Inclusive Excellence Action Plan – RSENR
Rubenstein School of Environmental and Natural Resources

Pillar 1: Academics

Central to the mission and strategic goals of the University of Vermont is excellence in the academic experience to help prepare members of our community to be globally responsible and engaged citizens, advance knowledge, and build critical thinking and problem solving skills.

1. What are the benefits, impacts, and/or learning outcomes of your initiatives and practices? How do these initiatives and practices promote inclusive excellence in your college/division?

We are in full agreement with the outcomes set forth in the Framework for Inclusive Excellence at the University of Vermont. Below, we have extracted outcomes from each of the components that are best aligned with the goals for the Rubenstein School for the next 3-5 years.

Component 1: Faculty Support and Engagement
1. Faculty receive support to incorporate diversity and inclusive excellence into their teaching, pedagogy, research, and scholarship.
3. Faculty receive support to develop the awareness, knowledge, and skills to effectively work with diverse and underrepresented populations.
5. Faculty from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds receive support and resources to support their scholarly engagement and success.

Component 2: Student Support and Engagement
1. Students have opportunities to develop multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills within their coursework.
2. Students from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds receive support and resources to support their academic engagement and success.

Component 3: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research
1. Diversity and inclusive excellence are infused within the curricula and across the disciplines.

RSENR faculty and students understand that all environment and natural resources issues are inherently linked to environmental and social justice. By being deliberate and transparent about increasing faculty capacity and enhancing students’ critical thinking skills around environmental and social justice, we will graduate well-prepared environmental leaders.

2. What initiatives and practices for inclusive excellence does your division/college consider exemplary and could serve as a model or best practice at UVM?

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<tr>
<th>Action/Initiative/Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty retreats devoted to diversity, power, and privilege</td>
<td>Deans Office/Facilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty professional development around Race and Lead faculty instructor of NR</td>
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</table>
3. What goals does your college/division want to achieve within the next year? Within the next three years?

- Continued faculty professional development with goal of better integration of diversity, power, and privilege in courses across the majors. Continued refinement of best practices for integration of diversity, power, and privilege in courses across the majors.
- More faculty engagement in NR 6 and NR 207
- Implementation of the next USDA multicultural scholars grant (which has been awarded to RSENR)

4. What strategies and resources (e.g., skills, expertise, financial) will your college/division use to meet your goals within a given component? What resources are needed?

The most significant barrier to adopting these goals is competition for faculty time and energy. We strongly suggest that the PCIE work with all units as they develop assessment plans to ensure learning outcomes address the outcomes of the Academic Pillar. Resources to help achieve these goals would be incentives for faculty to engage in integration across majors, such as summer salary, TA support, and administrative support to make it possible to accommodate this in scheduling and workload.

5. What metrics will your college/division use to gauge its progress with diversity and inclusive excellence goals?

- Use of the Working Across Difference rubric offers a tool to measure academic progress in student learning.
- Attendance at professional development programs.
- Larger pool of faculty engaging in NR6 and NR 207.
- USDA Multicultural Scholars successfully complete academic program with degree and professional skills
Pillar 2: Community

The University of Vermont aspires to be a community that affirms and demonstrates the value of the diverse identities and backgrounds of its members, promotes multicultural competence, and builds positive and productive connections throughout the community.

1. What are the benefits, impacts, and/or learning outcomes of your initiatives and practices? How do these initiatives and practices promote inclusive excellence in your college/division?

We are in full agreement with the outcomes set forth in the Framework for Inclusive Excellence at the University of Vermont. Below, we have extracted outcomes from each of the components that are best aligned with the goals for the Rubenstein School for the next 3-5 years.

Component 1: Representational/Compositional Diversity and Equity of Staff, Students, and Faculty
4. Robust retention strategies (e.g., advising, mentoring, career development, succession planning, work/life enhancement programs) for students, faculty, staff, and administrators from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds are developed, implemented, and assessed.

Component 2: Multicultural Competency Development of Staff, Students, and Faculty
4. Outcomes assessments are conducted for multicultural competency programs and initiatives.

Component 3: Inclusive Campus Climate for Staff, Students, and Faculty
1. Assessments of the campus climate and the degree to which diversity and inclusive excellence goals are accomplished are regularly conducted. Data are analyzed at the institutional, divisional, and unit levels.

