

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
HALL OF FAME

THE CASE FOR DEI
INITIATIVES IN **LAW FIRMS**

NATIVE AMERICAN
EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE SEEN

INCLUSION

*Creating Globally
Inclusive & Culturally
Competent
Workplaces*

WINTER 2023
+ ISSUE 8

**Leading the Charge
on Implementing
Inclusive and
Equitable Practices**

GENENTECH'S

**Quita
Highsmith**

\$7.99US



A full-page portrait of Quita Highsmith, a Black woman with short, curly reddish-brown hair. She is sitting on a light-colored sofa, leaning forward with her hands resting on her knees. She is wearing a white double-breasted blazer with black trim and gold buttons, a black top, and black pinstriped trousers. She is also wearing large gold hoop earrings, a necklace with a small pendant, and a ring on her finger. Her shoes are black high-heeled pumps. The background is a blurred office or lounge area with a wooden table and other furniture.

Quita Highsmith

Vice President and
Chief Diversity Officer,
Genentech

Photography by
Tony Valadez

Quita Highsmith is Genentech's first chief diversity officer in the 46-year history of the company, reporting directly to the CEO. She is responsible for enterprise-wide strategic initiatives that drive business impact by investing in commercial efforts, stakeholder engagement, research innovation, and community relations.

Highsmith brings to Genentech deep experience in brand marketing and business development as well as a global leadership perspective. Prior to becoming the CDO, she held leadership roles in commercial and government affairs at several companies (Genentech, Sanofi, Aventis), where she increased revenues. Recognizing the need to diversify clinical research, she cofounded Advancing Inclusive Research®, an initiative to address barriers to clinical research participation for underrepresented groups.

Highsmith has coauthored several articles on health disparities in peer-reviewed journals. In 2022, she was chosen by *Savoy* magazine as one of the Most Influential Black Executives in Corporate America and by LEAD 360 as Executive of the Year. In 2021, she was named the Inspire Award Winner by the *San Francisco Business Times* and selected as a Top 15 Champion by *Diversity Global* magazine. She is routinely asked to speak at national and international forums and to give media interviews with both large and small outlets, such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Stat*, the *Atlantic*, Katie Couric Media, and *HuffPost*.

Highsmith has committed to community service by working with nonprofit boards such as the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Delta San Francisco-Peninsula Foundation, Leadership Council San Mateo County, and the Genentech Patient Foundation.

Highsmith earned an MBA and an advanced diversity and inclusion certificate from Cornell University and an undergraduate degree from the University of Kentucky.

Inclusion: As offices return to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

“One area critical for organizations to prioritize in 2023 is to make certain that artificial intelligence [AI] is more inclusive and equitable. For the biotech sector, robust and powerful AI enables our ability to provide better health care, but potential for bias can worsen health disparities.”

Quita Highsmith: Throughout the pandemic and as employees have adjusted to being back on campus, Genentech has leaned into creating an inclusive, supportive environment. To ensure that employees' well-being is front and center, we've provided a comprehensive suite of mental health benefits and resources during this transition.

We also implemented our Future of Working initiative—an approach driven by each function and department of the company according to the unique needs of their teams. We adopted this hybrid work model because we want our employees to have flexibility in when, where, and how they choose to work, but we also believe that our campuses are vital to the work we do for patients and our ability to maintain our collaborative, innovative culture. We believe that offering flexible work options will help us attract a more diverse pool of candidates and, ultimately, build a more diverse workforce.

IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2023 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

QH: One area critical for organizations to prioritize in 2023 is to make certain that artificial intelligence [AI] is more inclusive and equitable. For the biotech sector, robust and powerful AI enables our ability to provide better health care, but potential for bias can worsen health disparities. For AI to be more inclusive and equitable, the people making the programs need to be representative, and the data must be representative of the communities that are impacted. As we continue to use AI to rely on data for personalized health care, and as the use of technology continues to grow, the need for more representative data increases. We need to build trust and engage underrepresented patient populations in our health care system to inform and improve the AI algorithms that will be making many of our future health care treatment decisions.

