

Welcome!

Dr. Frank Tuitt, AVP/CDO

Welcome to the Spring 2022 ODI newsletter! So far this year, ODI's central office and seven cultural centers and programs have been hard at work expanding the resources and programming that are essential to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice at UConn. Together as one ODI, we have collaborated with students, staff, faculty, and alumni to move the needle on campus climate and improve living, learning, and working conditions across the UConn system.



We have a lot to be proud of so far this year! Along with our institutional partners, ODI has expanded DEIJ infrastructure across the UConn system, providing the DEIJ-related expertise necessary for achieving our institution's goals of fostering a welcoming environment in which all individuals can achieve their fullest potential. We are thrilled to see an increase in diversity-focused positions across the UConn system. We are especially excited about the new Chief Diversity Officer position at UConn Health, and look forward to working alongside the inaugural CDO, Jeffrey Hines, MD, to facilitate UConn Health's goals of providing healthcare excellence.

We are also proud of the cultural centers and programs who continue to conduct meaningful work that not only meets the needs of our increasingly diverse student, staff, faculty, and alumni populations, but who offer the programming, support, and community building that makes our campus spaces more welcoming. In particular, the cultural centers and programs have expanded support this year for Undocumented, Native and Indigenous, and Middle Eastern members of our community. Moreover, we were able to open the ODI Commons space in the first floor of the Student Union Building, where we plan to host a variety of intersectional programming and events.

We also have a lot to be excited about for spring 2022, including 50th anniversary celebrations for the Women's Center and Puerto Rican / Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC); a closer relationship with the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE); and our annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Convocation. These events, and more, will be detailed in this edition. The work of building a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and justice-oriented campus takes all of us. We are excited to continue working with you to make UConn a better place!



A Look Back: ODI in Fall 2021

A New University-Wide Diversity Website



ODI is thrilled to announce that our University-wide diversity website, diversity.uconn.edu, launched this spring! This website is a hub for diversity efforts across the UConn system, providing resources, events, communications from UConn leadership, and ways to get involved. The website is a useful tool for **all** members of the UConn community. Whether student, staff, faculty, or alumni, we have something for you!

ODI Grows Closer to the Office of Institutional Equity



ODI is one of several units dedicated to improving living, learning, and working conditions for UConn's increasingly diverse populations. One of our closest partners in this endeavor is the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE), headed by [Associate Vice President Letissa Reid](#).

There is sometimes confusion about the different roles ODI and OIE play. **ODI** advocates for access and equity with a focus on strategic planning and providing resources and support for UConn students, staff, and faculty. **OIE**, on the other hand, administers UConn's non-discrimination policies and ensures its compliance with the law.

According to AVP Reid, OIE is the "E" in DEI, the office that promotes equity by ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination and harassment policies and holding accountable individuals found to have violated those policies.

Together, ODI and OIE work to make our campus spaces safer and more welcoming. This spring, OIE and ODI are re-envisioning diversity awareness trainings for new employees. Our goal is to create a set of trainings that not only make employees aware of University policies regarding discrimination and harassment, but that provide a meaningful opportunity for building community.

The ODI Commons is Open!

ODI is pleased to announce the opening of an ODI Commons space on the first floor of the Student Union Building! The ODI Commons will be the home of the Middle Eastern Cultural Programs (MECP) and the Native American Cultural Programs (NACP) and will also serve as a space for events celebrating intersectional identities. The new space will be renovated this summer to provide private offices, a conference room, a communal space, an outdoor community space, and a mosaic that acknowledges that UConn sits on Native lands.

MLK Living Legacy Convocation

This January, ODI hosted a week of events to celebrate the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition to guest speaker Feminista Jones, who gave a talk on Radical Healing and the need for radical action in institutions, ODI held a TED Talks-style event featuring student, staff, faculty, and alumni speakers from all of UConn's campuses. These speakers put Dr. King's legacy in context at UConn.

See the Ted Talks at <https://youtu.be/OF0EHJRdv4U>

A Look Back: ODI in Fall 2021

UConn's Cultural Centers and Programs: A Crucial Part of the University's DEI Infrastructure

UConn's cultural centers and programs play a vital role by providing programming, resources, support, and a sense of community to the members of our community who come from historically excluded and racially oppressed backgrounds. Though each center or program focuses on providing support to a particular affinity group, they work together as one unit to support identities at all intersections.

Much of the centers' and programs' work is student oriented. However, they also provide support for faculty and staff, including institutional advocacy and capacity building. They expand UConn's DEI infrastructure by offering content knowledge and expertise to address barriers to access and achievement and offer a sense of representation.

The cultural centers and programs' **specialty trained full-time staff are exempt from the University's mandatory reporting guidelines.** This enables them to offer a unique set of supports for students, staff, and faculty seeking information or making decisions about elevating issues to the appropriate systems and resources.

