



“I am committed to protecting the respect, dignity and equality of all West Des Moines residents.”

Rich Salas, Ph.D.
Human Rights Commission

Meet Rich Salas, one of our new members on the [Human Rights Commission](#). Dr. Salas is committed to serving his community and educating, supporting and representing West Des Moines residents on human rights and equity issues. We're thrilled to have him share his expertise and wisdom with us!

Are you originally from West Des Moines?

No. I moved to West Des Moines in 2012.

Where did you grow up?

I was born in San Antonio, Texas, but I grew up in Ft. Collins, Colorado. I worked at Colorado State University for over 18 years prior to becoming faculty at Des Moines University in 2012.

Why did you want to serve on the Human Rights Commission?

I am committed to protecting the respect, dignity and equality of all West Des Moines residents. As a West Des Moines citizen, I am excited [to serve on the Human Rights Commission](#) and contribute to preserve the public safety, health and general welfare of all our community members. Additionally, I want to serve my community and be pro-active in educating, supporting, and representing West Des Moines residents on human rights and equity issues.

Why is their work important to the community?

I believe the role the Human Rights Commission plays is a very important component of working towards making West Des Moines an inclusive, accepting and safe community for all of our residents.

Do you volunteer in other organizations?

Yes, I volunteer when my schedule allows with the Valley High School Equity committee, and I volunteer at both my children's schools – Valley High School and Stillwell Middle School to mention only a few.

What benefits have you received from volunteering?

I have benefitted by making a positive difference in our community – serving and lifting people up by celebrating the wide range of diversity we all bring to our communities.

What is your day job?

I am the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) at Des Moines University and also Assistant Professor in the Behavioral Medicine, Medical Humanities & Bioethics Department. In this important role, I am responsible for multicultural programming at DMU and direct student, faculty, and staff trainings in the area of cultural competency/humility. Additionally, I provide lectures and workshops for our medical/health sciences students across our three colleges in the area of culturally responsive care. As CDO, I am also responsible for expanding programming in the area of diversity and inclusion, aiding in the support of a positive campus climate, and collaborating with community groups, universities, and businesses. I love my job!

What do you do in your spare time?

I love playing my guitar, exercising, and spending time with my family.

What is something most people don't know about you?

I love playing basketball and in my good days, I once made 227 free throws in a row!

