

## **Valerie De Cruz Bio**

As a student affair professional for over 30 years, Valerie De Cruz has worked at the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University and Oberlin College. At Penn she oversees the Greenfield Intercultural Center (GIC) – where she has vastly extended the center’s reach among diverse student populations, forged connections with colleagues across campus, and directed the growth of innovative courses, programs, and services. As a result of her leadership, the center has received a robust endowment from donors who are enthusiastic about its impact.

Under her direction, the center has demonstrated a capacity for innovation. Through cross campus partnerships, Valerie has created programs and practices to support changing demographics and emerging student needs at Penn, ensuring that students experience success and a strong sense of belonging. Valerie’s extensive experience in higher education, her counseling training, as well as her personal journey, has uniquely equipped her to help guide colleges and universities in developing best practices to support students from diverse backgrounds -- including highly aided and first-generation college students. She consults nationally and internationally on equity issues in higher education. Valerie co-chairs the Transnational, Multicultural and International Committee for the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE).

Valerie has been the recipient of numerous awards, including: two Models of Excellence awards for developing innovative intercultural and social justice programming; a Woman of Color Staff leadership award; an Award of Appreciation from Muslim Students at Penn; an honorary induction into the Sphinx Senior Society; and an award for Outstanding Mentor – jointly presented by the Student of Color Honors Societies at Penn. In 2015, she was honored by Native Students at Penn at their 6th Annual Powwow for her longstanding commitment to sustaining Native and Indigenous communities at Penn. In 2019, she was chosen as the inaugural winner of the Annie Stout award given by the Penn Office of Spiritual and Religious Life (SPARC) for “exemplary contribution to spiritual and religious life at Penn” and for “consistent and truly visionary leadership in creating a home for cross-cultural education and for supporting generations of Penn students.”

Valerie graduated from the University of Calgary with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and earned a Master of Education in Counseling from Wichita State University. She spent her formative years in South East Asia, and has lived in England and Canada, before settling in the United States.