

UVM Libraries Inclusive Excellence Action Plan

Introduction

The principles of diversity, inclusion, and equity are and must remain the guiding principles for academic libraries.

In 2019, the Libraries' Staff and Faculty Development Committee formed a subcommittee commissioned to produce a "Diversity and Inclusion Report," recommending "how to move forward with integrating and imbedding the topics and philosophies of diversity, equity, and inclusion into daily library operations."

That report, released the summer of 2019, made several recommendations. Chief among them were the following two:

1. To clearly define the work of diversity and inclusion as it relates to the work of academic libraries.
2. To create a permanent body charged with overseeing and guiding the libraries' work on diversity and inclusion.

The report made clear the significant variation in understandings of diversity and inclusion within the UVM Libraries, a finding that should not surprise us given debates surrounding the phrase within the academy and in society at large. Recognizing that we need a shared understanding of language and concepts to inform our work, the Libraries' Dean Council decided to create a working group to address recommendation #1, that is, to define clearly the work of diversity and inclusion as it relates to the work of academic libraries.

The charge for this Diversity & Inclusion Working Group is as follows:

The Diversity and Inclusion Working Group will craft a two-paragraph definition of "diversity and inclusion" and a statement of values and commitments that are (a) specific to the particular work of the UVM Libraries and that (b) reference and uphold UVM's "[Why Diversity](#)" statement, UVM's "[Our Common Ground Values](#)" statement, UVM's [statement on academic freedom](#), ACRL's [statement on academic freedom](#), ACRL's [diversity standards](#), and any relevant document from the Medical Library Association.

That working group completed its task, crafting a charge for a standing Inclusive Excellence Committee (IEC) centered upon definitions of "diversity," "inclusion," and "equity." That charge and the attendant definitions are [here](#). This new Inclusive Excellence Committee oversees the plan below.

We do *not* ask the IEC to assume sole responsibility for the Libraries' work in diversity and inclusion. We believe D&I work should be embedded throughout the Libraries, and that various aspects of DEI work should fall under the purview of various bodies throughout the Libraries. So, for example, multiple groups and individuals will play a key role in identifying and promoting opportunities for education around D&I. The Dean's Council will work with the Libraries' human resource specialist and with campus-wide H.R. to develop a comprehensive plan and search procedures for attracting and hiring more diverse candidates. Collection Development personnel will monitor success in building diverse and inclusive collections.

Recent Completed Action:

1. We now have:
 - a. updated door-opening/accessibility technology in Howe Library's main entrance
 - b. a newly accessible entrance to Ira Allen Chapel, which allows access to the lower floors of Billings Library, including the Silver Special Collections Library.
 - c. a new, accessible restroom in Howe Library
 - d. two older restrooms renovated to comply with ADA standards.
 - e. accessibility upgrades to the restroom in Billings Library.
 - f. gender-neutral restrooms on all four floors of Howe Library
 - g. a gender-neutral restroom in Billings Library, home to the Silver Special Collections Library
2. We have ensured:
 - a. closed captioning of videos and visual displays
 - b. compliance with section 508 of the website compliance/WCAG 2.0 AA standard
 - c. website compatibility with screen readers
 - d. instructional and other materials in accessible formats
 - e. online learning systems accessible to all students
3. We continue to provide space for meetings to cultural groups on campus.
4. We continue to sponsor programs and exhibits that promote engagement with issues of diversity and inclusion. Recent examples include book displays showcasing the history and culture of indigenous peoples, Burack lecturer Kevin Young's talk "Brown: Adventures in Being," and a Dana Medical Library exhibit on racial disparities in health outcomes.
5. We use communication tools such as our Libraries' websites and social media accounts to routinely feature the diversity of both our collections and the campus community.
6. We require that annual performance reviews for staff evaluate work on diversity and inclusive excellence.

Pillar One: Academic

Overarching Goal: To provide unrestricted access to the breadth and depth of human thought and action through our collections, teaching, and service to faculty and students, while teaching analysis of the same.

