

Clark employee part of social justice pilot project



Roslyn “Roz” Leon Guerrero, *third from right*, attends a retreat in 2014 with her fellow members of the Social Justice Leadership Institute’s pilot cohort. *Photo courtesy of Roslyn Leon Guerrero.*

Clark College employee Roslyn “Roz” Leon Guerrero was invited to be part of a new cohort project designed to develop leadership skills in community college employees from historically disenfranchised or underrepresented populations.

Leon Guerrero, who identifies as a Chamorro from the Northern Mariana Islands, was one of 20 members of the pilot cohort of the Social Justice Leadership Institute. Members met five times over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year to participate in activities designed to help them grow their leadership skills, develop a systemwide network of colleagues, and learn new tools for supporting diversity at their respective institutions.

“There is so much to share about the growth and development I received from being a part of the SJLI first cohort group,” says Leon Guerrero. “There was a lot of reflection on me personally and professionally. Being able to come together with a group of awesome and inspiring individuals, sharing the same struggles and challenges, and mentoring and empowering each other is uplifting, inspiring, and heartening. If there was one word I could use to describe this experience, it would be ‘blessed.’”

Leon Guerrero, who has worked at Clark College for more than five years both in the Office of Instruction and now in the Office of Diversity and Equity, first heard about the SJLI

from psychology professor and early childhood education division chair Debi Jenkins. Moments after Jenkins's email, she received another from the Office of Instruction asking if she was interested in participating. Just a few weeks later, she was walking into the Whidbey Island Institute to attend a three-day retreat with the rest of her cohort.

The remaining four meetings took place at Bellevue College, which houses the SJLI. Leon Guerrero says that over the course of the year, she learned how to identify and use her personal strengths—a valuable experience. “Being able to focus on myself and understanding myself is important especially in my work in the Office of Diversity and Equity,” says Leon Guerrero, who currently serves as that office’s Administrative Support.

Leon Guerrero says she hopes to create a similar program here at Clark, and hopes other Clark employees will apply for the 2015-2016 cohort of SJLI, applications for which are due August 1. She offers this advice to anyone interested in participating: “Remember to do self-care before SJLI. Always reflect on yourself, and have an open mind . SJLI is not an avenue for you to find someone to take in your stuff; rather, it’s a safe place for historically underrepresented individuals to learn, grow, develop, and reflect on themselves so they can grow and succeed in their position in higher education. Be your authentic self in everything you do. ”