

# **AY23 Annual Report for The Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Safety**

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## **DEICS Committee Members (AY23)**

**Courtney MacArthur** – Co-Chair, Staff Council Appointee

**Math Jakaitis Trafton** – Co-Chair, Faculty Senate Appointee

**Davina Cole** – Juneau Staff Council Appointee

**Kimberly Matsuura** – Ketchikan Staff Council Appointee

**John Ingman** – Sitka Staff Council Appointee

**Melissa Dolese** – Juneau Faculty Senate Appointee

**Jay Szczepanski** – Juneau Faculty Senate Appointee

**Colleen Ianuzzi** – Ketchikan Faculty Senate Appointee

**X'unei Lance Twitchell** – Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Alaska Native Education

**Carin Silkaitis** – Dean of Arts & Sciences

**Lori Klein** – UAS Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management

**Nathan Bodensadt** – UAS Dean of Students

**Jamison Lednum** – Student Government Appointee

**Kailey Pritzl** – Student Affairs

**Louisa Cryan** – UAS Human Resources (ex officio)

## DEICS Committee Charge and Goals

As of the end of AY23, the committee still retains its original charge, drafted by Chancellor Carey in October of 2021:

The UAS Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Cultural Safety is established by the Chancellor to advance the University's diversity goals and strategies and to champion the diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural safety (DEICS) efforts of the University. These efforts strengthen the professional, intellectual, and cultural experience of all members of the UAS community. Committee members serve as DEICS ambassadors for faculty, staff and students and facilitators of campus diversity-related news. The committee also produces information that is helpful to the University leadership for decision-making and discusses timely topics that support the committee's charge. The committee members meet regularly throughout the year.

Five Goals:

**Goal 1:** Intentionally foster and sustain a welcoming campus environment based on the principles of equity and inclusion to create an environment that is respectful of differences and promotes the safety and security of all people.

**Goal 2:** Recruit, employ, and retain a diverse faculty.

**Goal 3:** Recruit and retain a diverse workforce and ensure that UAS' staff profile reflects the diversity of Southeast Alaska demographics.

**Goal 4:** Prepare UAS students to lead and manage in a diverse and changing society by incorporating diversity and inclusion in significant ways in teaching, learning, and research.

**Goal 5:** Build upon existing partnerships and create new partnerships that enhance the University's commitment to diversity.

## DEICS History

The current UAS Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Safety (DEICS) is a reissue of a previous committee titled the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Equity and Cultural Safety. Before that, the Diversity Action Committee focused on similar issues. Previous iterations of this committee were disbanded for a variety of reasons, but there is consensus that this current DEICS committee is more proactive and has wider institutional support than its predecessors, which gives us hope that this committee has a strong and meaningful future to look forward to.

Then, in the fall of 2021, as the university began to open itself back up following the pandemic closures, Chancellor Carey reformed the current incarnation of DEICS with the charge and goals presented above in the **DEICS Committee Charge and Goals** section above.

The committee was initially designed with a membership of twelve individuals representing a diverse range of positions across the institution’s three campuses. During the first year (AY22), the committee voted to increase membership and, with Chancellor Carey’s approval, added three additional positions: an additional Juneau Faculty Senate appointee, the dean of Arts & Sciences, and a representative from CACANE (Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Alaska Native Education). Then, this year (AY23), the committee voted once more to increase membership and, with Chancellor Carey’s approval, added one additional position: a representative from Student Affairs.

Currently, the DEICS membership has 16 members (one ex-officio), as reflected above in the **Committee Membership** section of this document.<sup>1</sup>

The committee spent most of its first year in AY22, from December 2021 to May 2022, establishing its membership and its committee structure. In this first year, the committee found success in its efforts to strengthen the university according to the DEICS core values. The committee first created and approved its bylaws from scratch. Then, the committee also formed three temporary workgroups that led to concrete outcomes in the university:

- One workgroup coordinated with [CELT](#) to organize a year-long professional learning community titled Decolonizing Our Spaces, drawing inspiration from CELT’s *Stop Talking* reading group from AY22.
- A second workgroup coordinated with CACANE and Sitka Title III representatives to help prepare a [presentation](#) for Staff Development Day titled “Anti-Discrimination, Equity, and Decolonization: From Ideas to Action!”

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<sup>1</sup> Note that for AY23, the Sitka campus Faculty Senate appointee has been vacant, and faculty co-chair Math Trafton, based in Sitka, has temporarily served additionally in the capacity of representing Sitka campus faculty.

