communities, and I love that. I think that is the power of podcasting, if you will, and the power of communication that it's not just limited to the BSD. Even though when Tobias and I first conceptualized of this, we really thought of our audience as people who work in the BSD, people who might be interested in doing a PhD or postdoc at UChicago and are curious what diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives are happening. We never thought that it would really reach kind of outside of the Chicago bubble, as folks call it. So that's really, really exciting to hear. I want to ask a follow up question. If you were to do another episode of the podcast as a guess, what would you discuss now, having heard other stories, having heard your podcast episode, what would you build upon or what would you want to be asked?

**Speaker 3** [00:09:41] I'm really sorry. I have, a thousand topics and stories I would love to, to talk about, like in this space where I work. But one of the ones that has always been front of mind for me is Afrofuturism.

**Speaker 1** [00:09:57] Yes.

**Speaker 3** [00:09:59] So, one I stand, LeVar Burton and, his podcast, LeVar Burton Reads. And on that podcast, he.

**Speaker 2** [00:10:09] Book Reading Rainbow.

**Speaker 3** [00:10:10] Yes, yes. The the guy who made Reading Rainbow has come back around and is serving, that very same audience once again. So he highlights stories that he really likes, and most of them are stories of Afrofuturism. And I think that kind of genre of literature and imagination would be really useful for the scientific community right now because like in my mind, sci fi is how we visualize what our future can look like and how we map out how we get there. So if we could if we could do another episode with me, I would love to, to talk about Afrofuturism and use that as like a foundation or a platform or vision for what we could be doing next to advance equity in the sciences.

**Speaker 1** [00:10:58] Tina, I love that I will absolutely do an episode on Afrofuturism. We can get a little panel going. Don't get me started, because I love science fiction and how there are theorists, academics, writers, people just writing on blogs who are conceptualizing how science is following science fiction. Because science fiction is the visionary aspect of like this is this would be a really cool product to have, for example, like a person transporter, like they hadn't Star Trek. We aren't there yet. Maybe, I don't know, I don't have super high security.

**Speaker 3** [00:11:35] We're getting we're getting better at quantum entanglement, but we won't.

**Speaker 2** [00:11:38] But entanglement, that is the word of the day. Quantum entanglement.

**Speaker 1** [00:11:44] There is now a term for it. We don't just say, beam me up, Scotty. Right. So, absolutely, Afrofuturism has been pretty entangled, to use that word again in our recent culture. I even mentioning Janelle Monet, one of her albums was an homage to black and Afrofuturism specifically. So yes, I would love to do that. Perfect. Put a pin in it. This is now everyone holding us accountable to doing that episode.

**Speaker 3** [00:12:13] It would be my super. It would also be super cool to pull in our cousins from the humanities to talk about Afrofuturism, like the folks that actually like, study this literature, like, I would, I would love their perspective in their guidance.

**Speaker 1** [00:12:26] Humanities folks. You are on notice.

**Speaker 2** [00:12:29] Just I like that because I think, you know, part of what sort of makes the work of day important is imagination, right? Is sort of, thinking about the possibility of what can be. And so many, you know, as we think about blackness, anti-Blackness, the black condition. Right. So much of it has been sort of like talked about around violence or around detriment or deficit. Right. And I think, you know, Afrofuturism like I'm thinking about like Octavia Butler. Right? Afrofuturism has always sort of positioned itself as like the possibilities of what can be. And so I always want folks to think about Dei work in that way. Right? It's not simply about making up for the wrongs of the past, although that is definitely a component of it, because we know that there have been these sort of really real histories of exclusion, but it's also about what is coming, what can come, you know, what do how do technologies merge with different facets of culture, different facets of blackness to to make something that wasn't possible, possible. So I, I like that, I like I think it fits in with the theme of dei.

**Speaker 1** [00:13:48] I have no notes. I do want to ask you, Tobias, though, if you were to be a guest on the podcast as opposed to a host, what would you discuss?

**Speaker 2** [00:14:00] You know, like I mentioned to you all before, I think that stuff changes. Things shift. And I think right now it would be really interesting to have an episode about not only about, but from people who do Dei work to really help contextualize and set a basis for what it means to do the work. I think with the resignation of Claudine Gay at Harvard. Right. And the the ousting. Right, the purposeful sort of whatever happened, that it is important for us to really regroup and begin to talk about what does diversity, equity and inclusion mean, right? What does it mean to create spaces where community is prioritized, where we think about flourishing, where we think about academic excellence as a way to do inclusion, where we think about, you know, great health care, as always and already equitable. Right? I think sometimes what happens is, is that those concepts diversity, equity and inclusion get removed or excised from these things, these goals, these aims we try to accomplish in academic medicine, in humanities and social sciences, whatever. But really Dei are like central components of those things. And so I would love to have a conversation about like, what does it mean to, to do DTI work in this moment? Right. What does it mean to sort of reformulate it? And think about, you know, how we can move things forward in a moment where I think people are taking all kinds of definitions and putting them on to the words.

