

## Welcome!

**Dr. Frank Tuitt, AVP/CDO**

Welcome to the Summer 2022 ODI newsletter! The 2021-2022 Academic Year is in the books, and ODI's central office and seven cultural centers and programs have continued the work of expanding the resources and programming that are essential to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice at UConn. Together as one ODI, we collaborated with students, staff, faculty, and alumni to move the needle on campus climate and improve living, learning, and working conditions across the system.

We have a lot to celebrate this year. Our new university-wide website went up this spring and continues to house important resources for the entire community. We also opened our ODI Commons in the first floor of the Student Union building; this space allows UConn to extend its position at the forefront of higher educational cultural center work by designating a space to meet the growing needs of increasingly intersectional identities for students, staff, and faculty. We also welcomed Dr. Jeffery Hines, who is serving as the inaugural Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer at UConn Health. Moreover, we continued to work with our partners to improve the climate across all of our campuses. We believe that efforts to make UConn safer, more equitable, and more just for **any** group will improve the living, learning, and working conditions of **every** group who makes their home at UConn.

Despite these successes, we continue to face challenges in making UConn a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just environment. In particular, we recognize that the last few years have been difficult for everyone between the COVID-19 pandemic and a nationwide increase in identity-based harassment and violence. ODI sees that we need to continue offering high-quality services and resources despite the twin pandemics' reduction of individual bandwidth. ODI is committed to building capacity across the University system, so that our partners across the University are able to continue to meet the growing needs of our students, staff, and faculty. In that regard, we look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Provost's Office led by Interim Provost Anne D'Alleva, who is a tireless advocate for our students, faculty, and staff. We welcome and look forward to working alongside her!

ODI remains committed to the important work improving campus climate that began with the founding of our African American Cultural Center in 1968. ODI is here for you. In these times of change, we are committed to staying the course in facilitating UConn's efforts to live up to its diversity-related goals.



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## A New University-Wide Diversity Website



ODI is thrilled to announce that our University-wide diversity website, [diversity.uconn.edu](https://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!

## The ODI Commons is Open!

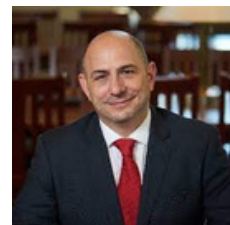
ODI is pleased to announce the opening of the ODI Commons space on the first floor of the Student Union Building! The ODI Commons is the home of the Middle Eastern Cultural Programs (MECP) and the Native American Cultural Programs (NACP), and will also serve as a space for events celebrating intersectional identities.

This space will be open for activities starting in Fall 2022. We are excited to give our Middle Eastern and Native American and Indigenous students a space for community-building and programming. We are also excited for the opportunities for cross-unit events and programming this space will provide. Be sure to stop by this Fall!



## Good Luck at Stony Brook!

At the end of the Spring 2022 semester, Provost Carl Lejuez left UConn to become the Executive Vice President and Provost at SUNY Stony Brook.



Since he joined UConn in 2020, Provost Lejuez demonstrated himself to be one of UConn's most dedicated advocates and allies for making our campuses more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just. We'll miss Provost Lejuez and his Chief of Staff, Kristi Henderson, and wish them good luck!

## UConn Health's Inaugural Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Begins Tenure



ODI is pleased to welcome Dr. Jeffrey Hines, M.D., who began serving as UConn Health's inaugural AVP / CDO this June.

Dr. Hines comes from Wellstar, one of Georgia's largest not-for-profit integrated healthcare systems. There, he served as Division Chief for Gynecological Oncology and as the the Wellstar Health System's Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Health Equity.

Dr. Hines 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.

We are excited that Dr. Hines has joined us and we look forward to his leadership in building upon our strong diversity commitment and efforts!

# Spring 2022 Highlights

## Two Cultural Center 50th Anniversaries

UConn's seven cultural centers and programs are a vital part of the University's DEIJ 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 celebrated 50th anniversaries for two of our centers and 50+ years of UConn student activism.

### The Women's Center



The 50th Anniversary was dedicated to recognizing, honoring, and sharing the impact of the Center's work over the last five decades, as well as to recognize the important work still being done across campus today.

The Women's Center hosted a variety of events and programs during the Spring 2022 semester to engage the University community in honoring this work, envisioning possibilities for success, and inspiring each other to create opportunities to effect positive social change through meaningful action.

