The Commercial Real Estate Diversity Collaborative is a collaboration of commercial real estate associations and individual members promoting and expanding diversity within our industry.
The theme of 2018 was to reevaluate the direction of the organization, re-prioritize its work and restructure our leadership.

RESTRUCTURING LEADERSHIP

Lisa Dongoske, one of the founders of the Commercial Real Estate Diversity Collaborative in 2010, retired from Cushman & Wakefield and from the CREDC. Her leadership and inspiration will be missed!

We also said goodbye to another founding volunteer, Chantily Malibago. She served the organization for more than five years before taking a position in California. She recently returned to Minnesota to work for Mortenson Construction as a project manager.

The new tri-leadership team was comprised of three volunteers with extensive background with both Commercial Real Estate and the Diversity Collaborative. Those leaders are:

- Stephanie Lee, vice president – Carlson Partners. Stephanie joined the CREDC in 2015, bringing her 20 years of CRE experience coupled with her passion for enhancing the diversity of the CRE industry.
- Kjersten Jaeb, general manager-Cushman & Wakefield, has been a volunteer leader with CREDC since 2013, previously managing both the communications and events committees.
- Lynette Dumalag, senior vice president-JLL, has been involved with the CREDC since 2016. She has nearly 15 years of experience in commercial real estate and volunteers for a number of non-profit community organizations. She serves as Past Chair of the Aeon Board of Directors.

Once the tri-leadership team assembled in early 2018, they set forth to restructure, reposition, and refine the mission of the CREDC.

As an organization, we focused heavily on doing less but doing those things better. We identified that we were trying to do too many things at once without enough resources and set forth to streamline and right-size the organization.

We look forward to an exciting, successful 2019!

~ Lynette Dumalag, Kjersten Jaeb & Stephanie Lee
REDEFINE:
The team decided to expand how we look at diversity. In a strategic planning session early in the year, we identified the barrier in developing a pipeline of diverse students by focusing so heavily on four key post-secondary education institutions: University of St. Thomas, St. Cloud State University, Metropolitan State University and Dunwoody.

We identified a mismatch between the available employment opportunities in our industry, and the organizations targeted for events and scholarship candidates.

The two changes made in 2018 and beyond were:
• Shift our focus to add trade schools and community colleges
• Add a focus on post-high school opportunities in the industry that are some of the hardest positions for companies to fill.

Based upon a survey and feedback from students, professional associations and organizations, we redefined our role and identified where we bring the most value:
• Act as a bridge between students and organization;
• Ease the transition to employment of diverse candidates through best practices and diversity and inclusion programs.

REPOSITION:
We met with most of our professional associations and participating organizations and renewed their participation and brought great focus around how we will partner.
• We produced and shared a directory of diverse candidate’s
• CBRE, Newmark Knight Frank, Cushman & Wakefield, JLL, and Carlson Partners have a lead diversity advocate within their organizations who partners with CREDC to drive the implementation of diversity partnerships, mentoring and job opportunities:
  • 2 scholarship recipients were hired by CBRE
  • 1 scholarship recipient was hired by JLL
  • 1 scholarship recipient was hired by Inventure Properties (Greater MSP)
• Mike Ohmes, Cushman & Wakefield’s managing director of the Minneapolis office, sent a request to the industry for greater participation with the CREDC in early January, bringing attention to the organization and providing strong credibility to our mission.
In addition to expanding diversity leadership and sponsorship across our industry. We are especially grateful to these organizations for offering additional financial support in 2018 and beyond. One activity that we initiated in 2018 was to send a thank-you note with our annual invoice to ensure that each of our partners was aware of our commitment to them. The contributions we received, in addition to the annual contributions of the commercial real estate associations included:

Finally, we added some new volunteers from these partner organizations to our steering committee. Thank you to those people who serve on our steering and working committees.

RESTRUCTURE:
In our first steering committee meeting of the year, we focused on how we operate as an organization and restructured for improved execution and better long-term planning.

We changed our steering committee to become a working committee structure with monthly meetings and focused our quarterly partner meetings on reporting on the work that happened during the quarter.

