

The Launch of Diversity Dialogues at HSDM

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On Monday, February 27, 2017, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, in partnership with ASDA and SNDA, asked the question “How offensive are you?” At the well-attended launch of Diversity Dialogues, Dr. Josephine Kim, Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, posed this question to faculty, staff, and students. When asked about what motivated the launch of Diversity Dialogues, Dr. Kim said, “Until we become so good at diversity and inclusion that it becomes our default way of being, we have to create intentional spaces where we explicitly talk about issues of diversity.”

In professions such as dentistry, service providers cross paths with people from diverse backgrounds, and cultural competence is often a challenge. What Dr. Kim showed the group was that we cannot be culturally competent without coming from a place of humility and grace. After activities that invited attendees to interact with each other to discuss their own culture and to unpack how certain behaviors could be offensive to others, attendees had an opportunity to reflect on the impact of cultural differences on their everyday interactions with colleagues.

Dr. Kim summarized the presentation by saying, “We can be offensive even when we have great intentions. That’s why we have an obligation to be culturally sensitive, to give people a chance, and to constantly self-assess.” The Diversity Dialogues session provided an opportunity for HSDM members to reflect on what makes them who they are and to understand the value of cultural competency in our academic community. We look forward to having many more sessions that unite and celebrate the many different cultures of HSDM.