Some of their events to celebrate the 50th include:

- Roxane Gay: "With One "N" - Women's Herstory Opening / 50th Anniversary Opening
- "From Childhood Sexual Abuse to Campus Sexual Assault: Black Feminist Perspectives on Supporting Multi-time Survivors"
- Chanel Miller - "Know My Name"
- UConn Women's Advance Conference: "Strengthening Community, Manifesting Justice"

See more at <https://womenscenter.uconn.edu/>

### Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC)

This spring, PRLACC celebrated 50 years of improving the status of Latinx students and of promoting awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the richness and diversity of Latinx individuals and Latin American cultures.



PRLACC hosted a series of events to celebrate:

- A reunion for classes graduating since 2011
- Happy Birthday, Feliz Cumpleaños, Párabens PRLACC
- 50th Reunion for alumni from 1975- 1976
- Latin Dance Caberet: 50 years of Dancing featuring ten-piece Latin band Orlando Ortiz & Karibe Mambo Orchestra

PRLACC also produced a short presentation about the history of the Puerto Rican movement at UConn.



Watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C66xXrol0U4&t=8s>

# Spring 2022 Highlights

## Cultural Heritage Celebrations

This year, ODI has begun a more robust campaign to inform the UConn community of cultural heritage month celebrations. We endeavor to include the heritage celebrations for every culture at UConn. Detailed explanations for every heritage month can be found at <https://diversity.uconn.edu/communications/>. Here are two heritage events ODI is commemorating right now:

### Pride Month



Pride Month celebrates the LGBTQIA+ community by affirming their identities and providing spaces for individuals to show up as their most authentic selves.

LGBTQIA+ history is often told through the perspectives of gay white men. However, Pride would not be possible without Black, Brown, and Trans activists. This year, ODI reflects on two early LGBTQIA+ leaders, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Read more about them, as well as about opportunities to celebrate Pride, at <https://diversity.uconn.edu/june-2022-heritage-and-awareness-events/>.

### Juneteenth



Juneteenth celebrates freedom. On June 19th, 1865, the Union Army arrived in Galveston, TX, to enforce Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, officially ending slavery in the US.

African American communities have celebrated Juneteenth since the late nineteenth century, but momentum for a national holiday rose after the nationwide protests following the 2020 deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Juneteenth became a national holiday in 2021 and will be a Connecticut state holiday in 2023. Learn more about the holiday, and find local celebrations at <https://express.adobe.com/page/JYeMRgRPkI9qr/>.

## ODI in the News

ODI's team members and institutional partners have been making a splash in the news!

The Rainbow Center was featured in two articles this spring, including a *UConn Today* feature on Pride and a *Bulletin* article on helping LGBTQIA+ students after the pandemic. We were also proud to see a UConn alumna in an article about equipping future educators to fight misinformation about Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. We were also very excited to see a feature on Professor Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar in *The Upside!* See these articles and more under the "featured articles" tab in <https://diversity.uconn.edu/communications/>.

#### Taking Pride in UConn's Rainbow Center as Leaders Look at Work Beyond Celebration

Building toward an ambitious agenda of events and engagement for the Fall 2022 semester



#### The Evolution of a UCONN Professor: From 'Radical Cat' to the 'Hip-Hop Revolution'



Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, Professor, University of Connecticut



# Spring 2022 Highlights

## Building a Better Campus Climate

ODI remains dedicated to improving the climate on UConn's campuses for students, staff, and faculty. We believe that improving the living, learning, and working conditions for all members of the UConn community will enable each of us to be our most authentic selves while allowing those who make a home at UConn to reach their fullest potential.

This spring, ODI continued climate improvement efforts by addressing the needs and concerns of two religious groups that had faced increased incidents of identity-based harassment. We believe that efforts to improve the climate for each group will help improve the climate for every group.

### Campus Climate Initiative (CCI)

ODI partnered with Hillel International on a Campus Climate Initiative that works to ensure a positive campus climate where Jewish students feel comfortable expressing their identity and values and are free from antisemitism, harassment, or marginalization. CCI is based on the idea that broad-based educational and policy change directed towards improving experiences for one group will benefit all groups at UConn.

See more at <https://www.hillel.org/ccli>

### Academic Engagement Network (AEN)

ODI continued building its capacity to serve the Jewish community and address antisemitism by participating in the Academic Engagement Network's Signature Seminar Series, which brings together university and college administrators to discuss and develop strategies for bias incidents. We believe that participating in this series will help ODI build its capacity to serve all students.

## Combatting Islamophobia

This Spring, ODI's Central Office, alongside the Asian American Cultural Center (AsACC) worked with members of the Muslim community to address instances of islamophobia on campus.

