Chicagoans are familiar with the unique ability of Health Care Service Corporation (HCSC) to reach new heights. After all, no other company built a virtually-empty skyscraper on top of another one—and then proceeded to fill it!

Now, Pat Hemingway Hall, president and chief executive officer of HCSC, is leading the company to new heights in corporate diversity and inclusion. And, for those efforts, Hemingway Hall will receive Chicago United's Chicago Bridge Award at the organization's 8th annual Changing Color of Leadership Conference and Bridge Awards dinner in November.

The Chicago Bridge Award salutes a corporation supporting the development of a vibrant and richly diverse business community in the Chicago region. The Bridge Award represents the first of its kind to honor a CEO who is an advocate for multi-racial diversity in corporate strategies and executive level management. In support of multicultural participation at all levels in business, and brings visibility to those who have driven change and inspires others to follow.

Hemingway Hall joins a select group of CEOs who've earned the Chicago Bridge Award past awards include W. Roe Stayer, CEO of Northern Trust Corp., James Skinner of McDonald's Corp., Robert W. Lane of Deere & Co., Gregory C. Cote of Aon Corp., and Friedrich H. Waddell of Aon Corp., and Frederick H. Waddell of Aon Corp., and Frederick H. Waddell of Aon Corp.

Under her leadership, HCSC has accelerated the positive change brought by diversity and inclusion. Hemingway Hall appointed the company’s first chief diversity officer to elevate the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion as a key business strategy. She continually advances diversity and inclusion at HCSC, building on the foundation laid by her predecessor, Ray McCaskey, a past Chicago United chairman.

"In order to continue to provide access to affordable health care, it is imperative that we have a strong understanding of the diverse populations we serve," Hemingway Hall noted. "That requires insights and strategies that can come only from corporate governance, leadership and a workforce that is equally diverse."

To select recipients of the Chicago Bridge Awards, Chicago United focuses on the Chicago Metro 100. Through a rigorous examination of publicly available company data, the search is narrowed to five Chicago-area companies with diverse boards of directors based on a specific threshold of diverse board member participation.

The honoree's company must have no less than 20% minority representation on its board. Diversity is becoming an important indicator of a company's attractiveness to shareholders, said Gloria Castillo, Chicago United's president. Even though the Senior Executives and Exchange Commission requires a company to disclose whether, and if so, how, the nominating committee or board of directors considers diversity in identifying nominees for directors, it is good business practice for a company to move beyond such requirements and aggressively seek to add multicultural board directors," Castillo added.

"American business is increasingly influenced by people of color, and any companies that don’t see the value of diversity and inclusion may risk their position over time," Castillo said. "The Bridge Award is a strong indicator of companies that are well managed and well suited for growth in this new, highly diverse era of global competition. I’m very grateful for Pat’s support of Chicago United and I applaud her for sprinting with the diversity and inclusion baton that was handed to her.”
The members of Chicago United don’t just talk about access to opportunities for various groups, they take action to open those opportunities. The University of Chicago, a Chicago United member since 2009, recently promoted one of its own executives of color for her leadership in making the university a better business partner for minority-owned companies.

Nadia Quarles was recently promoted to Assistant Vice President for Business Diversity at the University. She is credited with focusing the University’s attention on expanding its use of minority- and women-owned business enterprises (M/WBEs). Professional service firms in particular. In this Q and A with Chicago United, she lays out the steps she’s taken to improve minority and women’s representation in business diversity and inclusion. She also reveals the highlight of her achievements thus far – recruiting minority-owned investment managers.

Chicago United: How and when did you start at the University?
Nadia: It’s interesting because I didn’t even know that the University was looking to fill the position. I received a phone call from the search firm asking me to complete the online employment application, and it seemed like a perfect fit. I came to the University in 2006. Prior to this position, I managed the diversity program at Chicago Public Schools. I oversaw the target recruitment program for the City of Chicago. I had the online employment application, and from the search firm asking me to complete the application, I even knew that the University was looking for someone with my experience.

Chicago United: What are the success metrics that you apply to your position?
Nadia: I determine success by the number of sustainable relationships we create with M/WBEs. By that, I mean I like to see the number of sustainable relationships we create with business diversity and inclusion. As a result of the symposium we have already retained nine firms in industries including minority management, legal, executive search, auditing and communications. Last year, we began advertising in Ebony and Black Enterprise magazines. This was another first for the University. These premier publications have provided new opportunities for students and their families to learn about the University’s extraordinary intellectual community. Each time one of these ads appeared in our magazines, our website traffic spiked.

