

- Welcome to everyone again, and particularly, welcome to the folks that are here on our diversity panel, Intersection of Education and Workforce. We have with us this afternoon David Owen, South Dakota Chamber of Commerce president, Nathan Sanderson, South Dakota Retailers Association executive director, Carla Gatzke, Daktronics, Vice President for Human Resources, Sandra Ogunremi, Regional Health, Manager of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality, and Nicole Freesemann of Raven, Vice President of Human Resources. I'd like to start from my right with Ms. Freesemann, and have each of you just give a brief opening statement, for lack of a better description, a little bit about who you are, what you do, and the importance of these issues in the workplace and how they relate to what we do, and then we'll open it up for questions and hopefully have a good dialogue. This is intended to be a rather informal gathering. So with that, please proceed.

- All right, good afternoon. My name is Nicole Freesemann. I am the Vice President of Human Resources with Raven Industries. I've been with Raven now a little over 11 years in various HR roles, and today lead our HR function. As I was asked to be here, as far as considering my opening statement, I was to make comment about diversity and cultural education as an important conversation in South Dakota, and so I'm gonna speak a little bit from our perspective at Raven. Diversity and inclusion is a hot topic for employers today, and often, companies mistakenly assume diversity and inclusion are synonymous, but they are not. There are many dimensions of diversity which include the visible traits such as age, gender, disability, and ethnic background, but there's also invisible ones too such as socioeconomic status, marital status, education background, and sexual orientation, and of course, inclusion refers to a culture, an environment, a feeling of belonging, and that is what we support at Raven. In the past, most employers have been compliance-focused as it relates to diversity, such as EEOC policies, but today, employers are focused on inclusion. Companies including Raven are becoming global at a faster rate, and in order for us to get the most out of our people resources, we have to respect our differences and ensure a sense of comfort and belonging within our workforce. So as I mentioned, Raven is committed to treating one another with dignity and respect, and maintaining employment practices based upon equal opportunity, and that is something that has been a part of our company for a significant period of time. And respect is really where inclusion lies for us. We haven't thought about diversity and inclusion until most recently because our culture is founded on respect, and when you respect one another, you typically have inclusion. But when we think about Raven, we think about ourselves as a Raven family, which means that we are accepting of each other's differences, and we build those into our hiring practices and our training practices and our development practices. But as we look at how the school systems can help us with that educational piece, we know that our society is becoming multicultural, and it is best served by a culturally responsive curriculum. Schools that acknowledge that diversity of their student population understand the importance of promoting cultural awareness. Having students that are culturally aware only makes it easier for employers in creating an environment of respect, and it is schools that have the ability to touch a population when they are probably most moldable, and that is in the stage of learning. That is my opening comment.

- Thank you.

- Thank you. Mr. Owen?

- People that can be that brief scare people like me that are, well, obvious. David Owens, South Dakota Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Thank you for this opportunity. I have to mention as an aside, I've rarely been given the treat of a reserved parking spot with my name on it, which made me feel real important. Then the zero-sum part of my personality kicked in and I figured that's taxable income. Somehow. I'm over 60. I'm pasty white. I'm pudgy. I'm male. When it comes to diversity, I'm the personification of the problem, and so to address the answer is a treat. The chamber is a collection of probably the most diverse collection of businesses. The gentleman on my right runs the largest business association in the state, and they are retailers, and there are hospital associations and others. Around the board table for the South Dakota chamber sits the health systems, sits the large financial institutions, sits a significant representation of the manufacturers here, so we're diverse and we're fairly large employers. I wanna spend about two minutes because I lose control of my brain and it wanders, as a former labor secretary knows. I looked at the word 'diversity,' and I found out it was first used in the 14th century, and one of the most interesting reads I've done in the last 20 years talked about the turn of the millennium to the year 1000, and it said the first thing you would notice is how quiet it was. But everybody lived in villages of about 280 people and rarely went

more than 20 miles from home. So this idea of accommodating things that are different, which I think is the challenge before us when we talk about diversity, has been going on for 800 years, and I always say tongue-in-cheek, my members like change as long as nothing's different. Here's a glimpse of the South Dakota census in 1920: 98% white, 2% Native American, 0.1% black, African American, or as it was phrased at the time, Negro. In 2000, the last census, we were 84% white, 9% Native American, 4% Hispanic, 2% black or African American. South Dakota's changing, and that's the reality. The number one problem that we talk about around my board table, unless I'm forcing a discussion about hemp, is finding workers, and legal immigration is gonna be part of that answer. People that are diverse in their lifestyles is gonna be part of that answer, and is today, and is really important. We're doing things that 10 years ago we wouldn't have thought of. We brought a bill with the Rapid City chamber and the Sioux Falls chambers and 12 other groups to try to get South Dakota to offer driver's license manuals and examinations in Spanish, because we want those people to be safe on the road while they get to work. And if you're waiting for public transportation in Rapid City, you're gonna die sitting on the corner 'cause they don't have any. So this becomes important to our membership as an expression of diversity. Smithfield Foods' CEO was in town yesterday. I had the privilege of talking with him, and they went back to try to figure out this legendary, how many languages are spoken in Morrell's plant? They figure it's more than 40, someplace around 50. Then we get to my concluding comments. There's another form of diversity that you all are dealing with that's tougher yet, and that is the expressions, the utterances, the language, the philosophies that get expressed on campus, what's tolerable, what's not. It is essential that people be confronted with the whole range of diversity of thought, because that's how they're gonna learn critical thinking. That's how they're gonna become thoughtful CEOs. That's how they're gonna become thoughtful shift supervisors, and we will do everything we can to promote critical thinking, putting things in context. There's three areas that the South Dakota chamber was involved with during the last session that separate us from our traditional political conservative folks, and that's legal immigration, including the driver's license issue, transgender and lifestyle kinds of issues and making sure we don't pass laws that blindly discriminate against them, and getting kids that are at risk into early education so they can be productive citizens and keep poverty and incarceration to a minimum. Good luck.

