

**University Senate Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Committee**

Annual Report April 2022

Committee Charge: This committee shall review University policies, practices, and conditions relevant to supporting and promoting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion among students, faculty, and staff.

Diversity Committee members 2021-2022: *Margaret Rubega, Chair, CLAS, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, *Michael Christy, Undergraduate Student Government Representative, *Caitlin Elsaesser, School of Social Work, *Maria-Luz Fernandez, CAHNR, Nutritional Sciences, *Kristen Govoni, CAHNR, Animal Science, *Diane Lillo-Martin, Linguistics, *Joseph MacDougald, Law, *Elle Ouimet, CLAS, Anthropology, *Greg Reilly, Business, Management, *Sarah Willen, CLAS, Anthropology, Cinnamon Adams, The Graduate School, Jackson Calhoun, Graduate Student Senate Representative, Clarissa Ceglio, SFA, Digital Media and Design, Julie Guild, Human Resources, Josianne Hamilton, Undergraduate Student Government Representative, Christina (Rivera) Irizarry, Institute for Student Success, Christine Kirchhoff, Engineering, Civil & Environmental Engineering, Mona Lucas, Enrollment Planning & Management, Maryann Markowski, OVPR's Office, Alison Paul, SFA, Art and Art History, Claudia Pina, Student Health and Wellness, Waterbury Campus, Willena Price, African American Cultural Center, Michael Rodriguez, University Libraries, Stephany Santos, School of Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Audrey Silva, Center for Students with Disabilities, Magdalena Silver, UConn Public Safety, Frank Tuitt, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion & Chief Diversity Officer

***Senate member (2021-2022).**

Dates of JEDI Committee Meetings during the 2021-2022 academic year:

September 2, October 7, November 4, December 2 2020; January 19, February 1, March 2, April 5, May 4.

In the 2021/2022 Academic year, the JEDI Committee focused on creating some structures and processes that would allow greater inclusiveness in the work of the committee (a fluctuating meeting schedule, to ensure that all members of the committee are able to attend meetings at least bi-monthly), and more focus on between-meeting progress (establishing subcommittees). Margaret Rubega will be rotating out as committee chair, in accordance with Senate Bylaws; she will be replaced in 2022-2023 by committee member Joseph MacDougal.

Major topics for the academic year:

1. Advisement and Contribution to Other Committees.

The committee's role is realized to a large degree in working with other senate committees and university entities to provide perspective and to ensure DEI perspectives and impact are accounted for; committee members contributed time and feedback this year to the CLAS Accessibility Committee, and the Working Group to Consider a Proposal for a Mandatory Anti-Black Racism Course. The Committee Chair (Rubega) also participated in the search process for the new Director for the Stamford Campus, though was not a member of the search committee. Rubega co-chaired the ODI Campus Climate Assessment Working Group in Spring 2021, and in Fall 2021 attended/presented at meetings to report the Working Group's findings to various stakeholders, including the Provost's Core Team, and the Dean's Council. She also presented at the ODI's DEI Strategic Planning Event, and joined the University Bias Action Group.

2. Engagement and interaction with Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Frank Tuitt, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Dr. Tuitt is an ex officio member of the committee; every JEDI committee meeting begins with a review of recent events, actions, and initiatives in ODI. Some notable changes at ODI this year include the establishment of the ODI Commons, and Native American and Middle Eastern Cultural Programs; and a comprehensive ODI website.

3. Structural racism at UConn.

Acting on the widespread data that people of color had much worse outcomes during the COVID crisis than did whites, and in response to the action by the state of CT, the UConn Student Government, and Interim President Awunobi to declare racism a public health crisis, the Committee, led by committee members Michael Christy and Sarah Willen, brought to the Senate a Resolution In Support of the Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis, and a Call for Action. The resolution called for the university to commit direct funding to initiatives to enhance diversity and support communities of color on campus; develop or adopt racial equity tools, and use them to review policies, initiatives, and educational outcomes; use best practices in community based participatory research; direct funding and build opportunities to teach and learn about the impact of racism; and work toward dismantling structures and systems within the university that reinforce racism. The Resolution passed at the November 1, 2021 Senate meeting.

On a similar note, data from 2017-2021 show that much higher percentages of Black, Latino and Hispanic students than white students end up on academic probation at the end of their first semester at UConn, and that these numbers worsened during the COVID pandemic. Reduction of this disparity is a priority of the committee, which will consider where support may be lacking and how policy may intersect with this situation in the future.

The committee supports, and has been engaged for the last 2 years in conversations about requiring for all students the 1 credit course on anti-black racism

that was developed in Fall 2020. The committee did not bring a resolution on this matter, since the USG had already submitted a proposal; committee members Rubega and Santos are serving on the Working Group directed by the Senate Executive Committee to consider the USG proposal for the requirement, with a report to be delivered May 1, 2022.

4. Transgender Rights.

The committee returned their focus to a subject of earlier concern, rights and support of transgender people at UConn. The committee met with Angela Rola and Maureen Sullivan, members of the University Bias Incident Response Team, to discuss incidents and issues surrounding the ability of students to have their chosen name used in their University interactions and records. Students can opt to have their chosen name added to their UConn ID cards, but in many contexts their legal names (which they may be unable to change for familial or financial reasons) appear on their records (e.g. in student rosters) leading to incidents in which students either have to repeatedly correct instructors and others with regard to their name, or accept being misgendered. The committee raised this issue with the SEC, which discussed it with the President's Council. Chosen name integration into university systems is an ongoing project that the committee will continue to monitor into the future.

The Transgender Rights subcommittee of JEDI took up the issue of the availability of gender-neutral restrooms on campus. Several members of the subcommittee had received reports from transgender students that restrooms they felt safe to use were too distant from the buildings their classes were in for them to be able to use restrooms on campus, resulting in distress and urinary infections in some cases. The committee obtained bathroom data from UConn's Office of Space Management and Planning to determine what the numbers and distribution of restrooms accessible to anyone is like on Campus; it was evident from our own local knowledge that the spreadsheets we received are inaccurate for at least some locations, and we began discussion about how a ground-truthing exercise might be accomplished. Committee member Jackson Calhoun also alerted the committee to the work that the Rainbow Center has done on this issue; Kelsey O'Neil, director of the Rainbow Center met with the committee to update the committee on their efforts. Rainbow Center student staff began mapping the restrooms and their signage in 2018 (by direct visit); they identified incorrect University floor plans, requests for changes to restrooms refused on the basis of building codes and other policy interpretations, resources and COVID-19 as barriers to progress. Since then the Rainbow Center has developed an OIE-approved gender-inclusive restroom signage guide, and a gender-inclusive restroom map (<https://rainbowcenter.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2262/2021/11/UConn-Gender-Inclusive-Restroom-Map-version-November-2021.pdf>). The committee's goals for the future are to support the Rainbow Center in this effort, with particular attention to reducing or eliminating policy barriers to expansion of gender-inclusive restroom availability on campus.