Chicago United: How have you been able to move the diversity and inclusion agenda “farther and faster than you thought you would” if so, why?
Nadia: Yes. I did this through a grassroots effort. It didn’t happen overnight. It took a lot of internal relationship building on my part. Once I established those internal relationships, my colleagues trusted that I would introduce them to the best businesses to meet their needs and the needs of this institution. I think credibility and trust are important. I often hold one-on-one in meetings between business people and key decision makers here at the University. In those meetings, my colleagues see the high quality of minority and women-owned businesses I can bring to this institution.

Chicago United: What goals do you and your University have for the work done in business diversity?
Nadia: To increase our relationships with M/WBE professional service firms and continue to build our M/WBE and workforce goals on our construction projects. I hope our commitment to advancing inclusion and opportunities in our supply chain provides additional economic development opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses. We asked you about what institutions serve as your role model in business diversity.

Chicago Fed Promotes Diversity and Inclusion
Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Moves Forward with Programs in a Variety of Different Areas

Working closely with partners like Chicago United, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago (FRBC) continues to promote diversity and inclusion in the purchase of products and services, hiring, and creating development opportunities for staff members.

Corporate Social Responsibility Council
Supplier diversity is just part of a much broader bank effort to promote socially responsible behavior. Also working on that effort is the bank’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Council, which is made up of leaders who help establish strategies that support employers as well as communities throughout the Midwest. Guided by the council, the bank connects its internal and external practices with key initiatives that, in addition to promoting supplier diversity, include fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace environment where employees are respected, treated fairly, and given equal opportunities to perform to their fullest potential. The bank actively seeks diversity in its workforce at all levels, with specific regard to recruiting efforts targeted to minorities and women. Other important bank efforts that council members consider include their work in financial and economic education efforts geared toward teachers and the public as well as programs related to community development. Midwest economic outreach, environmentalism and volunteerism.

One recent Chicago Fed volunteer effort included a career preparation “speed mentoring” event in June that connected 20 college students from the Chicago Scholastic Bowl with five local businesses.

The FRBC recently hired a manager in charge of supplier diversity. Since joining the bank last year, Mark Hands has helped strengthened the FRBC’s supplier diversity relationships in the business community.

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago earlier this year established the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) to build upon ongoing efforts and assist bank leaders to develop and execute strategic D&I objectives. The creation of the office was in response to a mandate included in last year’s Dodd-Frank financial reform legislation. Similar offices were established at the Federal Reserve Board and at the other 11 Federal Reserve Banks, as required by the legislation.

Leading the diversity and inclusion office in Chicago is Van Meter, who also serves as the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago’s Director of Minority and Women Inclusion and Chief Financial Officer. “All the Federal Reserve Banks and the Board of Governors work together to be responsive to the mandates of the Dodd-Frank Act,” said Van Meter. “In fact, I have been meeting the mandates for a number of years, consistent with the Federal Reserve’s core values.”

“Not this is a one-time initiative,” she added. “It is an ongoing effort to integrate all our activities in a way that helps us achieve maximum economic impact in the region we serve.”
The members of Chicago United don't just talk about access to opportunities for minority-owned businesses — they take action to open those opportunities. The University of Chicago, a Chicago United member institution and one of its own executives of color for her leadership in making the university a better business partner for minority-owned companies.

**Nadia Quares was recently promoted to Assistant Vice President for Business Diversity at the University. She is credited with focusing the University’s attention on expanding its use of minority and women-owned business enterprises (M/WBE’s), professional services firms in particular. In this Q and A with Chicago United, she lays out the steps she’s taken to position the University in business diversity and inclusion. She also reveals the highlights of her achievements thus far in attracting minority-owned investment managers.**

**Chicago United: How and when did you start at the University?**

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**Chicago United: Describe some of your accomplishments since joining the University?**

**Nadia: I have created the current business diversity program. There was already a significant focus on our construction projects; however, I have worked to integrate business diversity throughout the University. So our efforts have expanded to creating opportunities for M/WBE’s in professional services and goods and services. I collaborated with our Booth School of Business and Law School Justice Clinic for Entrepreneurship to create our South Side Business Development Initiative, where our students and professors facilitate free workshops to help elevate business acumen and sustainability of our local businesses. In addition to that, our Direct Connect Program provides an opportunity for M/WBE’s to meet with our purchasing leaders and our Professional Services Symposium brings together minority and women-owned professional services firms to network and build relationships with our senior decision makers at the University and Medical Center.**

**Nadia:** I certainly didn’t do it alone. John Rogers is a university trustee and this is something he has been advocating for a long time. Initially, this all started with a conversation I had with Mellody Hobson, chairman of Ariel Investment Trust, and president, Ariel Investments, that really opened my eyes to the challenges minority money managers face in trying to obtain business with university endowments, foundations, and corporations. I had no idea how difficult it was. It’s really unfortunate because there is a lot of money out there and in the investment industry. Many of the diversity and inclusion leaders at other institutions are more than capable to handle those investments. I really immersed myself into the industry. For me, it was important to understand the challenges minority managers face in the investment management industry so that I could effectively advocate for the firms I wanted to introduce to our investment team. I spoke to industry leaders and asked a load of questions. By the time I began introducing firms to our team, my colleagues and I could speak intelligently about every firm I can give you detailed information about all of the money management firms I’ve introduced to the University. When you can speak intelligently about a particular company and the service they provide, you’re better able to market that business to your company or institution which gives that business a better chance of getting a contract.

