Introduction with Music:

You are listening to the Undeniably Well podcast hosted by the University of Delaware's Employee Health and Wellbeing team. Keep listening to discover ways to be your best self each and every day.

Introduction:

Welcome to the eighth episode of the Undeniably Well podcast and the third and final part of our Equity and Inclusion series. If you missed the first two parts of this series, you can find them on our websites podcast page, along with links to all relevant resources. Those two episodes were candid conversations with employees of color here at UD.

This episode is more like the traditional episodes that we've produced, this is a conversation between Beth Finkel and Dr. Regina Wright, who is a psychologist and associate professor in the school of nursing here at the university of Delaware, as well as the associate Dean of diversity and inclusion in the college of health sciences. Dr. Regina, right. Really tries to listen and garner momentum and engagement around relevant topics. But also always is thinking through sustainable efforts to move this work forward. She's worked intentionally and deliberately with leadership behind the scenes to give people the language, to do this work within their own teams, because of the initiatives that she spearheaded in her tenure in this position much of the colleges doing individual DEI, retreats and trainings within their own individual areas. And then they also work to give students the mentorship experience that they need and support them.

This is actually an amalgamation of two different conversations that bathroom Regina had together. So the first part of this episode talks about purpose in diversity, equity and inclusion, and really what is diversity, equity and inclusion, and then how to design work, that lowers barriers for BIPOC employees here at the University of Delaware. And then in the second part of the episode, they really talk about recruitment and some of the new policies that have come out of the COVID 19 pandemic that you should be aware of, especially as you are looking to hire.

This is our final episode of 2021, and I just wanted to say from myself and the entire Employee Health and Wellbeing Team, we are so grateful for you for coming along with us on this journey this past semester. And we look forward to continuing it in 2022. Thank you so much for your continued support. And we look forward to growing with you.

Beth Finkle:

Good morning, Dr. Wright, how are you doing?

Dr. Regina Wright:

Good morning. I'm great. How are you?

Beth Finkle:

I'm doing well. We're so happy to have you here. You know, for our listeners, my name is Beth Finkle. I am the host and have the pleasure of recording this wonderful conversation with you. I did a little bit of research on your background and I did not know that you were a trained psychologist.

Dr. Regina Wright:
Yes I am, but I'm not a clinical psychologist.

Beth Finkle:
Tell us a little bit about that history.

Dr. Regina Wright:

My background is in neuropsychology, which is basically the study of the interaction between brain and behavior, and so my work has really turned into work where I look at health and cognitive function and older adults. So it's kind of, a subspecialty of psychology that really focuses on brain health and how that manifests in behavior.

Beth Finkle:

It's so relevant to the conversation we'll be having today and even more so, you know, you've been with the university of Delaware for 10 years now you were professor of the school of nursing. And now most recently, the last five years really working in the College of Health Sciences as the Diversity Officer, can you share a little bit with us, in regards to that role and what you've been doing with the college.

Dr. Regina Wright:

Wow. So I can't believe this is my sixth year in this position, and so the role has, you know, it really started out as a role where I would just try to get some initiatives going from the ground up. And so the first thing, one of the first things was creating a college committee focused on diversity, equity and inclusion. So we've been around for about, I think, four years now, , and then another focus has been just building up our pipeline programs. Um, our priority has been undergraduate pipeline and we've created a number of programs that have been sustained across about five years now, where we bring undergrads in and various programs, expose them to the college, get them excited about UD and hope that they enroll as a College of Health Sciences majors. Another thing we've done is some significant diversity training around search committees around social justice and really gotten the college, just talking about issues related to diversity what it means, why it's important to focus on in the workplace. That's pretty much the bulk of the position, I will say. And we'll probably talk about this at some point, during the pandemic, the focus shifted a whole lot, and I think that was a good thing. And I hope that we don't lose that momentum.

Beth Finkle:

I agree. So let's just start there. I think you bring a lot of gifts in your past experience and you'll bring that to our conversation today and just, I started with you. So I'm in my sixth going into my sixth year as well, and so let's just start unpacking your intro. So you talk about diversity, equity and inclusion. And what does that mean from your lens in the workplace?

