

Fund Finance Friday



Diversity in Fund Finance – Career Panel and Update

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This week, as part of the Diversity in Fund Finance Group, we connected with **PENCIL**, the NYC-based non-profit whose mission is to provide New York public school students with access to relationships and opportunities with business professionals. They've successfully moved their programs virtual, continuing to support hundreds of students this summer through various programs, including a paid summer internship. Yomi Akinyemi, Director at Wells Fargo, Richard Young, Senior Vice President at Citi, and Natasha Puri, Vice President at Lloyds Bank, joined a Career Panel moderated by Gregg Bethell, President of PENCIL.

Yomi was previously a Director at Lloyds Bank for 9 years moving from London to New York across various roles before joining Wells Fargo as a Senior Originator; Richard started his career in investment banking at Citi in 2008, transitioned to law school and practiced at Cadwalader in the Fund Finance group before returning back to Citi in the Office of the CFO; and Natasha began her career in accounting at PwC in 2012 before making a career shift into banking, joining the Lloyds Sponsors Coverage team. The unique background of each panelist was well received by the 100+ high school and college-level students who were able to learn and ask questions about finance and career navigation, and obtain general advice as they think about their future. Gregg noted that many of the students come from low-income and diverse backgrounds, and have been positively impacted by being able to hear the perspectives on these panels over the summer. The students appreciated the honest thoughts on career challenges as well as the lesson that not everyone's career path is the same.

PENCIL will continue adjusting their programming into the Fall, and we hope to engage in further volunteer opportunities. Additionally, we will be continuing our partnership with Baruch College's **Financial Leadership Program**, which provides intensive professional development training to high-performing diverse students in their sophomore and junior year. Over the past two years, the students have provided consistent feedback that the presentation by the Diversity in Fund Finance Group is one of the best. This year, we will be having a virtual session on October 1 from 6-8 p.m., consisting of a presentation followed by virtual networking. If you would like to volunteer for the networking session or are interested in reviewing the class's resume book, please email Natasha.puri@lbusa.com.

Lastly, let me provide a general update. It's been a highly turbulent and emotional time for all of us during the pandemic, and in the context of the continuing unrest in the country and beyond due to persistent racial injustice that permeates every facet of our society. Like some of you, I have become more involved in conversations happening within the workplace. I can see that the fire for change has been lit and is shining a light on structural racism, with a stronger call for change and action. Many have reached out to become involved with the Diversity in Fund Finance group; I thank you for your interest and patience.

By way of background, I started this initiative based on my dissatisfaction with the lack of diverse representation in our corner of the finance industry. I believe that the notion that "hiring the best" often absolved leaders from a responsibility to drive change – itself an illustration of systemic oppression. Our events and involvement have focused on the belief that educating and connecting with students earlier in their careers is necessary to help increase the diversity of students entering the broader talent pool, and we will continue these efforts.

We have heard you and agree that we can do more as an organization to engage our members. We know that change starts from within – by recognizing the privilege of being able to make a difference and impact others. Often times, this begins with honest conversations acknowledging that Black people and other people of color face different realities than their white peers, and are not afforded the same opportunities. We are looking to explore this dialogue further at the upcoming FFA Virtual Week, and if you are open to sharing your experiences or being part of this important conversation, please contact me at Natasha.puri@lbusa.com.