

RUBENSTEIN SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE ACTION PLAN 2022-2027

Introduction

Background

The School of Natural Resources was established in 1973 and became the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources in 2003 with a generous gift from Steven Rubenstein. Throughout this document we refer to our academic unit as the “Rubenstein School”, “the School”, and “RSENR” interchangeably.

The School is comprised of five undergraduate programs and four graduate programs. It has approximately 1,000 undergraduate students, 130 graduate students, 50 full-time faculty, and more than 50 staff. The Rubenstein School has long been committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just community. This work has taken shape in many forms, from the development and evolution of an undergraduate Core Curriculum that examines racism in the field of natural resources, to the launch of two graduate programs built upon the premise of dismantling systems of oppression.

In addition to these curricular and programmatic offerings, the Rubenstein School has demonstrated a commitment to examining its own history, processes, and practices that may perpetuate marginalization. Diversity initiatives in the Rubenstein School date back to 1988 beginning with a focus on student recruitment and scholarships. Over time, initiatives included faculty and staff of color recruitment and retention, professional development, community building, and curriculum development.

In August 2017 the School hired an external consultant to conduct a year-long Diversity and Equity Assessment. Concurrently, an undergraduate conducted her senior research thesis on racism in Rubenstein. These research and reflection initiatives took place as activism grew across campus. A student group named NoNames for Justice presented a list of demands to the University administration and to the leaders of academic units, that called for several changes to institutional culture, staff and faculty hiring practices, curriculum, and pedagogy to address social injustice and inequity. These students described their college experience as far more stressful, and rife with obstacles compared to the experiences of their mainstream white peers (Vea, 2020).

Following the equity assessment, the School adapted the Rubenstein Diversity Task Force (created in 1991) into a committee enshrined in the School bylaws, of faculty, staff, and students to continue the work of moving the school toward equity and inclusion. The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Action (IDEA) Committee generates and contributes to the development of ongoing diversity initiatives across all aspects of the Rubenstein School, it is a key responsible party for implementing this plan and holding the School accountable to its goals and outcomes.



During the 2020-21 academic year, the Rubenstein School engaged in scenario planning to create a bold vision for the School to be a catalyst for positive change in response to rapidly evolving world conditions. Through this unique process the Rubenstein community created the School's current mission question, which asks:

How can RSENR unleash empathy, passion, innovation, and creativity to heal and radically change human-environment systems in a just, equitable, and ecological direction?

In short, how can we **UNLEASH EPIC** (empathy, passion, innovation, and creativity)? [The Rubenstein School's full strategic plan, including its core and enabling strategies is available online.](#)

The students, faculty and staff of the Rubenstein School recognize that environmental and natural resource problems are thoroughly intertwined with issues of equity and social justice. We have made progress in the decades following the founding of our School and in the years since the [Diversity and Equity Assessment](#), completed in 2018. There is always more that can be done, and we reaffirm our commitment to our 1996 diversity plan mission statement:

The environmental and natural resource disciplines and professions have been conspicuously underrepresented by both individuals and perspectives that reflect all peoples of the nation and the world. We recognize that enhancing diversity in our School, University, and professions entails much more than simply recruiting people of color. As we strive to create an inclusive, equitable, and truly pluralistic perspective for natural resources, we must be willing to change what we teach and how we teach, incorporating diverse ideas and values into our curriculum.

Although not all our overarching goals fit neatly into categories, our vision for the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources is to create a diverse community in which:

- All members feel welcome and included.
- Equity is centered in our curriculum, business practices, and policies.
- Opportunities for personal and professional growth are available to all.
- Our curriculum reflects diverse perspectives and ways of knowing and being in the environment.

The content of this Inclusive Excellence Action Plan was gleaned from conversations with the RSENR community from Summer through Fall 2022. We recognize that our students, staff, and faculty are very active community members but often we are not aware of current opportunities or possibilities for collaboration and synergy. The goals crafted below represent a desire to be with and learn from each other, to amplify our efforts, and to deepen relationship across communities. We also acknowledge that some of the goals from different categories in this plan are interrelated and lead to redundancies among subsections of our plan.

