

# AY24 Annual Report for The University of Alaska Southeast Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Safety

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# DEICS AY24 Committee Membership

## Committee Roster as of AY24's Final Meeting, 4/26/2024

- **Kimberly Matsuura** – Co-Chair, Staff Council Appointee
- **Math Jakaitis Trafton** – Co-Chair, Faculty Senate Appointee
- **Davina Cole** – Juneau Staff Council Appointee
- **Angie Goffredi** – 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
- **Grace Roller** – Sitka Faculty Senate Appointee
- **X'unei Lance Twitchell** – CACANE Representative
- **Carin Silkaitis** – Dean of Arts & Sciences
- **JoMarie Alba** – Stand-in for UAS Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management
- **Devin Tatro** – Stand-in for UAS Dean of Students
- **Almería Alcantra** – Student Government Appointee
- **Kailey Pritzl** – Student Affairs
- **Louisa Cryan** – UAS Human Resources (ex officio)

## Membership Position History

When it was originally formed in the fall of 2021, the DEICS Committee was 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, in AY23, the committee voted once more to increase membership and, with Chancellor Carey's approval, added one additional position: a representative from Student Affairs.

In AY24, we had two mid-year position changes: first, Nathan Bodensadt (Dean of Students representative) left the university, and his position was replaced by Devin Tatro (Disability Services); second, Clair Fitzpatrick (Ketchikan staff representative) left the committee, and she was replaced by Angie Goffredi.

Currently, the DEICS membership has 16 members (one ex-officio), as reflected above.

A full listing of present and past members since AY22 is available upon request.

## DEICS Committee Charge and Goals

The UAS Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Cultural Safety (DEICS) works to advance the university's commitment to providing a vibrant culture of belonging and equitable empowerment for all members of the UAS community. In practice, the committee serves to engage the university by learning about and strategically addressing institutional issues, concerns, policies, and procedures related to DEICS matters. The committee is primarily charged with identifying points of necessary change and then developing action-oriented recommendations in order to advise and assist university leadership in its efforts to act on these recommendations. These committee efforts aim to strengthen the professional, intellectual, personal, and cultural experiences of all members of the UAS community.

The DEICS Committee reports directly to the university chancellor via regular communication, and its members serve as ambassadors representing staff, faculty, students, and administration. The committee meets formally nine times throughout the academic year, generally on the last Friday of each month, from 10am - 12pm.

In its work, the DEICS committee strives to enhance the university's commitment to the following values related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural safety:

1. Intentionally foster and sustain a welcoming campus environment that is based on the principles of equity and inclusion and that is respectful of differences and promotes the safety and security of all people.
2. Recruit and retain a diverse workforce to ensure that UAS's employee profile reflects the diversity of Southeast Alaska demographics.
3. Prepare UAS students to lead and manage in a changing society by incorporating diversity and inclusion in teaching, learning, and research.
4. Promote institutional awareness of instances of inequity, exclusion, and discrimination in our campus communities so that they may be adequately addressed.
5. Build upon existing partnerships and create new partnerships that enhance the university's commitment to DEICS principles.

Previous versions of the committee's charge and goals are available upon request.

## DEICS History

In the fall of 2021, Chancellor Carey initially formed the UAS Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Safety (DEICS) with an initial charge and list of goals. The current committee 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 ultimately 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.

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: (1) a workgroup to coordinate with CELT to form a year-long professional learning community titled Decolonizing Our Spaces, (2) a workgroup to coordinate with CACANE and Sitka Title III representatives to prepare an anti-discrimination presentation for Staff Development Day, and (3) a workgroup to review the Faculty Handbook and proposed edits promoting DEICS values.

In addition to the workgroups, the end of AY22 also saw the formation of six subcommittees that would begin 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 AY23.

As a result of this first year of planning, the DEICS committee was able to begin AY23 efficiently. The subcommittees formed in AY22 began to meet regularly to develop initiatives and priorities.<sup>1</sup> By the end of AY23, the committee found that while the subcommittee work resulted in many meaningful outcomes, the extra subcommittee meetings and sometimes numerous subcommittee directives diffused the efforts of the committee work overall. The committee has ultimately decided to recommend dissolving its subcommittees to instead concentrate committee efforts on just a few centralized priorities each academic year.

The committee began its third year in AY24 with a renewed vision for its structure, its charge, and its current priorities, all of which were approved by Chancellor Aparna Palmer at the start of AY24. The committee went on to pursue its ranked priorities for the year, as outlined below.

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed summary of each subcommittee's work through AY23 can be found in the DEICS Committee's AY23 Annual Report.

## Summary of AY24 Activities

During AY24, the committee held nine meetings, regularly scheduled one Friday near the end of each month from 10:00am to 12:00pm. The academic year's penultimate meeting, on Friday, March 29, however, was held as an all-day retreat in Juneau in which extended campus members were invited to fly in to attend.

