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**2016
CHS alum
Jordan Davis**

'Diversity and inclusion are intertwined into the culture'

Maryville University to receive 2018 Corporate Diversity Award

By Rebecca Rivas
Of The St. Louis American

On a Monday morning, Maryville University junior Jordan Davis was monitoring a wall-size, digital map of the world – and it looked like he was watching the next world war unfold. Attack lines were flying across the screen every second.

"This is a live threat map, which tracks all the attackers in the world and shows live cyber-attacks by IP address," said Davis, who is majoring in cyber security.

"After going through the cyber security program at Maryville, I am much more aware of what's going on in the world. And while it's at first frightening, it's helpful to know what the problem is so you know how to prevent it."

Davis, an African-American student, has a full scholarship as a Donald M. Suggs Scholar, and he plans on pursuing a career in software engineering.

■ "People of different backgrounds engaging across differences in critical dialogue on our campus really does help move and shape our institution."

– Turan Mullins, assistant dean for diversity and inclusion

"At Maryville, you're going to learn what you wouldn't learn at a different campus," Davis said. "Diversity and inclusion is so important here that it's intertwined into the culture of Maryville and not just the classrooms."

That is the message that university leaders have been trying to drive home for the last five years as part of the university's strategic plan.

"It's kind of hard to have diverse conversations when you don't have a diverse group of people on campus," said Turan Mullins, assistant dean for diversity and inclusion. "And so we knew that was a critical part of this plan. To be able to have people of different backgrounds engaging across differences in critical dialogue on our campus really does help move and shape our institution."

Because of its efforts and progress, Maryville University will receive the 2018 Corporate Diversity Award at the St. Louis American Foundation's 19th annual Salute to Excellence in Business Awards & Networking Luncheon on Friday, November 30.

"The United States is struggling with issues of race, ethnicity and diversity, and it has been for a very, very long time," said Mark Lombardi, the university's president.

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“Even amidst all the events going on today in the political climate, it is very important for universities, for organizations, for companies and for communities to lead the way in really addressing these issues and eventually hopefully solving them. Because that’s what this is all about.”

In the past five years, Maryville has intentionally and strategically worked toward a more diverse student population, Lombardi said. Since 2013, its enrollment of traditional students from underrepresented populations has increased to 23 percent of the total – doubling the number since 2008. More than 25 percent of Maryville’s first-year class in 2016-17 and 2018 has identified as students of color.

Since 2013, the number of diverse faculty and staff has increased 50 percent. Its senior-level leadership, which numbers some 40 positions, currently includes 14 people of color.

University staff members undergo professional development to exam their own cultural bias, and they are urged to use Maryville’s various resources to become more culturally competent all year long, said Laura Ross, associate director of the Finch Center for Teaching and Learning.

This past year, the center led a group reading of “Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America” by Michael Eric Dyson. Ross participated and found the experience to be profound.

“We had the opportunity to listen to some of our colleagues of color and some of the prejudices that they have experienced,” Ross said. “And, as a white-identifying faculty member, I had the opportunity to really start adjusting my lens and become a better ally, a better colleague, and even it affected the way I parent. So professional development



Photo by Wiley Price

Maryville University junior Jordan Davis monitors cyber attacks in the Cyber Fusion Center, a student-run and faculty-managed security operations center.

isn’t just about how we treat our students in the classroom or a curriculum, it really is about personal growth so we can be the best us we can be at Maryville.”

The university also aims to expand access to higher education for all students. It leads programs to prepare K-12 students for college success. It also provides scholarship opportunities for underserved students. Its Multicultural Scholars program has grown by 54 percent in the last year to 82 scholars.

In 2015, Maryville established one Donald M. Suggs Scholarship, which provides full tuition and room/board for undergraduate, academically strong students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education; it now serves five students. Beginning in Fall 2018, the university committed to awarding a second Suggs Scholarship each year.

The Martin T. Lombardi Scholarship, which provides 50 percent tuition for talented African-American students, was created in 2016 by a gift from Maryville University President Mark Lombardi and currently serves six students.

Multicultural endowed scholarships are the central

focus of Maryville’s capital campaign, with the goal of reaching a \$50 million endowment for underrepresented students.

And to help make college affordable, the university announced a tuition freeze for the 2018-2019 academic year, marking the third time in four years that Maryville has frozen tuition and fees.

“We want every student who graduates from Maryville University to understand, appreciate and be aware of the enormous diversity of the American experience,” Lombardi said, “They are going to be part of the solution to the human challenges that we face, not just in St. Louis, not just in America, but across the world.”

The 19th annual Salute to Excellence in Business Awards & Networking Luncheon will be held Friday, November 30 at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel St. Louis, with a networking reception at 11 a.m. and luncheon program at noon. Tickets are \$100 for Preferred/VIP seating and \$75 for general admission. Call 314-533-8000 or visit www.stlamerican.com for more information or to purchase tickets.

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