- A third workgroup met to review the Faculty Handbook and made some recommendations for changes in language and structure with regard to DEICS's core values; Faculty Senate approved the proposed edits at the end of the year.

In addition to the workgroup outcomes, the end of AY22 saw the formation of six subcommittees that began to meet outside of the primary committee meetings in order to research issues pertaining to the committee's charge and to prepare its priorities for moving forward into its first full year in AY23.

As a result of this first half-year of planning, the DEICS committee was able to begin AY23 efficiently. The subcommittees formed in AY22 began to meet regularly starting in August 2022, developing initiatives and priorities, occasionally combining, dissolving, or being put on hold as needed. A detailed summary of each subcommittee's work through AY23 can be found below in the **Summary of AY23 Activities** section of this document. Overall, while the DEICS subcommittee work resulted in many meaningful outcomes, the committee has found that the extra subcommittee meetings and sometimes numerous subcommittee directives diffused the efforts of the committee work overall. As stated below in the **General Recommendations: Committee Structure** section of this document, the committee has ultimately decided to recommend dissolving its subcommittees and thereby concentrating committee efforts by limiting the focus to just a few centralized priorities each academic year.

## Summary of AY 23 Activities

During AY23, the committee had nine meetings, regularly scheduled for the fourth Friday of the month from 11:00am to 1:00pm. The academic year's penultimate meeting was held as an all-day retreat in Juneau in which extended campus members were flown in to attend.

Throughout the academic year, the committee's first full year of activity, the most significant outcomes were the product of the six DEICS subcommittees, as listed below.

### Subcommittee: Antidiscrimination Training

**Subcommittee Members:** Lori Klein (chair), Kimberly Maturra, Melissa Dolese, Courtney MacArthur, Carin Silkaitis

Formed in early spring 2023, its predecessor was the Priorities Subcommittee. In fall 2023, the Priorities Subcommittee determined that the priorities for the 2022-2023 academic year included a large focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural safety throughout our UAS webpages as well as establishing regular annual training for UAS employees. Specifically, anti-discrimination and bystander training for the foreseeable future, but perhaps other trainings as time goes on. As such, the Priorities Subcommittee was dissolved and the Training Subcommittee was established. A Website Subcommittee already existed, and has led the charge on that priority.

The Training Subcommittee collaborated with UAA and UAF to see how they structured comparable committees/departments, and came up with three recommendations:

- Recommend a paid and dedicated position, such as an Office of DEICS or a Chief Diversity Officer (following models of UAA and UAF) along with a DEI strategic plan developed. Conversations around this topic are reflected within our formal recommendations at the end of this report.
- Immediate collaboration with CACANE, UAA, UAF, and UA-statewide HR to join efforts and reduce redundancy
- Establish a budget for the priorities that emerge from the DEICS committee annually, to be used on:
  - 2+ trainings per semester
  - Annual retreat to draft report and make recommendations

## **Subcommittee: Campus Climate**

**Subcommittee Members:** Melissa Dolese (chair), X'unei Twitchell, Jamison Lednum, Louisa Cryan

The intention for this subcommittee was to discuss ways to assess and enhance campus climate. This subcommittee was not particularly active throughout this academic year, but the meetings did result in some meaningful conversations. For example, the subcommittee started to develop ideas for a climate culture survey to be administered to the campus communities, with the hope that the results of such a survey could help this committee and other entities make informed and data-driven decisions directly relevant to institutional needs. There were also some circulating thoughts about how to develop, fund, and support such a survey, as well as the development of supplemental activities to enhance representation, inclusivity, belonging, and community bridge building. This committee also discussed the importance of a system for bias reporting.

In addition to this, at the start of AY23, the subcommittee met with CELT to ensure a smooth opening facilitation of the Decolonizing Our Spaces professional learning community initially established at the end of AY22.

## **Subcommittee: UAS Website Revision**

**Subcommittee Members:** Davina Cole (chair), Carin Silkaitis, X'unei Twitchell, Lori Klein

This subcommittee met a couple of times throughout the year to research the logistics of making changes to the website and also to brainstorm exactly what kinds of meaningful changes could be made to best reflect the DEICS core values. One particular revision the subcommittee developed involved the creation of a highly visible button on the UAS homepage for students, staff, or faculty to report discrimination, and this proposal is reflected in the final recommendations listed at the end of this document.