Dr. Regina Wright:

Right. So actually, a colleague the other day kind of said that those terms are like getting a little annoying because it's like figuring out how it's defined. So, I will say diversity is really just about appreciation of differences and, Really taking stock and looking at whether your workplace represents,, the differences,, that mirror society. , I would say the equity is really about making sure that folks have the opportunities that they want in need to be fulfilled in the workplace, and inclusion is about feeling
included in the environment, feeling welcomed and, really, getting a sense that the workplace is a place that you belong and where you're appreciated and wanted people want you to be there. And so I think, there's a lot of pieces there. But kind of thinking about it holistically is really important.

**Beth Finkle:**

It's important that you sort of share the breakdown of each of those terms because to your colleagues mentioned. It is a lot. And then when, when we think about the conversation that we're having today, we're really talking about those three areas, distinct areas, diversity, equity, and inclusion. And how does that intersect with one's wellbeing? How does that intersect with one's mental health? All three of those things play a very significant role in our wellbeing. Right? So to talk a little bit about the first piece. So this was a new role to the college and leadership support and compassionate leadership is such a driver in this space. And I guess my first question would be, how did you start to gain buy-in around these initiatives with our leadership?

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

So I will say, I'll give credit to Kathy Matt, our wonderful Dean and our retired deputy Dean Susan Hall, who really thought that this was an important position that should exist in the college. And they were willing to put the dollars behind it to support it. And Dean Matt has also kind of set aside a lot of funds to support our pipeline programs and other initiatives. So I would say that would make our college pretty unique engineering is doing a great job, as well. So I hope that all colleges will kind of get on board at some point. So I'd say, the opportunity came to me, but it was really my job to create the position, decide what the focus would be and what our priorities would be. And so I guess, you know, in the beginning, I was very young and, you know, this was a new administrative roles. So you know, that the prospect was a bit overwhelming, but I really just kind of looked at models, in other colleges and other universities. I think, one thing I did, and I don't know that this was the greatest use of resources and time, one thing I did was just start a speaker series. So I had people come in and start talking about the issues. And so, I had folks come in and talk about health disparities, health equity. I had folks talking about diversity. I had a faculty member come and talk about disability and how that plays out at the university and the workplace in terms of accessibility. And I think we had a speaker that talked about LGBTQ plus issues. And so, you know, the first thing I did was just kind of create opportunities for people to see that we're here to see that these are the issues that are going to be important for this role. And then from there kind of just building out pipeline and then building out the committee work that we've been doing.

**Beth Finkle:**

I remember those speaker series early on as well. And I would say, you spearheaded a lot of conversation because I remember just the response in conversation is a significant piece that was derived from that speaker series because it wasn't common dialogue amongst our colleagues. And it did provide us an opportunity to really start talking about lived experience and looking at how others, you know, have lived experience through a different lens. So I think that there was a lot of value there. Would you say that you gained traction from that beginning series, to build and, and move on to other pieces or what was the trajectory after you started with that panel session.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**
Again, presence. You know, what normally happens over time is that people are excited and then, I think they start having to make this decision between, do I attend this or do I make a dent in my workload? So that's a challenge for anything that's like outside of normal work responsibilities.

Beth Finkle:

But staying there really quickly, Regina, I do think it's important to, to stay here for a moment because that does happen quite often, people are motivated and they're willing, but then as time goes on, you have to kind of keep reminding them why this is important. Right. And you have shared some of the tactics and one of them being dollars. Like we have dollars that are being invested into the work, right? Because we know that when we have a diverse and inclusive environment, we build a better team. We build a safer workplace where people feel, you know, that they can contribute in meaningful ways. We also know that we're supported to take advantage of some of these offerings that are available to us. So, what would you share as an example for those that are trying to keep this momentum? A number of things have started across campus, right? And so we're all probably feeling that apathy in a way, but the momentum is still there. So how have you really bought into that momentum and kept it moving with senior leadership buy-in or conversations that you're having?

Dr. Regina Wright:

So I think, you know, again, having the platform, having the role helps a lot. Last year, I try to create these programs that would be sustained. And so, we started the ongoing conversation series and our social justice training series, and those things are coming back this fall. And so, you know, one thing I get to do with this platform is remind the college via email, via the town hall or a college meeting. These things are here, this is why they're important. I hope you can attend, but a big part of that is I think working with leadership, i.e. Chairs to make sure that folks are getting the freedom, to attend these things and to engage, so they can keep that motivation going, and so I think having those kind of sustained programs will be great. I wonder about when I'm not in this role anymore, how much of a priority this work will be, and that's one of the reasons that I created the DEI committee created this subcommittee structure, because even if I'm gone in my role at the university as a professor, that committee structure will keep those programs going and continue to do the work.

