

**PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION FOR INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE**

**2019 ANNUAL REPORT**



# About PCIE

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The purpose of the President's Commission for Inclusive Excellence is to advise the President on the advancement of the strategic diversity and inclusion goals of the University as outlined in the document *Inclusive Excellence at UVM: A Framework for Building a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Multiculturally Competent Campus*.

## Commissioners

Alan Maynard, Chair

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Wanda Heading-Grant, President's Designee, ex officio



The University of Vermont

## INTRODUCTION

This is an exciting time at the University of Vermont. With transitions in several key senior leadership positions, including the President and Provost, coupled with the University's commitment to [Inclusive Excellence](#), we believe the University's future is brighter than ever. We believe the strong relationship between The Commission and the President is crucial to this commitment, and we look forward to supporting President-Designate Garimella and the University during this period of transition.

The President's Commission for Inclusive Excellence (PCIE) plays an important role in the University by not only advising the President on the advancement of the strategic diversity and inclusion goals of the University, but also by helping the President cultivate critically important relationships with community members. Collectively, PCIE Commissioners have taught, worked, and studied at UVM for well over a hundred years, and the relationships Commissioners have can be leveraged to support the upcoming Presidential transition well.

PCIE with significant support from President Sullivan's delegate, Dr. Wanda Heading-Grant, Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, built on the momentum generated during the 2017-2018 academic year by re-engaging with leaders from Governance Bodies and key stakeholders (Appendix A). This report focuses on a review of recommendations from last year and information gathered during this year's stakeholder meetings. The information PCIE gathered this year is meant to inform current and future practices, identify areas of concern, and check-in on the progress of implementing recommendations made by the Commission last spring. The information gathered identifies topics for focused efforts in the next academic year.

Additionally, the Commission believes it is important to emphasize how important support from senior leaders (e.g., Deans, Vice Presidents, Directors) is to the efficacy of the Commission. The President is responsible, to a large degree, in helping to open the door to these leaders, and by setting an example for how these leaders lead. Senior leaders have a significant impact on the climate and culture of the University and should represent the best of the University. We hope to continue to play an important role in representing the President to these senior leaders and to the rest of the UVM Community.



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND STATUS UPDATES FROM JUNE 2018

### ***Recommendation One: Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development***

- Engage with campus leaders to ensure the most urgent and effective types of trainings are available at times accessible to most constituents
- Engage with campus leaders to implement effective incentive models for diversity and inclusion professional development by campus members
- Improve the range of communications about available trainings to reach all constituents

**Update:** Many aspects of Professional Development offerings across the University were reviewed. Overall, the Commission believes the efforts in faculty development are robust and accessible. Coordination of professional development activities between units such as the Office of the Provost, The Center for Teaching and Learning, The Center for Cultural Pluralism, and between The Larner College of Medicine and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences have been shown to be effective. However, we believe additional ways to encourage faculty members to participate in professional development offerings, especially in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion still need to be explored further.

### ***Recommendation Two: Effective Communication and Engagement***

- Engage in conversations with campus leaders to inform development of a robust communication strategy for all vital information with the goal of reaching a broad range of community members
- Increase the visibility of campus leaders by encouraging attendance at more events on campus, particularly those organized by student groups

**Update:** The Commission is pleased to hear that during the fall of 2018, two communications committees were formed by the President and Provost to address internal communication needs and strategic communications goals. It is our understanding that both committees have been working to identify changes that will help communicate UVM's story to broader audiences and better inform our own community, and that they are working jointly to produce a set of recommendations to senior leaders to support these goals. We hope the committees' recommendations will be implemented during the 2019-2020 academic year.

### ***Recommendation Three: Campus Climate Study***

- Conduct a campus climate study no later than the 2018-2019 academic year that produces actionable data to drive strategic investment(s) for inclusive excellence

**Update:** The Commission was excited to see a comprehensive [campus climate survey](#) administered during the winter of 2019. According to the Office of Institutional Research, approximately 5,884 community members including undergraduate, graduate, and medical students, faculty, and staff participated in the survey, which represents approximately 30% more participation than during the last campus climate survey in 2011. The Commission is looking forward to the public release of the survey results during the fall of 2019 and hopes the analysis will produce actionable information to drive strategic investments for inclusive excellence efforts across the University.



