INCLUSION

Creating Globally Inclusive & Culturally Competent Workplaces

WINTER 2017 **+** ISSUE 2

Leading the charge on implementing inclusive practices

- - - - - - - - - - - -

CISCO'S

SHARI SLATE

Shari Slate, VP, Chief Inclusion & Collaboration Officer, Cisco Systems, Inc.

Harnessing technology to ensure pay equity and break down barriers.

Shari Slate is responsible for building a strategy that enhances Cisco's vision to be a world-class company for inclusion and collaboration. She is promoting thought leadership across Cisco's people strategy, enabling employee engagement and inclusion outcomes to fuel innovation.

"Diversity is fundamental to Cisco's business," says CEO Chuck Robbins. "With the increasing pace and complexity of today's market, it's critical that we understand our customers, deliver results, bring diverse perspectives and experiences, and build world-class, highly-motivated teams. This is what will differentiate us as an innovative organization that delivers the best results for our customers."

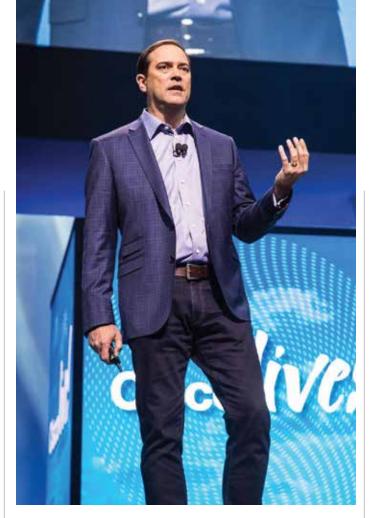In Slate's previous role, she served as Chief Inclusion & Collaboration Strategist for Cisco's Sales Organization. Prior to joining Cisco, she was Chief Diversity Officer and Director of Global Community Affairs at Sun Microsystems.

Slate has been widely recognized for her visionary leadership and her transformational views on inclusion. The YWCA named her a 2014 "Tribute to Women in Industry" honoree. In 2013, she was named one of *Diversity Woman* magazine's "Stars Who Mean Business." She was also honored by the California Diversity Council as one of the "Most Influential in California" and a "Woman Worth Watching" by *Diversity Journal* magazine. She received the National Coalition of 100 Black Women's 2010 Corporate Leader Award and *The Network Journal's* "40 Under Forty" Achievement Award. Slate holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in political, legal, and economic analysis from Mills College.

INCLUSION: What has been the biggest success factor in driving inclusion at Cisco?

Shari Slate: If I had to point to just one, it would be the passion, commitment, and extraordinary leadership—starting at the very top. Our CEO, Chuck Robbins, has put in place one of the most diverse leadership teams in technology. Cisco's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is more diverse in gender, generation, ethnicity, culture, experience, expertise, ability, nationality, and tenure at Cisco than ever before.

Our diverse ELT gives us new perspectives and demonstrates that diversity is fundamental to our business. But diverse representation—even at the top—is just one part of a much larger vision. To fulfill that vision we need leaders who are inspired—and driven—to

Chuck Robbins,
CEO, Cisco

be extraordinarily inclusive. Not just in hiring, developing, and promoting the full spectrum of diverse talent, but also in the way we engage our people to collaborate, participate, and add value.

We have Inclusion Leadership Teams (ILTs) within every region and function. We collaborate closely with our ILTs—they are instrumental in helping us make the initiatives within our Office of Inclusion & Collaboration (OIC) relevant across the business and aligning actions to goals. We hold regular ILT Innovation Forums to come together, connect, and generate ideas, next practices, and new solutions.