Beth Finkle:

So talk to us a little bit about the committee and, and I know about it on the outskirts, but I know you all are doing great work and have great representation with faculty, staff, a number of employees on that committee. So how was it formed? What type of work are they doing and how do you see this committee leading that sustainability charge in this space?

Dr. Regina Wright:

So I think I went to the governance committee probably four years ago to bring about a vote on the creation of this committee. The committee is made up of a representative from each department, as well as Alyssa Benjamin our pipeline coordinator. Sam Wilson, who's the moneyman. They tell us whether we have money to do things And then one of our HR staff, they tend to be able to tell us whether we can do certain things or not as well. And so last year, with the George Floyd incident and the programming we had around that I decided that we really needed to have some very specific charges and specific activities going on. And so I kind of brainstormed and did some research thinking
about the areas, that we could improve in the college and areas of impact we could have. So for example, one of the subcommittees is community and clinical considerations. And so I should mention last year I sent out a call to the college that we're creating these subcommittees. And ask for members to join, literally got about 30 volunteers at some of those things, and those folks have hung around with us.

Beth Finkle:

And I would say too, just not to interject, but just to clarify a point here, I think also why you got those 30 volunteers is the extreme support from Dean Matt saying this is important in our work.

Dr. Regina Wright:

Absolutely

Beth Finkle:

It could be compassionate. Inclusive healthcare leaders, and this is a big piece of that puzzle. And so leading from that strong message, I think it was a no brainer for people to say, Hey, like I'm supported to do this work. I know this work is important for me and my colleagues. And so that, that I think dovetails really nicely.

Dr. Regina Wright:

An example of a subcommittee that you might not know about is our community and clinical considerations, subcommittee. And so that subcommittee is made up primarily of nursing and physical therapy faculty who are engaged in clinical practice. And, you know, one of the questions I pose to them, What type of impact are the physical therapy clinic, the speech clinic, I forgot that, and the nurse managed primary care center having on the community, what does the population of folks look like that are utilizing those services? And one thing we learned is that there is no demographic data being collected. And so I think that's one thing that's going to shift, but also, thinking about how we can make ourselves more available to maybe those populations that wouldn't necessarily think about coming to UD for clinical services. And so that committee's working on that they've been meeting with different community health partners, learning more about, the communities that we could potentially service. Another subcommittee is the social justice training committee. That got pretty popular from a UDaily article. What we did was we had individuals go through two social justice training sessions over zoom. So they learned about social justice, what it means, how we can apply it here at UD and in our everyday lives. And then we had our healthcare theater folks, create scenarios which showed social justice issues in the classroom and at the university. And so participants got a chance to watch those scenarios play out and then it became kind of a, what would you do scene and what did you learn or how would you have confronted that person? So it was a really good learning experience, you kind of forgot that they were actors because you were so kind of emotionally involved in the scenario that was playing out. We had a really powerful one that dealt with a faculty member and a microaggression against an Asian student. And that was, it was just really powerful and it gave participants the opportunity to really kind of jump in and understand things from the student's perspective and also what a bystander could do to improve the situation.

Beth Finkle:
What an amazing example that you provide really, you know, to me, the first thing that's kind of spurring my thought around is creating an opportunity for training for our students. So our healthcare theater students and that division, and then translating what something in the real world looks like, but in an academic setting and that experience is just bar none. For those that are listening and may not know about healthcare theater, can you describe what their role is and how we interface with them in the college of health sciences?

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

Sure. So healthcare theater is a partnership between the college and the department of theater, and essentially, students in theater are trained to act in healthcare scenarios. And these theater students can act out a number of different health conditions. They act as patients who are being treated, and it creates an opportunity for healthcare students here in the college to learn how to work with patients who might be difficult, who might have some sort of language barrier or trying to assess symptoms in someone who's not necessarily communicating them clearly. And so it's a really great learning experience. The theater students are learning great acting techniques and then the nursing and other healthcare students are getting an opportunity to have simulated almost real-life scenarios with a patient.

