



# OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH (OVPR)

## INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE ACTION PLAN 2022-2027

LAST UPDATED NOVEMBER 14, 2023

### Introduction and Background

The Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) within the University of Vermont (UVM) spans a diversity of interested parties across campus and is growing as UVM continues to emphasize growth of its research mission. OVPR supports research, scholarship, and creative works at UVM centrally and functions to build and support research infrastructure, enable research on and off campus, connect UVM’s research to the Vermont community, and aid in transitioning UVM to R1 status. OVPR provides researchers with institutional support through grant proposal development, pre- and post-award support, specialized instrumentation and maintenance services, animal husbandry, biohazardous support and training, and in areas of legal oversight and research integrity. OVPR additionally houses support for commercialization of technological advances, community and industry outreach and engagement. OVPR has expanded its services while it grew modestly with 123 positions in 2017 increasing to 143 by autumn 2022.

OVPR joined the University Diversity Council (UDC) as a campus unit in summer 2022 and made use of an existing 2019 Research Unit IE Action Plan, but much had changed in 3 years. The OVPR now encompasses additional groups, including the Research Development Office, (established in January 2020, now 10 employees), Animal Care Management, Instrumentation and Technical Services (IMF/TSP), and Directors of University Research Centers. OVPR Directors were interviewed in fall semester 2022 and all indicated a willingness to serve as a resource and/or support efforts related to DEI.

### Subunit(s) within College, Division, Department or Unit

Directors within OVPR are direct reports of Kirk Dombrowski, the VP for Research at UVM. Table 1 shows the number of individuals that are supervised by each director position as of Fall 2022.

**Table 1. Organizational hierarchy for OVPR under Kirk Dombrowski, VP for Research**

Total No. Employees	Leadership Title (Abbreviation of unit if applicable)	Subunits (if applicable)	No. in Subunit (if applicable)
3	Director of Operations and Chief of Staff	OVPR Business, OVPR Communications; MMSSC	
3	Director of Office of Animal Care Management (OACM)		
54	Director of Instrumentation Technical Services (IMF/TSP)		
51	Executive Director for Research Administration and Integrity (RAI)	Director of Research Integrity Administration (RAI)	1
		Director of Research Protections Office (RPO)	9
		Director of Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA)	37
		Director of Electronic Research Systems (ERS)	4
3	Director of UVM Innovations		
10	Director of Research Development (RD)		
3	Director, Office of Engagement (OOE)		
20	Directors of University Research Centers	Director of Gund Institute for the Environment	4
		Director of EPSCoR	8
		Director of VBRN	6



<i>Still to come: WATER Institute; Institute of Agroecology; Institute for Rural Partnerships</i>	Director of VACC	2
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## Part 1 – Integrative Learning: Academic Success Goals and/or Co-Curricular Learning

Academic success goals are not applicable for the OVPR, which is not an academic unit, but instead serves as a major driver of the research enterprise of the University. Student interaction occurs through training students performing research on animals or through research institutes, from compliance requirements working with RPO, through IMF/TSP or Innovations internship programs, or through grant writing workshops.

## Part 2 – Recruitment and Retention

The OVPR Unit is comprised nearly exclusively of full-time positions, (5 of 135 were mid or part-time as of Fall 2021). Recruitment for UVM Staff is generally more attractive since the forming of UVM Staff United, a bargaining unit with a new agreement in 2022 that resulted in increased wages (including increased baseline wages for all positions) and enhanced benefits for UVM Staff. Recent policy changes to allow for remote work where/when possible, also makes UVM a more attractive employer and enables recruitment from locations beyond State boundaries, increasing the diversity of candidate pools. Leaders may extend advertising positions in advance of starting interviews with qualified candidates to ensure a diverse pool.

COVID-19 caused increased personnel changes in many areas with retirements, position shifts, new hires, and some resignations in OVPR. Exit interview information collected by Human Resources is not shared with departments due to privacy and other concerns, which limits understanding of employee entries or exits around inclusivity or equity concerns.

## Demographic Headcount

Over 94% of employees within the OVPR Unit are Staff with the balance of positions being Management and one Officer of Administration. Most are full-time employees, only 5 are not (4 mid-time, 1 part-time). In 2019 >50% of Research employees identified as female, including at director-level positions, with diverse cultural representation self-identified through a survey of the Research Unit at that time. The 2022 Campus Climate Survey data indicates 57% of OVPR employees identify as female, and many remain in positions at level of director level or higher. We relied solely on Human Resources and UVM OIRA for demographic data and did not conduct any additional interviews or surveys on the many other axes of diversity that employees may bring to our unit. Please note that OVPR is represented as the “Research” Unit through PeopleSoft categorization, though we are the OVPR Unit for the UDC and for the IE Action Plan.

Generally, demographic data helps us to understand possible perspectives and viewpoints that are missing from our collective table. Greater cultural awareness and focus on DEI also supports successful recruitment and retention in a competitive job market, to recruit well qualified, diverse candidates to open positions. There is also a trend of federal funders’ increasing focus on equitable STEM opportunities and inclusion of people from underrepresented communities in research, further supporting the need for the OVPR Unit to grow its DEI capabilities in support of UVM achieving desired research-related outcomes. (See Goal #1 at end). These efforts are also relevant to Goals #4 and #6 (also described at end of plan).

OVPR demographic information as of September 2022 found that the OVPR unit is whiter (86.7% white in 2021) than the total UVM employee population (which is only 77% white). The local Burlington community is 82.6% white, not Hispanic or Latinx, and OVPR does not fully represent the immediate local



hiring pool; but is a closer representation of Chittenden County as a whole (which is 87.7% white, not Hispanic or Latinx).

(Sources: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/burlingtoncityvermont>, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/chittendencountyvermont/RHI825221>).

Diversity has increased in recent years with non-white employee percentages increasing from 7.3% to 13.3% between Fall 2017 to Fall 2021, but not yet reaching parity with the rest of the UVM community, nor the surrounding city (data from UVM OIRA, September 2022).

## **2022 Campus Climate Survey Data**

We shared 2022 Campus Climate Survey results with leaders, and plan to do this again with the 2025 results (the next planned Campus Climate Survey date) (see also **Goal #2 on increasing survey participation**).

## **Division of Enrollment Management (DEM) Strategic Enrollment Plan**

Does not apply to OVPR which does not enroll any students.

## **Part 3 – Professional and Faculty Development**

An initial finding from our director level interviews was that OVPR is not a cohesive unit. We determined developing a communication channel inclusive of the entire OVPR Unit may help build community, promote integration, and break down silos within OVPR. Through centralized communication we hope to promote a more connected, highly effective research team to support and propel UVM research forward. Strong OVPR-wide communication will enable promotion of events and training opportunities around research, DEI, or other pertinent activities of wide interest. (See **Goal #3**).

Interviews with OVPR Leaders identified that events, training, and resources related to DEI specifically were being sought out. We surfaced CITI trainings, Blackboard Jungle past presentations, and the yearly Inclusive Excellence Symposium series by the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as possible options for recorded materials within UVM's ecosystem for use; but these and other future opportunities need to be sorted for relevance and accessibility before broadcasting. (See **Goal #4**).

The yearly Inclusive Excellence Symposium will also be highlighted as a key event for OVPR employees in 2023 and in future years. (Update in May 2023 the IE Symposia were advertised broadly through the newly established OVPR Listserv as the result of this IE Action plan). OVPR Unit leaders identified a need for more training on DEI and difficult conversations. Professional development opportunities can be shared going forward through the OVPR Listserv.

## **Part 4 – Accessibility**

### **Universal Design**

OVPR follows the universal design policy for the University.

### **Physical Accessibility**

N/A for remote workers.

Animal care facility work requires that one be able to bend and lift 50 lbs., as requirements of the position. This is stated in hiring documentation when people apply; however, while it would be difficult to fulfill the job responsibilities if dealing with a physical disability, the Director was open to considering all reasonable accommodations to make this possible.



Notably, regarding equity, the IMF/TSP Director has actively worked to promote equality, emphasizes management on-site visits to remote locations twice weekly, and has tried to equalize benefits as much as possible.

### **Digital Accessibility**

The IMF/TSP subunit exemplifies how digital accessibility can enable asynchronous participation by necessity. This subunit is spread across 4 states in the New England area (VT, ME, NY, and NH) in several locations. On-site training is universally difficult in the IMF/TSP subunit because the nature of the role requires on-site work. Recording presentations and content to have people review asynchronously has also proven effective for inclusivity of remote team members, or those that are busy with a job during the event time.

### **Cognitive Accessibility**

As an example of inclusive cognitive accessibility, the Animal Management staff communicate with researchers about animal health using cards with an animal outline drawn and any issues circled to indicate where the issue is in order to clearly communicate without requiring a lot of descriptive text – it was found that this was both faster and much clearer for timely communication on animal health.

### **Sustainability**

No content at this time.

## **Part 5 – International Inclusion and Global Education**

### **Analysis of Systems & Analysis of Support**

We intend to inventory OVPR systems, policies, procedures and learn how DEI work and inclusion of internationally identifying individuals in or who are served by OVPR are supported in areas of Linguistic Access and Inclusion (ex: using Plain English), Cultural Access and Inclusion (ex: using narrow US-specific cultural references in courses, programs, etc.) and Intentional solicitation and incorporation of international perspectives (ex: in data collection, in leadership roles, etc.). (See Goal #5).

#### **OVPR SMART GOALS:**

**Goal #1)** We will monitor OVPR demographic information annually each Fall Semester to observe and broadcast trends and share data with leaders to increase awareness in hiring decisions.

**Goal #2)** Promote participation in and share results of next Campus Climate Survey results via the OVPR listserv for 2025.

**Goal #3)** Maintain OVPR Listserv as a communication channel for community building within OVPR, celebrations, volunteering, DEI event or leadership training. Update annually in Fall Semester with current employees and recommend leaders add new employees as part of onboarding process.

**Goal #4)** Inventory DEI training available through CITI. Share broadly relevant training opportunities via OVPR Listserv.

**Goal #5)** We intend to review our systems, policies and procedures beginning in 2024 for inclusivity, accessibility, and representation of various identities.



The University of Vermont

**Goal #6)** Assess the value and opportunity to develop DEI proposal submission (with a DEI component and DEI focused categories) for award tracking within UVM CLICK. Effort supported by UDC OVPR representative, SPA leadership, SPA Business Systems Analyst.

### **Part 6 – Review Schedule**

(Spring each year is an opportunity to report on progress – where we are, what we’ve accomplished, where we’re headed).

**Spring 2024**

**Spring 2025**

**Spring 2026**

**Spring 2027**

## **Part 7 (Optional) – Process**

As the OVPR Unit was established summer of 2022, with first Jessi Waite then Deb McAdoo joining in the fall, we first needed to figure out “who” OVPR was since expanding and adding new services since the last 2019 iteration of the IE Action Plan. We did this by using organizational charts, talking with leadership, and generally getting oriented. We learned through the University Diversity Council more about the goals of this Inclusive Excellence Action Plan and the planned uses and implementation of these plans at UVM.

We proceeded to interview OVPR leadership, including Victoria Jones who led the first IE Action Plan effort for OVPR (the “Research Unit”) in 2019, and followed with interviews with many of the subunit leaders. Notes from leader meetings were captured in the Teams Notes in the OVPR DEI Teams channel, as shared working space for just our OVPR UDC work. We recognize that we have not yet met with all leaders, nor included all OVPR employees in this conversation. We intend to continue these conversations in 2023 by broadening input through a two-question survey (*what do you know/could you contribute in DEI, and what do you want to know/learn about in DEI*) once we have an OVPR communication channel established (update: OVPR Listserv was established in late Fall 2022). We are continuing to work on the SMART goals outlined here and use this living document to communicate and plan the path forward to improve DEI and climate within OVPR.