Our leaders are also showing up in the most incredible ways to create breakthroughs—starting with understanding diverse perspectives at a whole new level. We experienced this recently in North Carolina, where we held a town hall to better understand the perspectives of our over 7,000

employees in the state given the current legislative and social justice climate. Our Connected Black Professionals hosted a forum to create a supportive environment to discuss the impacts of recent events of immense historic significance in the fight for fair and equal treatment under the law within the United States. Our Executive Leadership Team joined the forum at 6 a.m. the week of Cisco Live!—our biggest annual customer event. After the conversation, the ELT sent our employees a communication acknowledging the impact on individuals and inviting a deeper conversation about inequality, how we will support each other, and the role that Cisco will play as the borders between our company and community are blurred in the realm of social justice issues.

IN: What are some ongoing or special initiatives Cisco is engaging in now to address inclusion?

SS: For the Office of Inclusion & Collaboration, this year has been about going bold. We're now delivering on innovative solutions to some of our most business-critical challenges and opportunities—like pay parity, attracting a highly competitive share of diverse talent, and advocating for fairness and inclusion throughout our communities where it is at risk.

Our innovations are built by us—for us. There really aren't any manuals or models that would tell us how to design a pay parity framework for a global company of over 70,000 employees with complex pay-for-performance strategies.

So we've rolled up our sleeves and done both the big thinking and the heavy lifting. Cisco has always been committed to fair pay. In taking on pay parity, we've expanded our capabilities—creating new insights through a framework of powerful analytics and targeted strategies to identify the factors that influence fairness and equity. While many cross-industry are focusing on gender parity, we look holistically across gender—male and female—globally, plus race and ethnicity in the US, as defined by the US government. To date, we've completed our US analysis, which revealed a healthy compensation system and only minor disparities found within approximately 2 percent of our entire US employee population.

We've given pay adjustments to fully close those minor gaps. The funds required to do that represented a very small fraction—approximately 0.1 percent—of the US base payroll. Now we're scaling globally. We'll be testing for parity regularly, and where we see gaps, we'll fix them.

We're taking a national leadership role as a founding signer of the White House Equal Pay Pledge—one of just 28 companies. We've joined forces with the other 27 companies to form the Employers for Pay Equity Consortium, to help

Cisco Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

make the promise of fair pay a reality for *all* employees.

We're also building new muscle around driving higher levels of what we call "full-spectrum diversity" across our global company. When we dive deep into the data, we see exactly where we need to focus. It's primarily in certain technical roles and functions. It's an issue that's common in our industry—we're committed to creating uncommon solutions to address it.

To start, we're moving beyond a generic industry approach to identifying potential internal and external talent. Our objective is to have the mix of talent across our company to mirror the markets where we do business— for all jobs and regions. We're building an innovative new framework of powerful analytics and creating data-driven insights to re-set our aspirations, respond faster to market transitions, and drive accountability in the way we attract, develop, and retain talent. We think our innovations have the power not only to change the Cisco talent equation—but to be an industry game changer as well, through open dialogue, next practice sharing, and collaboration.

IN: What will be some of the biggest issues and challenges in 2017 for corporate diversity and inclusion leaders like yourself?

SS: Next year will be an extremely important year for what I like to call "making the shift." In the past two years since I became Cisco's chief inclusion and collaboration officer, my team has focused on strengthening the foundation of diversity, inclusion, and collaboration across our organization. We are now in a position to take on our biggest challenges and opportunities presented by digital transformation. Digital transformation is creating new opportunities using advances in mobile, cloud, and analytics technologies and smart devices. Digital

Digital transformation is already "breaking HR." We're accelerating new practices.

transformation is radically changing companies across the globe—of every size and in every industry. It's changing the customer and workforce experience.
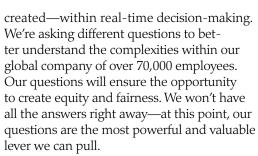
Digital transformation is already "breaking HR." We're accelerating new practices that leverage technology and real-time data in supporting our people leaders and creating environments in which everyone can thrive. That means the systems, processes, and practices that D&I integrated within no longer exist as we have known them. The best practices that we have been leveraging to move the needle are no longer relevant.