Attendance at each meeting through AY 24 tended to be well-attended at an average rate of over 75% attendance. The October and April meetings, however, had to be canceled due to the committee's failure to meet quorum. Attendance rates for the academic year are as follows:

- Friday, September 8, 2023, 10:00am-12:00pm: 83.33% attendance
- Friday, September 29, 2023, 10:00am-12:00pm: 78.57% attendance
- Friday, October 27, 2023, 10:00am-12:00pm: 50.00% attendance
- Friday, November 17, 2023, 10:00am-12:00pm: 80.00% attendance
- Friday, December 15, 2023, 10:00am-12:00pm: 85.71% attendance
- Friday, January 26, 2024, 10:00am-12:00pm: 92.86% attendance
- Friday, February 23, 2024, 10:00am-12:00pm: 71.43% attendance
- Friday, March 29, 2024, 9:00am-4:30pm: 93.33% attendance
- Friday, April 26, 2024, 10:00am-12:00pm: 46.67% attendance

Throughout this academic year's nine meetings, the DEICS Committee focused on the following seven priorities. For each priority, the committee conducted extensive research in order to develop recommendations submitted directly to the chancellor. Each priority's recommendation, taking the form of a memo, highlighted an opportunity for improvement in our institution and, correspondingly, offered detailed suggestions for implementing change. The committee's work on each priority is described in more detail in the following pages.

- Priority #1: DEICS Committee Revision
- Priority #2: Website Revision
- Priority #2A: DEICS Award
- Priority #3: Revision of Registration Form
- Priority #4: Signage Updates
- Priority #5: DEICS Statements on Employee Applications

## Priority 1 - DEICS Committee Revision

At the end of the previous year, AY23, the committee determined that its subcommittee structure proved to hinder more than support the committee's pursuit of its goals. The committee also observed that its work, in practice, differed by varying degrees from the work laid out in the original charge developed by Chancellor Carey in the fall of 2021. As a result, the committee proposed in its AY23 Annual Report that the committee's structure, charge, and goals be revised—however, the committee proposed waiting until the first few months of AY24 to undertake this revision in order to involve the incoming Chancellor Palmer.

The committee therefore prioritized this revision and began working with the new chancellor right away in AY24. After a few meetings and direct consultation with the chancellor, the committee finalized its new committee structure, charge, and goals.

Under the new structure, the committee will no longer split its work by subcommittee but will instead focus its collective efforts on one priority at a time. As a result, the committee discontinued its subcommittees, with the exception of the Rapid Response Team and the Bylaws and Faculty Handbook subcommittees, as needed. This new structure ensures that all committee members are involved in each project and that they will be able to bring all of their constituencies to the conversation.

Under the new charge, the committee remains advisory by nature, meaning that its primary purpose is to develop recommendations and submit them directly to the chancellor. However, as written explicitly into this new version, in addition to identifying points of necessary change, the committee is also responsible for developing specific action-oriented recommendations to help guide its proposed changes. In other words, when the committee identifies an issue, the committee will also recommend a solution—or multiple potential solutions.

As for the new goals, they have been framed as not tangible actions that *the committee* will take but rather actions that, as reflective of the committee's values, the committee will promote and encourage throughout the university overall. For example, the committee's second goal to "Recruit and retain a diverse workforce to ensure that UAS's employee profile reflects the diversity of Southeast Alaska demographics." Clearly this advisory committee is not suited to directly oversee recruitment and retention efforts—but it can make recommendations to UAS administration to adapt its recruitment and retention policies and procedures in order to strengthen its efforts toward diversity. In this sense, these are more promoted *values* than *goals*.

Finally, with the committee's new structure, charge, and goals defined, the committee confirmed its ranked list of priorities to pursue this academic year, which retrospectively include this priority, in addition to the ones detailed below.

## Priority 2 - Website Revision

This past year, DEICS embarked on a significant project aimed at enhancing the representation of our core values on the UAS website. The committee reviewed our institution's online presence, in search of ways we can enhance the way we present ourselves both externally, to the community and prospective students and parents, and internally, to our students and university employees.

This initiative reflects our commitment to not only advocate for necessary changes within our institution but also to operationalize these changes in ways that visibly affirm our dedication to creating an inclusive, equitable, and culturally safe environment for all members of our community.

The committee's extensive review of the UAS website led to an extensive list of recommendations tailored to various departments and aspects of the site. These recommendations, detailed in our final memo, span from the creation and promotion of new web pages dedicated to DEICS values and Pride inclusion, to the inclusion of pronouns in the UAS personnel directory, and to the enhancement of imagery and language across the site to better reflect the diversity and inclusivity of our campus culture. Each suggestion has been crafted with the aim of fostering a more welcoming, supportive, and just virtual space for prospective and current students, staff, faculty, and the community at large.