**Beth Finkle:**

Amazing. Switching gears a little bit, and I'm going to link up all of this, this work that you're notating the committees, and I will link up that piece, from the college website. The one thing I want to talk about, or maybe spend a little time digging into is connection. And from the employee perspective, we did a call to action after the murder of George Floyd to our employee base. And one of the things that we heard from our colleagues at the college is that many of them felt unseen. And during their workday, you know, they felt unseen in meetings when they sat and were being asked to contribute what they didn't feel like potentially, you know, that was something they could trust or that was authentic. And we have done a significant amount of work. You have done a significant amount of work in this space since that original feedback was received. Can you talk a little bit about that piece and anything that we can sort of learn or derive from that experience and getting that feedback from our employees?

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

Right. So, you know, after the death of George Floyd... I have a particular lens, right, as an African-American woman. And so that experience touched me in ways that it may not have touched some of my other colleagues. And so actually meeting with Dean Matt and Gina Porter. We decided that we would, have a session for employees to just come together and talk about it. So I don't think I really imagined how well attended it would be. And how vocal folks would be during that listening session. And so a group of last, including you, Beth, kind of created a task force to work on developing this session and what it would look like and you know, how we would welcome people to have their voices heard during that session. I think that, you know, came up in our session. I also did some work with Lerner College, where it came up, where people felt unseen. They felt invisible.

**Beth Finkle:**

That was actually the word that they used invisible.
Dr. Regina Wright:

Not included in certain conversations, not included in certain invitations. And so I think, we heard some of that on the zoom session and, you know, we heard, we actually heard a lot from some of our colleagues that. You know, they were unaware of all of these issues, but they wanted to help, and that, we heard from some... one Asian faculty member talk about how George Floyd's death and everything that ensued kind of took him back to his childhood and, kind of the issues he experienced as an Asian man growing up and being bullied and teased and all of those things. And so, I thought it was really powerful. It made people visible. Those who were speaking and those who weren't speaking, because we learned a lot about people's realities and their experiences. Both in the workplace and outside in the world. And so, I do hope that that piece, stays alive, where people are seeing people for who they are and appreciating them for who they are, but we'll see.

Beth Finkle:

Yeah. I just remember being in that conversation and, and so many of our colleagues. Didn't maybe have the right words, but they wanted to be there. They wanted to, they wanted to offer ally ship. And sometimes that's a first step and I don't want to just roll past that because it's not always the easiest step for those that maybe aren't as comfortable with language and saying the wrong thing. And so I do feel like that listening session, I believe it was called. Was purely that it was just to listen to understand it wasn't necessarily a time where we were going to go and be super actionable. It was truly just to spend time slowing down and listening and connecting to each other, and I don't think we do that enough because you know, you, you alluded to this. A lot of this is not baked into our day to day jobs. We sort of have to carve out time for it and figure out where we can spend time growing and learning in the pursuit of diversity, equity and inclusion. Right. And if we don't activate ourselves around that, it doesn't just happen. So what examples, or maybe what advice could you give to us to keep us on that pursuit, to keep us in that, that lens of learning and growing so that we aren't just connected, but we are in essence becoming better versions of ourselves. And that better version is a self that can be an ally or a support mechanisms to our colleagues who don't have that same equity in the workplace that some of us do.

Dr. Regina Wright:

I think that's a great question. You know, you make a really good point. We, we spend the majority of our working waking hours at work, whether physically here or on zoom or at home working. And so it's so important to be aware of your colleagues. And aware of how they're doing and, you know, making sure that you're supporting them as best as you can and creating opportunities to. Not necessarily bond, but let them know that you see them, and that they're important. They're an important part of this workplace. And so I think, you know, Beth, I don't know what's going to keep that momentum going. I hope it's not, further tragedy, but I think, you know, it really has to be built into our everyday work lives. And so the work that employee health and wellbeing does, to bring people together, to focus on mindfulness and purpose and, you know, having, solid relationships in the workplace. All of those things are important. The focus on mental health and wellbeing is so important. And so to the extent that we can build more of that into our activity, even if the workload is really high, I think it's important. And so, you know, in corporate environments you don't necessarily opt in or volunteer to. To participate in these things. I mean, they are built in like, built in which feeds are built in, engagement, volunteer work
together. And I think academia kind of misses the mark there, we spend so much time together. Some of this activity has to be built in, in a meaningful way where everyone has to participate.