We prioritized involving students into the CREDC organization through volunteer roles:
- Three students who previously received CREDC scholarships, volunteered on the Communications committee.
- The Events committee is run by industry lead/student lead and serves as a mentoring platform to nurture student talent.
- We created a student liaison with schools and targeted previous scholarship winners for those roles. Vanessa Sayer and Emmanuel Adeniran from Metro State served on the Events committee and now both are currently employed in real estate and finance organizations. Additionally, Austin Ruehle, Ivan Alvarado, and Albert Martinez-Castro served as volunteers on the communications committee.
- Vanessa is with RBC Management as a financial analyst and Emmanuel is with Ramsey country.

We developed an operating budget to improve our functionality, resulting in our ability to double the amount of scholarships offered in 2018 and the first half of 2019.

We also updated the website and created a plan to populate LinkedIn to improve our engagement with students. Three previous scholarship winners wrote posts that will be added in the near future.
The committee was pleased to award three scholarships in 2018, which was an additional scholarship above our traditional two. The committee remained focused on not only awarding scholarships, but also providing mentoring, networking, and interning opportunities to our scholarship recipients through our Diversity Collaborative volunteer member organizations, professional network and our membership partners.

The committee increased our outreach to follow students through a career status survey for our past scholarship recipients, invitation to a career development event and commercial building tour, and ongoing networking opportunities in a group and individual setting. We also asked our Minneapolis-based recipients to share their experience regarding the collaborative with other diverse students and to participate in the mission of the collaborative.

We strengthened our partnership with our core schools in an effort connect with diverse students seeking a career in commercial real estate regardless of our ability to reward a scholarship. Changing the face of our industry must look beyond the ability to provide college financial support and a job but also provide ongoing support during their real estate career to ensure they thrive.

**KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

- Awarded three scholarships in 2018
- Held a network breakfast and building tour for past scholarship recipients
- Deepened relationship with St. Thomas University and St. Cloud State University
- Created touch points for past scholarship recipients to provide better networking and career opportunities
- Conducted career update survey to past scholarship recipients

**INITIATIVES:**

- Continue to broaden and strengthen partnership with schools
- Match two mentors to each scholarship recipient
- Develop a pipeline of student applicants for our industry
- Continue to invite and encourage scholarship recipients to attend industry events

**SCHOLARSHIPS:**

Our industry partners have helped us raise a total of $29,500 in scholarship funds thus far. In 2018, we raised $9,000 and were able award three scholarships. A big thank you to our sponsor partners, Cushman & Wakefield, CBRE, and JLL for their contributions to those scholarships. As with every year since our start, we are grateful for the ongoing support and contributions from the member associations of the Diversity Collaborative. We are pleased to share the following students selected for scholarships in 2018.
Ivan Alvarado was a full-time student MBA at the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business with a focus on Real Estate Development and Data Analytics. Ivan graduated in December 2018 and was hired as an Asset Manager with Ackerberg Group in Minneapolis. Ivan’s future career goals include building bridges for other people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter the commercial real estate industry. Making a difference in the lives of others is his passion and Ivan believes a career in commercial real estate will help him create meaningful change in his community.

Eric Martin was a full-time student at the University of St. Thomas working on a bachelor’s degree in Real Estate and Entrepreneurship. He graduated in May of 2019 and was hired as a Capital Investment Analyst specializing in Retail with CBRE. Eric’s future career goals include obtaining his real estate license in the spring of 2019 and becoming a tenant representative with a local commercial real estate company. Eric has always believed in creating quality long-term relationships both personally and professionally in his community.

Francis Do was awarded the fall 2018 scholarship. Francis Do is a full-time student at the University of St. Thomas working on a bachelor’s degree in real estate and business. His expected graduation date is May 2021. Francis future career goals are to be well-versed in both commercial and residential real estate, creating an option for a one-stop shop for all his client’s real estate needs. Francis would also like to earn his MBA and become a licensed broker and to eventually own his own commercial properties.

Thank you for the work of our committee members!

