

NIEHS welcomes new chief information officer

By Robin Arnette

Since Information Technology (IT), or the use of computers and software to manage information, continues to grow in importance in the modern world, the person in charge of IT within an organization plays a vital role in the success of the enterprise. NIEHS leadership recognized the need for a Chief Information Officer (CIO), and found the right fit in Bernard Brown II. He started at the Institute Sept. 9.

Brown comes to NIEHS after having spent the past two years at the White House. He served as Director of Operations and Engineering in the Executive Office of the President, and was responsible for ensuring that all unclassified technology - including computers, networks, and mobile devices - were continuously available in support of the President of the United States.

Several reasons prompted his move to North Carolina, including living in the Triangle, the excitement of a CIO position, and the willingness to take on new challenges, but Brown admitted one of his main motivations was being part of the NIEHS mission.

"I've been looking to do a CIO position for a while, but when I looked into what NIEHS does, I realized it was something that I was really interested in," Brown said. "I want to know how the environment affects us, our health, and everything we do."

Bringing a wealth of experience

Before Brown went to Washington to work for President Obama, he had already amassed a considerable amount of IT experience in the private sector, as well as serving as an officer in the United States Air Force. One of his professional achievements occurred when he led a team that built a satellite-based tactical weapons system for Air Force Space Command.

Brown's computer skills weren't his only attribute in service to his country. He was stationed at Aviano Air Base in northeastern Italy during the 1998-1999 Kosovo War. All of the bombing missions the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) flew in the conflict originated at Aviano, and Brown was in the middle of all the activity. He was also one of the leaders providing command and control for all communications and IT issues during that military operation.

Brown said his goals are to modernize the computing networks at NIEHS, as much as possible, which will help Institute employees do their jobs better. He's only been in the position for a few weeks, but he's accomplished several tasks.

"Already, in the short time since his arrival, he has been involved in tackling some IT and management challenges, such as the mandate to limit our IT contractor to essential services for the duration of the contract protest," said Joellen Austin, NIEHS associate director for management.

Brown's background has prepared him for the work ahead, and he's moving forward with his IT vision for the Institute.

"I'm really excited about the job," Brown added. "I'm dedicated to being successful and making everyone [at NIEHS] successful."



Brown is a native of Rochester, N.Y., and is the proud father of two adult children. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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