



# Blazing New Trails

## Driving value from the intersection of inclusion, collaboration, and technology

**Innovation. Collaboration. Value.** Key priorities in my company and with our customers and partners. In rising to meet the challenges of contemporary realities – globalization, shifting economies, changing demographics, and rapidly advancing technologies – we’re seeking new and better ways to create tangible value and drive sustainable growth.

At Cisco, we’ve engaged in an extensive inquiry with our customers and partners, exploring the role that Inclusion plays in enabling true collaboration and in fueling innovation. Together, we’re exploring an intriguing hypothesis that identifies reciprocal relationships between inclusion, collaboration, and technology and points toward the key factors that will make it possible to fully realize the potential of the diverse mind sets, skill sets, experiences, and perspectives that naturally exist within our organizations.

What we’re observing is what can best be described as a transition point in the evolution of the classic approach to Inclusion and Diversity. We believe we now have an opportunity to create new conversations and powerful “next practices” that will move us beyond the traditional objective of compliance into a new level of engagement within our organizations in which the objective of inclusion is to drive value.

In the process of exploring this hypothesis, one thing is becoming clear: creating a relationship between diversity and inclusion leadership and the Chief Information Officer is an essential step on the evolutionary path. From the viewpoint that inclusion has a direct impact on the people, processes, and technologies that ultimately enable an organization to survive – and thrive – powerful new alliances are critical.

### Interested in creating that evolutionary relationship?

Having a conversation about key organizational priorities – and the role that both inclusion and technology can play in fulfilling them – is a great place to start.

First, envision the impact that a highly inclusive environment could have on technology adoption and ROI. Ask the question: How can we align both inclusion and technology goals to enhance the way we collaborate across our workforce and with our customers globally, remotely, virtually, and cross-culturally?

Next, explore the role that technology plays in advancing inclusion. What tools and technologies are we employing now – or should we employ – to ensure that everyone feels welcome and able to fully participate, leverage diverse perspectives, and add value?

For those willing to deviate from the beaten path by engaging in these conversations, new realms of possibility in realizing the potential of inclusion and diversity await you. Take the first step today. Reach out and begin the inquiry. Seek support from your fellow “evolutionaries”. Reach out to me and share your experiences ([sslate@cisco.com](mailto:sslate@cisco.com)). Together we can blaze a new trail!

#### Shari Slate



Shari Slate is Cisco’s Vice President, Chief Inclusion & Collaboration Officer. She is responsible for building a strategy that enhances Cisco’s vision to be a world class, benchmark company for inclusion and collaboration; driving exponential business value across Cisco, its partners, and customers.