Inclusive Excellence Committee/Implementation Team Members

Name	Title	College/Division/Department/Unit
Allan Strong	Interim Dean, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Alayna Howard	Communications Lead, UDC Representative, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Marie Veal	Assistant Dean Student Services, UDC Representative, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Luben Dimov	Senior Lecturer, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Mariano Rodriguez-Cabal	Research Assistant Professor, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Julianna White	Research Program Coordinator, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR , Lake Champlain Sea Grant, Vermont Water Resources and Lake Studies Center, Northeastern States Research Cooperative
Soham Mehta	Undergraduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Troy Ahmed	Undergraduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Juliana Ward	Undergraduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Grant Burton	Graduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR

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

The Rubenstein School is structured as a complex system within one department such that the following teams and programs represent crucial functions across the School:

- Undergraduate Programs:
 - Environmental Sciences
 - Forestry
 - Parks, Recreation and Tourism
 - Sustainability, Ecology and Policy
 - Wildlife and Fisheries Biology
- RSENR Business Service Center
- RSENR Student Services
- Dean's Office and Leadership Team
- Graduate, Teaching, and Research Faculty
- Rubenstein Graduate Student Association



- RSENR Student Advisory Board
- RSENR Community of Practice
- Research units with significant staff representation (Spatial Analysis Laboratory, Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative, Lake Champlain Sea Grant, Rubenstein Ecosystem Sciences Laboratory, Spear Street Forest Sciences Laboratory)

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

Academic Success Goals – Catamount Core

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Content around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is central to the field of environment and natural resources (E&NR) and integrated into the RSENR curriculum. We want to ensure that DEI content is truly integral and not supplemental. Further, while we in practice begin our DEI learning and teaching on the history and issues of racial justice, we aspire to expand our understanding of DEI and our skills to work across difference beyond only racial identity to multiple identities and multiple expressions of our identities.

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Expand faculty involvement in the BIPOC and other diverse speaker series to provide non-dominant narratives around environment and natural resources issues. Investigate and expand networks from which to draw possible speakers. Identify obstacles to increasing the number of diverse guest speakers. Outcome: Utilize existing gift funding to diversify perspectives shared in RSENR courses, create a network of guest speakers and UVM faculty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSENR Faculty, Program Directors, Dean, Office of DEI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three to four speakers in each program each year: at least 5 end Fall 2023; at least 15 total by end Spring 2023; at least 30 total by end of Fall 2024.
Conduct pre and post surveys in NR 1060 (Race and Culture in Natural Resources, a required D1 first year course) addressing student attitudes toward learning outcomes and skill development. Outcome: Utilize survey results to ensure learning outcomes are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NR 1060 instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually at the beginning and end of the spring semester. Beginning Spring 2024.



met and course content is revised regularly.		
Create a useful and accessible repository of resources to aid faculty in building DEI content in courses. Outcome: RSENR community accesses and continuously updates shared knowledge to improve DEI learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RSENR Community of Practice and IDEA Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete by end of Spring 2024
Assess equity content across syllabi in RSENR core courses and required courses in each of the majors. Create a curricula and research/scholarship portfolio that includes Traditional Ecological Knowledge, global perspectives, environmental justice, and diverse ways of knowing and being. Outcome: Determine the current level of equity-centered content and diverse perspectives shared in RSENR and take steps to ensure these topics and perspectives are integral and intentionally scaffolded in curricula and scholarship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim Dean, Assistant Dean for Student Services, Associate Deans, Program Directors, RGSA, SAB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment completed by the end of 2025 academic year. With longer-term goal of scaffolded DEI content in each of the programs in RSENR by 2027.

Co-Curricular Learning

Co-curricular learning is a large part of the overall experience for RSENR students and it is supported in various ways by staff and faculty. Scaffolded and intentionally designed for content and skills-based learning, the required [Core Curriculum](#) includes NR 1010: Natural History and Human Ecology, a year-long lecture and field labs for all first year students. It also includes a long-standing Diversity 1 course, NR 1060: Race & Culture in Natural Resources, which serves as a means for first year students to build relationship with their peers and RSENR faculty through the practices of critical reflection and dialogue around issues of environmental justice and multiple ways of knowing.