- Thank you.

- Thank you.

- Thank you, Mr. Sanderson.

- Thanks, David. My name is Nathan Sanderson. I'm the executive director of the South Dakota Retailers Association. South Dakota Retailers Association represents almost 4,000 businesses in 160 different business categories. Has everything from your carwash to your local gas station to your grocery stores, restaurants, hotels, and everything in between. We do primarily three things: advocacy, information, and we provide services for our members. We don't survey our members, those almost 4,000 members, on diversity with any real regularity. Doesn't really happen, but if you asked me to say, well, of the members that you have, who owns those businesses? Well, generally speaking, the primary operator is a man. Generally speaking in South Dakota, he is white, and generally speaking, he's probably over 50. Now, it's interesting when you talk diversity 'cause the staff of the South Dakota Retailers Association includes 11 individuals, including one male. So I have a staff of 10 women, 11 total individuals on the staff, that serves a series of member businesses that are very likely predominantly white males. It's an interesting dichotomy, and I don't know what that means, but it probably means something. When it comes to the definition of diversity for retail businesses, there's an old joke that says that business owners are almost colorblind. The only color they can see is green, and I think that's probably right when it comes to this conversation about diversity. What do retail businesses value? Well, they value intellectual diversity and they value diversity of perspective. Intellectual diversity and diversity of perspective. I think that's primarily the lens through which our retail businesses value diversity. Last thing that I'll say before I move on, this conversation today is the intersection of politics and policy, and it's interesting to navigate that because there's all sorts of things that swirl around that. In today's society, we view everything through a political lens. Studies have shown we're more political, more polarized than we have ever been. With that context, it's hard for you all to decide, how do we navigate this in a changing environment? How do the folks that are sitting at the table behind me, those university presidents, navigate that? But one thing I think is certain, Mr. Owen mentioned it, communication and the way that we communicate is so critical to this process, and I look forward to being part of the dialogue this afternoon.

- [Chairman] Thank you. Ms. Gatzke.

- My name is Carla Gatzke. I am responsible for HR at Daktronics. Daktronics is a South-Dakota-founded organization, and we're now about 2,500 people, but only about 1,500 are in South Dakota. The other thousand are across the country and worldwide, and our customers are also across the country, across our country plus in 70-plus other countries, and so our employees are engaging in a multicultural environment on a daily basis. Like Nicole said, at Daktronics as at Raven, we haven't really talked about diversity and inclusion in the way that we're talking about it today. We were based on the values of helpful, honest, and humble, and that's what we teach, and it's the behaviors that we expect of employees, supporting then a respectful and trustful environment, and that's now how we describe inclusion: to behave in a way that's creating this environment that's respectful and trustful so that we can be successful as a business, so our teams are high-performing and our individuals are contributing at their max. Some ways that we've talked about diversity historically is diversity of perspectives and diversity of experiences to bring those multiple perspectives, because a diversity of perspectives enables us to have more likely possibilities of understanding what our customers might value and how we might serve those, and so how do we pull onto the team this diversity of perspectives? We need people with different experiences, and that feeds now our conversation about diversity in the traditional senses as well, in the diversity in gender and in nationality and in sexual preference, gender preferences and so on. So diversity of experiences and diversity of perspectives is important to us. And then now how we also talk about inclusion is, how do we leverage that diversity? Through our behaviors of curiosity and our behaviors of wondering and questioning. That serves in problem-solving as well, but if I'm curious about you as a person, I'll more likely understand what matters to you and be able to have a trustful and respectful conversation so we can more likely pull the best out of both of us to solve this problem. That's what we talk about there. How do you all help us help our employees be successful? How do you help us teach our future employees how to do that? We're this global company now, but when I looked, 80% of our employees who have a bachelor's degree got their bachelor's degree in South Dakota, so how are we teaching in our current and future employees this curiosity, this respect for diverse perspectives and experiences? We employers, we rely on you all to provide that capability to us, so what we see you doing, we believe is really, really critical to providing us these employees that have this curious mindset and who will be able to pull from each other and from the team the best performance by being respectful and creating this environment of trust.

- [Chairman] Thank you. Ms. Ogunremi.

- Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Sandra Ogunremi with Regional Health. I oversee diversity, equity, and inclusion, and I'm gonna go over some of the questions that you had asked us, and how do we at Regional Health define diversity and cultural awareness? Diversity. Verna Myers said, "Diversity is inviting everyone to the party, "and inclusion is asking them to dance." So so many times, we don't even stop to think, are we being diverse? Have we invited everyone, and everyone means anyone within our community, who wants to apply for a job? They are welcome. They may be veterans, they may be people with some form of disability. We make reasonable accommodation. They may be older citizens in our community, they may be male, they may be female. They might be of a different race, ethnicity, language, or national origin. Everyone is welcome. We're not gonna stop to check your political views. We're not gonna stop to check your religious affiliations or your sexual orientation or preferences. Anyone and everyone in our community, they are welcome to come and work with us as long as they adhere to our purpose, our mission, our visions, and our values, and so that is diversity, but we focus a lot on inclusion because sometimes we have the numbers right, but you're not including, you're not asking people to dance. At Regional Health, we ask anyone and everyone to dance. They then have the option to say, "I don't feel like dancing today," and that is okay too. And what is cultural awareness? We actually use cultural awareness in one of the classes that I teach, and cultural awareness, really the definition can be taking a step back from yourself and becoming aware of your own values, your perceptions, your belief system, and then understanding yourself enough that you can then go out and help someone else. If you don't understand your own values, your beliefs, your perception, you cannot fully understand somebody else because you're gonna use your own frame of reference to define how they do things. For example, not everyone in our Lakota community, especially the traditional elders, will make direct eye contact, and so if I were a Lakota presenting, speaking to you today, I might be looking down if I'm traditional. While one culture says that is lack of confidence, another culture says that is respectful. Now, because I work a lot with Native Americans, I've formed the habit of introducing myself as