Central to our approach was the understanding that these website revisions are not the *final* culmination of our efforts but the beginning of an ongoing process of reflection, assessment, and action. We foresee these recommendations as the first step in an ongoing process in which our committee, in consultation with many other individuals and units at our university, annually assesses our virtual—and potentially physical—spaces.

In closing our recommendation, we expressed our hope that these recommendations will be met with the support and action from the Chancellor's office. We have offered our continued assistance in the implementation of these changes, highlighting our readiness to collaborate closely with university leadership, staff, and faculty to bring these important revisions to fruition.

This effort is a testament to the university's commitment, under Chancellor Palmer's leadership, to not just uphold DEICS values in principle but to live them out in the spaces we inhabit, both physical and virtual.

This recommendation was formalized into a memo, which was sent to the chancellor's office on Monday, February 26, 2024.

## Priority 2A<sup>2</sup> - DEICS Award

In our committee discussions this year, we determined that it's very important to encourage, recognize, and normalize excellence in promoting DEICS efforts and behaviors across all of our campus communities, not just within our own committee and the few others like it. In an attempt to strengthen this effort, we developed a recommendation for UAS administration to institute three annual DEICS awards—one for a staff member, one for a faculty member, and one for a student.

After much deliberation, the committee decided it would be best to recommend a very simple form that is easy to use (compared to the more arduous nomination forms for Staff Excellence and Faculty Excellence awards). The committee also offered to serve as a review body—in collaboration with CACANE if they are interested—to make recommendations for the chancellor's final award selection.

The committee's recommendation started taking shape in late January and February, and we initially thought to fast-track the recommendation in order to submit it with enough time for consideration and implementation this academic year, AY24. However, after more thought, we instead decided to take the time to develop the recommendation more thoughtfully, and so our recommended implementation timeline is for the end of AY25, ideally to coincide with Staff Excellence awards or Faculty Excellence Awards at the end of the academic year.

In recognition of the late Professor Sol Neely and his dedication to and significant contributions to DEICS efforts, the committee proposed to name the award the Sol Neely Award for Excellence in Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Safety.

This recommendation was formalized into a memo, which was sent to the chancellor's office on Monday, April 8, 2024.

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<sup>2</sup> This priority 2A was not a part of the original list of priorities for AY24, but the idea was presented to the committee midway through the academic year, and the committee thought that this was important enough to insert into its current pursuit of priorities.



### **Priority 3 - Revision of Registration Form**

Over the last two years, the committee has explored the possibility of expanding the demographic categories contained on the student registration form (e.g., gender and race categories, as well as further delineation of Alaska Native identities). We've explored these changes in order to promote a more inclusive and welcoming environment, especially as, for some students, their first interaction with the university is via that form.

However, as it's been explained to us by the Registrar, the federal government and the Census Bureau are reconceiving race, ethnicity, and gender categories for the decennial census, and it is those categories that will inform the IPEDS categories to which UAS reports its demographic data. These changes should happen by the end of AY25. Thus, until these new categories are launched, any work on this initiative would result in a form that would quickly be deprecated once these new categories arrive.

This is still a priority for the Committee, and we will continue to monitor the situation and will pursue these changes as soon as is feasible.

This priority was therefore put on hold, and it was not developed into a formal recommendation.

## **Priority 4 - Signage Updates**

The committee developed a list of recommendations for revisions and updates to campus signage. We spent time reviewing signage and visual art around the Juneau, Ketchikan and Sitka campuses. We determined that our top priority is to repair damage to the UAS Juneau Welcome Sign that occurred this winter. We identified community partners and artists that have already developed posters and print materials that may be used by UAS and recommend distributing and displaying these materials here on campus. We recommended the development of UAS branded clothing and memorabilia featuring Northwest Coast Art to be sold on campus. We made a decision to model restroom signage based on the work done on the Sitka Campus, while adding verbiage in Tagalog/Filipino language. We agreed upon the importance of granting University buildings Indigenous names, and will explore this project in the future.

This recommendation was formalized into a memo, which was sent to the chancellor's office on Monday, May 6, 2024.

## Priority 5 - DEICS Statement on Employment Applications

In an attempt to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce, following the DEICS Committee's second value, the committee developed a recommendation for university hiring managers to adopt new language in their job ads. This default language attempts to highlight the diversity of our institution to prospective applicants at the same time that it implicitly attempts to draw the attention of diversity-minded prospective applicants.

The proposed language could be adapted, as necessary, for specific positions, and for location (we provide specific information for each of our three campuses as bullets).