Rubenstein seniors participate in a core capstone service-learning course—NR 4060: Environmental Problem Solving—with community partners where skills in working across difference are applied to real problems. Students also participate in many internship and research experiences, including our [Perennial Internship Program](#), now in its tenth year, that features over 30 community partners offering paid, academic experiences. Many students participate in



RSENR and UVM Clubs, currently RSENR students are in leadership roles with POCO (People of Color Outdoors), UVM SACNAS (Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science), ISA (International Student Association), and Headwaters Magazine.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Create a list of RSENR Community Partners with demonstrated leadership in DEI and social justice work. And identify opportunities for DEI knowledge sharing and goal generation with partners that do not have existing goals or expertise. Outcome: Build a useful resource that facilitates long-term partnerships with community groups with whom we can co-create reciprocal DEI goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NR 4060 students (service-learning project); Community of Practice; Internship and Community Based Learning Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate Fall 2023
Clubs associated with RSENR create diversity statements, co-created by club members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club leadership teams, SGA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually
Increase internship and research accessibility and inclusivity to expand opportunities for underrepresented students; connect underrepresented students with professionals; collaborate with faculty to conduct presentations in academic classes for added exposure. Outcome: Every student who desires an internship/research experience can access this opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internship and Community Based Learning Coordinator; Professional Advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer 2024

Part 2 – Recruitment and Retention

Demographic Headcount

2022 Campus Climate Survey Data



The 2022 Campus Climate Survey provided a set of quantitative benchmarks that has allowed us to address areas of improvement for the Rubenstein School to work toward creating a more inclusive community. There are several areas in which RSENR performed strongly (upholding principles of Our Common Ground, dialogue around cultural awareness, recognition of bias, willingness to engage with difference, engaging with tension, and a feeling of belonging). However, there are a number of areas in which RSENR can show improvement. (We note that it can be challenging to disentangle whether issues noted by RSENR respondents are specific to the Rubenstein School or are systemic across UVM). Regardless, it is important that we play our role in striving for continual improvement in creating an inclusive and equitable climate at UVM.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
RSENR faculty, staff and students work to create a more inclusive community. Outcome: Improve the RSENR score for satisfaction with UVM’s efforts towards equity on the basis of race. / Increased sentiment of inclusivity within RSENR, reflected in an increased score on the Climate Survey Data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RSENR Students; RSENR Staff; RSENR Faculty; RSENR Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous over the five-year period of the plan. Measure via Campus Climate Survey data following 2025 survey.
RSENR faculty, staff and students can recognize bias incidents and know the reporting process. Outcome: Improve the RSENR score for observation of a discriminatory practice at UVM. / Improve the RSENR scores for witnessing insulting or disparaging remarks about disability; gender; gender identity and expression; race; and religion, spirituality, or philosophy at the University of Vermont. / Improve the RSENR score for awareness of the protocol for reporting a bias incident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire Community, through professional development opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous over the five-year period of the plan. Measure via Campus Climate Survey data following 2025 survey.

* Although we cannot improve the climate for all of UVM, we will work with faculty, staff, and students to create an inclusive and welcoming climate within the RSENR community.

[Division of Enrollment Management \(DEM\) Strategic Enrollment Plan](#)



“The University of Vermont’s future success will be assured by following these three strategic imperatives: student success and experience; focusing on and expanding upon distinctive research strengths (“healthy societies and healthy minds”); and better realizing our land-grant mission by partnering with communities, businesses, and the state.” -[Amplifying Our Impact: Strategic Vision for UVM](#)

[The Rubenstein School’s Strategic Vision](#) aligns with the statement above. RSENR must transform our recruitment and retention practices toward equity and justice. Expanding interdisciplinary collaboration, new partnerships, and a global presence will inspire innovative and excellent research and education. It will also assist in networking with and recruiting lifelong learners and contributors. The entire RSENR community must focus on shared power, team building, communications, intercultural competence, multiple ways of knowing, and facilitation in its professional and curricular development. Arts, humanities, creativity, and expression are critical pathways to well-being and unleashing empathy.

Reaching our goals requires intentional, integrated, and sustained commitment over the long haul. Amer Ahmed, Vice President for DEI is known to say, “Retention is recruitment”. The goals below build upon the strengths and potential embodied in the people that have been and are already here, on the relationships and initiatives that are on-going, and the emotional and intellectual labor already done.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Evaluate and revise communications to highlight ongoing and longstanding DEI initiatives and services. Align our messaging with our actions (see goals under professional development which can provide material for this goal). Outcome: Current and prospective students hold a collective awareness of opportunities for professional and personal growth, and of DEI initiative results. Initiatives highlighted in messaging and materials for prospective students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Lead, Student Services, Dean and Program Directors. Office of DEI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer and Fall 2023
Strengthen RSENR Alumni networks and increase career development programming. Outcome: Current and prospective students have access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Gifts Officer, UVM Foundation Alumni Relations Staff, RSENR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 and Spring 2024



<p>to environmental professionals (particularly RSENR alumni) and can identify well paid and meaningful environmental career pathways.</p>	<p>Professional Advisors, Communications Lead</p>	
<p>Determinedly search for and hire faculty and staff that represent diverse identities, cultural backgrounds, and ways of knowing. Outcome: RSENR students will have opportunities for support, connection and learning from diverse faculty and staff. Local community members and prospective students find RSENR approachable and collaborative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean, Search Committees, Faculty (peer outreach), Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Search - Fall 2023 and Spring 2024
<p>Increase the diversity of the RSENR undergraduate population by developing relationships with local high schools. Outcome: Members of local communities (including local schools and prospective students) find UVM/RSENR approachable, accessible, and responsive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment & Retention Coordinator, Student Services Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 and ongoing
<p>Award internship funding to admitted BIPOC students. Develop plan for distribution of Chrysalis funding. Outcome: BIPOC students are equitably supported in their pursuit of professional development opportunities and will have clear outline of options for internship timing and funding support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean, Student Financial Services, Recruitment & Retention Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring and Fall 2024

Part 3 – Professional and Faculty/Staff Development

Over the past two years, we have seen a significant increase in the capacity of our faculty and staff to engage with the community around DEI topics. Individually and collectively, faculty and staff have led workshops on a wide variety of DEI topics. Our goal is to continue these workshops in the coming years, specifically integrating diversity into E&NR content, working across difference, centering equity, and creating an inclusive community. Additionally, the workshops and seminars offered by UVM centrally expand the range of professional

development opportunities available to our community. Both faculty and staff have DEI work as one component of workload planning and annual review. Consequently, it may be relatively straightforward to require faculty and staff to attend at least one workshop per semester as part of their workload planning/annual review process. We want to consider how to create accountability around attending professional development opportunities as well as how to incorporate new learnings into daily practices. (We have struggled with the sub-heading of advising here and have tentatively deleted it as our PD goals are broader.)

Advising

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Update RSENR RPT Guidelines to align with the Rubenstein School's Annual Review Criteria and UVM's Green Sheets. Outcome: Faculty see alignment of their DEI work across all measures of performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dean with Special Project support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2023
Conduct an annual faculty survey on anti-racism practices. Outcome: Present results back to faculty and identify areas for improvement and further development collectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dean, Faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual survey deployment in Fall, beginning in 2023.
Create and conduct annual staff survey on anti-racism practices. Outcome: Present results back to staff and identify areas for improvement and further development collectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDEA Committee, Community of Practice, Staff, Supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual survey deployment in Fall, beginning in 2023.
Support and participate in the building of cross-campus seminar series. Outcome: Build community and encourage conversations, peer learning, seminar culture across all UVM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VP for DEI (in conjunction with Deans), Graduate Student Senate, RGSA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer and Fall 2023 and Spring 2024
Conduct two workshops with faculty, staff, and students each semester. Topic ideas include equity lens, macroaggressions, campus climate survey, white supremacy culture, facilitating challenging conversations, inclusive classrooms, working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dean, Associate Deans, IDEA Committee (supporting role) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin Fall 2023



<p>across difference, inclusive pedagogy, decolonial research practices. Outcome: Continue to amplify and highlight DEI work both outside of RSENR and within our own community.</p>		
<p>Create a forum for faculty, staff, and graduate students to share their DEI work. Outcome: Be more informed and develop a greater understanding of the broad array of DEI work happening across RSENR. Community-building opportunity for faculty and staff to share best practices and foster a culture of continuous learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Team (Dean, AD for Graduate Education & Research, AD for Faculty Affairs), Faculty & Staff (participate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum established and piloted by end of Spring 2024

Part 4 – Accessibility

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).

Physical Accessibility

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
<p>Provide a workshop for RSENR faculty on Universal Design for Learning. Outcome: Faculty have the knowledge and resources necessary to design their courses to serve all students and they take steps to do so.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean, AD for Academic Affairs, Center for Teaching and Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer and Fall 2023



<p>Conduct an accessibility audit for RSENR buildings and lab facilities. Outcome: Understand accessibility levels of all RSENR buildings, classrooms, and labs. Use the results of the audit to create a report for the community to reference in course planning and to create a plan to increase accessibility where necessary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AD of Business Operations, UVM Risk Management, UVM’s AAEO Office, Director of Student Accessibility Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 to Spring 2024
<p>Create public transit/travel guide on getting to and from all RSENR locations, including campus buildings, frequent lab sites, and off campus locations. Guidance should consider differing physical abilities and include specific entrance details, parking locations, and elevator locations. Outcome: RSENR buildings, classrooms and labs are accessible for everyone, and people feel well informed about details for travel time and entry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab Coordinator, UVM's AAEO, GIS Service-Learning Student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 to Spring 2024
<p>Develop descriptions of accommodations for all physical needs in RSENR field courses and make available on the website, course catalogue. Outcome: Demonstrate that all physical needs are welcome and accommodated in RSENR.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Lead, AD for Academic Affairs, RSENR Program Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 to Spring 2024

Digital Accessibility

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
<p>Continually review and improve RSENR digital content to ensure compliance with digital accessibility guidelines. Outcome: RSENR digital content is designed for access by all abilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Lead with support for UVM Web Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 and ongoing

Cognitive Accessibility

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Host a workshop on neurodivergent learning for faculty, teaching assistants, and any other interested groups in RSENR. Outcome: People in a teaching or advising role to have the knowledge and resources necessary to best serve students with neurodivergence and they take steps to adapt their practices to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dean, AD for Academic Affairs, Faculty, Teaching Assistants, Advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2023
Host a workshop on best practices for teaching across language difference. Outcome: People in a teaching or advising role have the knowledge and resources necessary to best serve students for which English is not a predominant language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dean, AD for Academic Affairs, Faculty, Teaching Assistants, Advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring 2024

Sustainability

The Rubenstein School explicitly addresses sustainability throughout our teaching, research, and service missions. However, the three-legged stool of sustainability clearly tilts toward environmental sustainability. Although much of our work addresses issues like the carbon footprint of our buildings and operations, we see our goals as a tool to even the legs of the stool, with greater focus on the cultural/social and economic components of sustainability, particularly for our community members. These include a more explicit incorporation of an equity lens into our practices and policies and expanding the concept of sustainability to include more diverse perspectives.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Create a guide for RSENR community to consider equity when purchasing supplies or services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AD of Business Operations, RSENR Business Service Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2023



<p>Facilitate payment to BIPOC-LGBTQ- women-owned and/or local companies. Outcome: RSENR business transactions support equity-building for historically marginalized people.</p>		
<p>Reduce single occupancy travel by RSENR community. Accommodate hybrid work and encourage carpooling, public transportation, and walk/bike when people travel to campus. Develop or share resources for the RSENR community to plan sustainable forms of travel. Outcome: The RSENR Community is encouraged and empowered to reduce the environmental impacts of travel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSENR Leadership, entire RSENR Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2024

Part 5 – International Inclusion and Global Education

The Rubenstein School has a small population of international students, faculty, and staff. As a result, our existing systems and supports have been created with U.S. citizens in mind. Through the engagement sessions and surveys administered to inform this plan, many opportunities for improvement were identified. In some instances, the barriers and burdens faced by international students, faculty, and staff relate to federal restrictions, financial regulations, and University-wide policies. While specific goals for the Rubenstein School to address these challenges is out of scope, we have noted this crucial feedback in an appendix to this plan and will aim to represent these challenges to UVM departments and leadership that have more potential to drive systemwide change.

Analysis of Systems

How do your systems, policies, and procedures support or inhibit the presence of foreign nationals at UVM?

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
<p>Strengthen RSENR’s international reach through dedicated alumni outreach, faculty relationship building, and pursuit of research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA Committee and Subcommittee, UVM Foundation Alumni Relations Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build subcommittee in Fall 2023. Plan for ongoing engagement and growth by end of 2024.



<p>opportunities. Create a subcommittee of the IDEA Committee or a Working Group to assess and build RSENr's international network. Outcome: RSENr international relationships and research opportunities increase.</p>		
<p>Establish a mechanism to fund visiting international faculty and/or research at institutions outside the U.S. Prioritize international research by RSENr faculty and graduate students to support network building. Outcome: Increase RSENr's work and partnerships globally by reducing barriers to current collaboration with international partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA Committee International Subcommittee, Dean, Major Gifts Officer, OIE, AD of Business Operations, Provost's Office, OVPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund and proposal process in place by end of Spring 2024.

Analysis of Support

How does your unit support inclusion of internationally identifying individuals who are in your unit or are served by your unit?

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
<p>Build an onboarding guide to RSENr and UVM for international faculty, staff, and students. Include a list of willing mentors and the languages they speak, list of public services, and FAQs. Encourage mentorship through stipends and create formal pairings of existing international faculty and students with incoming faculty and students. Outcome: RSENr's international faculty and students are aware of support systems at UVM and in the surrounding community, strong connections and formal mentorship relationships are available upon arrival in RSENr.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA Committee International Subcommittee, RSENr HR, AD of Academic Affairs, OIE, DEI Office, RSENr Communications Lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 and Spring 2024



<p>Conduct a RSENR community audit of international partnerships including research collaborations, professional contacts, current international faculty, and graduate students, to expand our marketing reach. Outcome: RSENR has a map of its network of international partners to better share its current reach and identify opportunities for increasing diversity and facilitating recruitment of students outside the U.S.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IDEA Committee, Provost's Office (UVM GO), Advanced GIS Student, UVM Foundation Alumni Relations Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• End Spring 2024
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The University of Vermont

Part 6 – Review Schedule

Spring 2023

Spring 2024

Spring 2025

Spring 2026

Spring 2027

Part 7 (Optional) – Process

The Rubenstein School University Diversity Council representatives lead the process for the development of this plan with extensive support from School leadership and the IDEA Committee. A primary goal was to ensure that the process itself be inclusive and representative of all Rubenstein School stakeholder groups. The process began with a series of surveys and engagement sessions to collect feedback and host conversation with members of the Rubenstein community.

Initial Assessment:

- Reviewed Campus Climate Survey Data
- Completed DICE Inventory

Engagement Sessions:

- Faculty and Staff Retreat to kick off the fall 2022 semester with breakout sessions to discuss the inclusive planning process, to review the DICE Inventory, and to draft priorities across all faculty and staff stakeholder groups in Rubenstein.
- Undergraduate engagement session with twelve students, led by undergraduate IDEA Committee members Troy Ahmed and Soham Mehta.
- Graduate engagement session with fifteen students, led by Alayna Howard and Marie Vea and supported by Rubenstein School Graduate Student Association President Lucy Drummond.
- International engagement session with nine students, staff, and faculty. Lead by IDEA Committee members Soham Mehta and Mariano Rodriguez-Cabal.

Surveys:

- Faculty survey
- Staff survey
- Follow up surveys for each engagement session group

Drafting Sessions:

- The IDEA Committee met four times to review assessments, engagement session notes, and survey results to identify recurring themes and top priorities for the Rubenstein School.
- Marie Vea, Alayna Howard, and Allan Strong wrote the first draft of the plan collaboratively in December 2022.

Next Steps:

- The draft plan will be shared with the IDEA Committee for input.
- The draft plan will undergo edits based on feedback from the Committee and through the UDC Spring 2023 review and editing process.
- Work with potential Fall 2023 Graduate Assistant to create a shared accountability calendar that flows from the timeline on individual SMART goals.

Appendix – Engagement and Survey Notes from RSENR Stakeholders

Academics/Curriculum

- Structured and intentional feedback processes and improvements for courses needed.
- DEI should be integrated into all courses, not just one or two classes that check a box & Scaffolded equity curriculum throughout - this should include differences that go beyond racial identity.
 - Creative and varied opportunities to do this, does not have to be and should not be general approach to meeting DEI requirements
 - CONTENT & FACILITATION: NR 6/5/95, NR 306/395 geared toward white students who need exposure and education
 - Requirement with Resources and accountability
 - Global perspective from first year on
- (Grad) Consider a colloquium with outside facilitators for students on DEI topics, more dynamic and more community building
- Expand BIPOC speaker series. Guest speakers, experts, practitioners can provide non-dominant narratives
- Centering Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge in aspects of curriculum and research.
 - Hiring TEK Tenure Track
 - Reconsider use of ‘centering’
- *Quantification of diversification of ways of academic thinking (teaching, class styles) so as to attract people from different backgrounds*
- (Grad) Barriers of required courses (306 and 395) - these become obstacles (scheduling wise?)
- (Grad) Consider creating a seminar for graduate students to have dedicated space/time to work on research proposals - also a community-building outcome with this model