Beth:

It's such a great point that you made because we are on overdrive and, and I don't think I can meet one person that I work with that isn't. And so part of that puzzle, a part of the piece that fuels that is this. Connection to your point is this responsibility around our own mental health and our emotional wellbeing. So it all is so interconnected. One example that I loved being, witness to with you is when you really push our senior leaders in the college to play a role in this space. And things happen, you know, we've had, unfortunately, to your point, some great tragedies, some great crises in the last two years where we've had to really cascade communications that come from, let's say the president and connect with our individual areas more directly. So one example that I wanted to share for our listeners is how you have really coached, in a way our chairs to have an activated response, when a message goes out from the president, and it truly is important because when the chair then sends something down to their team, It already is underscored that that is important for that specific college for that specific area, but I know it's not always an easy thing for chairs to do. , so how can you maybe share. Simplistic ways to get these conversations started in other areas of our university, who aren't really doing this communication tree right now.

Dr. Regina Wright:

Right. So I think, you know, the example you mentioned, it seems so basic, right. And I remember, I think it was the morning after the Pulse, or it was the Monday after the Pulse nightclub shooting. This was several years ago and we were having a college meeting. And I said to Frank Newton, who's not here at the university anymore have Dean Matt take a moment of silence because I knew that there were folks in our college that were really affected by that incident. And I thought that it shouldn't be business as usual. And so let's just take a moment to acknowledge that something tragic could happen on a national scale, I think I heard from a student, that, the precedent is a distal figure in the mind of students, right? And your home is really your department.

And so hearing that from someone who you might actually interact with, you might have a class with, or that is at least kind of very proximal to you. What's important in your academic life and knowing that you're acknowledging that that thing may have had an impact on you. I think other departments should do this across the college. I think that just acknowledging to students that it's a really tough time, even now, as we're almost back to normal. I mean, we just had a COVID spike a few weeks ago that I'm sure had students on edge. Just that extra step, making an intimate connection kind of in your department with your class. Take a pause in the beginning and just take a pulse check. Is everyone doing all right? Does anybody want to, you know, discuss anything that's happening before we get started? I think from a faculty perspective, a lot of faculty don't feel equipped to have those conversations, should students bring them up. And I think that that's okay, right. But they need to be aware of the resources that, that are available to students and be able to make that recommendations for students. And so, I think just having those touch points, with students and employees, and not kind of just going along with business as usual, it's still a really challenging time. I feel it emotionally, physically, still each day, it's not like it
wasn't 2020, but I think we definitely have a ways to go, to get back to, you know, what, what our new normal is going to be.

Beth Finkle:

Yeah. If any time to be patient and slow down and try to understand more, now is the time to really do that so that we can be the most resilient and not like the resilience when we think about just pushing through right. The resilience when we think about healing, in order to grow. And so that's sort of where we want to spend some of that patient time right now. Sometimes the basic things that feel super simplistic are the first things that we should be doing because they have the most translatable outcomes for our focus areas. And then the other piece that I want to distill just from your statement is that local level. That quote unquote, you called it our home. Sometimes we think of our team as that as well. That is where we need to feel heard, understood that is where the psychological wellbeing comes into play. And so by the chairs really offering their ear, not always, you know, they're not always going to come in and be the solver, but they're going to be there to listen and get, you know, our colleagues or our students, where they need to from a resource lens is really what, what matters after some of these things happen. I have loved really talking about this because, I know you personally, and You take this body of work truly from a systematic lens and you do all of the other things. You do a ton of programs and you built an amazing committee around this, but I really think you tackle this from a systematic approach. And I, I venture to guess that's probably from some of your background. And do you feel like when, when trying to tackle big things like, systematic racism and social justice and mental health crisis, do you feel systematic approach is the way to think about this, to achieve in these areas. What are your thoughts around that?

Dr. Regina Wright:

Definitely. I noticed some of the things that don't work are kind of like having a speaker here or there, or, you know, offering a training here or there, doing these one-time events or experiences. They really missed the mark. And so I try to think kind of like. And this probably comes from my experience as a faculty member that, you know, has to, you know, my work has to be theory driven and very, systematic, but, thinking about, what are the, you know, higher level goals we want to achieve.