- Herb Tousley: St. Thomas University
- Ashley Peterson: University of Minnesota
- Kelley Jameson: St. Could State University
- Emily Becker: Cushman & Wakefield
- Brent Webb: Mortenson
- Raymond Vaughn: Ryan Companies
EVENTS COMMITTEE
The events committee focused on deepening our relationships with our real estate partnerships in the background with smaller networking meetings, but also while still holding two main events.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS LUNCHEON:

The Steering Committee decided that it would be great to hear directly from the previous scholarship winners. The goal was to learn what the CREDC could do better for them and hear about their career goals to assess the organization’s future focus.

At a casual round-table luncheon in July, the leaders asked each recipient to share their thoughts. In addition, each member of the Steering Committee introduced themselves and their organization to the attendees. The luncheon was attended by six scholarship recipients and six members of the Steering Committee. Suggestions for improvement included: more mentors to meet at attend industry events, personal introductions by CREDC leaders to leaders at prospective employers, and more direct leads to employment. In addition, all of the scholarship winners offered to volunteer on committees to help with the operations, event management, and communications of the CREDC.

During the last 18 months, scholarship recipients have landed positions within the Commercial Real Estate Industry:

- Ivan had an internship with JLL and CBRE and then landed a full-time position as an Asset Manager at Ackerberg.
- CBRE has interviewed a number of scholarship recipients and has hired Eric Martin and Bjorik Mutize.

RESTRUCTURED EVENTS COMMITTEE:

- As Stephanie Lee transitioned into her tri-leadership role, she began recruiting for new volunteers to manage the Events Committee.
- While she wasn’t able to find a replacement leaders, she did focus her efforts on connecting scholarship recipients with individual networking opportunities. As a result, the organization added an industry lead and the student lead. Ivan Alvarado became the lead for student activities and Adele Bayless, JLL’s general manager, Riverplace, became the business lead for events.
The Communications Committee focused on adding volunteers, creating a better digital presence, and improving relationships with local commercial real estate reporters in 2018.

**ADDING VOLUNTEERS:**
During a luncheon with previous scholarship winners in May 2018, Committee Chair Martha Nevanen asked for volunteers to write “blog”-type posts to use on the Commercial Real Estate Diversity Collaborative’s LinkedIn site. Three previous winners volunteered to not only write the posts about their experience but also to join the Communications Committee. Those volunteers -- Albert Martinez-Castro, Ivan Alvarado, and Austin Ruehle joined Martha and Adam Rae-Voge. By the end of the year, each of the three students had written a post, which will be added to the Diversity Collaborative’s LinkedIn page in 2019.

**CREATE A BETTER DIGITAL PRESENCE:**
- While the CREDC had a working website, it hadn’t been updated in nearly a year. During 2018, all pages were reviewed and updated, and new content was added.
- We also created a Google account, allowing the CREDC to send emails as an entity rather than as individuals. This change allows the committee to create a more consistent schedule of providing information to donors, partners, volunteers, and leaders. A Mailchimp account was established, contacts were added to it, and emails were sent for each scholarship announcement and to announce new leadership.
- Finally, the committee is working to launch a LinkedIn showcase page, which is expected to go live in 2019. Before the page could launch, the team had to create social media graphics, which required recruiting a graphic designer to provide pro-bono services. We were unable to recruit that volunteer in 2018 and have moved this initiative to 2019.

**DEVELOP BETTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE REPORTERS:**
Adam Rae-Voge was able to leverage his working relationships with the Business Journal, Finance & Commerce, and Star Tribune commercial real estate reporters to create awareness about the CREDC. The three reporters have expressed interest in coverage in 2019.

For 2019, the committee is focused on supporting the new events team, securing coverage of events and scholarship winners and expanding the digital footprint of the Diversity Collaborative.

Thank you for the work of our committee members!

- Chair: Martha Nevanen, NorthMarq
- Adam Rae-Voge, Cushman & Wakefield
- Albert Martinez-Castro – St. Cloud State University graduate
- Ivan Alvarado – University of St. Thomas MBA graduate
- Austin Ruehle – St. Cloud State University graduate
THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT