



UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE ACTION PLAN 2022-2027

Introduction

Background

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at the University of Vermont is home to students, faculty, and staff from six academic departments, three cross-college undergraduate programs, and UVM Extension.

CALS engages in teaching, research, and community outreach activities that promote sustainability, health, and well-being at scales ranging from cells to society.

CALS reaches across Vermont with a strong and visible presence on campus coupled with farms, research facilities, and Extension offices in nearly every county of the state.

CALS focuses on natural environments, agriculture, social and biological scholarship, and community engagement to serve Vermont, while translating our impact across the world. In this context, we define our mission and vision as follows:

Mission - Our mission is to deliver collaborative, transformative research, academics, and outreach that create critical thinkers and problem solvers to build resilient, sustainable, inclusive, and healthy communities and environments.

Vision - We *envision* a college that moves society continuously towards science-informed decisions to help our community and environments thrive.

The CALs Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee was established in 2019 to collaborate with both the Dean and College faculty, staff, and students to develop College-level initiatives that focus on matters related to equity, diversity and inclusion. During the 2019-2020 academic year the EDI Committee codified its mission, definitions, and by-laws, institutionalizing it as a standing committee of the College. The Committee consists of representatives from each unit within CALs and members are appointed for a one-year term, renewable up to three years. Since its establishment in 2019, the Committee has carried out its charge to consult with and advise the CALs Dean on matters pertaining to diversity and inclusion and advance strategic priorities surrounding DEI initiatives within the College, including the development of this Inclusive Excellence Action Plan.



The College uses the following definitions of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, developed by the CALS EDI Committee and adopted in 2020:

Equity: Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Diversity: Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, we embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, ability status, sexual orientation, class, veteran status, socioeconomic status, ability, education level, marital status, language, and body size. Our definition also includes diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. We also recognize that individuals affiliate with multiple identities.

Inclusion: Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate, and conditions that support a sense of belonging across multiple identities and communities. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It's important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition, diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive.

Inclusive Excellence Committee/Implementation Team Members

Name	Title	College/Division/Department/Unit
Senior Leader	Dean Leslie Parise	CALS Dean's Office
UDC Representative	Professor Jane Molofsky	Dept. of Plant Biology
UDC Representative	Senior Project Manager, Rachel Leslie	CALS Dean's office
CALS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Members	Professor Yolanda Chen	Dept. of Plant and Soil Science
	Entomology Educator Scott Lewins	UVM Extension
	Asst. Professor Dan Tobin	Dept. of Community Development & Applied Economics
	Lecturer Cory Morgan	Dept. of Animal & Veterinary Sciences
	Assoc. Professor Mary Tierney	Dept. of Plant Biology



	Clinical Asst. Professor Farryl Bertmann	Dept. of Nutrition & Food Sciences
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Some units within CALS have also established committees focusing on issues relating to equity, diversity and inclusion. For example, Extension’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, established in fall 2019, predates the existence of the College-level EDI Committee and consists of faculty and staff throughout the organization. Current membership (Fall 2022) includes: Chis Callahan, Mark Isselhardt, Scott Lewins, Becky Maden, Allison Smith and Sara Stowell. In addition, the Department of Plant Biology has established a DEI committee focusing on increasing DEI initiatives in the department; other departments have identified a DEI spokesperson to address DEI concerns while others are considering their own committees. Representatives of all committees were consulted in the development of this plan and will be integral to its implementation.

Units within the College

- Department of Animal and Veterinary Sciences
- Department of Community Development and Applied Economics
- Department of Microbiology & Molecular Genetics
- Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences
- Department of Plant Biology
- Department of Plant and Soil Science
- UVM Extension



Part 1 – Integrative Learning: Academic Success Goals and Co-Curricular Learning

Academic Success Goals – Catamount Core

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Implement inclusive teaching methods across the Catamount Core curriculum. By 2025, 80% of faculty will use inclusive teaching methods across all courses.	CALS Dean’s Office and Academic Department Chairs	2023-2025
Expand curriculum to include more D1, D2, sustainability and global citizenship courses. By 2025, launch three new courses.	Academic Department Chairs and CALS curriculum committee	2023-2025
Ensure that all faculty and staff include a diverse range of cultural and socioeconomic perspectives in class materials used in formal classroom settings, as well as in labs and journal clubs.	Academic Department Chairs, individual faculty	2023-2026

Co-Curricular Learning

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Increase diversity of external speakers who are invited to give seminars or teach within academic departments.	Academic Department chairs	2023
By Fall 2023, create an annual event around issues of DEI in fields relevant to CALS. Host in partnership with other UVM units, community groups and alumni when possible.	CALS Dean’s Office	2023



Increase funding for all students to participate in internships, research, and/or study abroad opportunities by \$100,000 by 2026 and prioritize funding for underrepresented students.	CALS Dean's office & CALS Major Gifts officer	2026
By 2027, 100% of students will engage in service-learning, internships, research and/or study abroad experiences.	CALS Student Success Advisors/Student Services Team, CALS faculty advisors, CALS internship coordinators (partners: FOUR Office, CELO, Career Center)	2027

Part 2 – Recruitment and Retention

S.M.A.R.T. Goals – Faculty & Staff

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Beginning in fall 2023, faculty and staff search committees will advertise positions through organizations that specifically serve underrepresented populations. All search committees for faculty and staff positions will show evidence of using best practices for interviewing and recruiting candidates from diverse backgrounds.	CALS Dean (Leslie Parise), Extension Director, CALS HR, Unit Chairs, Search Committees	2023
Retain under-represented* faculty and staff through creating a sense of belonging and opportunity within CALS. <i>*under-represented in this goal refers to markers of diversity that are tracked at UVM - race/ethnicity, gender</i>	CALS Dean (Leslie Parise), Extension Director, Unit Chairs, Search Committees	2023-2024

S.M.A.R.T. Goals – Students

Division of Enrollment Management (DEM) Strategic Enrollment Plan

CALS Subgoal: Maximize enrollment, increase retention and graduation rates of students.

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
By the 2025 Campus Climate Survey, at least 90% of students, staff and faculty will respond affirmatively that they are aware of how to report a campus bias incident.	CALS Communications, CALS Student Services, Dept. Chairs	2023-2025
Retain 90% of first-generation and BIPOC undergraduate students.	CALS Student Services team	2022-2023
Develop student-centered activities that foster community and a sense of belonging among all CALS graduate and undergraduate students.	CALS Deans office, CALS Student Services team, Dept. Chairs, graduate training program leaders	2023-2026
Partner with UVM Admissions, and Strategic Communications to increase inclusivity of the UVM brand (and therefore CALS) to appeal to and attract a diverse student, faculty and staff population.	CALS Deans office in partnership with UVM Admissions, Strategic Communications and CALS units	2023-2025

Part 3 – Professional and Faculty Development

S.M.A.R.T. Goal – Advising

In Spring 2022, CALS moved to a new professional advising program for undergraduate students in which all first-year students are advised by professional advising staff during their first year and transition to an advisor within their academic department at the beginning of their second year. This change was part of a broader university-wide shift toward a professional advising model for all new UVM undergraduate students. The following goals aim to support this transition and strengthen advising for all students in CALS.

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Provide tools to ensure that all CALS advisors have the necessary knowledge, skills and support systems to advise diverse undergraduate and graduate students (race, LGBTQ+, ability, socioeconomic status, immigration status, home country, etc.).	CALS Dean, CALS Associate Dean for Academic Programs/Student Services	2022 - 2027

S.M.A.R.T. Goals - Professional & Faculty Development

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Include professional development around DEI topics for all faculty and staff. Incorporate DEI measures into new RPT guidelines. Implement DEI-related questions into BLUE course evaluation surveys by spring 2024.	CALS Dean’s Office, Unit Chairs	2022 - 2024
In collaboration with Graduate College, explore a train the trainer mentoring program for CALS faculty.	Unit Chairs and Departmental Graduate Program Coordinators, CALS EDI Committee	2024 - 2025
By 2025, 100% of CALS faculty and staff have time allocated in their schedules/ workloads to support DEI initiatives and professional development.	CALS Dean’s Office and CALS HR with support from CALS Supervisors and Unit Chairs	2022 - 2025
Develop, launch and engage CALS staff in a Community of Practice centering professional development	CALS Dean’s Office, Staff Culture Committee with support from Supervisors	2023 - 2025



The University of Vermont

and intercultural competency building.		
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Part 4 – Accessibility

S.M.A.R.T. Goals – Universal Design

“Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits. By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, universal design creates products, services and environments that meet peoples' needs. Simply put, universal design is good design” (What is Universal Design, 2020).

