

Central Engineering Team, Director Honored for HUB-inclusive Practices

By George McCue, Writer

Great things are happening at DPS' Central Engineering, which was [profiled in the February edition of the Digest](#). Most recently, the section racked up two awards at the 38th Annual State Construction Conference. The awards recognize business practices to encourage and include historically underutilized businesses (HUBs) as vendors. Central Engineering was awarded for its "Outstanding Commitment to the HUB Program and Utilization of HUB Firms." In addition, Central Engineering Director Jeffrey O'Briant won "Outstanding Individual Contributor to HUB Inclusion Efforts." Out of the roughly 900 construction professionals present at this conference, and across the state's entire construction industry, the commitment by O'Briant and his team stood out.

Within the past year, the Central Engineering team resolved a technical issue that had impeded their ability to accurately report HUB participation previously. Now, DPS can show that its HUB participation this year is actually the highest among all state departments.

"There was a collaborative team effort to figure out how to accurately report construction projects. The team was more than willing to determine a fix to the issue. The desire was evident," said Tammie Hall, director of the Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses, the office that selected winners for these awards. "The entire team was definitely committed to resolving the issue. And we saw the determination, through implementation of inclusive policy and procedure, to encourage small, minority-owned or women-owned business participation."

Central Engineering, which is essentially the equivalent of a mid-size engineering, architectural design and construction firm located within DPS under Adult Correction, has reviewed and revamped its contractor policies to ensure equal opportunities. "We've been more purposeful regarding inclusion of HUB vendors in the bidding process," O'Briant said. "That inclusiveness has been incorporated throughout the procedures that we've set up, from A to Z."

Deputy Director Robert Gron stressed that both awards reflect O'Briant's leadership. "Jeff has instilled upon all of us that HUB inclusion and respecting diversity are not a matter of 'checking a box' or 'filling out a form' — rather, it is simply doing the right thing," Gron said. "Once that leadership and vision were provided, everything else fell into place."

Central Engineering's awards are actually only the most recent in a series of honors that DPS has earned for its HUB inclusion efforts. Last August, DPS Purchasing & Logistics received a "HUB Champion Most Improved Award" at a procurement conference. Hall noted that DPS' purchasing office plays a role in internal training on HUB to speak on industry best practices, and has been a prominent HUB-inclusive presence at expos and workshops.

More information on North Carolina's HUB initiatives can be found on the [Department of Administration's webpage for the office](#).



Pictured from left to right: Central Engineering (CE) Project Manager Pamela Schooler, NC Office for HUB Director Tammie Hall, CE Director Jeffrey O'Briant, CE Deputy Director Robert Gron, CE HUB & Property Coordinator Cheyenne Franklin and NC Office for HUB Deputy Director Alicia Lyon.