Unfortunately, not all members of the UConn community are aware of the protections afforded by the cultural centers and programs; we know that, on occasion, members of our community who suffer an injustice feel at a loss for where to go or who they can trust for help. If you ever find yourself or one of your students in such a situation, please remember that the cultural centers and programs are here to help you -- and will put YOU first.

<https://office.diversity.uconn.edu/cultural-centers/>

Fall 2021 Highlights and Events

ODI had a successful semester across all eight units! Here are some of the highlights from our Fall 2021 programming and events. Find a full listing at <https://diversity.uconn.edu/events/>

Central Office

- ODI Leadership Training Series
- A Campus Climate Initiative with UConn Hillel and the Academic Engagement Network (AEN)
- Partnered with CT Students for a Dream to create training about working with and supporting undocumented students

African American Cultural Center (AACC)

- **AACC Reads:** *Yoke: My Yoga of Self-Acceptance* by Jessamny Stanley and *Happyvism*, a picture book co-written by UConn alumnus Justis Lopez
- **Kwanzaa**, an African American Holiday Celebration

Asian American Cultural Center (AsACC)

- **Asian/Asian American Mentoring Program (AMP)**, a signature program connecting first-year students with returning students
- **SALAAM**, a program that educates the UConn community about the Muslim community and the rise of Islamophobia
- **IMPAACT Conference**, an annual one-day conference focused on current issues, leadership skills development, and community building

Middle Eastern Cultural Programs (MECP)

- **Yalda**, an Iranian celebration of the winter solstice and "darkest night of the year."
- **Co-Funding Program**, offering up to \$1,000 to sponsor student, staff, or faculty projects that advance diversity and inclusion at UConn.
- The launch of three mentorship programs:
 - MECP Peer Mentorship Program
 - MECP Husky Mentorship Program
 - MECP Cultural Ambassador Program

A Look Back: ODI in Fall 2021

Native American Cultural Programs (NACP)

- **LandGrabCT.org**, a project that maps out the Native and Indigenous land given to UConn
- **Indigenous People's Week**, featuring panels, virtual demonstrations, and a keynote address by Tristan Ahtone and Robert Lee.
- **Native American and Indigenous Heritage Month** events:
 - Indigenous Women in STEM panel
 - Discussion with Navajo Artist Shonto Begay
 - Fundraiser to stop violence against Indigenous Women and Girls
 - Guest speaker Sarah Deere

Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC)

- Redesigning Diversity Awareness Training
- **Latinx Student Leadership Council**, empowering students through a sense of community and programming
- **Healthcare for Immigrants Forum**
- Unveiling the PRLACC 50th Anniversary Mural

Rainbow Center

- The inaugural **Rainbow Center Symposium**, featuring a keynote performance by Dr. Mick Powell and 10 separate workshops on issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ community
- Launched the inaugural **LGBTQ+ Health Needs Assessment** in partnership with Yale
- **Out to Lunch Lecture Series**

Women's Center

- **Steminist Summit**, a 2-day summit for students, staff, and faculty in STEM fields. In partnership with the Vergnano Institute for Inclusion.
- **Expectant and Parenting Work Group** to enhance support for undergrad and grad students who are pregnant, expecting, and/or taking care of children while at UConn.
- **Stop Honor Killings**, a seminar on gender-based violence with Dr. Rezvan Moghaddam.

Important Resources for Navigating UConn

A vital part of UConn's DEIJ mission is making campus spaces more welcoming and inclusive. The cultural centers and programs play a lead role in this effort, in part, by providing spaces for refuge and community building for historically excluded and racially oppressed groups in a primarily white institution (PWI). In addition, they offer programming and events that celebrate these groups and educate the wider UConn community.

A second component of building a more welcoming and inclusive community is providing resources that help students, staff, and faculty navigate UConn's systems, whether directing them to resources and communities or in helping them find the appropriate channels for reporting bias incidents.

Below is a partial list of the resources UConn offers for making campus spaces more welcoming and inclusive. A more detailed list can be found at <https://diversity.uconn.edu/resources/>

Resources for Reporting Bias Incidents

Inform.uconn.edu



Inform is the University's hub for reporting bias, harassment, safety issues, and other types of misconduct. It is open to ALL members of the UConn community, including visitors and bystanders. This website directs you to the appropriate office, department, or form.

Title IX -- titleix.uconn.edu

UConn is committed to ridding campus spaces of all forms of sexual harassment and violence. The Title IX office provides a place to report incidents, as well as resources to help faculty and staff respond to student disclosures of such violence. These resources are available regardless of whether formal administrative or criminal processes are initiated.

A Look Back: ODI in Fall 2021

UConn Support Resources Highlights

UConn has a number of resources available to support community members as they navigate campus spaces. Below are a few highlights.

