

Remembering the Golden Rule

Tajaro Hudson '19, '21 learned a lot about himself and about culture since he moved to the United States from Nassau, Bahamas in 2015 to attend the University of Central Arkansas.

Today Hudson serves as associate director in the UCA Office of Diversity and Community. He advises and mentors underrepresented students in organizations like Project X, the Minority Mentorship program and the Black Male Achievement Challenge.

When he was living in the Bahamas, Hudson says he learned about the history of racism and discrimination in America. As a Black person in the Bahamas, he was a part of the majority. His perspective changed when he stepped onto the UCA campus. Hudson remembers the Office of International Engagement and the Office of Diversity and Community working diligently to make students like Hudson feel visible, valued and validated.

"I didn't even understand why they needed to create a space for us until I walked into the classroom and realized that I was the only international student, often the only Black person, and sometimes the only male. Coming to UCA (and to America, in general) and having it flipped from where I was in the majority to the minority and learning about all the history made me realize that I wanted to help create a place that promotes diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging," Hudson said.

Hudson said promoting a culture that supports diversity goes beyond sexual orientation, skin color and gender. Because identity is multidimensional and intersectional, Hudson says the most effective way to reach others is to have a conversation or multiple conversations.

"I want to talk, but not in a way that feels like I'm beating them over the head with a diversity stick. I want to meet them where they are. For one person, it may be inviting them to a program or event, another person may resonate more with a song, while others can understand through a religious viewpoint. It's about finding different ways of relating to others but never being aggressive."

UCA is dedicated to supporting a diverse student, faculty and staff population. It is one of the university's core values as described in the AVID (academic vitality, integrity and diversity) acronym. Hudson said having Angela Webster as associate vice president of Institutional Diversity and chief diversity officer working alongside teams of advocates across campus to help foster an inclusive environment is an excellent way to make significant progress.

"We have someone whose literal job is to make sure that we are diverse in our hiring, academia and programs. She runs an office that is dedicated to promoting diversity and community and having a space to make students feel welcome. I also want to commend our president for attending and supporting different events across campus for all students. The culture starts from the top down."

By following the golden rule and remaining an advocate, Hudson strives to continue to leave a positive impact on campus through mentoring underrepresented students as they grow into happy and productive citizens.