



The  
UNIVERSITY  
of VERMONT

RUBENSTEIN SCHOOL  
OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
DEAN'S OFFICE

EMAIL MESSAGE SENT TO ENTIRE Rubenstein Community  
February 26, 2018

Dear Students, Staff and Faculty,

I have listened and heard the concerns expressed last week about diversity, equity and inclusivity in our School. It is clearer than ever that students are deeply hurt by the racial bias incidents on campus and to some, the lack of a welcoming community in the School. I am deeply concerned.

Although the Rubenstein School has a long history of striving for authentic community and has embraced inclusivity and diversity, we have a long way to go. An authentic community is one where difference is respected and celebrated, rather than buried or avoided. This type of engagement requires a climate that is safe, where multiple perspectives are welcomed and differences are embraced. It is my hope and intention to create a welcoming and empowered climate in the School, one where every person feels valued, heard and included.

To that end, I am initiating several immediate actions as a first step in addressing our students' concerns.

1. Review and revision of the format and learning outcomes for the D1 first-year course, Race, Culture and Natural Resources (NR6), starting in Fall 2018.
2. Ensure appropriate professional development and training for faculty engaged in NR6.
3. Implement the recommendations of the Equity Assessment that is currently underway by Dr. Shadiin Garcia and intended for completion in June 2018.
4. Formally designate a team to lead diversity and inclusion efforts that will include Associate Dean Allan Strong, Assistant Marie Vea-Fagnant, and representation from undergraduate and graduate students.
5. Include a new metric of "demonstrated evidence of efforts to advance diverse perspectives and inclusion" in scholarship, instruction or engagement for all faculty. (NOTE: Annual performance reviews for faculty and staff already include a similar requirement.)
6. Reiterate the expectation that all Rubenstein School faculty and staff participate in the school-wide diversity and inclusion professional development series.
7. Initiate a review, by the RSENR Faculty Standards Committee, of promotion and tenure metrics to consider the inclusion of a criterion that addresses engagement in diversity, equity and inclusivity efforts.

The faculty and staff of the Rubenstein School recognize that environmental and natural resource problems are thoroughly intertwined with issues of equity and social justice. Consequently, 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.*

I will end by expressing my appreciation to those students who courageously stepped forward to express themselves through the NoNames for Justice activism. Your voices are powerful. For the students who have not been involved, we will continue to offer opportunities for learning and solidarity over the rest of the spring semester. The Rubenstein School values and recognizes diversity in all of its forms. I, along with the School's leadership team, look forward to continuing the conversations and working together to co-create our community to ensure that it is one where we all flourish and thrive.

In Solidarity, Compassion and Relationship,

Nancy Mathews  
Dean