

Samford University's [Orlean Beeson School of Education](#), in partnership with the [Office of Diversity and Intercultural Initiatives \(ODII\)](#) is delighted to host its second Diversity Forum June 6-7.

Schedule of Events

June 6, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

- 8:30-9 a.m. Registration and Check In
- 9-9:10 a.m. Musical Performance by Netra Blanch
- 9:10-9:35 a.m. Opening Greetings
[Beck A. Taylor](#), president, Samford University
[Anna McEwan](#), dean, Orlean Beeson School of Education
[Denise Gregory](#), associate provost for student success and diversity and inclusion
Yvette Richardson, Alabama State Board of Education member
- 9:35-9:45 a.m. 2nd Annual Diversity Award Presentation
[Theresa Davidson](#), professor in sociology program, director of Samford's Race, Ethnicity, & Social Justice Minor
Presented by Anna McEwan and Denise Gregory
- 9:45-10 a.m. Break
- 10-11:30 a.m. Keynote Panel
Latinos in Alabama: What and Why of Connecting with our Latino Neighbors
Jose Fernandez, professor, UAB School of Health Professions, Department of Nutrition Sciences
Freddy Rubio, Rubio Law Firm
Dulce Rivera, Board of Directors, HICA, Mi Pueblo Supermarket
Micaela Oer, program manager, ¡HICA!

**Moderated by Carlos Javier Torres, ¡HICA! Programs
Director**

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Lunch

12:45-1:45 p.m. Breakout Session 1

*Using Core Values to Address Race, Ethnic, and Cultural
Gaps in School Climate and Instruction*

Having difficulty addressing cultural differences in your building? Do you experience problems connecting with diverse backgrounds? Does your data show misalignments within your populations? If so, what is your plan to help navigate these issues? These questions, and more, will be addressed during this session that gives educators tips and strategies to address race, ethnic, and cultural gaps among students and staff. Participants will leave with a blueprint for leading difficult conversations and move forward together.

Antonio Cooper, Jr., director of curriculum and instruction, Vestavia Hills City Schools
Room 229

*Juntos We Can: Efficiently & Proactively Serving
Hispanic/Latino School Populations*

“Juntos we can,” empowers instructors, paraprofessionals, and school administrators with strategies and techniques to engage and retain the involvement of EL caregivers by creating culturally aware and welcoming spaces in schools.

Estela Tirado, executive director at Alabama Aprende y Emprende
Room 239

2-3 p.m. Breakout Session 2

The Russellville City Schools’ (Diversity) Story

The presentation will include the history of Russellville City Schools, demographic shifts and educational challenges. The session will focus on the strategies the school system incorporated and tell amazing stories highlighting its culture and recent successes and accomplishments.

Heath Grimes, superintendent, Russellville City Schools

Room 229

Relics or Real People? The Representation of Native Americans in Education & Beyond

Drawing upon a body of interdisciplinary research, this presentation discusses the representation (or lack thereof) of Native Americans in educational curriculum and other institutions that serve as socializing agents shaping what we “know” about this group. The session examines the often problematic narrative about native people and nations, some consequences of this narrative, and how non-native individuals, educators, and institutions might do better.

Theresa Davidson, professor of sociology, Samford University

Room 239

June 7, 9 a.m. -12 p.m.

8:45-9 a.m.

Breakout Session 3

The Impact of Culture & Climate on Attendance, Academics, and Attitude

This presentation will define culture and climate and how they have helped to shape a positive environment at Charles F. Hard Elementary School. The collaborative investment from faculty and staff, parents, scholars, and

community partners has made a tremendous difference in the school's attendance, academics and attitude. The implementation of innovative ideas, solid strategies and consistent celebrations is ensuring scholar success.

Armentress Robinson, principal, Charles F. Hard Elementary School

Room 229

Serving Neurodiverse School-age Students and Ensuring Equity

During this breakout session, participants will review the current epidemiological trends among neurodiverse students. Strategies, both academic and social emotional, for supporting neurodiverse students, including technological accommodations such as Chat GPT for neurodiverse students, will be presented. Furthermore, the session will discuss research trends among this population and how those findings affect teachers and administrators.

Laura Fiveash, executive director at Spring Valley School

Room 239

Experiences in Bridge Building

This session will provide reflections from two Samford instructors who used Interfaith America's "Bridging the Gap" curriculum to introduce college students to the central skills of bridge building across differences. Funded through a grant, students from Miles College and Samford learned to engage in constructive conversations. Students also shared cultural experiences and fellowship that helped form the foundation for lasting relationships.

Anna McEwan, dean, Orlean Beeson School of Education

Bridget Rose, director, Samford Student Services

Room 269

10-10:15 a.m.

Break

10:15-11:15 a.m.

Keynote Speaker

Tonya B. Perry, vice provost and professor, Miles College

*What Happens When We All Care and Advocate?
Teaching for Equity in Tough Times*

Teaching all students effectively is the mission of every school and every teacher. However, when caring requires equity work, the mission-driven tone is sometimes impacted. This keynote address will discuss how teachers and students across the country are doing equity work, despite the climate that may seem to stifle the growth of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. The reality is that when each person is successful, then our society at large is more productive. The work of equity is the work of everyone.

Regions Room

11:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

Student Panel

Reflections on Diversity

Christa Cherry '23, current Master of Social Work student

Alyssa Gross '23, elementary, early childhood, collaborative

Kiara Guerrero, Spanish secondary education student

Moderated by Jewel Littleton, CEO Learning Little People

Regions Room