IN: In 2021, many companies began to put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, the support of social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed, and do you see that energy continuing?

QH: The pandemic created a new normal for the future of working, where the lines between our personal and professional lives are blurred. We can't expect employees to leave their individual experiences and

societal challenges at the virtual office door, whether working from home or returning to the office. At Genentech, we've seen that our employees want us to take action and speak up on these societal wrongs, and as leaders, this is the moment for us to have tough, important conversations internally and ensure that all employees feel included and supported.

In 2020, we created an event series called Dialogue Circles, which gives employees a safe space to share their feelings about the social injustices and other issues happening across our country. Some of our most attended events were centered on addressing employees' feelings on the murder of George Floyd, coping during the global pandemic, and the increase of Asian American Pacific Islander hate across the nation.

We also encourage our employees to join our Diversity Network Association [DNA] Groups, which are an integral part of our culture, providing support to our employees and serving as a vital connection between our employees and leadership. Our 14 DNA Groups include Genentech Women Professionals, African Americans in Biotechnology, VIDA [supporting Hispanic/Latinx culture], Genentech Native Americans [gNA], and gPRIDE.

IN: Paid compensation has been very unbalanced. What is your organization doing to rectify this, and what are some hopeful signs and trends you are seeing?

QH: Over the last decade, we've applied a multipronged, long-term diversity and inclusion strategy, and we are proud of our ongoing commitment to pay parity. We've successfully maintained pay parity across Genentech, with no effective pay difference between women and men, or between people of color and white employees.

IN: Has Genentech made a commitment to sharing DEI data, and what has been the impact of that?

QH: We believe that embracing the increasingly diverse world around us is integral to our business strategy. Last year, we announced our 2025 D&I Commitments, centered around three core pillars: fostering belonging, advancing inclusive research and health equity, and transforming

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society. We also launched our inaugural D&I Annual Report, as a road map for us to bring this mission to life, and we have shared our employee demographic data both internally and externally in the spirit of transparency and accountability. Our 2025 D&I Commitments are intended to create impact for our employees, all patients, and society at large. At Genentech, we believe that we have to be transparent, intentional, and bold in our efforts to make change.

In support of our 2025 D&I Commitments, we launched the Genentech Officer D&I Action Plans to allow our leaders the opportunity to transparently detail the measurable steps they are taking to embed diversity and inclusion strategies and behaviors into their day-to-day work and responsibilities. Nearly 100 percent of Genentech's officers completed D&I Action Plans, which are accessible by any employee on our intranet to ensure transparency and accountability, and we encourage employees to follow up with officers and ask questions.

To view our latest D&I Annual Report, visit gene.com/stories/our-commitment-to-diversity-inclusion.

IN: How is Genentech supporting gender identity and expression in the workplace?

QH: We are committed to creating an inclusive working environment and to celebrating all employee identities and everything that makes them unique. Last year, in support of gender identity and expression, we developed a Gender Identity & Pronoun Usage Guide. The guide was developed for people at Genentech to better understand key concepts about gender pronoun usage; to make pronouns part of our day-to-day language; to give employees learning tools to build more inclusive work environments; and to provide a resource to support gender nonconforming individuals.

We've also expanded our voluntary self-identification options for employees to include gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, military service, sexual orientation, allyship, disability, and veteran status.

IN: What do you foresee in the future and how can we get there?

QH: We still have to double down, we still have to stay focused, we still have to be intentional, and we still have to be bold in order to ensure that we are going to get to the finish line. All of us are responsible for creating an inclusive culture and have to be aware of the barriers to advancement faced by employees of color and faced by patients of color, so our work is not done. I am pleased to say that we have taken some steps forward, but we still have a long way to go. **IN**