Co-Curricular Learning

- Place-based education is important, but the result feels like we're missing global perspective, all emphasis is on VT and the Northeast (Global Trek ideas for RSENR – International environmental justice).
- COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION of existing opportunities, sharing information that isn't exclusive to UVM students
 - Include international students in resource list
 - Include varied ability in resource list
 - Include and highlight opportunities beyond New England
- Accessibility of labs and field outings – logistics can be complicated, prioritize getting all students engaged.
- NR206 Assessment: Field work should involve engagement with local communities (and rural communities) and connecting with organizations doing environmental justice work. Diversify community partners, build deeper relationships, take on projects deeply embedded in equity work.
- Affinity spaces in RSENR are covered in the table below but needs some work to think about best placement and how this aligns with other units across campus (and campus-wide affinity spaces).
- Extending help to clubs with systematic support
 - Buses, specific project funding

Demographics

- Are we walking the walk on advertising?
 - Encouraging/facilitating networking
- Recruitment for faculty of color is essential, especially with new tenure track openings - to hire all white faculty would be a big miss, PRT in particular, big opportunity for BIPOC faculty and diverse perspectives in this major
- Audit position descriptions and interview statements to make sure that DEI questions do not preference white identities. Commitment to DEI should be more than just a checked box.
- Continual, rapid improvement in faculty and staff representation (racial diversity as well as other underrepresented identities).

Enrollment

- UVM and RSENr attract a lot of students from New England or the Northeast, they have a leg up when it comes to understanding the Vermont landscape and environment - there is so much emphasis on this in NR1 and NR2 that students from elsewhere can be singled out or feel disadvantaged
- We now have free tuition for low-income Vermonters. But should socioeconomic status be combined with other “marginalized” identities. How do we go beyond this to include cost of books, travel, food, dorms, etc.
- Messaging: RSENr-focused recruitment. Consider the environment, whatever culture you are a part of or pathway you envision. Career mapping.
 - Not sure where this one belongs. It speaks to the interrelationship between recruitment and retention. “Are we walking the walk on advertising?”
 - Students need clearer pathway and proof of career placement success
- Auditing and leveraging the international partnerships we have
- Burlington and Winooski are racially diverse, how do we draw in BIPOC students from our own communities – Akol and Marie’s work on recruitment of BIPOC students.
 - Not just high schools, middle schools as well
 - Creating a welcoming environment is a crucial first step
 - We now have free tuition for low-income Vermonters. But should socioeconomic status be combined with other “marginalized” identities discussed above.
- *Focus on retention of BIPOC students, prioritize their perspectives (Services beyond CAPS or SAS that are needed to support students)*
 - *Normalizing the experience of BIPOC students and other underrepresented students*

Professional Development & Advising

- Faculty and staff training
 - BIPOC students are made hyper visible and sometimes even pointed out by faculty
 - Intentions are there but delivery is a miss, better training for faculty and/or professional facilitators should be involved
 - Consider a shared colloquium for students that faculty would attend as well, community building and more intention DEI learning/teaching
 - Experiences with faculty include abuse, microaggressions, harm - training is needed
 - 100% participation in IE Symposium
- Well-trained advisors working with students with underrepresented identities

- Amplify work of Community of Practice
- Incorporate DEI topic into every Faculty & Staff mtg. and continue hosting sessions.
 - Leverage perspectives from partner organizations/practitioners. Workshop with external person that is highly engaging.
 - Consider a series of sessions – advising, recruitment
 - Annual review process integration: Recognition and rewards for incorporating DEI into work
 - What was the impact? And what did you do differently because of it? Add teeth.
- RPT revision to ensure DEI guidelines/criteria be met before advancement

Accessibility

- Can we expand work options to attract more people to Spear St. for instance (need a car)
- A long-standing question is accessibility in outside labs. The gear library is a great start, but we should consider other able-isms in the school.
- Incorporate Universal Design into RSENR curriculum. RSENR's idea of Diversity is limited to BIPOC, we need to go beyond this definition to include neurodiversity, LGBTQIA, differing physical ability
- Translation options for web (International Students, see below)
- Affordability of computers
- Diverse learning styles are not always prioritized or considered

Sustainability

- Reducing carbon footprint for the school - minimizing long distance plane travel, considering energy uses for teaching. Use carbon analysis of the School - yearly to examine trends.

