

Communication

Annual Report

This annual report for the Office of Institutional Equity is the first and intends to highlight the work that this office is engaged in across the university. Admittedly, this report provides only a snapshot into the good work being done related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. There is much work across this university at the student, staff, and faculty levels that is not included in this report but is equally engaged in programming and initiatives that contribute to the same DEI goals.

Institutional Equity Website

A new website was established for the [Office of Institutional Equity](#). This website acts as a connector and organizer for news, DEI related calendar of events, larger university initiatives (e.g., committees, Employee Resource Groups, stats and findings, etc.) and resources throughout the university that encourage and support our collective DEI efforts.

Transitions

In June 2022, Emilio Solano transitioned from his role as executive director of Willamette Academy for the last six years and agreed to become the Assistant Provost for Institutional Equity and Community Engagement. In this role Emilio supports the development and promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives throughout the University, collaborating with faculty and staff across all campuses to engage in approaches to promote a sense of belonging in the university for all, particularly among community members from underrepresented groups. His role includes assisting Academic Affairs, Institutional Research, and other university units in developing data-driven approaches and strategies to improve campus climate, increase representational diversity, and address equity gaps through accreditation, budgeting, and academic planning and policy. He has also been tasked with helping to build relationships and strategic partnerships in the Salem/Keizer and Portland communities.

DEI Committee Reports

University DEI Committee Report

The newly established University DEI Committee met from November 2022 to May 2023. The committee charge:

Recognizing that each college has its own diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and/or working groups, this committee's charge is to actively promote awareness of—and a shared commitment to—diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout Willamette University. It serves as a coordinating body, connecting faculty, staff, and students across the university to develop and share strategies and resources (and avoid the duplication of efforts) as part of our ongoing and collective effort to make Willamette a more equitable institution.

Among the tasks that were accomplished in its first year as a committee:

- Developed a [shared language](#) for diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Supported the roll out of the campus climate survey that took place in February

- Gave feedback on the development of the newly established Institutional Equity [website](#)
- Began the process for the establishment of an Office of Institutional Equity Annual Report as well as the development of an Equity Dashboard that will compile key institutional data in categories for diversity, equity, and inclusion to help measure gaps and progress towards institutional goals and priorities. Reporting on disaggregated data allows for comparison across groups and is a tool for the university to better understand the good work being done and where inequities may exist.

School-Level Committee Updates

College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)

The College of Arts & Sciences reorganized their committee membership and updated their charge for the 2022-23 academic year:

The CAS EDI Working Group reports on projects, policies, and proposals from PPC, CAP, and FEC that focus on EDI or have EDI implications. It focuses on CAS faculty governance, specifically in support of the development of policies and practices of faculty evaluations, curriculum & curricular policy, faculty governance policy & practices, and faculty culture. The CAS EDI Working Group consists of one elected member from each of the Faculty Evaluation Committee, the Curriculum & Academic Policy Committee, and the Policy Planning Committee. It also includes one member of the faculty/librarian who is also the representative to the Willamette University EDI Committee and the Faculty Associate Dean for Faculty Development.

The Working Group meets periodically throughout the semester (with preference to once a month). They also receive a report from the Willamette University EDI Committee. In addition to serving as a conduit for EDI matters between the elected committees, the Working Group also identifies and develops new opportunities to improve CAS culture/conversations around EDI issues. The advocacy and action may include:

- Connecting various CAS constituencies (including other committees, individual (or groups of) faculty or staff, etc) with EDI resources.
- Requesting a task force, working group, or other resources to research/develop/implement specific EDI opportunities
- Developing faculty EDI leadership training & opportunities in collaboration with the Dean's Office and/or the Faculty Career Support Committee
- Connecting larger EDI university groups/initiatives to CAS constituencies

College of Law (WUCL)

The College of Law reorganized its already established DEI committee including their membership and committee mission. The updated mission is below:

Established in 2021 following the College of Law's adoption of its [Statement on Racism, Hate, and Violence](#), the Institutional Equity Committee (IEC Committee) includes students, staff, administration, and faculty. The IEC Committee is committed to creating an environment where every student, staff member, faculty member and administrator feels welcomed, included, heard and equally valued, embodying Willamette's motto: "Not unto ourselves alone are we born." We recognize and acknowledge societal and institutional structures of inequity are rooted in Eurocentrism, inequalities that have long been expressed through white supremacy, the ongoing oppression of groups not defined as white, and racist violence.

