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Cover Page Footnote
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“In work, you have to connect to the thing you’re passionate about. For me, it’s helping people fulfill their dreams.”

–John H. Dozier, chief diversity officer and director of community engagement, University of South Carolina

For John H. Dozier (MBA ’02, EdD ’11), diversity in higher education is about more than demographics. “It’s about creating an environment where all people feel that their contributions can be respected and honored,” says Dozier, the first-ever chief diversity officer and director of community engagement at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Dozier helps define strategies to promote ethnicity, race, gender and religious inclusivity on and off campus, a role he clearly embraces as a way to put the Vincentian values he experienced at DePaul into practice.

Dozier, however, has long been working to help individuals realize their potential regardless of their circumstances. He spent 10 years with the City Colleges of Chicago serving a population that includes disadvantaged students as vice president of academic affairs and student services, vice chancellor and chief information officer and, ultimately, as president of Kennedy-King College. The student profile at the University of South Carolina is different from that of the City Colleges, but Dozier sees parallels between the two.

“It may be that students who come to these institutions have different pathways to achieving their goals. The thing that is similar is that everyone comes looking for an opportunity to better themselves,” he says. “In work, you have to connect to the thing you’re passionate about. For me, it’s helping people fulfill their dreams.”

Dozier, who was born and raised in South Carolina, was drawn back to the area because of family ties, giving him a special stake in advancing the community engagement side of his job. “It’s not about a single program or a specific service-learning opportunity—it’s about all of the opportunities we provide to our students, faculty and staff to engage with the community outside of the classroom,” says Dozier.

Dozier has made such a mark on the local landscape that he was recognized as one of the area’s 50 Most Influential People of 2013 by Columbia Business Monthly. His outside activities include serving on the boards of the preservation organization Historic Columbia and the EdVenture Children’s Museum, as well as on a local school improvement council. In addition, he and his wife, Victoria Paul-Dozier, cofounded The Language Buzz, a world language-learning center in Columbia that promotes partial-immersion experiences in Spanish, French and Mandarin.

DePaul has played an important part in Dozier’s journey of accomplishment. After earning his MBA from DePaul and working his way up within the City Colleges of Chicago, he was drawn back to DePaul to pursue a doctorate in education because of “a ribbon of social justice education and urban education throughout its curriculum. It really connected with me because there was perfect alignment with what I valued in my work and what was being offered through the program at DePaul,” he says.

“I could go on and on about the folks in the College of Education,” he continues. “They all provided such engaging opportunities for students to consider and then reconsider the communities we were serving. It was not just theoretical, but also practical.”

In expressing his life philosophy, Dozier reflects, “My passion for engaging in the community and my commitment to the Vincentian values of community engagement extend well beyond just my role at the university—it’s really a lifestyle.”