For example, transformation-minded HR leaders are now breaking performance review practices as we know them—moving away from reviews and ratings. For many years, we've leveraged the performance review and ratings practice as a way to detect bias within the promotion process. Now we need to take a seat at the table to help co-create the next practices for HR, exploring new ways for driving and embedding diversity, inclusion, and collaboration.

The challenge for me and for other CDOs is to be fully plugged into this dynamic. We'll need to begin to work across all functions and geographies to shape the new people management systems, policies, and practices for the digital era.

At Cisco, our vision was, and continues to be, building an inclusive environment that drives fairness and equity now—and for the future. A future that's being shaped by digital transformation. A future that's going to drive us to fully leverage our tools and technologies and advanced analytics to create what we're calling "the future of fairness." It will take us beyond policies and practices, beyond programs, to the heart of where fairness is

Employees at the Executive Leadership Council 29th Annual Recognition Gala (2015).

created—within real-time decision-making. We're asking different questions to better understand the complexities within our global company of over 70,000 employees. Our questions will ensure the opportunity to create equity and fairness. We won't have all the answers right away—at this point, our questions are the most powerful and valuable lever we can pull.

Across industries, we CDOs can come together to help each other dive deep, create the right questions to ask, help break HR, and leverage each other's ideas, experience, and insight. The year 2017 is going to be one of building new leadership muscle—to see new possibilities within these complex and uncharted landscapes.

IN: Recent events have focused attention on social justice and the rights of transgender people. How is Cisco responding?

SS: We've been ahead of the curve for transgender fairness. I'm so proud of our workforce—since 2007, each time a member of the Cisco family informed HR of intent to transition, we have provided coaching and guidance to the individual, his or her management, and his or her teams and partners. In every instance, the teams have welcomed their transitioning colleague, managed expertly through change, and done so with full management support.

Still, while Cisco has been at the forefront of transgender inclusion, there are new threats and new opportunities for us to take into consideration. When the rights of some of our people are threatened or compromised—all of our rights are compromised.

When laws like North Carolina's HB2 place our employees and customers at risk, we take it seriously. We're listening carefully—and speaking out. We're building respectful dialogue with our employees and inviting diversity of thought, differing opinions, and proposed solutions. We've signed the Human Rights Campaign's amicus brief decrying discrimination. We're taking to social media at all levels, including our CEO. And we're collaborating with communities, advocating for long-term solutions that build fairness into policies, practices, and laws that break down barriers.

IN: How has your approach to D&I changed in the last 10 years? How has the thinking in the field changed?

SS: My approach has changed dramatically—because digital transformation is changing the D&I landscape. The shift is creating huge opportunities for companies to create exponential value through their people.

Before I joined Cisco, I was intensely aware that in the midst of rising to meet the challenges of contemporary realities—globalization, shifting economies, changing demographics, and rapidly advancing technologies—many D&I leaders were also seeking new and better ways to create tangible value and drive sustainable growth.

For many years I've been focused on thought leadership and developing new models for driving diversity, inclusion, and collaboration-leveraging technology. At Cisco, I've been able to fully engage in exploring the role that inclusion plays in enabling true collaboration and in fueling innovation. I've been able to focus on developing new models and strategies that will make it possible to fully realize the potential of the diverse mindsets, skill sets, experiences, and perspectives that naturally exist within our organizations.

From my perspective, we're now experiencing a transition point in the evolution of inclusion and diversity—moving from a focus on counting people and making them feel included toward ensuring they are participating in the business outcomes that drive value for the company.

The complexities of the landscape coupled with digital transformation fundamentally change how we build transformational practices for diversity, inclusion, and collaboration. These changes will allow us to be in action on a whole new level, taking on big, business-critical challenges—like pay parity and attracting more than our fair share of diverse talent, instrumenting mindset, skill set, and tool set for human to human, human to machine, and machine to machine interaction across teams.

Our time is now. As chief diversity officers and chief inclusion and collaboration officers, we will deliver on the promise of diversity and bridge the gap between where our companies are operating and where we want to be. There's never been a better time to be doing this work. Cisco is all-in. **IN**