**Introduction**

This annual report includes updates on major institutional diversity initiatives and accomplishments in the past year, as well as significant upcoming projects. UVM continues to make steady progress towards our diversity and inclusive excellence goals. Although our work is ongoing, through the hard work and commitment of the institution’s leaders, faculty, staff, and students, UVM continues to be recognized nationally for our efforts. This year’s report highlights:

- ALANA Student Center relocation
- ALANA Student Center renaming
- Gender-inclusive restrooms at UVM
- Professional development series for UVM’s senior leaders
- Implementation of the *Framework for Inclusive Excellence*
- National recognitions for UVM’s diversity and equity work
- 10th Annual Blackboard Jungle symposium

**ALANA Student Center Relocation**

In the upcoming weeks, the newly renovated and freshly designed ALANA Student Center (ASC) will be fully functional. Located in the Living Learning (L/L) complex in the suite of offices formerly occupied by the Career Center, the large common area and eight additional offices provide an improved offering to the student experience. Previously located in Blundell House on Redstone campus, this more centrally located ASC has expanded floor space that will enable greater access to advising services, more opportunities for collaboration, and the
expansion of high impact culturally sensitive programs and initiatives. In addition to the large living/dining/study area, this “home away from home” features a classroom, full kitchen, dedicated student club space and offices for the student advising team. The move to L/L has already begun and the ASC should be fully functioning in this new space by the end of October 2016.

Since 1973, the Blundell House has been a multicultural hub enabling a range of educational opportunities and community building initiatives for people of color at UVM. The desire for the ASC to relocate closer to the heart of campus began years ago when the center was initially included in early plans for the Davis Center. Although that move was not possible, support for the relocation of the ASC intensified and over the last eight years a new location for the center has been institutionally prioritized.

In the spring of 2015, undergraduate student Angela Crespo led a successful SGA resolution effort to support an ASC move to L/L. Dr. Wanda Heading-Grant and President Tom Sullivan provided institutional advocacy and the possibility for such a transition became real. During the spring of 2016, Sarah Childs, Acting Director of the ASC, led an effort to investigate and assess the thoughts and feelings of the UVM community regarding the proposed move as well as potential name change. A committee of UVM students and staff researched comparative spaces, implemented an online survey and facilitated four focus groups for the UVM community to explore the relocation and possible re-naming of the ASC. Students of color, in particular, expressed the desire for the center to maintain its mission and safe, homey, culturally empowering climate. We believe the new and improved ASC will retain and add value to these qualities.

**ALANA Student Center Re-naming**

Over the years, questions have been asked about whether the ALANA Student Center (ASC) should keep its current name. If not, what should it be called? What terminology best describes the mission of the center and signals a message of welcome to the targeted student audience? These questions were explored ten years ago and with the recent relocation of the ASC it has become relevant to investigate whether or not the current name is the best possible one for the ASC.

Some students and community members have shared that the ALANA acronym is not easily identifiable nor fully inclusive of the racial and ethnic identities in the student of color community. With this in mind, the committee convened to assess the relocation of the ASC also investigated the re-naming.

The ALANA (Asian, Latino, Native, African American) acronym is regional and used primarily in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. Many students of color don’t initially identify with the term, though those who are most active in the community tend to embrace it. The assessment process revealed a range of student and community responses to the name change. Most students were open to the possibility as long as the mission of the center stayed the same. Several names were suggested. The committee, after compiling and reviewing the information, generated two
recommendations, which were expanded to three after consultation with the ASC staff. The final three names were vetted with key stakeholders and one name was recommended to senior leadership. The ASC leadership team looks forward to discussing the proposed new name with President Sullivan in the near future.

**Gender-Inclusive Restrooms at UVM**

UVM became a leader among universities by taking steps as early as 2003 to increase restroom access for transgender students. Since that time UVM has continued leading the nation on gender inclusive initiatives. Since North Carolina introduced legislation restricting access to restrooms by individuals’ birth sex, there has been greater national awareness about safe and equitable restroom access for people with diverse gender identities. In May 2016, a student group at UVM known as Justice for Queer and Trans Students presented the UVM administration with a petition and list of proposed changes to UVM facilities that centered around increasing the number of both non-gender-segregated and ADA accessible restrooms.