Sandra Ogunremi. Typically, if I was in a setting that included physicians, I would have to tell myself, "Remember to say you're Dr. Sandra Ogunremi. "You're dealing with medical doctors." But the Lakota community is a humble community. You do not go into that community giving them your accolades and how many years you've done stuff, so cultural awareness is understanding the differences between how you would normally behave, how the culture you're going to go into will behave, and closing that gap, and that is something that we do at Regional Health. Why is this important? Because we deal with patients. How do you assess a behavioral health patient who is not responding immediately to you? In one culture, if I ask you, "What's your pain level?" you say "five" and you move on. It's a quick response. Another culture says you pause, and if you're pausing, does that mean you're not fully coherent? That doesn't mean that. So understanding one culture won't make direct eye contact, one culture might pause, another culture might have a gentle shake versus a firm handshake, and so using that to understand when you're caring for a patient, you cannot use one set of standards to make decisions, and so we are very aware of that. Another question that was asked is, "Does your organization demonstrate diversity "and cultural awareness competency?" Absolutely. I've given the example of the patients we deal with. We on occasion might have patients that are students. We might have patients from different communities who come in injured after a sports game. We take into consideration the different cultures. Ramadan season will come soon, and we have to understand that potentially Muslim caregivers might be fasting, and if they're fasting, that is not the month to have potlucks endlessly around our healing environments, and so we take that into consideration. We take into consideration the menus that we serve. We have caregivers who do not eat beef because it's just not acceptable in their religion. We have caregivers who do not eat pork and caregivers who do not eat different things, and we have the vegetarians. We have to think of all of our caregivers, all of our patients, ensure that we meet their needs, and we have to ensure that for the care of the patients, it is always culturally appropriate. You've got patients who do not, under any circumstance, want a blood transfusion. We will not violate that based on their religious beliefs, and so understanding and demonstrating cultural competency is actually a requirement within the regulations for healthcare. We must have cultural competency. How does cultural awareness and diversity training advance your company in terms of productivity, ability to have productive interchange? It does a great job because now we kind of, through years, we've done this for years, we've measured it, we have people understanding each other, understanding that, if you use the Lewis model, someone who just comes maybe from an area that is multi-reactive might laugh and giggle a little bit more than someone who comes from a reactive environment or from a linear environment, and so we cannot measure engagement of any caregiver or of our patients based on how we would like to see things. We do a lot of education. We have a monthly cultural diversity gathering. We listen to different perspectives. We cover all the different topics. Our caregivers embrace it. Cultural awareness trainings, we typically get a perfect five anonymous score because people want to learn, and one of the things that helps people learn a lot is we're not pushing our personal views. We're saying, "Understand the people you're working with." Outside of my day job, I'm an Assemblies of God ordained minister, and so when I say that in gatherings like this, people are like, "And you do this work?" Absolutely, every single day. My job is to make sure that when anyone comes into our healing environments, they are welcome, they know they will be cared for, and all of our caregivers, we're all swimming in the same direction: physicians, non-physicians, regardless of any of the things that we have talked about. Cultural training and awareness is so important. It is important that we embrace it. I get a little bit shocked when I watch the news and people are pounding their fists and fighting over things. I say, hey, like... I'm sorry, I don't remember your name, sir, but you had said you're not the poster child because you are above 60 and a tall white male. You are the ones I need, because the majority can speak for the minorities, and so I embrace and love when we can work together and I can have someone who can champion this cause, and we have cultural champions across my organization. Think of any category, they're all covered. We value it. We model it. We live it. We're proud of it. As we have this conversation and as it's opened up for discussion for other people, I wanna say we have so much internal change and external change. We've partnered with our community. We're part of Rapid City community conversations. There is trust. Our healing rooms are used in the evenings by our community members who used to be afraid, five, six years ago, that, are their patients safe? Are their family members safe? Guess what? Open the meeting rooms in the evenings, let them come in, use it, learn, and feel welcome in our healing environments. We've turned the way things are done, and so it is possible to have these difficult conversations in a non-threatening manner, and so I look forward to the future. If you ever need me for anything, on behalf of Regional Health, I'm here. Thank you so much.

- Thank you. Questions from the board.

- I've got a question to start us off with, I guess, and maybe primarily it's directed at some of the HR folks on the panel, but how often when you're interviewing potential hires do questions surrounding diversity, inclusion, that sort of thing come up, and if so, what might be some examples of those questions? How are they phrased, and what sort of responses might you be looking for from those candidates?

- So I will answer for us. We do not ask questions around diversity and inclusion, but instead we interview for a cultural fit, and that cultural fit is based upon shared values which include drive, courage, humility, authenticity, and integrity. We feel like those shared values create an environment of inclusiveness, which is really what we get to, and through that, we will find diverse candidates that have those shared values with us, but we do not ask specific questions around diversity and a competency around that. You almost have to be careful.

- I might just dive in really quick. I would say that would be typical for a retail business as well. When they're interviewing individuals, that would not be a standard line of questioning. It's more like, how do they fit within the culture, and how do they demonstrate their cultural awareness, their own individual diversity of perspective during the course of the interview process? It's less overt in most cases.

- Thank you.

- We have one more HR person.

- I'm sorry.

- I'm curious about, were you imagining us as the employer asking a candidate something, and what kinds of...