Though this subcommittee initiated many fruitful conversations, since the subcommittee cannot redevelop and rewrite content on all areas of the institution website, it was determined this work should become part of the entire DEICS group and done in collaboration with institutional leadership.

## Subcommittee: Faculty Handbook Review

**Subcommittee Members:** Math Jakaitis Trafton (chair), Jay Szczepanski, John Ingman, Melissa Dolese, X'unei Twitchell, Colleen Ianuzzi

This subcommittee met regularly to review the UAS Faculty Handbook with a particular eye on issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural safety. Through the first half of AY23, the subcommittee formed a list of over 35 potential recommendations and ultimately selected ten to develop and craft proposals around. After first focusing on some minor issues that would be easiest for Faculty Senate to approve and for the Handbook Committee to implement, we decided to work toward a more substantial impact by focusing on a few larger issues.

Through AY23, the Faculty Handbook Review Subcommittee advanced 8 proposed edits to the Full-time Faculty Handbook:

- Modify the teaching evaluation criteria to allow credit for DEI efforts.
- Modify the professional development evaluation criteria to allow credit for DEI efforts.
- Modify the definition of “specific identifying reference” to allow a broader range of accepted material for faculty the evaluation process.
- Add language that would encourage faculty members to attend annual antidiscrimination trainings.<sup>2</sup>
- Add language under a new “Commitment to Antidiscrimination” section in “Professional Expectations.”
- For syllabus material, move Title IX policy from the “invited to include” list to the “required to contain” list.
- Refine nondiscrimination language to standardize the language with UA statewide policy (UA Notice of Nondiscrimination webpage) and to be expanded to include more groups.<sup>3</sup>
- Edit all language to change all instances of “he/she” to a nonbinary and more inclusive pronoun “they.”

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<sup>2</sup> The subcommittee was informed in November 2022 that Faculty Senate found that this proposed encouragement could have workload implications or could affect working conditions such that UNAC would need to be consulted. Faculty also expressed concern for a lack of language that would identify who would coordinate the training and how much of a role faculty would have in this coordination. In AY24, as DEICS continues to develop its strategies for regular training opportunities, this proposal will be revisited.

<sup>3</sup> The subcommittee was informed near the end of AY23 that this proposal was rejected because the original language, which the subcommittee found *less* inclusive than the language on the UA Notice of Nondiscrimination webpage, was borrowed from the State of Alaska’s Code of Ethics of the Education Profession. The committee plans to revisit this issue next year.



In addition to the 7 proposed edits to the full-time Faculty Handbook, the subcommittee also advanced 3 proposed edits to the Adjunct Faculty Handbook:

- For syllabus material, move Title IX policy from the “suggested to include” list to the “required to contain” list.
- For syllabus material, add language to include a new item “Instructor pronouns” to the “suggested to include” list.
- For syllabus material, add language to include a new item “The UAS land acknowledgment” to the “suggested to include” list.

## **Subcommittee: Discrimination Rapid Response Team**

**Subcommittee Members:** Lori Klein (chair), X’unei Twitchell, Jay Szczepanski, Math Jakaitis Trafton

Unlike the other subcommittees, this ad hoc group did not meet regularly but instead met throughout the academic year in reaction to incidents as they arose. Since its later inception in the fall of 2022, the subcommittee provided response in the following instances:

- The subcommittee wrote a memo to the UA Coalition of Student Leaders to express support of renaming Thanksgiving Break to Fall Break.
- The subcommittee wrote a memo to the Board of Regents to denounce anti-trans comments made at the September 2022 public meeting by one of the Regents.
  - The subcommittee subsequently communicated to the UAS governance groups to provide context of the issue and to share the BOR Chair’s response to the subcommittee’s earlier memo to the board.
- The subcommittee wrote a memo to the UAS governance groups and the UAS upper administration to express support of the UAS Student Government Resolution 2021-17: In Support of Adding a Racial and Ethnic Harassment Statement to the Student Code of Conduct.
- The subcommittee also communicated internally about an incident related to the March 2023 Alaska Airlines performer (comedian) at a student engagement night in Juneau, and whether or not DEICS should issue a communication on this issue. As the issue was addressed from other university bodies, no action was taken on the part of DEICS.

