



Photo Paul Chouy

By Harsh Kalan

Diversity is a near and dear issue for Gregory Vincent, Ph.D., who has been UT's vice president for the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement since June 2006. The 47-year-old native New Yorker has dedicated his entire life to the mission of developing a model of excellence and inclusion. An academic standout since his early years, this law professor works closely with the local community and his students with equal and unbridled intensity.

Vincent was born in New York to middle class college-educated parents, who instilled values of a good education and community service in him.

"My grandparents came here as immigrants and in one generation our family hit the ground running and now next generation we are all thriving," Vincent said. "It's all because of public higher education."

Vincent's father was the chief engineer with the New York City Transit Authority and his mother was a drug and alcohol counselor on the school board in New York City. The fact that both his parents were involved in serving the community throughout their careers inspired Vincent to take a personal interest in public ser-

vice.

After graduating from the Bronx High School of Science, Vincent attended Hobart and William Smith College on an academic scholarship. He played Division III basketball and ran cross-country there. Vincent's most intriguing experience at this private liberal arts school was being exposed to a world he had never seen before—a world of trust funds.

"It was a very different experience for me to go to a school where my roommate freshman year went to school on a trust fund," Vincent said. "I had never heard of a trust fund before. At 17 this just blew me away."

After Vincent completed his undergraduate studies, he attended law school at Ohio State University, also on an academic scholarship, where he was exposed to an even more diverse population. After excelling in law school, he began his professional career as a corporate attorney. However, Vincent knew he wanted to work with civil rights issues, and pounced on the opportunity to work in the civil rights section at the attorney general's office in Columbus, Ohio.

"That was when the Americans with Disabilities Act came into effect. There was a lot of controversy in the Supreme Court

about major civil right cases and it impacted the state; and in fact, I argued major cases successfully in front of the Ohio Supreme Court," Vincent said. "It was a really good time to be doing that work."

He then made the transition to the administrative side, when he was offered a leadership role in the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. However, he found his true calling when he made the jump to academia.

Due to the reactive nature of law, higher education in law is important, he said. Precedents dictate the course of law, which increases the importance of formal education's role in unprecedented situations.

Vincent, who stresses the importance of good mentorship, found his own guide in the form of an old law professor, who introduced him to teaching.

In turn, Vincent has influenced and mentored people around him. One such person is Enrique Romo, Vincent's assistant and a doctoral student at UT. Romo has been working with Vincent since he came to UT more than six years ago.

"He has been one of my mentors. And he really takes the time to know you as a person, other than just someone who works for him," Romo said. "He really has

UT's Gregory Vincent Drives Diversity, Community Engagement

your best interest at heart. He wants you to succeed and give you the information that you need in order to get to the next level. So, he is always very encouraging and supportive."

Vincent's vast academic experience has taken him from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to Louisiana State University to the University of Oregon, and finally to UT. He has been involved with the mission of promoting diversity at all of these places.

Along with carving out a diversity model through policy setting, one of the most important things about Vincent's affiliation with academia is teaching and researching.

"I am active in the classroom, I do serve on and chair dissertation committees, and yet I'm also able to shape the direction of the University," Vincent said. "It's really the best of both worlds. I love being in the classroom, I love doing research."

Vincent's day begins at 5 a.m. every day and ends depending on when the last event or meeting ends.

"One of the things about serving the community is that my job isn't just here on campus. Many mornings I have meetings where I am meeting people like community members several times a week," Vincent said. "Evenings tend to get late simply because there are a lot of events."

Even a professional academician like Vincent needs to unwind every now and then. His outlets are reading biographies and going to church. Vincent, who is an Episcopalian, regularly attends the St. James Episcopal

Church in Austin.

Vincent also indulges in a few guilty pleasures from time to time that allow him to suspend reality.

"I like 'Tudors' on Showtime. That's a great show," Vincent said. "But, I am a huge 'American Idol' fan. I love it. And I was a bit of a science geek in high school, so I like 'Big Bang Theory.'"

But, the fact that Vincent loves his job always adds some extra bounce to his step. He is always keen on meeting new people, discussing issues and working on a diversity model through the division that he hopes will be adopted by other universities.

According to Vincent, it was UT's and President Powers' commitment to the mission of promoting diversity and working closely with the local community that drew him to Austin.

"Obviously UT is one of the great universities in the country and the world. I thought they had a good vision. I thought the vice provost job I had before I got promoted would help me be an in-house consultant while being a professor," Vincent said. "So I thought that would be a good mix."

Despite his association with several academic institutions, Vincent cherishes his experience at UT. The last few years, he has watched his dreams come full circle and he is one of the lucky people who truly loves and is deeply involved with what he does.

So, when it comes to showing allegiance to a school, all he had to say was, "I'm a Longhorn! That's pure and simple."