In response, the Gender-Inclusive Restroom Taskforce was assembled to address the following issues and project goals:

- Increased access and options for restrooms on UVM’s campus by identifying institution-wide criteria for prioritization of existing facilities for additional restrooms, as well as principles for new construction within regulations, and then generate a list of prioritized facilities;
- Review UVM’s existing guidelines, standards, and processes regarding allocation of restrooms, restroom signage, and accessibility;
- Review UVM’s existing guidelines, standards, and processes regarding establishing and tracking the locations of ‘gender inclusive,’ ‘all-gender,’ ‘gender-neutral,’ ‘unisex,’ and any other gender-inclusive restrooms on UVM’s campus;
- Identify consistent signage to be used throughout UVM’s campus for gender-inclusive restrooms;
- Review UVM’s existing policies, guidelines, and practices to improve restroom access for individuals that are gender non-conforming, have disabilities, and are from various religious traditions throughout campus;
- Review current, and suggest additional, educational professional development for UVM’s campus community and visitors regarding all gender restrooms; and
- Review and address safety access to gender-inclusive bathrooms.

Taskforce members met throughout the summer and completed a report containing a total of fifteen recommendations in August. Several campus offices are currently evaluating budgeting and responsibility issues.

**Inclusive Excellence Professional Development Series for UVM’s Senior Leaders**

Over the last three years UVM’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has made a conscious and active commitment to their professional development in the areas of diversity and social justice.
This effort is also intended to model leadership engagement for others. With the guidance of Vice President Heading-Grant and the commitment of President Sullivan, there have been four sessions organized for the SLT. These four sessions were supplemented with a Blackboard Jungle Symposium workshop specifically for the SLT in Spring 2016.

These sessions had the goals of enriching the team’s knowledge of diversity and cultural identities and their impact within the Senior Leadership team. Additionally, these sessions addressed topics such as: building a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities as leaders regarding campus racial climate; tools and resources for effectively engaging in the work of supporting UVM’s inclusive excellence goals; challenges and strategies on matters such as campus racial climate, student activism, budgeting and resource allocation; and recruitment and retention practices to support inclusive excellence. Campus leaders also learned about protocols used at UVM to address bias incidents. Professional development for the SLT will continue on a semiannual basis.

**Framework for Inclusive Excellence**

In Spring 2016, *Inclusive Excellence at the University of Vermont: A Framework for Building a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Multiculturally Competent Campus* was shared with the UVM community. This framework is organized by four pillars of diversity and inclusion including: academics, community, environment, and operations. Within each pillar are components and strategic priorities that support UVM’s vision of achieving inclusive excellence.

Moving forward, each academic and administrative unit within the university is expected to use this framework as a planning tool to help guide strategic decisions, programs, and services committed to building a diverse, inclusive, and more multiculturally competent university community. In order to support the implementation of this framework, the President’s Commission for Inclusive Excellence hosted several community forums for students, faculty, and staff in spring 2016.

Currently plans are underway to develop a process and accompanying tools to support the colleges and divisions across UVM in implementing the *Framework for Inclusive Excellence*. This process will include assessment, creation of action plans, and an evaluation and review of these plans.

**Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award**

For the third consecutive year, the University of Vermont received a Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine. The HEED Award is a national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. The HEED Award process consists of a comprehensive and rigorous application that includes questions about the recruitment and retention of students and employees, programmatic efforts, infrastructure for inclusive excellence, and leadership’s support for diversity and inclusion.
The standards of the HEED award are high and UVM was selected based on the university’s exemplary diversity and inclusion initiatives and its ability to embrace a broad definition of diversity on its campus.

**UVM in the Top 30 LGBTQ-Friendly Schools**

The University of Vermont has been named a 2016 Top 30 “Best of the Best” among LGBTQ-inclusive colleges and universities. In order to be in the Top 30 listing, an institution had to score the highest percentages in the LGBTQ-friendly benchmarks for policies, programs and practices. The listing this year includes colleges with student populations from 807 to over 45,000, public and private schools alike. It is worth noting that thanks in part to the hard work of our LGBTQA Center, UVM has been listed among the best many times, as far back as 2009.

**The University of Vermont’s Blackboard Jungle Decennial Celebration**

The Division of Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs will be hosting the University of Vermont’s annual Blackboard Jungle Symposium for its 10th year this March 2017. The Blackboard Jungle Symposium is designed to support UVM’s faculty (particularly those teaching courses for UVM six-credit diversity requirement), staff, and others seeking to develop skills, knowledge, and a deeper understanding of diversity that supports excellence in teaching, service, and research. The symposium sessions create “open spaces” where all members of our community can participate in authentic dialogue, reflection, and expanded learning to promote inclusive excellence for all.

This year’s decennial celebration will include national and campus experts engaging participants in discussions pertaining to issues of race, color, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin, socio-economic status, cultural and/or geographic background, religious belief, age, and disability. This annual event provides opportunities for faculty and staff to inspire each other by sharing experiences, wisdom and strategies for educating and guiding our students at UVM, and equipping them with tools that will enhance their experiences in an increasingly diverse world.