Resources for Students who are Pregnant or Have Parenting Responsibilities

We have heard from pregnant and parenting students that the pandemic has presented enormous challenges, especially as boundaries between personal and professional lives grow less defined. They report feeling isolated and having limited information about available support. Here are a few resources for pregnant or parenting students:

- Moms4Moms, a parenting support group run by the Women's Center: <https://womenscenter.uconn.edu/programs-services/groups/>
- HR's page on family resources: <https://hr.uconn.edu/worklife-family/>
- Requesting accommodations at the Center for Students with Disabilities: <https://csd.uconn.edu/temporary-injuries-and-conditions/>
- OIE's resources: <https://equity.uconn.edu/pregnant-and-parenting-resources/pregnant-and-parenting-resources-for-undergraduate-students/>

Resources for Muslim Students

Unfortunately, incidents of islamophobia are up across the country -- and UConn is, sadly, no exception. We have a few resources to help make campus safer and more welcoming for Muslim students:

- Middle Eastern Cultural Programs (MECP)
- Salaam, an Asian American Cultural Center program to raise awareness of Islamophobia: <https://asacc.uconn.edu/programs/salaam/>
- The Islamic Center: <http://icuc.weebly.com/>
- Muslim Student Association: <https://career.uconn.edu/organizations/muslim-student-association/>

Expanding the DEIJ Infrastructure

ODI has been working with institutional partners to expand DEIJ infrastructure across campus spaces, especially by bringing in people who provide DEIJ-related expertise to our institutional efforts. We are excited to announce the addition of these staff:

UConn Health Associate Vice President / Chief Diversity Officer

ODI is pleased to announce that Jeffrey Hines, M.D., will serve as the inaugural Associate Vice President / Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) at UConn Health.



Dr. Hines has a wealth of experience developing DEI strategic plans; implementing frameworks for achieving health excellence through health equity; addressing disparities in healthcare; and facilitating efforts to align diversity and inclusion strategies with core institutional objectives. Dr. Hines will begin his tenure on June 3. We look forward to his leadership in building upon our strong diversity commitment and efforts!

Rainbow Center Program Coordinator

Chris Richard (they/them/theirs) joined ODI as the Rainbow Center Coordinator in December.



Chris bring 10 year's experience in creating and supporting academic systems that function both as inclusive environments and as spaces that meet the needs and honor the lived experiences of all students. We look forward to Chris's continued efforts in critical social justice work with our communities!

AsACC Assistant Director

Jeffery Alton (he/him/his) will begin his role as the new AsACC Assistant Director on March 25.



A UConn alumnus, Jeff returns to Storrs after ten years as the Associate Director at the Asian American Resource and Cultural Center at the University of Illinois, Chicago. We are excited to welcome Jeff as he continues his work on intersections between ability, gender, race, and sexual orientation!

A Look Back: ODI in Fall 2021

The Faculty Affiliates Program

Overview

The important transformative work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice cannot be fulfilled by a single unit or department; rather, it takes buy-in from every unit and department across the entire system. In order to build the DEIJ infrastructure that facilitates engagement, as well as to align DEIJ-related expertise with unit and departmental goals, ODI created the Faculty Affiliates Program.

The Faculty Affiliates Program provides resources and infrastructure for creating sustainable efforts for building capacity at UConn. Faculty Affiliates work to build a more welcome and inclusive UConn community by advocating for access and equity and welcoming and celebrating the experiences of historically excluded and racially oppressed groups who make a home at UConn.

Faculty Affiliates are positioned to facilitate innovation and transformation at the local level. Affiliates come from STEM, Social Sciences, and Professional Preparation Programs. They represent Storrs, all five regional campuses, and UConn Health. For more, visit <https://office.diversity.uconn.edu/faculty-affiliates/>

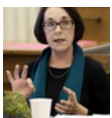
The Faculty Affiliates



Mary Anne Amalaradjou
Associate Professor of Food Microbiology



Stephany Santos
Assistant Professor in Residence in
Biomedical Engineering; Exec Assoc.
Director of Vergnano Institute for Inclusion



Brenda Brueggemann
Professor, Aetna Endowed Chair of Writing



Thomas Craemer
Associate Professor of Public Policy



David G Embrick
Associate Professor of Sociology, Africana
Initiatives; Director of Sustainable Global
Cities Initiatives

Strategic Domains

Each Faculty Affiliate collaborates to support ODI's efforts in at least one of five strategic domains:

Graduate Student Support and Development

This team focuses on building community for first-generation grad students, racially minoritized grad students, and grad students with disabilities.