*Among the majestic array of islands, channels, fjords, coastal mountains, icefields, and glaciers, the University of Alaska Southeast sits in the traditional territory of the Lingít, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. On our three campuses, students have opportunities for field study, research, creative production, and internships in the Tongass National Forest, in intertidal marine environments, at local businesses, and within federal and state government entities.*

- *Juneau, epicenter for Northwest Coast Arts, and our state capital, provides ample opportunities for student internships within Alaska's legislature.*
- *Ketchikan, home to our Maritime Training Center, works closely with the United States Coast Guard to provide training and credentialing for Alaska's maritime workforce.*
- *Sitka, hosting programs in Applied Fisheries, Health Information Management, and Law Enforcement Training, prepares Alaskans for public service in these vital fields.*

*The [position] is dedicated to fostering a safe, supportive, and open environment at the University of Alaska Southeast. We prioritize equitable access to resources and opportunities for all individuals to reach their full potential, recognizing the importance of cultural safety and belonging for present and future success.*

This recommendation was formalized into a memo, which was sent to the chancellor's office on Monday, May 6, 2024.

## **Bylaws Changes**

In the AY24, there was one change to the bylaws (approved 11/17/23) to clarify the committee makeup.

Bylaw 5.A.3 had originally stated that “Both Faculty Co-Chair and Staff Co-Chair will be appointed by the Chancellor.” This has been changed to clarify that the Faculty and Staff co-chairs are appointed by the Chancellor, with input from Faculty Senate (for Faculty Co-Chair), Staff Council (for Staff Co-Chair), and input from the current members of the DEICS Committee.

## General Recommendations: Committee Structure

During the annual retreat in March, the DEICS Committee reviewed the previous year's (AY23) recommendations for revision in the committee structure. Whereas many of the previous year's recommendations have been met, there are some that remain that we would like to return to. The committee therefore asks that the chancellor consider the following recommendations with regard to the committee's structure, policy, and process:

1. The committee recommends the chancellor create a line item in the budget specifically for DEICS initiatives, which could also 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.
2. The committee recommends the scheduling of monthly meetings with the chancellor and the two DEICS Committee co-chairs.
3. The committee recommends monthly meetings with similarly minded university groups (CACANE and CELT). These three committees actually did begin meeting infrequently through the spring semester of AY24, and these meetings have been very helpful in developing collaborative efforts. We suggest instituting even more intentionality put into scheduling these meetings regularly, ideally monthly, throughout the academic year. It is our hope that these committees can coordinate their respective priorities to both ensure mutual support and to reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts. If desired, these meetings could be combined with the recommended monthly meetings with the chancellor and the DEICS Committee co-chairs.
4. The committee would like to formalize the co-chair service terms. We recommend following the model established by CACANE and its co-chairs, namely that each co-chair position last two years, staggered. This would mean that the staff co-chair position would change at the start of every even year, and the faculty co-chair position would change at the start of every odd year.

## General Recommendations: Proposed AY25 Priorities

The DEICS committee has developed the following potential priorities for next year, AY25. These priorities are not in ranked order—the committee has voted on a rough ranking for these priorities, but we want to wait until next year’s new committee members join the discussion, and we want to be sure to include the chancellor in this decision-making process as well.

Through AY25, the DEICS committee plans to develop advisory material to advance the following actions across our institution, in the following ranked order:

1. Enhance support reports of discrimination and increase capacity of care team to provide support
2. Address issues of inaccessibility and ADA noncompliance on campuses (Juneau in particular, but also Ketchikan)
3. More support for Disability Services (such as making the intake paperwork and process more accessible, reframe & reframe title of office to Accessibility Office or Office of Equity and Access, crafting draft syllabus language)
4. Increase accessible and relevant DEICS professional development training opportunities, including training for mental health or cognitive or information-processing challenges (e.g., mental health first aid training) and certification to signal completion of certain trainings (sticker, magnet, digital image)
5. Build in training opportunities for DEICS committee members (e.g., how to have meetings be more effective, how to maintain emotional health with this work, how to frame this kind of work)
6. Revise the Faculty Handbook toward DEICS matters
7. Revise classroom policies to allow flexibility and accommodations for subsistence-related activities
8. Bring back the Power & Privilege Symposium
9. Promote and advertise the use of labor acknowledgments on campuses
10. Revise the registration form to enhance inclusivity (however, we do understand that we can’t do much about this until the changes in federal regulations are finalized and implemented)
11. Draft language for a UAS-wide DEICS Webpage (with vocabulary of terms and what they mean *on our campuses*, acknowledgments that discrimination does exist at UAS, etc.)
12. Create a group where people can come together to talk about racism and their experiences (e.g., conflict resolution, white ally discussion)
13. Recommend UAS website include UA’s annual Affirmative Action Report