

RUBENSTEIN SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Inclusive Excellence Action Plan

RSENR faculty, staff, 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. We strive to integrate diversity and equity across all of our majors and in our core curriculum.

General Information

1. **Dean:** Nancy Mathews
2. **Person submitting plan on behalf of College:**

Name: Allan Strong
 Title: Associate Dean
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 Phone number: 802-656-2910

3. **Programs within the College:**
 - a. Environmental Science
 - b. Environmental Studies
 - c. Forestry
 - d. Natural Resources
 - e. Parks, Recreation and Tourism
 - f. Wildlife and Fisheries Biology

4. **Implementation team members** (including team lead/chair):

Name	Title	Department/Office/Unit
Nancy Mathews	Dean	220K Aiken
Nathan Sanders	Associate Dean	220L Aiken
Mare Veal	Assistant Dean – Student Services	220F Aiken
Allan Strong, Team Lead	Professor	312I Aiken

Action Plan for the Four Pillars of Inclusive Excellence

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.

As part of our core curriculum, the Rubenstein School offers two D1 courses that are central to our work around diversity and equity: NR 006, Race and Culture in Natural Resources, and NR 207, Power, Privilege, and Environment. We see the content and competencies that students gain through these courses as central to helping develop environmental leaders. Students have opportunities to develop multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills within their coursework and students from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds receive support and resources to support their academic engagement and success. We provide support to faculty and staff through professional development trainings and workshops to ensure the incorporation of diversity and inclusive excellence into teaching and scholarship. Additionally, faculty from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds receive support and resources to support their scholarly engagement and success.

RSENR Metrics and Goals

Action/Initiative/Activity	Responsible Unit(s)/Role(s)
Faculty retreats and periodic workshops devoted to shared learning on diversity, power, and privilege	Dean’s Office/Facilitation
Faculty professional development around Race and Culture in Natural Resources (D1 course required of all first-time, first-year RSENR students)	Lead faculty instructor of NR 6, outside consultant/facilitation
Move our D1 course, NR 6 to the spring semester, create a fall preparatory course for incoming FTFY students addressing critical reflection and dialogue, and increase NR 6 to 3 credits	Associate Dean/Workload planning
Increase faculty engagement in our D1 courses, NR 6 and NR 207	Associate Dean/Workload planning
Continue to recruit diverse faculty, staff and students to RSENR	Dean’s Office/Funding
Continue to use our “Working Across Difference” rubric-based learning outcome to assess student work	Assessment coordinator/Facilitation
Strengthen our support for the Masters of Professional Studies in Leadership for Sustainability.	Dean’s Office, MLS Program Coordinator

Resources and strategies:

We continue to see increased faculty and staff engagement around our diversity and equity initiatives, both through increased involvement in our D1 classes as well as through our work to integrate diversity and equity into our annual review process. We will build on this momentum with more professional development opportunities and support for faculty to integrate issues of social justice and environmental racism into their courses.

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.

The Rubenstein School is committed to robust recruiting and retention strategies that attract students, faculty, staff, and administrators from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. We have conducted assessments of the RSENR climate and the degree to which diversity and equity are prioritized within the School. A School-wide equity assessment, as well as an undergraduate thesis that examined the racial climate of the School serve as benchmarks for further work in creating a welcoming, equitable, and inclusive community.

