



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Rene Cabral-Daniels

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions questions that affect us all.

Rene Cabral-Daniels is currently the Vice President of Grant Programs at the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation. Previously, she was the Director of the Office of Health Policy and Planning (OHPP) from January of 2002. Rene received a B.S. in Spanish and Mental Health from Tufts University, a Masters in Public Health from Yale School of Medicine, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Virginia. Rene enjoys spending time with her husband Taumi and three daughters aged 7, 9, and 11.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: One change that reaped unexpected as well as unanticipated benefits was the hiring of young professionals in key positions in the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Health Policy and Planning.

The Virginia Department of Health did not have a positive track record of hiring younger professionals. The average age of its workforce is in the mid-fifties. By hiring young, talented professionals, the Office was able to stay abreast of emerging trends in electronic communications, better understand generational paradigm shifts on health access issues, and tap into the high energy levels of this age group.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: The most troubling change has been that often when people talk about diversity in the workforce, it is considered almost as an act of charity rather than an important business strategy that has exponential benefits in the global marketplace.

Q: How will globalization (e.g. the emergence of new global powers, such as China and India) affect your professional area in the near term?

A: The health care market will be greatly improved by these emerging countries. Their contributions to date have transformed health care which is most evident in the area of health information technology but is also apparent in the clinical and therapeutic arenas. Their cultural focus on education provides a wonderful learning opportunities for the United States.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: The greatest challenge will be one of cost. Unlike fungible commodities, there is no substitution for the value of ensuring the public's health. Its importance to the country's economic

and social stature cannot be overstated. However, reckless spending for limited value erodes our nation's ability to assure health to all sectors of the public.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: The greatest challenges are the economy and the ability to compete in a global economy with limited math and science educational backgrounds.