- I was just curious if topics surrounding diversity ever come up in any interview processes. I mean, you're talking about seeking candidates who are certainly a fit within the organizational culture, but is diversity addressed in any, as we're discussing it today, is that any sort of component at all? Just wondering.

- Yeah, that is interesting. As was mentioned, we as the employer, we don't ask specifically those, what's your take on diversity or are you, and we also don't hear often. We do try to give the candidates, as much as possible, a picture of what it would be like at Daktronics, and so frankly, actually, your question has prompted me to consider how do we discern what our environment feels like to a candidate who really does have an interest in a diverse workplace, and we may not be the best judges of that 'cause we're so familiar with it, so it does give me a takeaway, which I appreciate, of how can we maybe get a better perspective of what our environment feels like to a person who has that real interest.

- Sure, thank you.

- I wanna add something to that. In my organization, just as in every organization, we're not supposed to ask certain questions, which we don't, but there are other questions that we could ask, which we do. For instance, if we are recruiting in, if we're interviewing a physician that is where we have a shortage and the physician looks very different, with a name that is very different, and we know they might have that question at the back of their mind, will they be accepted? Will they be welcome? That's a question we have to help them answer, and so we will always ask, "Do you have any concerns?" "Do you have anything "that you want us to help you answer today?" And usually I meet with all of our visiting physicians, potential recruits, and the question always comes up, because we've created that culture where they say, "Will I be welcome?" "Will I be welcome?" "My last name indicates I might not be, "I might have a different national origin, "I might have a different religious perspective. "Will I be welcome?" And typically we'll immediately connect them with somebody else who is affiliated with their region of the world, where they come from, their national origin, who then ensure that they know that they are welcome, they will be treated very well, and so we've gone that extra step to not just have a safe space, but a brave space.

- Okay, thanks.

- One thing that I would maybe add, so you asked the question about do we interview for that, but I think if you take a step back from the interview process and you look at true recruitment, I think all of us as employers today would say that we are aiming for a diverse workforce. Knowing that there is a talent shortage, we wanna ensure that we pull on different demographics, whether that is age, gender, race, disability, and so on, and so through our recruitment practices, we try to target different audiences other than just a particular audience. I don't know if that helps a little bit, but it's not in the interview process. It's a step back from the interview process.

- Certainly, thank you.

- Let me ask the same question in maybe just a little different way. How do you ensure that employees have cultural awareness? I mean, is it part of an employment contract that you treat everyone in the business fairly and equally and with respect? Is it just simply expected that they perform that way? Is there ongoing teaching, seminars and things, required classes, if you will, that employees have to go to to learn about these things? I'm just wondering how you, you certainly have it in your businesses, I'm just wondering how you ensure that you have it, and if someone is outside of those norms, how they are dealt with.

- Yeah. Of course, it depends on the business, and certainly, well, for instance, South Dakota Retailers Association has a number of tourist-based businesses. South Dakota relies heavily on tourism after agriculture as our number two business, and so you can think of a number of tourist-based businesses especially in western South Dakota that deal with a very broad, diverse clientele. We have a number of employers who utilize H-2B or J-1 visas, and so part of the onboarding process for employees includes some manner of cultural awareness. It's gonna vary greatly depending on the number of employees that you have. If you're a smaller shop, you're gonna largely cover that through the hiring process and through one-on-one communications. If you're a larger organization, it's gonna be more built into your culture. It might be trainings, seminars, those kinds of things. You might even have that as part of your onboarding process as a new employee comes on board, and so different businesses are going to apply all of those and more. I think the take-home message is, cultural awareness is an important thing.

- I can't speak firsthand to the employment experience. I've got two other people that work for me, and I assume they're looking for jobs every day. But I'll tell you a place where we're just learning to do this is in that legislative process, which invites a wide range of dialogue and ideas, some of which are just putrid. And when we see, and we're getting better, but we have a long way to go. When we see Senator Neal Tapio, and I'll name names, bringing an anti-immigration screed into a committee, we let the immigration community react, but there was a number of the business community that were in that line telling that senator, "This has to stop. "We don't accept this. "That's not funny." Like I said, we're getting better at that, but the environment will change when the folks that have created the environment guide the change.

- Mr. Chairman, I would like to hear from each of you.

- I wanted to say at Regional Health, all of our caregivers, all of our physicians, all of our leadership, everyone has gone through cultural awareness training. It is part of our onboarding. We do it at day one, and then we do a follow-up at day 90 to follow up on the discussions, and then we encourage our caregivers to continue attending the classes that we have provided all year long. We record so that people can get continued education credits, but also to ensure that if someone for some reason, health reasons, missed the class, we could get them into the class that they need to be in. So it is something that we ensure that it's face to face, it's not online. Thank you.

- Thank you, I didn't mean to interrupt you. Nate, you talked to us about navigating the delicate little line between policy and politics, but in our work, we, as you know, in our state, we are navigating right now, and many of the faculty and many of the staff and all of the presidents are navigating that very delicate balance between pedagogy, teaching and learning, and politics. It's a difficult time, particularly for some staff and faculty and presidents, and we're trying to do our best at that. My question, from each of you, how would you advise us, 'cause you know our state. You know what we're living. What would you tell us?