The IEC Committee believes that a more just, inclusive, and diverse community results in empowered and effective leaders in our community. Seeking to turn WUCL community's lived and learned knowledge into action, the IEC Committee is charged by WUCL administration with (1) creating a consistent space for productive discourse and learning by hosting and supporting events for students, staff and faculty to grow their understanding of systemic and societal discrimination, (2) providing best practices for inclusion of diversity, equity, and inclusion in curriculum, hiring, and admissions, and (3) serving as a coordinating body at the law school, connecting students, staff, and faculty throughout the law school and broader university community for issues and initiatives relating to diversity and equity.

Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA)

From January until May a working group of university-level and PNCA-level staff and faculty collaborated with Future Work Design (FWD), an organizational design and strategy firm, to co-create a path forward for the structure and operation of a new DEI committee. This committee will be charged with crafting and facilitating the advancement of a school-level strategic vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the fall, the working group will utilize the FWD produced memo that lays out a proposal from their team, including guidance and recommendations for membership and structure, to support the next steps in the committee creation process.

Atkinson Graduate School of Management (AGSM)

In May the faculty of AGSM approved a draft charge of the new school-level DEI committee. Members of the working group that helped establish the charge worked over the summer to map out committee membership and finalize the draft. Final committee approval will go back to the faculty in the fall with the goal of having the draft finalized and approved and the first committee meeting held in October/November. Once approved, the committee charge will be shared on the Office of Institutional Equity website.

Conferences and Grants

To support the transition of Assistant Provost Solano into his new role he was able to attend three conferences related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. He attended the [National College Attainment Network](#) Conference (NCAN) in Atlanta, Georgia in September 2022, the [National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education](#) in Baltimore, Maryland in April 2023, and the [National Conference on Race and Ethnicity](#) in New Orleans, Louisiana in May 2024. Learning from leaders in the field, these conferences have been instrumental in the development of the necessary work of the Office of Institutional Equity and has allowed Solano to benchmark and align the work that is in progress at Willamette, as well as the work that remains, with what is being done across the higher education landscape to support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Additionally, Solano was invited by College of Arts and Science's STEM faculty engaged in a grant funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to attend the [Inclusive Excellence 3](#) Gathering June 23-26 in Ashburn, Virginia. The gathering included 104 institutions across the country that received grant support to build capacity for inclusion of all students in science. Each institution is a part of a cluster in one of three projects: (1) pathways from 2-year to 4-year institutions; (2) reforming introductory STEM pathways; (3) and evaluating inclusive pedagogy (Willamette's team focus). Attending along with Melissa Marks (Associate Professor of Biology), the gathering allowed representatives from the other 20 institutions that are involved in the evaluating inclusive pedagogy project to engage in-person, make progress towards their goals, and map out the rest of the work ahead.

AAC&U's Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Grant

Over the last two academic years a working group of staff and faculty have been engaged in a grant provided by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Willamette was selected as one of a handful of institutions by the AAC&U to work on the development of a Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Climate Assessment Toolkit. This toolkit aims to support a more in-depth and action-oriented process for examining institutional policies, programs, and practices that perpetuate racial inequities after an institution has received findings from a campus climate assessment. When this toolkit is complete the university plans to use it as a complement to already existing assessment processes.

Willamette has been awarded a new grant by the AAC&U to continue this work during the 2023-24 academic year, moving into the beta-testing/feedback phase. This new core team, composed of members of the University DEI Committee, will work through sections of the draft web-based toolkit and will engage with evaluators in feedback collection activities that may include virtual focus groups, virtual interviews, and/or online surveys.

