



Letter of Reference for: Dialogues on Diversity

FROM: Judy Lawson on behalf of the University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI)

DATE: August 18, 2016

In April 2016, Ron Jones from Dialogues on Diversity facilitated a three-hour workshop for over 40 administrative staff members at the University of Michigan School of Information. However, I want to begin before that, to say that from the first phone call I had with Mr. Jones, I knew I was talking with someone who was 100% invested in building inclusive communities and fostering positive change. Through multiple conversations we developed a tailored plan to suit the needs of our staff group. I found Mr. Jones highly professional, knowledgeable, and responsive. He was an excellent listener, and I soon felt like we had a real partnership.

The staff members attending the workshop represented a wide range of professional areas, from Information Technology to Student Affairs to Accounting & Finance. Some had previous training on diversity issues and others had little or none. The group was diverse in age, race & ethnicity, gender, and much more. We had never held an all staff workshop of this nature. Mr. Jones did an excellent job as facilitator. He connected with this diverse group in a genuine and meaningful way. And soon it was apparent that people were having FUN! The activities had everyone up and moving around. As we continued, the positive energy was palpable. Comments staff provided in their evaluations of the event included:

- The speaker kept it real. He spoke on a level that was easy to understand and he used humor to get his point across.
- The best thing to me was that it prompted some genuine vulnerability, and made me feel closer to my fellow staff.
- It was professional yet casual. The hands-on activities were great bonding exercises and made the training easy to understand.
- What I liked most was the variety of exercises and engagement opportunities/styles. The delivery of concrete information and perspectives has since impacted how I view the world and think about "Diversity"
- My takeaway was that we are all so different but yet so much alike in many ways, and share more of the same experiences than I had originally thought.

I strongly recommend Ron Jones and Dialogues on Diversity for education and training on diversity and inclusion.

--Judy Lawson, Assistant Dean, UMSI