Increase emphasis on online/hybrid (online/in-person) classes to encourage wider diversity of student enrollment with need for flexible schedule.	CALS Dean’s Office, Faculty instructors, partnerships with PACE	2023 - 2027
Partner with College of Education and Social Services (CESS) to implement specific aspects of universal design most appropriate for CALS offerings.	CALS Dean’s Office in partnership with CESS	2023 - 2027

S.M.A.R.T. Goal – Physical Accessibility

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
By 2026, conduct assessment of CALS facilities to determine accessibility barriers.	CALS Facilities Manager, Dean’s Office	2026

S.M.A.R.T. Goal – Digital Accessibility

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Expand meeting formats to increase accessibility and reach more diverse learners.	All faculty/staff in CALS responsible for hosting events or meetings.	2023 - 2027



Incorporate accessibility guidelines into event planning process.		
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S.M.A.R.T. Goal - Cognitive Accessibility

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Ensure 100% academic unit faculty are familiar with Student Accessibility Services' offerings and understand how to support accommodations in their courses.	CALS Dean's Office and Assoc. Dean for Academic Programs & Student Services, Academic Dept. Chairs	2023

Part 5 – International Inclusion and Global Education

S.M.A.R.T. Goals – Systems

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Enhance international grad students, postdocs and faculty experiences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey grad students/PhDs/Postdocs and faculty mentors to better understand the international student experience. • Create a mentorship program to orient new international graduate students and postdocs, and faculty to campus, Burlington and Vermont. 	CALS Dean’s Office	2022-2024
Increase access to international learning opportunities for all students.	Academic Department Chairs, CALS Dean’s Office	2025
Ensure 100% of CALS faculty and staff are familiar with Plain Language guidelines and usage.	CALS Dean’s Office	2023
Ensure CALS educational content includes non-US examples and perspectives in teaching material and workshops.	All CALS faculty, Unit Chairs, CALS Dean’s Office	2023

Part 6 – Process

CALS underwent a college-wide strategic planning process in 2021-2022. The 2022 CALS Strategic Plan therefore served as the foundation for the development of this Inclusive Excellence Action Plan. The CALS UDC representatives (Rachel Leslie, CALS Senior Project Manager and Jane Molofsky, Professor of Plant Biology) met regularly throughout Fall 2022 to integrate the CALS Strategic Plan into the campus-wide inclusive excellence planning process and plan template in partnership with CALS Dean Leslie Parise and the College's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The plan was shared with all faculty and staff in CALS for feedback in April 2023. The final version of this plan will be adopted in May 2023; however, it is important to note that this plan is a working document and will evolve over time.

Timeline:

- September 2022 - UDC representatives meet to go over the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan template and expectations and set a bimonthly meeting for the plan development.
- October 2022 - UDC representatives meet with Dean Leslie Parise to discuss the CALS Inclusive Excellence Action Plan and its relationship to the current CALS Strategic Plan.
- October 2022 - UDC representatives incorporate the CALS strategic plan into Inclusive Excellence Action Plan working document.
- November 2022 - UDC representatives send Inclusive Excellence Action Plan working document to the CALS DEI committee for suggestions and revisions.
- November 2022 - UDC representatives meet to revise the plan.
- December 2022 – Draft plan reviewed by Associate Dean Catherine Finley-Woodruff. Draft plan further revised with Dean Parise and CALS DEI Committee. Draft plan submitted to Vice Provost and Division for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- January – April 2023 – Plan revised based on feedback from UDC leadership, discussion among UDC representatives and further internal discussions. The plan was circulated to all CALS faculty and staff for input.
- May 2023 – Final version of plan will be submitted for public consumption.