International Systems

- Within UVM
 - Why do we have SO FEW intl students
 - Recruit Intl TT faculty – this will increase intl student attendance and bring global perspective to curriculum and culture of school
 - Identify UVM or RSENR alumni who can speak to intl experience
 - Establish relationships and funding support with International Faculty and Researchers at other institutions. Prioritize international research by RSENR faculty and graduate students to support connection/relationship building.
 - Funds
 - Funding is definitely not enough, and the taxes charged by the University (comprehensive fees) and the federal/state taxes reduce salary by more than 20%. Shouldn't spend more than about 33% of monthly income on housing, but expense for housing is realistically 50%.
 - UVM should be better articulated with the city services, particularly transportation and housing. Talking about inclusion and diversity on classes is important, but it will not solve the problem if the University and the city do not make a joint effort to provide good social services for international students to thrive.



- US citizenship requirements restrict ability to receive internal and external funding and seems like a direct alienation of international students
- Outside UVM
 - Learn how to work in the U.S., support for sending kids to school, how to get driver's license, bank account, etc.
 - Housing housing housing – for faculty and students (who cosigns, language barriers, legal language, paying before receiving stipend, reaching out from afar)
 - Why are some U.S. Institutions so much more successful at international student and faculty recruitment?
 - Public transportation in the city is really bad after 6pm, so it would be good to make sure that the students can go back to their houses at night, especially during the winter

International Support

- Within UVM
 - Faculty and grad student onboarding with specific lens toward international and a lot of support up front is needed
 - Too much mentorship burden placed on other international faculty/students
 - New faculty orientation happens too late
 - Create formal pairings between new faculty and existing faculty (ideally pair with existing international faculty)
 - Reach out to international students/grad students and try pairing with faculty/staff who have experiences advising and supporting international students and scholars in the environmental & natural resources field. E.g., international faculty, faculty who have conducted research overseas, or who have taught overseas, preferably from the same region where the student/scholar comes from.
 - Need better system to support/incentivize Intl faculty – lecturers can never qualify for a green card (we should check to see if this is true...or just for PTL).
 - Give online pre-orientation sessions to new coming grad students (can also apply to Faculty members) to instruct about: 1. visa issues, 2. classes enrollment (what are 100, 200, 300 classes, how to choose, etc), 3. how to navigate blackboard, 4. full explanation about university tax fees, 5. instruct and offer help with housing search.
 - Training needed for teaching a class with students whose first language is not
 - What RSENR does feels like posturing without material inequalities around access to funding addressed
 - Provide support system (e.g. in terms of funding, accessibility) to student groups and individuals who engage in international work in RSENR. There might be funds and opportunities already present, but many students do not know about it or how to access it.
 - There is no real acknowledgement in classes or RSENR about the presence of students from overseas and their different knowledge and learning backgrounds.
 - Check the programs and initiatives at the International Centre, University of Florida.
 - Join programs, collaborations and partnerships with organization overseas can open new channels for student applications from global backgrounds to come to RSENR. Moreover, this can be a two-way street, for American nationals in



RSENR to connect and collaborate with programs, students, scholars and faculty overseas.

- Support systems for faculty conducting research overseas and connect with faculty from different academic institutions and organizations. “Global Fellows program”, “Fulbright Explorer”- university of Florida;
- “Supporting faculty to teach with a global lens” University of Florida. Access to trainings, advising and resources on curriculum in internationalization and virtual exchange

Communication

- Straightforward language, simple shared values we can remember that are socialized
- Regular surveys of students about experiences with RSENR staff and faculty
- Structural improvements to staff meetings - mechanism for staff outreach
- Ongoing spaces for feedback and voices to be heard is needed
- Students expressed an interest in more engagement sessions
- Students experience high variability in how much guidance they receive from advisors, many don't know about all of our resources
- Email is untenable for reaching students, we need in person communication, space for open connection

Inclusive Community Building

- More opportunities to know each other. How can we have more fun together? Potlucks etc. In-person events are helpful, less reliance on digital communication. Wellbeing initiatives for staff and faculty
- Onboarding process is critical for new employees and faculty
- Bring back affinity spaces for students with underrepresented and marginalized identities in RSENR. Make our physical spaces representative, welcoming, comfortable, accessible
- Connections to Spear St. - transportation and more
- We need to acknowledge UVM's and RSENR's past transgressions and work toward trust building
- Consider a zero-credit seminar focused on forming connections between graduate students and facilitating introductions