And then kind of in each of those buckets, like what are some of the sustainable and meaningful activity we can create around that? And. Truly like engaging faculty and staff in this work and students is so important. one thing I don't want DEI work to be in our college is something that some leader is doing over there, right. It really has to be infused into everything. We do our curriculum, our dealings with students, our dealings with, other faculty and staff. And so, I really tried to, create things that people can get involved with and, can work on, on their own, in their own unit. one thing I'm really proud of is that several of the departments have formed their own committees and they're doing very local level DEI work around their very specific issues. And so I think the goal has really been to kind of infuse it and then kind of add the people that can continue the work.

Beth Finkle:

Yeah. And so it's not always you. And, and that truly is where that sustainable piece happens is when those in that local team level are engaged around this work, they understand why it's important to their
day-to-day tasks. And then how does that elevate to the greater purpose of the organization? For our listeners, you know, you're the associate Dean of diversity for the college. Are there other roles like this across campus or anything like this, for us to look at and also model after?

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

So at one point there was an associate Dean for Diversity in engineering. I don't know that that role exists anymore. I think that Associate Dean shifted to another position and I don't think it was replaced. There's other DEI infrastructure across the college. We have, of course, the UD advanced fellows who are focused on faculty searching and mentoring and diversifying the faculty. And there's also the diversity advocates that were under the office of the vice provost, then those are kind of representatives from each college who are doing diversity work. We've been kind of defunct for the most part since Dr. Carol Henderson left the university, but hopefully that network will pick up once we hire a new chief diversity officer. So I would say, you know, I think of the colleges as states right, states with rights and you know, their own cultures. And so I'm challenged to think that one person at the top can really address the needs of all of the colleges and all of the departments. So I think it would be great to have leadership in each college.

**Beth Finkle:**

At least liaisons that can speak and be connected to that centralized piece, that centralized system, but also have the touch points on the ground within that local level, I would agree.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

But those individuals have to be given the platform and the time, the meaningful time to get this work done. And so I agree, a representative is fine, but with the support of the Dean to really make sure that everything gets communicated and that folks are serious about executing the work.

**Beth Finkle:**

So should someone not at this current point, have that supported platform within their colleges. But should they still want to gain knowledge around this skills around this become involved? Would you point them to, OIEDI. Where would you share for them to get started?

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

That's a great question. So, what is it? It's not OEI anymore.

**Beth Finkle:**

It's OI EDI.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

OI EDI I think that would be a great place to get started. There's a lot of training available from OI EDI. So I think a great place to get started would be to complete some of those trainings. There's a certificate available, if you complete a certain curriculum of training, and just kind of get well-versed in the issues, and kind of have that vocabulary and meaning behind it. And then, you know, kind of figure out where you can, volunteer at the college level or with, OI EDI, there are diversity caucuses on campus that are doing great work, figuring out where you might fit within the diversity caucuses is a really great idea.
Beth Finkle:

That's a great point that you bring up and also such a nice way to become connected to your colleagues that maybe not are in your college or your, your work location, but working somewhere, you know, underneath the University of Delaware. And I know there's definitely support for anyone that wants to get involved in the caucuses, but I think one thing just to drive home here is, should you not have a formal position like yours? Right? There are still ways that people with influence can usher this along. And I think one of the easiest ways is talking about it at team meetings. Let's say if you're a manager, you know, bringing this up as an agenda item and why it's important, but then also encouraging teams to take these trainings that are available. It's a resource to us as an employee at the University of Delaware. One that will enhance our job, and also our skills and help us be better humans, quite frankly. So it's such a nice way to start and these resources to your earlier point are available, but we need leaders and managers to sort of know about them so that they can share them and, and sort of, support employees taking advantage of them.

Dr. Regina Wright:

Absolutely.

Beth Finkle:

So changing gears a little bit, we talked a lot about leadership today. You've given some really great examples of how to get started and how to sustain some of the work with DEI, but then also you've shared why it's so important. We like to ask all of our guests, you know, realizing that we're all humans, right. And regardless of what we do for work or the roles that we play. We like to understand a little bit about sort of what makes you work, so taking it to a personal level, how would you define yourself when you think about what makes you, you're your best self? What are the pieces at play there?

Dr. Regina Wright:

Okay.

Beth Finkle:

Game on. Right. And for our listeners, you're a mom, you know, you are involved in our community, you know, you're on the board at your child's school. And so, you're a busy lady here. So what, what helps you to stay balanced and keep that wellbeing focused?