Faculty and Staff Support and Development

This team centers the voices of racially minoritized faculty and staff through faculty and staff of color town halls, the Higher Education Anti-Racist Teaching (H.E.A.R.T.) Podcast, and a survey to cultivate communal identity affirming language around race. Access the podcast at <https://diversity.uconn.edu/heart-podcast/>

ODI & Unit-Level DEIJ Strategy and Operations

This team supports DEIJ planning efforts at institutional and unit levels. It researches plans of peer and aspirant institutions, identifies best practices and not recommended practices, and builds partnerships outside UConn.

Community Outreach, Engagement, Advocacy

This team is developing a database to bring together scholars studying minoritized communities. They have also been engaging Indigenous faculty to collaborate with Indigenous communities and identify areas of growth for UConn in serving Indigenous peoples and tribal nations.

Research and Policy

This team held three panel discussions around the trolling of minoritized faculty and how institutions can protect minoritized faculty. They will have an additional panel with data about current UConn faculty experiences with trolling.

Selected Spring 2022 Events

- Women in STEM initiative (3/1)
- Panel discussion for first-gen grad students (3/30)
- BIPOC grad student event on financial support, mentorship, and academic success (April)
- BIPOC grad student networking event (April)
- Engaging Indigenous Faculty in UConn's practices in collaboration with Indigenous communities (April)
- Panel Discussion, Dr. Katheryn Russell-Brown (April)
- Faculty and Staff of Color Spring Town Hall (4/20)
- Task Force for Universal Design for Learning (May)

A Look Forward: ODI in Spring 2022

Two Cultural Center 50th Anniversaries

UConn's seven cultural centers and programs are a vital part of the University's DEI infrastructure. These seven units play dual roles at UConn: meeting the social and cultural needs of students from particular demographic groups and educating the wider UConn community about the historical context and ongoing issues these groups face. The centers and programs are vital to University efforts to create a more welcoming and inclusive campus environment.

Cultural centers emerged from student-led activism during the Civil Rights Movement, as students from historically excluded and racially oppressed backgrounds demanded social justice, cultural recognition, expanded curriculum, and better representation among student, staff, and faculty populations. UConn's own cultural centers and programs are the result of student-led activism to secure spaces of belonging, avenues of community building, and expanded representation and curriculum. This year, we celebrate 50th anniversaries for two of our centers and 50 years of UConn student activism.

The Women's Center



The 50th Anniversary is dedicated to recognizing, honoring, and sharing the impact of the Women's Center's

work over the last five decades, as well as the important work still being done across campus today.

The story of feminism at UConn is multifaceted and ongoing. It is comprised of countless individuals and diverse experiences, perspectives, and voices. We will share these stories and host a variety of events and programs beginning in Women's Herstory Month in March. We hope to engage the entire University community to honor the work of so many through the years; collectively envision alternative possibilities; and inspire one another to participate in creating opportunities to effect positive social change through meaningful action. See more at <https://womenscenter.uconn.edu/>

Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC)



PRLACC is pleased to celebrate 50 years of improving the status of Latinx students and promoting awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the richness and diversity of Latinx individuals and Latin American cultures.

PRLACC will host a series of events to celebrate:

- A reunion for classes graduating since 2011 (4/9)
- Happy Birthday, Feliz Cumpleaños, Parabens PRLACC (4/24)
- 50th Reunion for alumni from the 1975- 1976 classes, (6/11-6/12)
- Latin Fest 50 years of Dancing (6/11)

PRLACC invites the entire UConn community to join in the celebrations! See more at <https://latinx.uconn.edu/>

Selected Spring 2022 Events

January 2022

- Guest Speaker Feminista Jones 1/18
- MLK Living Legacy Convocation 1/20
- Land Grant or Land Grab? 1/25
- When Trolls Threaten Faculty of Color 1/26

February 2022

- Guest Speaker Alizia Garza 2/2
- Black History Mo. Opening Ceremony 2/3
- Guest Speaker Crystal Emery 2/15
- Justice Now Initiative Speakers Ongoing
- Inspired By History: Social Justice 2/23
- Supporting Women in Leadership 2/24

March 2022

- Picture a Scientist Film Screening 3/1
- Nowruz 3/6
- Legally and Medically Trans 3/8
- Guest Speaker Roxane Gay 3/9
- Asian Nite 3/26

April 2022

- Rainbow Center Talent Show 4/1
- Asian American Heritage Speaker 4/5
- PRLACC Young Alumni Reunion 4/9
- PRLACC Alumni Open House 4/9
- Arts and Activism with Ruby Ibarra 4/14
- PRLACC 50th Celebration 4/24

May 2022

- Women's Advance Conference 5/11

June 2022

- PRLACC 50th Class Alumni Reunion 6/11
- Latin Fest - 50 years of Dancing 6/11

Check <https://diversity.uconn.edu/events/> for the most up-to-date information on diversity-related events