- My mother had a couple of individual statements that she would make from time to time, and a few of 'em actually stuck. One of the ones that has stuck for me is, it's not what you say, it's how you say it. How is

that applicable here? I don't know that there are very many people who are gonna say diversity is not important. I don't think there are very many people who are gonna say cultural awareness is not important. I don't think you're gonna hear that a whole lot, but it's how you go about the process, and so it's not what you do or not what your goals are, it's how you try and achieve them, right? And so for your particular cases, you're in sort of the similar situation as I am when I talk about retail businesses. You've got some diversity offices that are very large, much more bureaucratic. You've got others that are a little bit smaller and a little more nimble. It varies from institution to institution, and so how you're going to navigate that space is honestly gonna have to be institution to institution. But I'll come back to something I mentioned in the opening comments, it's all about communication, so critical. And because we view, we, I mean the collective we, I mean you, me, politicians, I mean citizens at large, I mean the media, everybody, because we have come to view things through such a political lens, we've gotta infuse that in our thinking and our communications. I'm not saying you have to be political. I'm not saying that, but you have to think politically in your communications. Hey, I've got a PhD too. I spent a lot of years in schools. I've seen a lot of this stuff. Pedagogy doesn't follow politics. It's slow on the uptake. It always is. It's gonna continue to be.

- Or maybe it leads.

- It's part and parcel to the beast, if you will. And so I think my piece of advice would be, as we're thinking about how we communicate these things, you gotta have that somewhere in the back of our mind. Again, it's not what the goal is, it's how we achieve the goal.

- So I'd like to ask a question. I would agree. I kinda see it as a three-legged stool of politics, policy, and education, and so I would like to ask you all, what do you expect from prospective employee, from the prospective employees that you talk to, what do you expect that they have learned from their education in diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness? What do you think they should have gained from their educational experience, in whatever baccalaureate degree or graduate degree they may have received, what do you think they should bring with them that makes them valuable to the workplace as it relates to diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness?

- If I can jump ahead and maybe go back and answer the previous question as well. Kicking the Board of Regents around during a legislative session is just some people's idea of their favorite indoor sport. Watching it can be amusing as well. I think we're in this period right now with this focus in whether you're too liberal or too conservative, and unfortunately, our political dialogue is now being driven by polling. I run campaigns. I run statewide ballot measure campaigns. I do that kind of political research. I'm responsible for that kind of spin because it moves votes. However, the first casualty of war is truth, and my dad taught me there's nothing more stubborn than a fact. I will tell you there will ultimately be great powers in taking all of the anecdotal stories, half of which are just crap, and just quietly telling the truth, asking advocates like us to join you in telling that truth so that we can have people at coffee klatches and dinner just kinda saying, "Did you hear about this?" saying, "That's not true," and that's a first-gear, long-hill, slow climb, and there's nothing exciting about it. But I am old-fashioned enough to think that when you get the truth out about those stories and we can calm some of the rhetoric and some of the sound bites and some of the stuff that gets created out of that spin and research, 'cause that's not going away, that's one of your best answers, and so that's the question. Excellent question following. I'll let somebody else.

- I will answer the question more directly as far as what do we hope that policy, politics, and education bring together, and what do we expect that our students have learned coming into the workforce. So more than anything, we hope that students have learned how to remove barriers without putting up new barriers when it comes to diversity. We want them to come into a workforce open-minded and curious, as Carla had alluded to, but also having the ability to collaborate with one another through knowing that there is diverse experience and perspective and thought in coming to a common ground in which we can solve problems.

- I'd like to add, we want young graduates, old graduates, older graduates depending, we want everyone to know that they are welcome. We want them to come embracing others. When they join the workforce, embrace others. They don't have to think like you. They don't have to be you. I tell our new caregivers, if we were all, and there are some exercises we do, and then we all go into different corners based on those activities, and we do so many different ones, and they're all separated out. All of us at some point will disagree with each other if we keep on asking questions. When we take care of patients, we want everyone

to focus on the purpose with which they're there, so we encourage and hope our new graduates will come in, focus positive energy on why they're there, and embrace one another. That's what we hope they bring.

- These were well-articulated positions, and I agree with most of them. We've shared here how we're striving in our workplaces to create a welcoming environment, to create high-performing teams that have diverse perspectives, to be able to communicate in a way that pulls the best from each of us towards the problem. We would want the students that come from our universities to have abilities to do that, best if they've had opportunities to practice that in their curriculum and in their extracurricular activities. And in addition, then we'll grow and build on those capabilities.

- Two things: One of the greatest gifts ever given to me was a political affairs director of the Montana Power Company, who early in my career said, "Always allow the possibility that your opponent is right "or at least has a point, "and think through those arguments." And my second thing that I've learned being a crusty old guy now, jeez, we don't put things in context enough. And I go back 20 years, Greg Dean, who is one of my favorite people on this planet, worked for me when I first took this job over 20 years ago, and he kept running into my office with all these facts and statistics about how internet sales was growing, and it doubled last year, and it's gonna double this year, and it's gonna double every year in the foreseeable future, and I kept looking at him going, "What percent of sales is it now?" Took him two weeks to find out, but he comes in and he goes, "Less than one." Okay, that's different, but if we can put all these headlines in context and see how they're interrelated and you can teach people to critically think that way, that's the key to getting more right.

- I would just add, I couldn't agree more on the context thing. Context is so, so, so important, and that comes back to my message related to communication earlier. I mean, you have to put this in a little bit different context than you would otherwise think that you would need to when communicating with lawmakers and the public. Lawmakers and the public are not academics. Trust me, I know. I'm sort of like a recovering academic. Sorry, guys. This is the kind of thinking that you have to have in the back of your mind: How is this going to be viewed by those who are in position to make life difficult for you? Gotta be part of your thinking.

- So as I've been sitting here, I'm wondering if I maybe could have rephrased my first question a little bit better. I wonder if that was a little bit misinterpreted initially. I think we've since kind of gotten to the point of what I was looking for, and that was really, how do you get a sense of a person's understanding of and appreciation for diversity as it relates to the workforce, and I sense I think we've kind of gotten to that more, but I wanted to make sure I wasn't, I don't know, misinterpreted initially. Just making sure, sorry about that.

- Any questions from the students that we have in the audience?

- Or anybody else in the audience, for that matter.