**Speaker 1** [00:15:36] Yeah, I would love to have that conversation. This is really great. It's adding to my bank of episode ideas. But I appreciate what you mentioned about how diversity, equity and inclusion work is seen as this additional component to the work instead of as inherent to make the work happen. Yeah, and I think our mission vision values that, you know, we're released within the past six months, one of our values is

embody equity. So we are saying as a division this is integral to do excellent research, have academic excellence, provide great patient care. Yeah. Develop the next whatever. Yeah. And please excuse me because I love using tag words. But I think maybe what the episode title would be is on the forefront, on the forefront of innovative Dei practice. I mean, we have to imagine a different future because the tools we have won't always work.

**Speaker 3** [00:16:35] Yeah. I think folks in the sciences also might not realize that Dei is an entire scholarly field unto itself. And there are more scholars who do dei than just the people in this room. And it would be really it would be really cool to actually bring in some of our colleagues from other schools to talk about how they approach Dei, what they've learned, the experiments they've run, the papers they've published. I mean, that would be a really great perspective to add.

**Speaker 1** [00:17:03] Yeah, yeah. You know, I think these initiatives are happening on a small scale, but how do we amplify them? So I remember in 2023, I can't remember what month there was. The pedes residents actually brought in someone who was a U. Chicago alum and does a lot of work on LGBTQia healthcare, and he talked about his personal professional growth. And academic and medical journeys and his science that he did. So there is a way it's integral, especially for those of us of marginalized communities. It's integral to how we show up, the work we do, etc..

**Speaker 2** [00:17:39] Yeah. To add to that, it's it's also, I think about the postdoc course that we facilitate. And yesterday's lesson was about examining microaggressions that was facilitated by Tina. And one of the things I notice is that while some people sort of push out this idea that talking about Dei is divisive, as you're sitting in that classroom, it actually does the opposite. It like connects people because like as we sat there to talk about these definitions of microaggressions and how they sort of manifested themselves in the real world and people's everyday experiences, there were moments of connection among people who are different races, different genders, different socioeconomic status. Right. And so while while like we there's this larger narrative that like talking about these things divides people. It was actually and is completely the opposite. Talking about Dei provides opportunity and space for people to actually say, I want to listen to you, and I want to tell you my story, and I want to hear your story, and I want to think about how we could both be better and do better for each other.

**Speaker 1** [00:18:51] So, yeah, there's no real great segue, that I can think of on the fly. So as we move into our next question, I'm curious about if there were any challenges that we saw this first year and maybe what did we learn in this first year? I'll go first as this is not my full time job two podcast. So I would say that was probably one of the biggest challenges for me was, you know, scheduling with people who are very busy buying the right equipment, learning how to edit audio, posting on the right places, incorporating social media with that. Yeah. It's a lot of time. It gives me mad respect for people who do this, for their full time job and not, because it it can feel really overwhelming, especially if you have to learn all of these skills. So while it was a challenge and we had to kind of work through what that looked like and change our expectations and some of the outcomes, I really think we learned through it and made it a great product in the first year. And it at least to me, my goal was to make this podcast accessible and like you were having a conversation with someone, maybe in your living room, not something that felt super untouchable and like investigative diaries kind of situation.

**Speaker 2** [00:20:11] Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:20:12] So I think we really learned through those, obstacles this year. And I don't know if you would have noticed any challenges, but maybe as somebody who didn't participate as a host, did you see anything that maybe was a challenge?

**Speaker 3** [00:20:29] Yeah, logistics. Logistics are hard, y'all. Logistics, scheduling. There's a saying, in the in the D&D community that scheduling is the hardest part of playing D&D. Absolutely. The same problem.

**Speaker 2** [00:20:42] Dungeons and Dragons, right?

**Speaker 3** [00:20:44] Yes. DMD is Dungeons and Dragons. Yeah. No, I have a brand, but scheduling is the hardest part of putting the podcast together from from my perspective of like just getting the people in the room at the same time and then having the conversation, scripting the conversation, planning the conversation. That's not so hard. The logistics of putting the thing together, slicing together the audio, getting it posted like, my goodness, it's the background stuff that always makes artistic projects like this difficult.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:13] Yeah, that's real because I consider myself creative. But it's the like logistical part, the executive functioning if you will, that it's just so hard to complete. It almost makes the creative piece not as fun. But that is not happening with this podcast. It it was a challenge but it was a challenge worth taking on.