**Chicago United: What goals do you and the University have for the work done in business diversity?**

**Nadia: To increase our relationships with M/WBE professional service firms and continue to build M/WBE and workforce goals on our construction projects. I hope our commitment to advancing inclusion and opportunity in our university truly opens the door for M/WBE's and women-owned businesses. I am currently recruiting minority-owned investment managers.**

**Chicago Fed Promotes Diversity and Inclusion**

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Working closely with partners like Chicago United, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago (FRBC) continues to promote diversity and inclusion in the purchase of products and services, hiring, and creating development opportunities for staff members.

*Leading the effort is FRBC First Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Valerie Van Meter, who oversees the effort to promote social responsibility at the bank and also serves as vice-chair of the Chicago United Board of Directors.*

*“We are committed to creating an inclusive environment for those who work at the bank and those with whom we do business,” she said.*

A big part of the process is promoting diversity in procurement, with a focus on minority- and women-owned businesses. In 2010, the FRBC included minority diversity in the bank’s corporate strategy, building on a longstanding commitment to the effort. In addition, Procurement Manager Bob Bahit earlier this year received the Outstanding Buyer of the Year Award presented at the Chicago Business Opportunity Fair hosted by the Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council.

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“American business is increasingly being recognized by policy makers and any companies that don’t see the value of diversity and inclusion may risk their position over time,” Castillo said. “The Bridge Award is a strong indicator of companies that are well managed and well suited for growth in this new, highly diverse era of global competition. I’m very grateful for Pat’s support of Chicago United and I applaud her for sprinting with the diversity and inclusion baton that was handed to her.”

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Acknowledgment:
Thank you to the Chicago United’s Corporate Diversity Profile contributors for your continued support and commitment to diversity and inclusion. This recognition program is central to our mission to encourage and support diversity in the business community.

Chicago United is a member of Alliance for Corporate Growth and Performance and a member of the Corporate Leadership Council.

For as long as I can remember, I have felt strongly and worked hard to champion social and economic equality. I continue to see a society that can do so much more if only it would leverage the intelligence, innovation and leadership capabilities of more men and women of color. As the president of a business organization, I continue to see wide windows of opportunity for enterprises to serve their customers and shareholders even better by unleashing the potential of diversity and inclusion. I’ve also observed that more and more C-level leaders are “getting it.”

As Racial Disparities Widen, Advocacy Efforts Remain Committed

While Chicago United’s focus is increasing diversity and inclusion in senior leadership, it is equally important that they are driven at all levels of business and throughout society. That is why I am proud to be associated with the anti-racism efforts of the YWCA and other impactful organizations.

Playing fields still need to be leveled, inclusion of leaders of color at all levels of the public and private sectors is still lacking, and we aren’t yet fully engaging the best talent available — regardless of color — in many endeavors, including marketplace competition.

The median wealth of whites is now 20 times that of African-Americans and 18 times that of Hispanic households, according to a recently-released Pew Research Center analysis of government data. Unemployment rates for African-Americans and Hispanics remain much higher than they are for whites. The U.S. Department of Commerce’s Minority Business Development Agency continues to report that “minority-owned businesses face the obstacles of access to capital, access to markets and access to social networks, all of which are essential for any business to increase in size and scale.”

Chicago United’s most recent Corporate Diversity Profile showed that the recession didn’t slow a business to diversify Chicago’s corporate ranks as the pipeline of executives of color was thinned by layoffs. The Profile goes on to indicate that prior to the economic downturn, there appeared to have been some progress in employment opportunity and the hiring of diverse candidates. However, many of the economic gains minorities made in the previous economic expansion were erased during the downturn.

These realities are sobering. It will require our continued diligence to begin to reverse the trends that are decades in the making. Yet, signs of continued progress are seen right here in Chicago as well. The deficit is far greater than we think or the numbers show. If companies don’t see the value of diversity and inclusion, there is no reason why they should hire them.

On October 1st I will be proud to receive the YWCA’s Racial Justice Award. The YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Notice that social justice, access to opportunity and leadership in breaking down barriers are common denominators in these accolades. These efforts will help each organization recognize the need for continued advocacy in these areas; they all pursue a mission that remains relevant.

I give thanks for those who have joined me on my ongoing journey to open doors, minds and opportunities and invite the participation of those who are ready to reap the returns on investment that diversity and inclusion work provides.