Dr. Regina Wright:

Right. Great question, Beth. You know, I have a as spiritual life. It's fallen off a bit during the pandemic, but getting back there. I exercise regularly. That's a huge part of what helps me kind of keep the energy up for activities. You know, I guess feeling like, you know, in terms of my role here at UD as a professor and administrator, I'm really driven by impact, and having an impact here on, as many people as I can. And so I think, this role has given me a great opportunity to kind of enlarge my territory. And the people that I impact hopefully for the better. And I think that drives me a lot. You know, sometimes it's like, I think about when I would doze off in some of my college classes and I'm like, I have no idea how I became a professor, but I think just wanting to help folks, wanting to have a great impact. I'm really driven by the fact that. You know, not to focus on race and gender, but I'm an African-American woman
here at the university, and I know people are watching me either, you know, hopefully for encouragement. I think students are watching me at some point I was younger than some of my PhD students and maybe looking to me as a model, and so just bringing my best self. I don't know that I've answered the question, Beth.

**Beth Finkle:**

You did. And then sort of the follow up to that was, you know, the name of the podcast is undeniably well and, and to be in a state of undeniably, well, it's all the things that you mentioned. It's all of the components that get you there, sort of the vehicle you talk about it in the essence of spiritual connection and exercise and being involved in your community, but then you also have to, to get aligned with those indicators. And so for you, it sounds like undeniably well means when you can visually see the impact that you're having. Whether it's through the lens of being a role model, whether it's through the sustainable efforts of the DEI committees. It sounds like that's, that's a big piece for you when thinking about undeniably well.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

Right. I'm also supported by a great family and friends, I have a mom who like jumps in with my son whenever I need her. So those amazing, really helped to keep me going. Awesome.

**Beth Finkle:**

Awesome. Well, any last thoughts for our listeners today? I know we've sort of talked all around, but I, I really do value what you brought to the table today. I think it's so foundational to wellbeing. And again, you shared this a lot, but it can't be one-offs. It has to be built in the fabric of the way we lead our teams, the way we design our work, DEI is foundational to wellbeing. Would you share anything with our listeners that you're thinking.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

I totally agree. It's foundational to wellbeing and it's also foundational to workplace excellence. I mean, when we have a diverse group of folks, who are enabled to do their best work. There's nothing we can't achieve, right. And when people are in their best place. In terms of wellness, they can achieve a whole lot. And so we, we should really be striving to have these, these pieces in place.

**Beth Finkle:**

And just staying there for a minute. You know, when you talk about workplace excellence, it makes me think of job satisfaction as well. And so why should anyone spend one minute in a job where they aren't happy or they feel invisible or, you know, they feel unseen or unheard. So it's so important and critical to workplace experience, workplace excellence and such a driver, and the engagement piece is something that I think we can do. We can't roll over because it is such an amplifier to all of the other objectives and outcomes that we aim to achieve. Right. I agree.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

I definitely agree.

**Beth Finkle:**
All right. So we're just going to follow up a little bit on our discussion, as I do think it's really important to talk about the hiring process, in a way it's probably one of the easiest things we can look at that have like a really, really big return. Right? And so when you presented to us, in no more than 15 minutes, you gave us the tools to really think about why it's important to build a team that looks different than you. So what would you say in response to that? Why is it important to build a team that looks different than you?

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

Right. So if I think that if you think of any meeting that we're in on a regular basis, for you and I, our common meeting is the Dean's office team, and think about the makeup of that team. Um, there are some young folks, there are some older folks, males, females, there are some underrepresented members of the Dean's office team. There are some folks who are far along in their career or early in their career. And what that brings is like, A wealth of diverse perspectives and experiences, and different ways of thinking about problems and challenges that we have to address. And so I think being intentional about diversifying, who we hire is so important to keeping the best ideas flowing and making sure that the perspectives in the room help us to think about how others will perceive our work outside of the group. I think it's really important to keep driving home some of the points I brought up in the college meeting about how important it is to be intentional about not just hiring for fit. But hiring for diversity of thought and how that helps us to become a stronger college.