**Speaker 2** [00:21:36] Yeah. Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:39] So as we think about moving beyond the challenges Tobias, is there anything we'd like to change for the next year of the podcast.

**Speaker 2** [00:21:49] It's interesting. Yeah because we're recording this episode in 2022 and it's not I'm just joking.

**Speaker 3** [00:21:55] Oh I was like a pardon.

**Speaker 2** [00:21:58] It's like it's taking that long to get it out. No I don't you know, it's interesting because we still probably haven't been doing it that long to where we'd need to think about changes. I think the stuff you and I talked about where like, you know, having a consistent location, although it for some listeners, it feels like we're like, you know, hot 97 or less. Well, that doesn't exist anymore. But still, it sounds so professional. It's. Sounds like we are like in a studio, but really we're like traversing the division, going to people's different offices. Right? We're in Eileen's office. We're in the cancer center. Where? At Karen Kim's old office. So it's as a listener, right? It feels like so much of it is like put together, done. And I think that's because of your work, Kamila. And also, I think it's because, you know, the medium of podcasts, because you only hear people, right? You you sometimes don't see a lot of what goes into it. So when it comes to like changes, I think that, you know, we can continue to like update our questions. But something I did think about was like, do we do topics? And I think the problem sometimes with topics is that you then have to narrow who you can invite on. Right? Whereas like if we have a set of questions we want to ask about community and inclusion and what people's experiences are like, we can invite anybody to do that. So I'd just like for us to continue inviting in people who have those experiences and those voices that we often don't get to hear. Like, I know Iris Romero was big on us getting someone who is our colleague in food services to talk about their everyday experiences, you know, in the division. And, and I think I look forward to that. I look forward to that change, to us talking to more people who

do different roles. And it's also interesting because even when we do invite on different people, right, a scientist brings a different perspective to talking about these. Then, for instance, a psychologist or a humanities scholar. Right? So, you know, I want to I think we should maybe look at our questions, right. Maybe ask them different questions, but continue to highlight people's voices across the division.

**Speaker 3** [00:24:13] I think it would actually be cool to try and make this conversation operate in two directions. So like one, like we're telling our stories to the BSD, but I'd also love to hear their responses and answer their questions. So I'm a I have a huge podcast addiction. I'm listening to podcast 24 seven. One of my favorite podcasts is curiosity. It's a WBEZ podcast about like the history of Chicago and all that. And what they do is they just let Chicagoans ask their questions like, why is this this way? How does this happen in the city? And I'd love to answer folks in the BSD questions about like, how does the Dei operate? How do you think about this problem? What would you do about that? So like maybe open up a like a comment section.

**Speaker 1** [00:24:55] So first we are kind of blending these two questions of what we want to change for next year and what can people expect from us. Because I want to commit to that. Tina, I think that's a wonderful idea. Yes. On our website, on Spotify, on Apple Podcast, we say, if you'd like to connect with us or be a guest or whatever, please email us. But we never truly have an opportunity for people to say, here's a question that I just have about Dei or your office. Can you answer it? I love that and curiosity I will link. It is also a wonderful podcast. So yeah, I think that's something people can expect to see from us next year, this year, 2024 already. I, I would also like to get Dean Anderson on the podcast. Oh, I know, I know, we wanted to like, give him time to like, get into his position, develop the mission, vision values.

**Speaker 2** [00:25:49] But it's time now.

**Speaker 1** [00:25:50] It's time now. Dean Anderson, emails and people. I think that would be a really yeah, high profile episode. I also think it would provide an opportunity for people to feel like they're in community with him without necessarily having to schedule a meeting. Right? Yeah. And I also like your idea, Tobias, of reaching out to people in the BSD who maybe don't have a PhD after their name, don't have an MD after their name, who still participate in this BSD community with us every day. And we see all the time. So I think people can expect that from us and listeners. This is now a call for me. Call from me to you to hold us accountable to these episodes. We have.

**Speaker 2** [00:26:31] Those questions.

**Speaker 1** [00:26:32] We have 3 or 4 now that are in the docket, in addition to interviewing other folks. We do have some guests lined up for the next couple of months already, and I think you all will really enjoy hearing from them. They are both newer to the institution, so they bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, research practice to you, Chicago, and I'm excited to hear about how they've been integrating and working with Dr.. Principles and practices in their new positions. Yeah. So.

**Speaker 2** [00:27:04] I wonder if we can get a phone hooked up so somebody get.

**Speaker 1** [00:27:07] Like, a.

**Speaker 3** [00:27:07] Call in show. Oh my gosh.

**Speaker 1** [00:27:09] Who's gonna call in? That's not gonna call in. It's gonna look like.

**Speaker 2** [00:27:13] Tina Stevens got a.

**Speaker 1** [00:27:14] Call in, is going to call it. She's actually the call operator. It's going to be the phone from Powerpuff Girls with, like, the smiley face in the red nose button. That's what it is.