Component 4: Programs, Services, & Events
1. Programs, services, and events that advance diversity and inclusive excellence goals are created, enhanced, supported, and promoted.

Although RSENR continually strives to be an inclusive and welcoming community, we are a predominately white faculty and staff serving a predominately white student body. As such, we are always looking for ways to better understand how our identities lead to implicit biases and how to address these deficiencies.

2. What initiatives and practices for inclusive excellence does your division/college consider exemplary and could serve as a model or best practice at UVM?

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<td>Many years of support from the USDA (RSENR Multicultural Scholars grant). The grant provides scholarship funding and professional development funds for students from underrepresented groups.</td>
<td>Student Services team/Recruitment, retention, grant writing</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Two required D1 courses (3 credits total) in RSENR. Race and Culture in Natural Resources is required of all first-time first year students in RSENR (NR 6); the other is a senior capstone class, also required of all students; Power, privilege, and environment (NR 207)

| See cluster hire above – significant engaged scholarship around equity, health, diversity, and cultural ecosystem services | Dean’s Office/Brendan Fisher, cluster hire convener. |
| Developed and piloted rubric-based assessment of our “Working Across Difference” learning outcome | Coordinator of Educational Innovation/Facilitation |
| Brown bag lunches, webinars – we have initiated several informal professional development events. Last year, we had brown bag lunches around W. Kamau Bell’s United Shades of America and screened webinars of the AACU series Citizenship Under Seige. | Deans Office/Facilitation |
| Race and Culture in Natural Resources (listed above) engages faculty and staff in professional learning during weekly planning meetings | NR 6 lead instructor |
| Teach-ins – Several students took the initiative to develop short trainings for faculty around practices for identity development, inclusion, and implicit bias. | Students/Facilitation |
| Partnerships with The Nature Conservancy, High School for Environmental Studies, and The Harbor School/visits to UVM, visits to their campuses | Student Services/Coordination of visits, maintaining contacts. |

3. What goals does your college/division want to achieve within the next year? Within the next three years?

- Conduct an Equity Assessment with the support of an external consultant with an emphasis on climate
- Reinvigorate the Diversity Task Force as a formal committee and identify clear leadership
- Institutionalize informal professional development events

4. What strategies and resources (e.g., skills, expertise, financial) will your college/division use to meet your goals within a given component? What resources are needed?

- Human and financial resources to hire a consultant to implement and analyze an Equity Assessment.
- Survey students, staff, and faculty on topics of interest and best ways/times to deliver these events.
• Include in professional development goals per the performance review process.
• Recognize students, staff, and faculty for these efforts in the RSENR newsletter and the annual community celebration.

5. What metrics will your college/division use to gauge its progress with diversity and inclusive excellence goals?

• Completion of the Equity Assessment will serve as a benchmark to success. The Equity Assessment will also result in the identification of climate-related target areas to develop strategic next-steps. Completion of next-steps will provide a second set of benchmarks to measure progress.
• Establishment of the committee and its leadership are benchmarks
• At end of the year compile an inventory of events, organizers, and attendees.

**Pillar 3: Environment**

*The University of Vermont strives to create physical, virtual, and educational living, learning and work environments that are inclusive and accessible to all in our community.*

1. What are the benefits, impacts, and/or learning outcomes of your initiatives and practices? How do these initiatives and practices promote inclusive excellence in your college/division?

We are in full agreement with the outcomes set forth in the Framework for Inclusive Excellence at the University of Vermont. Below, we have extracted outcomes from each of the components that are best aligned with the goals for the Rubenstein School for the next 3-5 years.

**Component 1: Physical Accessibility**
1. Facilities are assessed for ADA compliance and Universal Design. Plans are developed for addressing inaccessible campus facilities.

**Component 2: Technology Use and Accessibility**
4. Social media tools are used to facilitate more effective communication in alignment with institutional diversity and inclusive excellence goals.

**Component 3: Cognitive Accessibility**
3. Information is made available in different forms and different languages to ensure accessibility.

**Component 4: Inclusive Spaces**
1. Spaces are provided for cross-cultural activities/engagement and identity-shared activities.

This pillar is the most challenging, as most of these outcomes should be addressed centrally. All units are billed by the square foot for space. The space inventory is a very time consuming and complicated process, the cost of which is born by the units. These data are then used by the central administration to bill the units. Although we
are in full agreement with the aspirational outcomes for pillar 3 as set forth in the framework, it will be very difficult for us to pay for these without significant financial incentives.