RSENR Metrics and Goals

Action/Initiative/Activity	Responsible Unit(s)/Role(s)
Continued submission of USDA grants to provide scholarships for students from underrepresented backgrounds.	Student Services team/Recruitment, retention, grant writing
Formation of IDEA Committee – this is a committee designed to increase the visibility of diversity and equity initiatives in RSENR. We currently have 2 elected faculty, 3 student positions (paid) and administrative staff that serve on the committee.	Various faculty, staff, and students/Event planning and coordination
Community of Practice – Regular meetings around diversity and equity with faculty staff and students focused on short readings, podcasts, etc.	RSENR faculty/Facilitation
Implement action items from the RSENR Equity Assessment and the RSENR Racial Climate thesis.	RSENR community
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.
Reduce barriers to making RSENR spaces welcoming to all	Dean’s Office

<p>Increase faculty participation in NR 006 and NR 207 to create a more equitable distribution of engagement with diversity work.</p>	<p>Associate Dean/Workload Planning</p>
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Resources and strategies:

We will promote professional development opportunities across campus and continue to integrate diversity conversations into regularly scheduled meetings and retreats. We will continue to recognize faculty, staff and students for their efforts around diversity and inclusion in the RSENR newsletter and the annual community celebration. We will continue to work with constituents to assess the climate of the school and its spaces.

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.

The physical spaces controlled by the Rubenstein School (Aiken Center, Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Laboratory, Johnson House, and the Forest Science Laboratory) have been assessed for ADA compliance and Universal Design. Plans are being developed for addressing inaccessible campus facilities such as natural areas and research forests. We hope to continue to work with UVM’s central administration to ensure that facilities, activities, classroom spaces, and student assignments are designed with inclusivity in mind.

RSENR Metrics and Goals

Action/Initiative/Activity	Responsible Unit(s)/Role(s)
Gender inclusive restrooms in Aiken	Greening of Aiken Committee
Learning outcomes in our core curriculum around integrated learning, information and quantitative literacy, and problem solving (among other competencies).	Core Curriculum Committee, Assessment coordinator/Ongoing assessment programs
Work to ensure that laboratory exercises and field experiences are not marginalizing particular segments of our community	IDEA Committee, Dean’s Office, Program Directors
Continue to provide opportunities for media, art, and informational material that promotes racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity.	Dean’s Office/funding, logistic support

Resources and strategies:

We will work with CTL on a universal design workshop to help faculty ensure that their field and classroom activities are accessible to all students. Additional professional development training offered centrally would also be helpful.

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.

The Rubenstein School is committed to making our policies and practices inclusive such that all community members have the support they need to thrive in the community. Our equity assessment provides a framework for next steps in addressing shortcomings in our operations. We have initiated a process for faculty to set goals around their own professional development and use that as one component of the annual review process. Programs have incorporated equity learning outcomes in their assessment work and assessing student learning is an ongoing process. We have had success with external funding to support students from underrepresented backgrounds and will continue to pursue scholarship opportunities.

RSENR Metrics and Goals

Action/Initiative/Activity	Responsible Unit(s)/Role(s)
Community-wide events that promote diversity and equity and provide professional development for community members	IDEA Committee/Facilitation, logistics
Working Across Difference learning outcome	Core Curriculum Committee, Coordinator of Educational Innovation/Facilitation
RSENR Multicultural Scholars program	Student services team/grant-writing, grant management, coordination, recruitment
RSENR website	Dean’s Office, Communications specialist/Maintain website
Inclusion of diversity and equity accomplishments as part of faculty annual review	Dean and Associate Dean/Annual performance review
Professional Development Funds for Faculty and Staff	Dean’s Office/Facilitation

Resources and strategies:

As UVM continues to improve its campus climate, we would love to see additional support from the central administration that continues to help “push” academic units to make our work more inclusive. RSENR’s work around diversity and inclusion has benefitted from committed faculty, staff, and students, but also from outside events that have moved the whole campus forward. Other central units such as HR and SPA have representatives that liaise with individual academic units and having academic representatives from HRDMA would help immensely.



In FY19, RSENR invested ~ \$70,000 in diversity programming for students, faculty and staff. Scholarships and directed grant funding were acquired in addition to the internal funding. In the future, we would like to work with other academic units to look for synergies, funding efficiencies, and ideas for programming to enhance curricula. Concurrent with this, we would seek support from both HRDMA and the Provost's office to build a common infrastructure to ensure consistency among and sustainability of efforts.