## Other Committee Activities

In addition to the work of the subcommittees listed above, the DEICS committee also achieved the following outcomes through the course of AY23:

- In February 2023, after engaging with all five candidates for the position of UAS chancellor, the DEICS committee as a whole wrote a letter of recommendation to the search committee, expressing strong support for some candidates and strong hesitation and lack of support for other candidates.
- The committee also worked to establish a new relationship with the Juneau campus's Student Government Social Justice & Equity subcommittee. Members from their group attended the first part of two of our meetings (October and February) and shared a presentation on their efforts, which are very much aligned with DEICS core values. They also invited DEICS co-chairs to attend their regular meetings. The committee looks forward to more collaborative efforts in the following year.
- In order to maintain relationships with Staff Council and Faculty Senate, the committee invited the respective presidents to the first meeting of the academic year in August. Both presidents expressed support for DEICS work. From there, presidents were sent updates and meeting agendas through the rest of the year.
- The committee co-chairs also regularly input meeting summaries into the Chancellor's Cabinet updates to keep the university community abreast of its efforts.
- Early in the academic year, the committee voted to request a page on the university's website, which was granted. The full webpage, at <https://uas.alaska.edu/chancellor/councils-committees/DEICS/>, provides a description of the committee, including its charge and membership, along with copies of meeting agendas and minutes.
- In October, the committee opened a discussion around the [UAS Student Registration form](#), which was determined to be limiting in its options for gender and racial identities. Nathan Bodenstadt examined the issue closer and discovered through conversations with Registrar Trisha Lee that many of the questions on this form correspond directly to fields and data values internal to the UA system, and it's not easy to change; however, there is an ongoing effort to find workarounds that will still allow more diversity in identity designators.
- As noted elsewhere, the committee coordinated its first full-day retreat in Juneau, which involved flying members from the extended campuses. The retreat was highly successful in providing members an opportunity to reflect on the committee's work throughout the year, the committee's role, and the future of the committee. Most of this document—most significantly the recommendations

below—are the result of this retreat, which the committee recommends be standardized annually.

- The committee also continued to refine bylaws as necessary.

## General Recommendations: Committee Structure

After having completed a full year of focused work, the DEICS committee met during the March 2023 retreat to reflect on the year and to reinvision the committee's role in the university. Specifically, the committee reviewed the original committee charge and goals. This conversation led to the development of recommendations intended to enhance the committee and its endeavors for the next academic year. Specifically, the committee asks that the chancellor consider the following three recommendations with regard to the committee's structure:

1. **Committee Charge and Goals.** After close review of the DEICS committee charge and goals, as presented above in this document, the committee has found that both the charge and goals, as originally conceived, are not accurately aligned with the way our work this year has evolved. The committee therefore proposes that the chancellor meet annually with the committee at the start of the academic year to revise and update the committee charge and goals to reflect the university's current priorities and to ensure alignment to accreditation and mission-fulfillment efforts. The charge and goals should also be reviewed annually in the context of other similarly minded UAS programs, departments, committees, and student organizations (e.g., CACANE, the Sustainability committee, the One-Campus-One-Book committee, Juneau Student Government's Social Justice & Equity committee, etc.) in order to maximize collaboration opportunities as well as to minimize duplication of efforts. For the upcoming AY24 in particular, in addition to generally revising and updating the language and purpose of the charge and the goals, the following questions should serve as further topics of discussion:
  - a. The committee was originally created as an advisory committee, but some of this year's work, as articulated in the subcommittee summaries, has in practice expanded beyond this scope. Should this committee continue in a purely advisory role, or should its power extend to any degree of *actionable outcomes* beyond merely advising?
  - b. The committee would also like clarification on expectations regarding collaboration with the chancellor and other university groups. How frequently should co-chairs meet with the chancellor or upper administration? Should there be any other regular collaborative efforts?
  - c. The committee also requests clarification on how committee membership is determined so that the bylaws can be amended accordingly. The committee believes it is important that members are aligned with the charge of the group and are positive role models on their campuses, as members who are obstructionist or

are not committed to the work can derail conversations and efforts. The committee would therefore like to determine, in detail, how members and co-chair roles are appointed. What role do governance groups have in this process, particularly for the staff campus representatives, the faculty campus representatives, and the co-chair positions? (The [UA BOR Policy & Regulations page](#) may provide guidance in this area). Additionally, the process for refilling vacancies that come up through the year should also be addressed.

