

# Providence Business News

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## Equality starts with respect at Marcum LLP

By **Isabella DeLeo**

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### **PBN 2022 Diversity Equity & Inclusion Awards** **Accounting: Marcum LLP**

WHEN INTERVIEWING for her new position as the director of diversity, equity and inclusion at Marcum LLP, Pauline Vesleno quickly figured out that the job was the right one for her when the in-house recruiter, Chief Human Resources Officer Molly Crane, made the national accounting firm's company culture stand out above the rest. Vesleno says that Crane reached out to encourage her to apply with a heartfelt letter that struck a chord in a way that most recruiting letters do not.

"The letter that she wrote me really resonated so much because her opening line talked about why Marcum is special to her, why she is still there. I don't hear that frequently from recruiters," Vesleno said.

"They talk about all the things that you're going to be able to do, all of the amazing opportunities and resources ... [that are] going to be at your disposal to do your job. It's very seldom that you hear someone say these are all the reasons why I'm here. Truly, it made me lean in and want to hear more."

Marcum, which has a Providence office, has made a concerted effort to create programs that build a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion at every organizational level. The firm has established a DEI Task Force, which develops training on unconscious bias, plus it has nine identity-specific associate resource groups and a mentorship program. In 2020, Marcum hired its first director of diversity, equity and inclusion.

A year later, the company created a \$5,000 Diversity Scholarship Fund to support accounting students from marginalized communities and established a group for recruiting diverse talent within the company that focuses on recruiting students from historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions. In Rhode Island in particular, Marcum has become a sponsor of Rhode Island PrideFest, an annual event in Providence supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

For Crane, creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment has a lot to do with respect.

"[It's about] having respect for the people around you, the different qualities and contributions that people bring to the table," Crane said. "Respect in that not everybody's the same; we're all going to bring different value to a job that we're working on or different value to a department, but it's respecting each other's differences that each other can add."

Crane, who says that Marcum has really expanded its diversity, equity and inclusion efforts over the past five years, said the firm wants all of its associates to feel "like they can bring their whole selves to work, that they can be successful regardless of what they look like, how they identify, what their religion is, what their nationality is, and really making sure that [everybody has respect] for each other."

Marcum also works to create a culture of openness and inclusivity by creating "associate spotlights" each month, which publishes an interview with a new employee about their career and personal stories.

The firm also holds what it calls “courageous conversations,” where an associate resource group leads a panel discussion on a particular topic.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Marcum has made it a priority to provide resources and flexibility for working parents. Vesleno said she did not see a parents group offering individuals with children support during the health crisis in other organizations.

“I think that was very prevalent during the pandemic. A lot of people managed their own workload and being a parent 24/7 because their kids weren’t going to school,” Vesleno said. “But at Marcum it remained a robust group that is trying their best to really be of service to those people who are still trying to figure out what this new normal [looks] like for most people.”

Vesleno also said that for organizations that are looking to become more inclusive, “the No. 1 thing that comes to mind for me is making diversity, equity and inclusion programs available to all.”