In partnership with UConn's Muslim community, ODI worked to highlight the Muslim experience on campus, including through a social media campaign to educate the UConn community about Ramadan. Ramadan brought special challenges to Muslim students this year, as its daytime fasts occurred at the most difficult part of the academic year. Moreover, its holiest holiday coincided with finals. ODI helped Muslim students navigate these challenges by finding access to specially prepared food, academic accommodations, and other resources.

In partnership with the Provost's Office, AsACC held UConn's first-ever university-sponsored **Eid** celebration. Eid al-Fitr is one of two major feasts in Islam, marking the end of a month of fasting from sunrise to sunset. It provided a great opportunity for community building among the Muslim community.



# Faculty Affiliates 2021-2022: A Year in Review

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

This newsletter provides a brief recap of their work in the 2021-2022 academic year. More information can be found at <https://office.diversity.uconn.edu/faculty-affiliates/>.

## Graduate Student Support and Development

Drs. **Mary Anne Amalaradjou** and **Brenda Brueggemann** focused on building community for first-generation and racially minoritized grad students and grad students with disabilities.

This spring, they collaborated with the Women's Center, the Grad School, the First Gen program, the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD), the Writing (W) Center, the UConn Foundation, and International Student Support Services (ISSS) on a number of events. Highlights include:

- A networking for grad students with disabilities (2/10)
- A Women in STEM event with the Vergnano Institute for Inclusion (3/1)
- A panel discussion for first-gen grad students (3/30)

This summer, they will be providing DEIJ training, mentorship, support, and employment through the AIDE Affiliate Program.

## Faculty and Staff Support and Development

Drs. **David G. Embrick** and **Stephany Santos** focused on efforts to center the voices of racially minoritized faculty and staff in addressing ongoing concerns at UConn. This spring, they partnered with ODI's Central Office, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), and the Graduate School on a number of projects. Highlights include:

- Two events for UConn Faculty and Staff of Color: a town hall to discuss on-going issues at UConn and a social event to promote community building.
- A H.E.A.R.T. podcast featuring Dr. Monica Cox, Ohio State's Distinguished Professor of Engineering Education.
- The creation of database of UConn faculty & staff who do research on or create programming related to DEIJ.

They look forward to continuing conversations this Fall about DEI-related language and terms. Access the podcast at <https://diversity.uconn.edu/heart-podcast/>

## ODI & Unit-Level DEIJ Strategy and Operations

Drs. **Brenda Brueggemann** and **Thomas Craemer** researched diversity plans from 18 peer and aspirant institutions in order to provide recommendations for UConn's 5-year DEIJ strategic planning. They conclude that successful plans prioritize increasing demographic composition and creating a more inclusive climate; unsuccessful plans see diversity as a tool to prepare predominantly white student bodies for the workforce.

Drs. Brueggemann and Craemer outline three suggestions for how UConn can create effective strategic planning:

- Center demographic change for students and staff, including faculty with increasing rank and leadership
- Use DEIJ programming to cultivate a culturally inclusive climate for students, staff, and faculty, especially from underrepresented or historically excluded backgrounds
- Include an institution-wide climate survey involving undergrads, grad students, staff, and faculty.

## Community Outreach, Engagement, Advocacy

Drs. **Stephany Santos** and **Mary Anne Amalaradjou** worked to develop opportunities for outreach and engagement within the UConn community and with the public. This year, they developed two initiatives: an inward-facing Women in STEM event to network and discuss issues around gender disparity in STEM, and a basic framework for an online database to promote avenues for the public to reach out and connect with UConn faculty and staff.

They will continue this engagement in the Fall, as well as expanding efforts to engage the Indigenous community and better outreach to BIPOC UConn Alumni.

## Research and Policy

Drs. **Thomas Craemer** and **David G. Embrick** worked to investigate and provide better understanding about the harmful effects of trolling actions designed to threaten the legitimacy of faculty's work, impact their physical well-being, or both. Drs. Craemer and Embrick's work includes programming and research components. For programming, they held three online panel discussions about trolling:

- The Theory and Politics of Critical Race Theory (11/19)
- Attacks on CRT: What's It Really About and How Can Universities and Colleges be Proactive (12/1)
- When Trolls Attack: Strategies for Universities to Proactively Protect their Faculty (1/26)

One insight from these panels is that trolling has less to do with CRT than with targeting non-white professors. Drs. Craemer and Embrick will hold one more panel discussion during the Fall 2022 semester. Additionally, they will complete their research component involving current UConn faculty's experiences with trolling and publish a white paper featuring their results and conclusions.