2. **Funding.** The committee recommends the chancellor create a line item in the budget specifically for DEICS initiatives, which could be shared by other campus groups that are also advancing similar work. In particular, the committee recommends institutionalizing annual DEICS end-of-year retreat. The committee further recommends that funding for DEICS-related efforts consider the needs of all three campuses. This could be accomplished in a number of ways:
  - a. The committee could collaborate with such budgeted entities such as CELT, Student Services, DSS, etc.
  - b. The committee could request a specific budget for our needs with regards to training, annual retreat (travel/catering), surveys, etc.
3. **Committee Structure and Prioritization.** As stated above, the committee would like to reconsider the proliferation of subcommittees. Though the committee wants to ensure that it is still responsive to issues that may arise through the academic year as necessary, such as via ad hoc working groups, the committee proposes eliminating most or all subcommittees next year to instead focus on a collaboratively determined set of large-scale priorities. Committee members would then be assigned discrete tasks to advance these larger priorities as needed, from one meeting to another. Under this model, each year's major priorities should be drafted at the end of the previous academic year and then determined, in collaboration with the chancellor, at the start of the academic year. See the following section for some potential priorities that could be adopted for AY24.

## General Recommendations: Institution

In addition to the recommendations specifically pertaining to the structure of the committee, as listed in the previous section, the committee would also like to present the following recommendations for the institution to consider in order to enhance the core values shared by the DEICS committee and the institution overall. The DEICS committee would be interested in collaborating with other university bodies on these issues—however, depending on the issue, the DEICS committee could also potentially be interested in taking the lead in researching, providing formal advisory counsel on, or even implementing any of the following issues. Whichever way the following issues are addressed, the committee hopes to review any or all of these recommendations with the chancellor during a meeting at the start of AY24, if possible.

1. **Website Redesign.** Redesign the website to develop an outward-facing representation of our values and to implement a clear system of bias reporting. UAF's webpage would serve as a meaningful model. The committee would also request the chancellor's approval to tell Alison Krein we want to touch the front page.
2. **DEI Statements.** Develop diversity/equity/inclusion statements for more visibility (e.g., post on the institution's website, in campus spaces, etc.). Connect evaluations to professional development done that is in line with our DEI statements.
3. **DEI Action Plan.** Using [UAA's DEI Plan](#) as a starting point, the committee believes UAS should develop a similar action plan and web presence that communicates our work to the wider community.
4. **Chief Diversity Officer.** The committee recommends that the university create an Office of DEICS to be headed by a permanent full-time Chief Diversity Officer position to oversee DEICS efforts.
5. **Training Opportunities.** The committee recommends that the university continue its efforts this year to develop further training opportunities, particularly pertaining to DEICS core values.
6. **Data Analysis.** The committee believes that there should be more robust efforts to collect and analyze data, either accessing existing survey data or developing or overseeing the development of new surveys, such as an annual survey to assess diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and cultural safety at UAS. Some of this work could be pursued by the DEICS committee, perhaps in collaboration with other bodies, such as statewide HR. This could furthermore be modeled after UAF's [HEIDS survey](#) or the [National Institute of Transformation & Equity](#).

7. **Efficiency.** The committee also recommends that there be more institutional focus on streamlining internal processes (budget, training, expectations) in an effort to reduce cognitive load, especially for neuro-diverse students, faculty, and staff. (For example, there could be more development following principles of continual improvement in universal design, as articulated by the Japanese concept of [Kaizen](#).)
8. **Power & Privilege Symposium.** The committee strongly recommends that UAS bring back the Power & Privilege Symposium, which has been suspended indefinitely. The symposium used to be a very popular annual all-day event, and while the Juneau campus was most active in creating a full experience for students, staff, faculty, and community members, the goal was to include all campuses. While initially there was heavy engagement from a wide range of campus roles; however, as the years went on, the planning committees suffered from staff and faculty attrition until most of the work fell solely on students, and this distribution of work became unsustainable. The DEICS committee believes this event should be resurrected with a more intentional, semester-long commitment to engagement opportunities around topics relevant to power and privilege. In order for the symposium to be viable, the committee requests that there be reliable staffing, perhaps built into employee workloads, as well as enhanced buy-in from faculty and administration. It is also necessary that the event receive stable funding.
9. **Incident Reporting.** The committee would also like to see the university develop a framework for effectively addressing student-reported and employee-reported bias-related issues and discrimination incidents. The reporting system should be highly visible and should be easily accessible. In particular, the committee recommends a stronger procedure for handling repeated offenses with professors. An enhanced reporting system would have to function in partnership with Title 9, the Office of Equity & Compliance, and Human Resources.