**Beth Finkle:**

Yeah. And even when you're looking through resumes, you know, there's experience and of course, experience is really important, but there's also transferable skills and, and people with transferable skills from different learned experience and, how they grew up, and what communities they were in and what resources they have. People have a lot to bring in that context as well. So I did really love that point that you made. And then it just honestly made me think about when you do have a team full of diversity, the energy is so much higher on that team because by proxy or by working closely with different people, you grow as an individual because you're thinking in different ways, you're reflecting, on products in a different way. You're coming to solutions together in a different way. And so by proxy, that energy piece is elevated.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

I agree, you know, I think when we have like monolithic groups, I mean, It's just boring right.

**Beth Finkle:**

There is no other way to describe it.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

And even, even if you are having to be in a room with someone who constantly challenges your ideas, you know, even if that's annoying, that is growth, right. So having you to think about, really, am I thinking about this in the right way? Can I be thinking about this differently? I think that really helps to push us forward.

**Beth Finkle:**
Or even after the fact, like, did we miss the mark? And if we only had people that looked like us going towards the same goal, we may never even realize that we missed the mark on something.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

Right, exactly.

**Beth Finkle:**

So great. The other thing that I wanted to just, this was, this blew my mind, and I know that probably our listeners are very familiar with something called a diversity statement. And when you're in the hiring process and you know, you're looking through, you have the candidate assessment team should also be very diverse. And when you're looking through resumes, you know, a lot of times you'll, you know, we know D E I is super foundational to wellbeing. and we asked them for a Diversity statement a lot of times, but something that I never heard we could ask for is a COVID 19 impact statement. And I'd love to just hear your thoughts about what that is and why that would be helpful for us, as we all over the university are hiring for many positions right now.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

I won't take full credit for this. This is an idea that came from UD Advance, and I think, you know, I have noticed that other universities have been doing this, in addition to the COVID impact statements. So it's really an opportunity for the candidate that's being evaluated to talk about how, they may have been impacted under pandemic conditions. And so this is actually really important. If you are a less seasoned person who, is looking for a job at the university. And, we know that the pandemic affected people differently and in different ways. And there are several groups that were highly vulnerable to job loss, to, a less productive period, whether it's due to childcare, challenges and issues, perhaps they were caring for loved ones, who contracted COVID-19 or lost a loved one who contracted COVID-19 and, you know, different groups were more susceptible to those kinds of challenges. And so allowing candidates to talk about those challenges and they don't even have to put forward personal information, just give an overview of the things that may have been delayed, slow down or that may not have come to fruition, due to the pandemic conditions. I know I experienced some challenges. I'm sure you did as well. And so thinking about, on the flip side, some people really benefited from having that time outside of the office, particularly if they were alone, if they didn't have any children in their home, if it gave them the opportunity to analyze data or start a new project, without the interference of others. And so by providing those impact statements, it helps you to not evaluate folks who are affected unfairly because people did have an advantage.

**Beth Finkle:**

I love that because so often you hear, oh, this person has a job gap. And like, that's just looked at as like a negative thing. But what you're saying. Side note. I love that you're sharing the knowledge of UD Advance because I think we don't do that enough knowledge share, but with this particular recommendation. It allows you to ask more thoughtful and intentional questions and it allows that candidate to also interview you right. And understand, will they be a good fit for your organization? Because it has to be a good fit for both people. So thank you so much for sharing that piece with us. Cause I think it's, if anything we can do, if we are a member of a hiring team or a review of resumes, this is something that anybody has the skills and can do. And if not, I'm sure that there's areas with the
university where you can get training on this. Can you share about the resources for us? If people need to learn how to appropriately go through the hiring process?

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

Right. So UD Advance has information online on resources, on their webpage. You can just search UD advance, from udel.edu They also have a good body of literature around some of these issues. Now, the COVID impact statements being provided for hiring purposes. It's something totally new. And so if someone was interested in in requesting those statements from a candidate, or even asking a question about that during an interview, I would suggest that they reach out to me and just make sure they're wording it correctly and appropriately. So as not to offend, but to give the candidate an opportunity to get an equitable look at them.

**Beth Finkle:**

Wonderful. Well, thank you very much, we will link up everything that we shared today. And we'll also share with Dean Kathy Matt, because like you, she has been so supportive of my individual body of work as well, and I'm just so happy to be able to have a conversation where we can connect the dots between these two pieces that we work day in and day out around. Yeah.

**Dr. Regina Wright:**

Thank you so much. It was fun, Beth

**Outro:**

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