- Sure, why don't you--

- [Man] Yeah.

- Come on up, please.

- Thank you, Tom.

- You bet.

- Sure, that'd be great.

- Hi, can you press the button in?

- [Carl] Okay, hello, my name is Carl Peterson. I'm a student here at Dakota State University. My question is kind of looking at all this in context, as we've mentioned. Do the people here on the panel from our various job and businesses across the state, when looking at this, once you get that feel for what type of feeling a



potential employee might have for diversity, how do you decide if the feeling that they've given towards your culture in your business is conducive to that culture? Let's say you feel that that student comes to you, and as a potential employee, makes you feel, as the people on the hiring committee, that one of their core values is hatred of others, and that that is what they want to bring into your environment. Do you allow that? How can you tell if that's something that might become a problem? And if you discover it after they're hired, what do you do when hatred that may have been fostered at an institution like this one or other Board of Regents schools comes into your workplace? How is that addressed?

- Again, Nathan Sanderson of retailers. Far be it from me to speak for all of our businesses, but I'll say for myself, I traditionally am leery of anyone who comes to anything with a set agenda, whether that's wanting to be on a board or commission, whether that's wanting to be hired in a workplace, whether that's wanting to be part of a group or committee or what have you. People who come with an agenda tend to only wanna be interested in that agenda, and so what are the repercussions of hiring somebody who has this mentality or mindset? Well, obviously if it's antithetical to your culture as an organization or as a business, you're gonna take steps to either correct the problem or you're gonna get rid of 'em. I mean, it's really that simple. If they don't fit your culture, then they don't belong within your organization.

- Thank you.

- Thank you. Any other comments by anyone? Any other questions? Oh, please.

- I'm sorry, there was a question earlier about employee behaviors, and I feel like that relates to this. So in our organization, and I suspect many, there are expected behaviors usually based on things like engendering respect and engendering trust in a team that will work together. There are behaviors that are expected, and it's to the behaviors that we teach and that we are explicit about the expectation, and then we make corrections if needed. And so the mindset likely matters, but it's to the behaviors that we're really focused on.

- I'll also add, in addition to the behaviors and correcting the behaviors, a question I often ask is, "Where did that come from?" because sometimes a person might act in what we would deem a hateful behavior or manner, but they're not being hateful, they just don't know differently. That might be shocking. In some cultures of the world, it is okay to say, "Hey," and I can pick on you because you're very slim and beautiful, they can say, "You're fat," and they're not being offensive. Another culture says you do not talk about a woman's weight ever, under any circumstance. Yes, the men are saying yes. If you wanna live and go home, you do not talk about the woman's weight, and so one culture says it's bad. Another culture, I witnessed a lady once who did not know about 15 years ago who was singing a song and ended it with a word that she should not have ended the song with, and I pulled her aside and I said, "You can't say that." She did not know. There are people with agendas, and if they come in with an agenda, you have to figure that out and deal with that, try to correct the behavior, or they exit, but there's also a lot of people who have lived in communities that are very small and don't know that certain things are wrong. They need an opportunity for an education, they need an opportunity for help, and they need to grow and expand their knowledge base and not be punished for their lack of knowledge. They usually make some of our best advocates.

- Thank you. Thank you.

- You've got a question.

- I have a question.

- Go ahead.

- What happens when you have hired employees that were good to come in, but now you have two employees, because of culture, are clashing? They come from different backgrounds, different cultures, different races or whatever, and there's infighting. How do you address to solve that issue?

- We always get to the root cause. We listen. Listening is so important. Understanding why you said what you said that caused her to be upset, and what she said, and trying to say it in a different way. Oftentimes

you say, "Say it in a different way." Someone who has English as their second language may not know, may in a moment of frustration, not be able to articulate their words correctly, and might not say, "Would you consider letting me speak at this point?" You might hear someone say, "Shut up," but they don't mean shut up the way we mean shut up. That's a point where you start to educate, and we've told all, we tell all our caregivers day one, if someone says something that is offensive to you, tell them to say it in a different way. Let them say it again and again until you can get to the root cause. We have seen a significant decrease in misunderstandings based on culture. Do we still have it every now and then? Absolutely, and then we have to educate. You can't pound your fist, if your culture permits that, to make your point. One culture says pounding your fist is making your point, another culture says that's potential assault. You're getting too close into my face. Some cultures don't have that bubble. Some cultures have, this is my personal space, so we work through it, and till date, we have been able to help people see things through a different lens. We don't have it as much anymore because people have learned to talk through their differences.

- Other comments? Other questions?

- I would just reiterate what was said that, as employers, we seek to understand the differences first and educate, but we also come back to what are our cultural expectations that we have set in the organization, and make those very clear to the team members that we employ, that in certain cases, we do not have tolerance for certain behaviors no matter how much there might be a misunderstanding or a lack of education. There are just certain ground rules that we have to have as employers, but of course, seeking to understand differences first is where we go as employers.

- Go ahead.

- Thank you, I appreciate it. My name is Ryan Blau, I'm a student at the South Dakota School of Mines, and I'm going to the School of Mines to eventually get a job. My education is for my employment, so what can we do as students and as student leaders to foster a future pattern of inclusive behavior at the collegiate level to ensure success in the workplace later on?

- Thanks for asking a question, and here's probably the answer you'd get from your folks, and so it's dismissible right off the bat. I've become proud of you for being in the mine. I wasn't smart enough to even, I lived in Rapid City and I drove away from the mines 'cause I couldn't, I wasn't going there. Your statement that says, "I'm going to the mines to get my job." I would begin with reshaping that and having you push some liberal arts conversations and looking at this time in your life as not just job preparation, but preparation to be a citizen in whatever community you're gonna be, looking at this god-awful mess that we call politics, or looking for chances to express a faith, looking for nonprofits, rounding yourself out as a true human being will make you more valuable all over the place.