2. What initiatives and practices for inclusive excellence does your division/college consider exemplary and could serve as a model or best practice at UVM?

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<td>Gender inclusive restrooms in Aiken</td>
<td>Greening of Aiken Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning outcomes in our core curriculum around integrated learning, information and quantitative literacy, and problem solving (among other competencies).</td>
<td>Core Curriculum Committee, Coordinator of Educational Innovation/Rubric development and Assessment Facilitation</td>
</tr>
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3. What goals does your college/division want to achieve within the next year? Within the next three years?

- Completion of the Equity Assessment, as described above, would also address Pillar 3
- Engaging faculty in incorporating more Universal Design for Learning approaches and techniques into their teaching practices

4. What strategies and resources (e.g., skills, expertise, financial) will your college/division use to meet your goals within a given component? What resources are needed?

- CTL workshops on Universal Design for Learning

5. What metrics will your college/division use to gauge its progress with diversity and inclusive excellence goals?

- Completion of Equity Assessment & identification/articulation of next steps
- Number of faculty participating in Universal Design for Learning workshops and implementing approaches in their teaching and advising

**Pillar 4: Operations**

*Business operations and organizational processes (e.g., policy development, fiscal and capital planning, human resource functions, and organizational practices and procedures) are critical to the daily functioning and long-term health of the University of Vermont.*

1. What are the benefits, impacts, and/or learning outcomes of your initiatives and practices? How do these initiatives and practices promote inclusive excellence in your college/division?
We are in full agreement with the outcomes set forth in the Framework for Inclusive Excellence at the University of Vermont. Below, we have extracted outcomes from each of the components that are best aligned with the goals for the Rubenstein School for the next 3-5 years.

**Component 1: Policies, Procedures, and Practices**
3. Policies, procedures, and practices are enhanced to better support the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, staff, and administrators from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.

**Component 2: Evaluation and Assessment**
1. Tools to assess and evaluate accessibility, inclusiveness, multicultural competency, diversity goals, and inclusive excellence at the individual, programmatic, unit, and systems levels are developed and used.

**Component 3: Financial**
2. Funding for diversity-related initiatives (e.g., research, programs, services, resources, professional development opportunities) is diversified and expanded.

**Component 4: Internal/External Communications**
1. Accomplishments and impact related to diversity and inclusive excellence are recognized and celebrated.

We are in agreement with the principles set forth in pillar 4. However, the University needs to take a stronger leadership role to ensure that all of its policies, practices, and initiatives are aligned with this framework.

2. What initiatives and practices for inclusive excellence does your division/college consider exemplary and could serve as a model or best practice at UVM?

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<td>Core Curriculum Committee, Coordinator of Educational Innovation/Facilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSENR Multicultural Scholars program</td>
<td>Student services team/grant-writing, grant management, coordination, recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSENR website</td>
<td>Dean’s Office, Communications specialist/Maintain website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Funds for Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>Dean’s Office/Facilitation</td>
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3. What goals does your college/division want to achieve within the next year? Within the next three years?

- Memorialize the DTF with a standing school-wide committee as mentioned in Pillar 2
4. What strategies and resources (e.g., skills, expertise, financial) will your college/division use to meet your goals within a given component? What resources are needed?

- We would like to see HRDMA hire staff liaisons to work with individual units on diversity initiatives. This framework would be similar to SPA or HR, in which staff in those units work directly with particular Schools and Colleges. Staff in these positions would be working with each unit to help them operationalize their goals and serve as a catalyst to ensure that the initiatives that are outlined in these strategic plans so that they don’t just sit in a hard drive. We get excited about writing these plans, going to Blackboard Jungle, getting positive feedback from students on our D1 courses. But, we have so many competing responsibilities, it will be a continual struggle to move these initiatives forward without more support. It would be wonderful to see a talented, enthusiastic, staff person (the D-CATS!) engage with each unit; the probability that these goals will be achieved will increase significantly.
- Set a deadline to formally activate this school-wide committee.

5. What metrics will your college/division use to gauge its progress with diversity and inclusive excellence goals?

- Officers are elected, the volunteer committee is operational, and an agenda is set.
- As Pillar 4 is to some degree an “umbrella pillar,” we see the metrics for progress in this pillar best assessed by how well RSENRT achieves its goals in pillars 1-3.