2019-2020 Objectives:

1. *Completed:* Ensure that the Libraries' new statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion embraces and commits to two principles sometimes in tension¹: inclusion and respect (embodied in UVM's "Why Diversity" statement, UVM's "Our Common Ground Values," and ACRL's "Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries") *and* fundamental principles of intellectual freedom (embodied in UVM's statement on "Academic Freedom," the "ACRL Statement on Academic Freedom," and the AAUP "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure").

2021-2022 Objectives:

1. Assess the diversity of library collections.

¹ For example: ACRL's diversity standards speak of the need for "safe spaces" and the need to act "respectfully," while UVM's statement on academic freedom affirms the institution's commitment to "explosive" ideas "bound to be disconcerting, even painful, to some on the campus and to many beyond its borders." We do not believe that these two commitments stand in opposition to each other; but they do often stand in tension with one other.

2. Determine the extent to which the collection serves the diversity of our community and educational program.
3. Work with new director of collection development and appropriate committees to determine needed actions.

Pillar Two: Community

Overarching Goal: Libraries that are open and affirming for all persons and supportive of all intellectually rigorous thought and traditions.

2019-2020 Action Items:

1. *Completed:* Ensure that the Libraries' new statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion commits the Libraries to affirming all persons and supporting all intellectually rigorous thought and traditions.

2020-2022 Objectives:

1. Develop in conjunction with H.R. optimal recruitment procedures designed build the strongest and most diverse candidate pools possible. Hold all search committees to the letter and spirit of these procedures.
2. Identify funds that will permit faculty and staff to obtain training in diversity and inclusion issues.
3. Determine whether to create a mentorship program for employees, with special attention to employees from historically underrepresented backgrounds or communities.
4. Create programs (lectures, debates, forums) designed to recognize diverse thought and opinions.
5. Determine whether funds might be available for an internship/fellowship designed to bring underrepresented persons into the library profession. Continue to work with the UVM Foundation on this longstanding priority.
6. Recraft cataloging, purchasing, and collection development policies that now focus primarily on making material accessible only to the UVM community; reorient this work to making material accessible to a global community.

Pillar Three: Environment

Overarching Goal: To make the Libraries' tools, academic resources, and physical spaces accessible and compliant with all relevant standards.

2019-2020 Action Items:

1. *Completed:* Ensure that the Libraries' new statement on diversity and inclusion commits the Libraries to purchasing, designing, and supporting accessible research tools, physical spaces, and virtual spaces.
2. *Completed:* Request an exemption to UVM's web policy—an exemption that will allow the Libraries to make all their services and tools available according to established accessibility standards.

2021-2022 Action Items:

3. Work with UVM's ADA coordinator to complete a review of UVM Libraries' facilities. Prioritize renovation and maintenance projects needed to improve and ensure accessibility.

Pillar Four: Operations

Overarching Goal: To develop operations that support and reward inclusive behavior without impinging upon academic freedom or freedom of thought.

2019-2020

1. *Completed:* Ensure that the Libraries' new statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion commits the Libraries to work that is diverse and inclusive in all its operations.

2021-2022 Action Items:

1. Determine the advisability of a comprehensive education plan for library personnel addressing the myriad issues surrounding diversity and inclusion.
2. Develop and implement accessibility and inclusion guidelines for the Libraries' communications workflows, including social media postings, news stories, and targeted communications.
3. Finalize a collection development policy for the McCrorey Gallery of Multicultural Art
4. Ask all departments in the library to discuss their operations in light of ACRL's [Diversity Standards](#). [Make notes of the conversations and share these notes in an all-hands meeting.](#)

General Information

1. **Dean:** Bryn Geffert

2. **Person submitting plan:**

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Title: Dean

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3. **Departments within the Library:**

- a. Dana Medical Library
- b. Collection Management Services
- c. Information and Instruction Services
- d. Silver Special Collections
- e. Access and Technology Services

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

- Sarah Gordon, chair
- Kate Bright
- Anitra Conover
- Bryn Geffert
- Laura Haines
- Ellen Kaye
- Colin McClung