- I'll add this, and it's more of a personal statement than it is a professional one. I've found that when it comes to that well-roundedness, that diversity, it was more the experience of being at an institution of higher learning that was the key driver than any specific diversity-related class or initiative or project or anything like that. It was the experience of interacting with people from different backgrounds and cultures and ethnicities and everything that that deals with. That was the driver. It was the experience and the process, not necessarily like any one specific thing, class, initiative, what have you.

- Irrigate your life with diversity and you'll be okay.

- Thank you guys very much.

- I happened to be this morning on the campus of SDSU at the Engineering College Advisory Group. They have an industry group that meets periodically, and what the industry folks were actually sharing with the college was, how do we help you help your students develop critical thinking and ability to work with others and collaborative team-oriented behaviors? That was a pretty strong statement from the industries there of what they're looking for in future, in this case, in future engineers. So my thinking was, how do we create those opportunities for experiences for students while on campus? How do we form teams in the class when we have a team project? How do we choose the extracurricular activities that we're in? How do we invite others to join us in homework groups and so on? Seems like some of those things could also enable what

the industry was asking for in terms of being able to work together as teams regardless of the experiences and backgrounds and perspectives. Is that the kind of area you were exploring?

- Yes, thank you. Thank you all very much. That was very beneficial.

- Good afternoon. My name's Carson Zucchi. I'm a student at the University of South Dakota. I first wanna thank you all for participating in this discussion today, and thank you for the regents for hosting this conversation. I couldn't agree more, these conversations are very critical to how we choose, how we approach all these situations in the future. We've heard a lot about what your organizations value from employees you're looking to hire in the future. I'm curious to hear what you have to say from an employer perspective of maybe a level of preparedness you've noticed from the universities for new employees coming to your organizations, and if there's been any trend in those level of preparedness.

- Could you amplify that a little bit? Could you just expand on the nature of your question, please?

- Sure. I guess from my perspective, I've noticed that diversity efforts have gained a lot of conversation lately, referencing the last maybe 10, 15 years as far as employment, so I'm curious maybe if you've noticed increasing levels of awareness for other cultures from your employees in recent history versus maybe what you've noticed in the past, or if there's been any trend coming from that, from those employment patterns.

- Very briefly, there's no question that we are becoming more diverse as a state and as a nation. It's happening. There's no question that awareness of diversity and awareness of cultural awareness is becoming more and more important, both to those who run companies and to the citizenry at large. So absolutely yes, I think that has definitely been the trend and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

- I have found that a lot of our new caregivers that have just graduated college, which is what you're referring to, when they come from different states, they are in shock. We just had one. I take the time to ask, "What have you observed in the last five days "that you've been here in Rapid City?" People who come from the East Coast are surprised at how we smile at each other and wave at random strangers. It's a shock to them, and it's not based on race. They're predominantly white caregivers, people who come from Minnesota. We just had a lady from Minnesota who could not believe that we were so different, and was in shock. We had to help her settle in. She was a young white female. We see constantly that, as a nation, we're very different in our different environments, and when people come in, sometimes that we have to help them because they're just not used to some of the things that we do. People who've come from Chicago, where guns are not allowed anywhere, they almost pass out when they get into Walmart and you can open carry. They just almost pass out. They don't know if they're safe. I mean, I could go on and on with the examples we get and what makes people almost hyperventilate. We can teach it, we can educate, there's certain things that when they get in they have to learn, and so the goal is always having people who can walk them through those difficulties when they come.

- Other comments? Thank you.

- Thank you.

- Tomorrow we're going to have a presentation from the diversity centers that we have in South Dakota. All of the campuses have an emphasis on diversity. Three of the campuses, SDSU, USD, and Mines, have diversity centers called one thing or another, but I'm wondering if any of you have any contact with those folks or any idea if it's something that you're aware of that we have that we're trying to do, if you are aware of it, and if you are, whether or not you believe it to be helpful. And maybe there's no contact, and I'm not suggesting that's a bad thing. We'll find out more from those folks tomorrow.

- I'll wade in here briefly. Certainly having gone to an institution in South Dakota, I'm familiar with the fact that diversity offices exist. Outside of whether there's regular business interaction with those entities, I would say largely no, there's not, but I don't know that that's necessarily inherently a bad thing either. One comment I'll make about that is, part of the reason why we're here today is because of the focus that has been placed on those entities. I mean, it's been in the media, it's been covered. For the last number of months it was a topic of conversation at great length during the 2019 legislative session, and so when I

referenced the intersection of politics and policy earlier, that's really what I'm talking about, and so I think that I've mostly made my comments, but I'll just reiterate them here, is that as you're having these conversation about diversity offices on university campuses, it is absolutely essential to keep in mind that political component as part of the conversation. Again, not to politicize our universities. I mean, these are publicly funded entities in large part, and so it needs to serve the citizenry of the state as a whole, but if, in order to navigate that fine line that we talked about before, have to think about the way in which those entities are communicating, not just externally, but internally as well. That has been a subject of no small amount of conversation in the legislative process over the last couple of years, and is going to continue to be as long as the disconnect between the messages that are intended, again, the goal that I referenced earlier, and the way in which they are conveyed continues to exist.

- Thank you. Any other?

- I wanted to make reference that the SDSU diversity office, my friends, I think, back there, they came to visit Raven here on Friday to share more about their overall mission through the diversity office and explain kind of their role on campus, and it was very enlightening. I appreciated the conversation that we had and how they can look to better prepare students for the future for us as employers.

- Okay. Mr. Owen.