USC Center's Racial Equity Initiative

Willamette University was selected from more than 300 applicants to receive coaching from the USC Race and Equity Center's Equity Coaching Academy racial equity initiative. The Academy was established to assist institutions in dismantling racism, eliminating racial disparities, and strategically pursuing racial equity. Willamette was one of 22 institutions chosen nationally.

Founded by Dr. Shaun R. Harper, the [USC Race and Equity Center](#) is a national leader on matters of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. The Center has worked with more than 500 educational institutions, corporations, government agencies, and other organizations. In 2019, the Center launched the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates, a quantitative survey that has been administered to more than 1.4 million undergraduates across the U.S.

Over a three-month period (May-July), a university working group featuring Emilio Solano (Assistant Provost for Institutional Equity & Community Engagement), Olivia Muñoz (Dean of Students for Community Care & Inclusion), and Lisa Landreman (VP of Student Affairs) worked with DEI leader [Dr. Sharoni Little](#) to prioritize racial equity components of Willamette's recent campus climate survey results in order to support our understanding of best practices and strategies. While the campus climate survey data did not arrive until August there was still much good work to highlight in terms of developing tools and processes for analysis. Some of the big takeaways include progress towards developing an infrastructure and communication plan for future surveys and actions, identifying key questions to disaggregate data for, creating more opportunities to highlight the good work that is already being done at Willamette, finding more consistent informal/formal ways to measure our culture (particularly around racial equity) so that we have many snapshots of the state of our campus climate, and a reminder that cultivating our campus climate is an ongoing collective experience and responsibility for our university community.

Events

First in Family Reception

Assistant Provost Solano organized and facilitated the annual First in Family Reception during the College of Arts & Sciences 2022 Opening Days programming for incoming students. The program is designed to

support first-generation college students (students whose parents or immediate family members did not complete a bachelor's degree or are not familiar with the U.S. higher education system) and their families in their transition to Willamette. The panel answered questions related to resources, advice, and how to identify mentors as well as the assets that first-generation students already possess as they enter college. Following the panel students and families had time to connect with each other as well as other university staff and faculty that were in attendance.

Faculty of Color Connections

Building from the success of the 2022 Faculty of Color Retreat at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington a new workshop series was established called Faculty of Color Connections. Faculty of color from across the NW5C colleges were invited to engage in generative, supportive conversation about diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice initiatives on each respective campus. Participants had the opportunity to highlight promising activity within classrooms, programs, or campus offices, while also discussing issues like cultural taxation, invisible labor, and performative allyship. This Zoom event was Facilitated by Lorna Hernandez Jarvez (University of Puget Sound) and Emilio Solano (Willamette University) and aimed to hold a collaborative space created by and for people of color. Following the workshop, a dinner was held at Reed College for Portland area participants to continue the opportunity for in-person connection to those that were able to attend.

Faculty of Color Retreat

The 2023 NW5C Faculty of Color Retreat took place May 24-26 at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. The Northwest Five Consortium (NW5C) includes Willamette, Lewis & Clark College, Reed College, University of Puget Sound, and Whitman College. One of the underlying goals of the retreat is for cross-institutional connection so that faculty of color see themselves as a part of a larger network of support. There were 40 faculty of color in attendance across the five institutions that participated in professional development and community building sessions and a keynote address from Dr. Michelle Jacob of the University of Oregon (Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education, Curriculum & Teaching, Curriculum and Teacher Education, Educational Foundations, IRES, Sapsikwala Program).

