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**PBN DIVERSITY & INCLUSION 2021 AWARDS PROGRAM**

## ACCOUNTING

# Marcum's resource groups play part in firm's success

BY HUGH MINOR | Contributing Writer

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION** are nothing new to **Marcum LLP**, the national accounting and financial services firm with offices in Providence. With more than 2,500 employees nationally, Marcum has learned that creating a welcoming and affirming space for everyone is a critical factor in its success.

Even in this incredibly challenging employment market, Marcum says, its recruiters remain committed to this important work.

"We can't let go of what we're trying to accomplish," said Rachael Gibson, Marcum's director of diversity, equity and inclusion. "Even in a tough job market, we have to stay true to our goals."

For the past two years, Gibson has led Marcum's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. The position was developed as a recommendation from the company's DEI Steering Committee, which has been in place for more than five years. The committee brings staff together to discuss

issues of diversity and equity and propose solutions.

Gibson explained, "Our diversity efforts start with doing the work internally, building a strong sense of belonging for all of our team members."

The response has been positive. "For many of our associates, it's the first time they can say, 'I am seen. I am heard. I am given space,' and that's huge for them," she said.

The DEI Steering Committee pulls together staff from across the organization to develop and execute a long-term strategy and plan for change.

Another outcome of the committee was the de-

velopment of associate resource groups to encourage associates to connect with one another for networking, mentorship and professional development, based on shared interests, cultures, lifestyles and abilities.

Currently, there are close to 500 group members working to deepen Marcum's inclusion efforts. The associate resource groups include ones for Blacks, Arabs, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and Latinos, LGBTQ+, women, veterans, young professionals, and parents.

The group members play an essential role in developing effective recruitment strategies.

"The ARG leaders have really helped identify best practices to recruit and cultivate a diverse workforce from checking on unconscious biases to ensuring equitable hiring practices," Gibson said.

Marcum's efforts extend to outreach through the larger industry and community in several ways.

The Diversity Scholarship Fund provides financial assistance to accounting majors from underrepresented groups who plan to become certified public accountants. Recipients are awarded a \$5,000 scholarship, a Marcum internship, plus other engagement opportunities with the company. The goal is to create a pipeline for young people from diverse backgrounds to

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**RACHAEL GIBSON**, Marcum LLP diversity, equity and inclusion director

enter the accounting field and ultimately step into leadership roles at the firm.

Building relationships with colleges and universities has been a critical piece of Marcum's success in engaging students. Similarly, the firm has partnered with professional associations to address gaps in the workforce and enhance

professional development opportunities for associates.

Strong connections exist with organizations such as the National Association of Black Accountants, Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting, and Junior Achievement of Southwest New England.



**STAYING COMMITTED:**

Despite challenges within the employment market, Marcum LLP leadership has remained dedicated to addressing issues surrounding diversity and inclusion at the accounting firm. Partner Erica Olobri, left, and receptionist Erin Oates are part of the staff at Marcum's Providence office. PBN PHOTO/TRACY JENKINS

## MARCUM LLP

From a philanthropic perspective, the Marcum Foundation supports causes and nonprofit organizations providing critical assistance to diverse communities locally and nationally. Contributions come from special events, collection drives, planned giving, volunteer initiatives and specially designated days of service so that employees across the organization are closely involved in the experience of giving back to others.

To maintain a conversation around equity and inclusion, Marcum also launched the firmwide Courageous Conversations. The quarterly series was launched in 2020 to discuss issues related to a variety of things impacting race, age and LGBTQ+ communities. Additionally, the "Allyship in the Workplace" forum invited the entire company to listen to and learn from external experts, educating associates on how to move beyond conversation and into action.

Marcum's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded in the company's long-term goals, Gibson said.

"DEI is not an initiative but a lens for us to view everything we do," she said. "We're in it for the long game. This work does have an impact and we are seeing that now." ■