- I wanna close on a positive note. To answer your question directly, I get caught up with statewide policies and business, and I can tell you more about how your property taxes are calculated than you wanna sit through, because everybody I've told that says they didn't need that information. And sales and use tax is even more fascinating for about three of us in the state. I've only found one of the other two. I wanna share this: We live in Sioux Falls, and my youngest is a 14-year-old freshman at Washington High who went to Whittier Middle School, which is a majority-minority school. I went to Anne Sullivan. We're living diversity and we're doing really well, and I'd take you back to his second grade class. I was forcing him to think about all of the kids and all the skin color there, and I was acting like a bass, and I said, "Well, how many white kids in your class, "because I don't know most of them." I saw the class picture. 21 kids, four Caucasians. He didn't know. He is purely colorblind because he was at school with them all day, every day. The only thing that he resents is that native Spanish speakers are kicking his butt in Spanish class.

- I had the opportunity of visiting School of Mines, their inclusion office. When I walked onto the campus, I opened my eyes to see the differences that existed with the students and the rooms they were reading in and studying in, and getting to speak with Jessie Herrera extensively. We need those, we need places where students can go. We need offices that can help our students, places that are safe and can put together events and programs for the students, and so I was personally quite pleased with what I saw, and I'm thankful for you all asking us to speak because, all of a sudden, I'm now aware of what we have right in my own town that I was not even aware of, and so that's another opportunity for us to even partner together and work together, and so I really appreciate you asking us to come and speak.

- Thank you for that. Question?

- My name, sorry, is Marissa Guillory. I'm a student here at DSU. There's been a lot of talk about the value of diversity offices here today. Here at DSU, we do not have a diversity office. It's something that myself and many other students have been trying to get created for a number of years now. I know many students on this campus who identify as part of minority groups or as the diverse population on campus feel like the lack of that office makes it more difficult to be heard on campus and succeed on campus. I would like to know your opinions as far as if you think that the lack of this office and support for that programming would also put students from this university at a disadvantage after their collegiate life.

- Somebody's gotta take a stab at that one.

- I was thinking about the question, previous question about the diversity offices on campus as well, and the folks from the office at SDSU have also visited us and shared about that, the activities and the challenges that they see students having that they're able to address. I believe that each of us is unique, and each student brings their own unique set of challenges, and some have really quite a lot of challenges that benefit

from having a group that has a focus on helping students who are not, don't have another place to get help from. My daughter was a student at USD, and she was active in the organizations that are part of the Center for Diversity and Community, is the way that it's described there, and it was highly valuable for them. My daughter went by the pronoun 'them.' Extremely important from my perspective as I listen to what kinds of activities that entity does, and then the way that they created a welcoming space for students, and we've talked about how we want our organizations to be welcoming for the employees who work there. It creates an experience that helps them stay in school, but also creates a model for how to build a welcoming environment. I think they are quite influential positively. I wouldn't judge the campus or a student coming from the campus by whether or not they had a center, but I would anticipate that having a center would make it more likely that more students would more fully be successful in their experience.

- In any conversation related to the creation of a new office or adding more staff at a university, it's not just as simple as the topic at hand, right? I mean, there's the political reality, there's the cost, there's the how does it fit within the institution reality, that kind of thing. Going back to my comments from earlier, I think the most valuable piece of your university education when it comes to diversity is the fact that you got one. That is the more important factor than it is whether your university has a diversity office or whether it doesn't. I mean, I know we're at a Board of Regents meeting, but I don't just mean like the regental institutions in the state of South Dakota either. I mean any type of post-secondary education is gonna be a differentiator there in your understanding and knowledge of diversity most likely, more than whether or not Dakota State has a diversity office or doesn't have one, but SDSU does, and USD does, and Mines does, but Black Hills State doesn't.

- Another way that I hear your question is, is having a separate diversity office the only way to address diversity at each campus, and I logically think no. But you're right, if the university president and the faculty aren't addressing diversity somehow, that's bad, and if you're at an institution that gets labeled in the soundbite world as a bigoted institution, you're gonna be coming from behind, so I don't know that it needs a separate office. I've watched budget problems enough, but the effort has to be there.

- President Rankin and I were talking, and he talked about the importance of making sure that his students all felt very welcome, and that the students had safe spaces to thrive. You are also right, it's so hard. You can't say, "Create an office everywhere," 'cause we're thinking budgets and all those other things, and so we cannot speak to what your budget looks like, but ensuring that organizations, institutions, universities, find a way to ensure that there's that safe space, that people can connect, that people can thrive, that people can blossom, that people can walk around campus with their heads held high and thrive and enjoy their environment, how they do that, I don't know, but it is very important.

- Anyone else on that question? Thank you. Regent Thares?

- Yes, I guess I'd like to, some comments that I think diversity has been part of our country for a long time. I own a ranch in Wyoming and it had an old coal mine town, and in the late 1800s, 12, 1,500 residents, 20-some different nationalities worked in that mine. I have read nothing that says there was major clashes with culture. They found a way to work through it. My grandfather came through Ellis Island right at the turn of the century, a German from Russia who knew no English, but found a way to be part of society and be productive in our country, and I think what's changed is really our immigration patterns and where our immigrants, really in the last 10, 20 years or so, have come from different areas of the world, and I think what's really the most important as that has changed is making sure we understand and respect those new cultures. I think that's where a lot of our problem, at least I see that in our community in Aberdeen, where these different cultures from different places have come in, and it's understanding and learning how to respect those different cultures. That's the biggest challenge, in my opinion.

- Any comments or thoughts on that? Any other questions by anyone? Thank you all for being here. We do find ourselves as a Board of Regents at the intersection of politics and public policy, and that never seems to go away, and this is certainly an issue that's important to a lot of people in South Dakota on either sides of it, and we are going forward with more knowledge about the issues thanks to your participation today, so thank all of you very much for being here.