Tribal Student Support Network Meeting

In May, Emilio Solano (Assistant Provost for Institutional Equity) and Aspen Padilla (Director of Academic Support) attended the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC) Tribal Student Support Network Meeting at Portland State University's Native American Student and Community Center. The event was designed to develop a community of practice for higher education and career training professionals that serve Tribal students. With two representatives from higher education institutions and representatives from various federally recognized tribes of Oregon in attendance, the goals of the meeting were to:

- have more understanding and knowledge of the various programs and systems that help create wraparound supports for students
- help students meet their higher education goals
- create a network of support and community of practice that learns from another and advocates on behalf of Tribal students

Recruitment and Retention

Student Retention Team

In September 2022, Provost Carol Long established a small working group to hold biweekly meetings to consistently engage in conversation around equity gaps in retention. Along with Provost Long this group consists of Lisa Landreman (Vice President of Student Affairs), Kelley Strawn (Associate Provost for Institutional Research), William Mullen (Vice President for Enrollment Management), and Christine Shanaberger (Assistant Provost of Academic Planning and Accreditation). The group has focused particular attention on improving data collection, analyzing current available data for trends in retention, and invited personnel to present on topics and measures that are impacting student retention such as the relationship of financial aid to retention, trends in Care Reports, and the Healthy Minds Survey related to mental health as a part of our larger JED Campus program. In the next academic year the retention group plans to prioritize improving retention data gathering and sharing, processes for understanding and keeping connected with students who go on leave, and advising processes.

Student Departure Form

While creating new policy around student course withdrawals, leave of absences, and exits, paired with larger university conversations around student retention, a new departure form was created in collaboration with Justin Leibowitz (Assistant Dean for Community Care and Inclusion), Laura Jacobs Anderson (University Registrar), and Nicole Rodgers (Assistant Registrar). This form aims to create more ease for students to navigate this process including selecting different options for consultation with appropriate university personnel. Additionally, the form will support improved data collection efforts as to why students may be taking leave of absences or exiting the university to inform our collective work in creating a university in which students feel a sense of belonging and support so that they can graduate.

Search Advocate Training

Mark Taylor (Director of Human Resources) and Tiffany DeGroat (Benefits Manager) attended the Search Advocate Foundations workshop series at Oregon State University. The workshop establishes a theoretical foundation of current research about implicit bias and diversity, information about the changing legal landscape in hiring, and an overview of inclusive employment principles. Using this foundation, Mark and Tiffany have constructed Willamette's own framework of practice for search advocate training, delving into specific issues that may arise at each stage of the search process, and exploring various ways to head off or respond to those issues.

The purpose of the search advocate workshop is to train employees to fill a role on search committees devoted to advising committee members on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues related to hiring practice to ensure a process that promotes positive outcomes. The workshop is divided into two half day sessions with homework both before and between the two sessions.

The sessions focus on answering three essential questions:

- What is a search advocate?
- Why does Willamette need search advocates?
- How does the search advocate perform their role in the search process to produce positive outcomes?

Mark and Tiffany have already conducted a search advocate training with faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences and plan on offering training to more employees in the 2023-24 academic year.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

In August 2023, in collaboration with Human Resources, a new policy for [Employee Resource Groups \(ERGs\)](#) was established. ERGs are employee-led voluntary groups that are intended to help foster a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive workplace experience. The policy provides guidelines for ERGs in their efforts to create communities and systems of support for one another. These intentional spaces for employees are generally organized around shared interests, identities, or backgrounds. ERGs are valuable as they enhance inclusive community engagement efforts, and assist in the recruitment and retention of a diverse community of employees. ERGs must welcome all employees. Those interested in establishing an ERG can review the requirements, application, policy, and FAQs on the Office of Institutional Equity Website.

Research and Assessment

Campus Climate Survey

Students, faculty, and staff were asked in February 2023 to complete a survey administered by HEDS (The Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium) to help us measure and understand perceptions of Willamette's climate including issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion and experiences of discrimination and harassment at Willamette. As Willamette strives to be a diverse and inclusive learning community we will use this data in our efforts to inform and improve services and policies at the respective colleges of our university. This was the first campus climate survey since 2019 and moving forward we expect to administer this survey every three years.

The data files arrived in August and, in partnership with the Office of Institutional Research, a report is in the process of being developed and is expected to be ready to share with the university community in the fall. With the support from the University DEI Committee, a series of programming will be developed in response to survey results with the goal of engaging our campus communities in the continuous cultivation of our climate.