

Cynthia Hardy Young

During college, I flew to an interview for a summer internship, arriving in jeans and with my luggage lost. So I asked the interviewers to imagine me well dressed. I explained that the interview would be an example of how I could improvise, adapt, and overcome. With a little humor, I got a job, and, when I showed up for work, there was a sign on my desk that said, “The Queen of Improvising, Adapting and Overcoming.”



Despite that embarrassing lost-luggage experience, Cynthia Young’s enthusiasm for travel remains strong. “I have an abiding passion for learning about other cultures and ways of life,” she says. “I love to travel. If a bus, train, plane, car, or boat can go there, I intend to go.”

She explains that it all started when she was in high school. “I was among 100 students chosen to participate in a U.S. and Japan student-exchange program. It taught me an appreciation for other cultures, religions, political systems, and ways of thinking. It broadened my horizons and left an indelible mark on me.”

That vision of inclusiveness and diversity helps Young in her current role as president of Encompass Insurance and vice president for Allstate Insurance Company. Young is responsible for a business valued at more than \$2.5 billion, and

she personally manages 1400 people and a budget of \$350 million.

But Young has not always been around large budgets. “Growing up in poverty in a housing project in Mississippi was adversity that became a blessing,” she explains. “It was clear to me early on that education would be the catalyst to a different life, so I applied myself. I also benefitted from a number of teachers, preachers, and others who took an interest in me. My experience gave me the grounding to have passion for whatever I undertake and compassion for others who are disadvantaged.”

Earlier in her career, Young demonstrated that empathy in practical ways while working for a company that was headquartered next to subsidized housing in a city.

The Leadership Promise at Allstate

“The company’s approach was defensive,” she recalls, “using security measures to ensure that the local residents didn’t create problems. I challenged the organization to embrace the community, build bridges, and be a community partner in a sustainable way.” Soon employees of the company got involved with their neighbors, doing things such as volunteering to teach adult literacy, helping students with homework after school, and developing community watch programs.

“I keep grounded because I know where and how I started.” acknowledges Young. “I understand the power of someone taking an interest in you, and I look to do the same with others. My family also keeps me grounded. I am guided by faith and love of friends and family. That allows me to be centered professionally and to extend myself professionally beyond day-to-day work – to mentor, coach, and connect.”

Through Delta Sigma Theta’s Social Action platform, for example, Young has been involved in recent voter-registration efforts and voter-education initiatives. She works with local churches, civic organizations, political organizations, and election boards to bring groups together to have robust, community-based dialog about issues affecting voters.

“She spends countless hours coaching, mentoring, developing, and providing needed guidance,” says Allstate’s Anise Wiley Little. “To know Cynthia is to know a great leader whom I am proud to nominate for the Eagle Award.”

CareerFOCUS Magazine[™] and the National Eagle Leadership Institute[®] salute 2010 Eagle Award winner Cynthia Young.

As a company with a diverse population of employees, agents, and customers, Allstate embraces diversity in everything we do, not only the customers we serve and the communities in which we invest but also the people we hire. Our diversity strategy is about leveraging differences to gain a competitive advantage and creating a supportive and effective work environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Allstate tracks employee-development plans and has succession plans to ensure that a diverse group of employees participate in and benefit from leadership and management training. Currently, Black/African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos comprise 25 percent of Allstate’s workforce, with more than 15 percent who are managers and 9 percent who are Allstate’s officers.

In 2009, Allstate earned recognition/awards from *Diversity MBA Magazine*, National Association of Female Executives, Black Data Processing Associates (BDPA), *Hispanic Business Magazine*, and *Latina Style* as a top company for executive leadership and diversity.

Cynthia Young At-a-Glance

Nominating Company

Allstate Insurance Company

Current Position

President of Encompass Insurance and Vice President for Allstate Insurance Company

Professional Milestones

- Member, Allstate Foundation Grant Committee
- *Diversity Journal*’s “100 U.S. Women to Watch”
- National African-American Insurance Association Rhythm Pounder Industry Award

Community Leadership

- Board Member, Communities in Schools of Chicago
- Member, Delta Sigma Theta
- Member, Hoffman Estates Chapter of The Links, Inc.

Leadership Principle

Continual learning, strategic vision, operational excellence, building dynamic teams, and helping others define and pursue success.

Education/Training

- B.S., Xavier University
- J.D., University of Notre Dame Law School

Birthplace

Meridian, MS

Current Home

Vernon Hills, IL