***Recommendation Four: ADA Compliance Capacity Building***

- Provide resources and support for the work of the recently formed ADA Committee, including but not limited to involvement by senior leaders (i.e., Vice Presidents)

***Update:*** The Commission is encouraged to know that an ADA Executive Committee has been formally charged by President Sullivan and that several senior leaders, including three Vice Presidents, are serving on the Committee. In addition, the Commission is also encouraged by the decision to charge Tessa Lucey, Director of Compliance Services and Chief Privacy Officer, with leadership of the committee. These are all encouraging signs, and we look forward to seeing how the work of the ADA Executive Committee unfolds during the 2019-2020 academic year.

***Recommendation Five: Structure and Function of the Commission***

- Determine if the Commission's primary functions and responsibilities are adequate to address diversity and inclusion efforts across the university
- Make any necessary adjustments to the structure and function of the Commission prior to the start the 2018-2019 academic year
- Monitor and align diversity and inclusion work across all Colleges and Divisions

***Update:*** We believe the Commission had a strong year in regard to its structure and function. We developed a [Charter](#), which solidified the Commission's primary functions and responsibilities. Engaging with campus leaders as well as holding open fora have proven to be an invaluable tool for sharing and listening to diverse viewpoints and needs. Some attempts at aligning diversity, and inclusion work across all Colleges and Divisions have occurred, but a need for further work in this area persists. For example, it seems prudent for designated Diversity Coordinators within each College and Division to convene regularly to discuss the implementation of their unit's Inclusive Excellence Action Plans.



## 2019 RECOMMENDATIONS

We wish to acknowledge the University's collective efforts focused on inclusive excellence this academic year. Numerous positive changes have been initiated or implemented, and we are encouraged by the continued momentum. We also know information and activities are fluid and some of our recommendations might already have some level of action. These recommendations were generated through triangulation of information gathered during stakeholder meetings, individual and group constituent meetings with the Commission's Leadership Team, and input from Commissioners. We feel the recommendations are helpful to the University and actionable. Therefore, the Commission respectfully provides the following recommendations for the President's consideration:

### ***Recommendation One: Effective Communication and Engagement***

This recommendation is reiterated from last year's recommendations. The Commission continues to hear that communication of important information to the UVM community is not reaching all community members, despite the University's best efforts. For example, some community members share they are still not aware of the University's [Our Common Ground](#) statement or [Inclusive Excellence at UVM](#) a.k.a. The Framework for Inclusive Excellence. In addition, some groups we met with felt they had a poor understanding of the work the administration was doing to address student concerns about diversity and inclusion on campus. Although we believe community members have a responsibility to read their emails and to access resources like [Advancing Diversity and Inclusion at UVM](#), we feel that continued effort needs to be made to ameliorate the inconsistent understanding of UVM's core values, strategic plan, and current actions to *all* community members.

Additionally, although UVM has a policy that all official communication occurs via email, the Commission strongly recommends consideration of alternative communication mediums to complement the use of email (i.e., social media).

It remains the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Engage in conversations with campus leaders to inform development of a robust communication strategy for all vital information with the goal of reaching *all* community members
- Implement the communication committees' recommendations during the 2019-2020 academic year
- Encourage University Communications to highlight inclusive excellence efforts within each College and Division



### ***Recommendation Two: Campus Climate Survey Data***

A climate survey of UVM community members occurred during the winter of 2019. We hope the data the survey yields provide actionable information to drive implementation of The Framework for Inclusive Excellence.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Make the survey results available to the community in ways that provide actionable information to aid in the development/advancement of [unit leaders' action plans](#) that are aligned with the [Framework for Inclusive Excellence](#).