**Speaker 2** [00:27:24] DNI diaries, this is Tobias speaking. It'll be something. Someone. But then we'd have to like that and. Yeah, yeah, it's not the world. It's not as fun as you know, the world these days is a little bit.

**Speaker 1** [00:27:37] So as we wrap up, are there any final thoughts that we would like to leave our listeners with? Tina, do you have any to share with us?

**Speaker 3** [00:27:49] Yeah, again, going into this interface between like, science and art, I think what makes like things like this podcast, or things like the the last postdoc course class that we taught so interesting and engaging is the humanity content of it. Like what makes art fun is the fact that it reflects our humanity back at us and gives us a new way to look at it and consider it and analyze it and process it. And to that end, the podcast is cool because it tells our actual human stories, and we all have really valuable, interesting stories to tell. Each of our journeys is different from one another's. Each of the challenges we faced is different, and how we got to where we are is really, really cool. And I want to know about how everyone got to where they are. I want to know what those stories look like. So I guess my final thought is like, we all have really interesting stories to tell. We shouldn't overlook that.

**Speaker 2** [00:28:50] Yeah. I think I want to encourage people to really take advantage of being on a college campus, really take advantage of the resources for like knowledge acquisition, you know, all of that because I think we have so many like I get so many emails about, you know, folks coming in to talk about this to do this, folks looking for folks to come help do something else. And, you know, in this moment where I guess we could say post-pandemic, where we are really trying to revive community, where we're really trying to think about what does it mean to sort of exist with others. So many examples of that are happening here at U. Chicago. And so I would just encourage our listeners to continue listening to our podcasts and other podcasts, but also to take advantage of some of the wonderful resources just here at U. Chicago and, you know, use that to learn, use that to to better yourselves and to further your imagination about, you know, the world that we ultimately want to see.

**Speaker 1** [00:29:57] Yeah, I guess first and foremost, I want to thank everyone who has been a guest. Thank Tobias for being co-host, and thank you for listening. This podcast wouldn't continue, truly, if you didn't listen. So I want to thank you for that. And I think building off of what Tina said, remember the power that your story holds and remember the power that your ability to have empathy for others holds as well. I think we've all hinted at it. We are in a very troubling and tiresome time, especially for those of us of marginalized communities. And the more we can reach out, be vulnerable, and hold each other close and be in community with people, the better we will be. And I just encourage you to keep doing that, whether that's listening to our podcast, inviting a colleague out for coffee, going to your kid's soccer game. I don't think it's soccer season, but whatever that looks like. I encourage you to keep doing that. Take care of yourselves. Go see the doctor.



I always need the reminder. So go see a doctor. I promise you, someone's going to need that. And this is truly a verbal invitation. If you have a story you'd like to share on our podcast, or if you know of someone whose story you think we should reach out to and invite to share, please, please, please email us. I would, I would love to welcome you to the podcast.

**Speaker 3** [00:31:18] I would go so far as to add. If you email us, feel free to attach a voice memo. Okay.

**Speaker 2** [00:31:25] I just keep thinking about because you said it's not soccer season. I was like, oh, it's is it curling season?

**Speaker 1** [00:31:30] It's got to be it's winter.

**Speaker 2** [00:31:32] Do they ever do curling outside?

**Speaker 1** [00:31:34] No.

**Speaker 2** [00:31:34] Always on and so like so.

**Speaker 1** [00:31:37] I mean like professional curling I don't think so. I think it's always inside of them because they can control the ice and the weather conditions inside.

**Speaker 2** [00:31:46] Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:31:46] I have a weird fascination with curling. It's just one of those sports that you're like, oh, this looks easy. And then it's like, wow, you need a lot of hip flexibility to do this.

**Speaker 2** [00:31:57] And like, oh yeah, yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:31:59] Okay. Well, on that curling note, take care of yourselves. Stay warm.

**Speaker 2** [00:32:04] Under each other.

**Speaker 1** [00:32:05] Yeah. Take care of yourselves and each other and stay warm. Stay well and stay engaged. Yes. Thank you all so much.

**Speaker 2** [00:32:14] Signing out. We want to thank our guests today and all our listeners for tuning into this episode of DNI diaries. We hope you learned a little bit more about our colleagues and Di practices at work. Remember to stay in contact with us to our website, our listserv, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to receive updates about new episodes and how to engage with our podcast.

**Speaker 1** [00:32:39] You can find us on all platforms where you listen to podcasts, and we drop a new episode the third Tuesday of every month. So join us next time for a conversation with another BSD colleague as they share their DIY journey and truths. Until then, be safe and have a great day!