### ***Recommendation Three: Structure and Function of Inclusive Excellence Work on Campus***

UVM has many people working on inclusive excellence across the University community. Some of these efforts are ongoing and some are relatively new. It is timely that all units are revising their Inclusive Excellence action plans. However, we recommend further work to align units in meaningful ways to capture opportunities regarding effectiveness and efficiency.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President and Provost:

- Monitor and align inclusive excellence efforts across all Colleges and Divisions on a yearly basis
- Encourage each College or Division to create or support Inclusive Excellence Committees with faculty, staff, and student representatives (if applicable), with active participation by the responsible senior leader (e.g., Dean, Vice President, Director), whose charge is to steward and implement their unit's Inclusive Excellence Action Plan
- Encourage Inclusive Excellence Coordinators across the University to collaborate with one another regularly throughout each academic year

### ***Recommendation Four: Senior Leader Interviews***

For the past few years, PCIE has been invited to participate in interviews of candidates for senior leaders like Dean candidates. As the only body at UVM specifically vetting candidates through a lens of inclusive excellence, we sincerely hope this will continue to be part of the process for future senior leader positions.

It is the recommendation of the Commission that the Office of the President:

- Institutionalize the involvement of the President's Commission for Inclusive Excellence in the interview process for senior leaders



The University of Vermont

## APPENDIX A

### STAKEHOLDER MEETING INFORMATION AND THEMES

#### *Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC)*

Upon completion of the overview presentation regarding the Commission's charge and current work, Commission representatives asked FSEC members for input on focus items for the 2018-19 academic year. FSEC members asked how the Commission measures progress. Commissioners responded that the Framework for Inclusive Excellence, and unit-level action plans are most currently being implemented to allow progress to be measured within each unit. Another question was posed about how the Commission responds to student concerns. Information was shared that the FSEC views D1/D2 courses as a topic of specific interest. Discussion circulated around concerns related to faculty capacity to teach these courses, and in relation to the faculty's perceived need and interest in more professional development opportunities specific to content within D1/D2 courses. Integrating student voices into discussions around curriculum was identified as a necessary component, along with further ability to measure the outcomes associated with general education requirements.

#### *Staff Council*

Last year, the SCEC general theme was of 'disparity' among units in terms of their levels of interest, funding, and actions in support of diversity and inclusion. This year there was more sharing around the positive professional development opportunities members engaged with. One concern that arose was one we've heard from other campus leadership groups: there needs to be an organizational structure to manage and advance the unit level strategic actions plans for the Framework for Inclusive Excellence.

#### *Graduate Student Senate (GSS)*

During the fall of 2018, members of the Commission met with representatives from the newly formed GSS Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity. These representatives, included Jessica Bocanegra, Rosy Neale, and Mahafuza Aktar. Some of the topics discussed included the importance of a universal orientation program for graduate and medical students, reducing the variability in the experience of graduate and medical students between programs, celebration of international student's culture, and extra-curricular opportunities for graduate and medical students to align more closely with those offered to undergraduate students.



### ***Provost's Academic Leadership Council (PALC+)***

Upon completion of the overview presentation regarding the Commission's charge and current work, the Commission representatives asked PALC+ members for input on focus items for the 2018-19 academic year. Members asked the Commission for the following information: an overview of best practices from the Inclusive Excellence Framework reporting and planning from across unit action plans; development of a "Common Talking Points" sheet to streamline communication with students; increased accessibility of the "Advancing Diversity" website; more opportunities from the Commission to provide open forums, to meet with graduate students, "No Names for Justice", SGA, University Communications, and leadership groups such as PSL and Dean's Council.

### ***Abenaki Nation***

During the November 2018 meeting with President Sullivan, members of the Commission were encouraged by President Sullivan to collaborate with other senior leaders on developing the relationship between the University and members of the Abenaki Nation. Over the course of several months, a few Commissioners and senior leaders engaged with Chief Don Stevens of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk and engaged in dialogue around how the University might begin to cultivate a stronger relationship with members of the Abenaki Nation moving forward. The result of this work is evident in a formal statement made by President Sullivan acknowledging UVM's role in the Eugenics Survey of Vermont (1925-1936). We encourage the University to continue building deeper relationships with members of the Abenaki Nation and consider ways to repair the harm that was done.

### ***Partnership Project***

Throughout the 2018-2019 academic year, members of the Commission were involved in conversations with senior leaders about the possibility of developing partnerships between UVM and institutions serving historically marginalized communities. The Commission encourages UVM to continue to think innovatively about partnerships with other Colleges and Universities, particularly Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and to develop pathways in both directions for students, faculty, and staff to learn from one another and explore educational opportunities.