

# TAKING ACTION

The Office of  
Institutional Diversity

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Oregon State  
University

Hattie Redmond  
Women and Gender Center

1700 SW Pioneer Place



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Established in 1973, The Oregon State University Hattie Redmond Women & Gender Center provides advocacy, support, programs, resources and opportunities for women from all walks of life. Learn more at [beav.es/beaversdigest](http://beav.es/beaversdigest).  
**Photo by Grace Johnson.**



**HEED AWARD**  
**Celebrating progress toward inclusivity**

For the fifth consecutive year, Oregon State University has been recognized for developing a culture committed to diversity and inclusion as a recipient of the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. "The HEED Award is a reflection of the dedicated work of many colleagues across OSU who strive to continually support minoritized students, staff and faculty, and are determined to build a more equitable and inclusive university community," says Scott Vignos, vice president and chief diversity officer.

## GREETINGS,

I am incredibly excited to introduce the Fall 2022 edition of Taking Action, the biannual magazine from the Office of Institutional Diversity at Oregon State University.

Before previewing some of the incredible stories in this issue, some (re)-introductions are in order. I am honored to take up the role as OSU's vice president and chief diversity officer. Following 14 months in the interim position, I am grateful to President Jayathi Murthy and the entire OSU community to be selected for this important role.

I arrived at OSU in 2015 and over my seven years here, I've participated in and witnessed OSU grappling with essential questions related to equity — how do we enhance OSU's access mission and meet our obligation to ensure success for all learners and communities served by the university? We've become a stronger university for the many efforts driven by these conversations that have produced tangible positive outcomes for individuals and communities.

Two things can be true at the same time: OSU has made great progress to advance equity and inclusion, and it

has a long way to go. Embedding equity and inclusion across the university is everyone's work, and the OSU community is excited to embrace the challenge of adapting to serve a state, nation and world that is constantly changing, increasingly complex and deeply interconnected. The opportunity to build relationships and collaborate with partners throughout the university and beyond to advance our important efforts is one I don't take for granted.

Some of these initiatives and community partners are highlighted in this issue. You'll find a story highlighting the 50th anniversary of Title IX, the landmark legislation that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in higher education and opened doors for participation of women, queer and trans students and community members in colleges and universities nationwide. OSU is spending this anniversary year reflecting on the law and the many ways it has shaped OSU's story.

We're excited to celebrate the hiring of three new faculty members in the College of Liberal Arts — Luhui Whitebear, David Lewis and Patricia Fifita — whose cutting-edge scholarship and teaching is creating pathways for Native and Indigenous students, and all learners, to engage Indigeneity in the Pacific Northwest and beyond through the new Indigenous Studies minor.

You'll learn more about the first annual State of Black Affairs Summit organized by the President's Commission on the Status of Black Faculty and Staff Affairs held last May. The summit brought together educational, community and industry partners at the OSU Portland Center to consider the important work of elevating and advancing Black humanity and success throughout the state, placing OSU at the center of this vital conversation. Planning for this year's summit, to be held on May 25, is already underway.

Finally, we will check in with Willie Elfering, director of the Military Veterans Resource Center, who works with an incredible group of students to serve and support student veterans and their families at OSU. Willie's work to enhance the experience of veterans has resulted in a university community that is tight-knit and deeply committed to the success of its members.

We hope you will enjoy these stories and the many more in this edition. We'll catch up with you again in the spring!

Sincerely,

**Scott A. Vignos, J.D.**  
Vice President and  
Chief Diversity Officer

# WOMEN HAVE FACED BARRIERS FOR DECADES. And they continue finding ways to break through.

Jodie Taylor



Up through the 1960s, women had limited access to higher education and were excluded from many programs and scholarships. That began to change thanks to Title IX. Part of the Educational Amendments of 1972, a follow-up to previous civil rights legislation, Title IX was brief, but clear:

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

50 years later, Oregon State University is continuing to serve both the letter and spirit of the law.

### CELEBRATING STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

As part of this milestone anniversary, Oregon State Athletics is inducting a new class to the [Hall of Fame](#). In November, 21 women — student-

athletes from golf, gymnastics, softball and track and field — were honored, along with Astrid Hancock, OSU women’s rowing coach from 1965 to 1975.

To spotlight the progress women have made through Title IX, OSU Athletics recently launched “[SEE IT BEAv IT](#),” an online campaign that shares the stories of student-athletes who have led and excelled in OSU women’s sports, past and present. Examples include top track and field competitor Cindy Greiner, head softball coach and four-time Olympian Laura Berg and soccer alumna Jodie Taylor.

### PUTTING INCLUSION WORK INTO MOTION

At the [Hattie Redmond Women & Gender Center](#), the anniversary of Title IX was celebrated by paying tribute to former U.S. Rep. Patsy Mink of Hawaii — who in 1964 became the first woman of color and the first Asian-American woman elected to Congress. Mink, along with former Rep. Edith Green of Oregon, helped steer Title IX through Congress in the early 1970s. In May, the center partnered with the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center to host an event to share Mink’s story, start discussions and build community.

Whitney Archer, director of the Hattie Redmond Women & Gender Center, says Mink inspires her daily work.

“I really put people like her in the forefront of my mind when thinking about advancing gender equity, racial justice and feminist work on our campus,” she says.

To emulate Mink’s example at OSU, Archer says we need to make sure everyone has a seat at the table and that all students feel heard and represented, celebrated and honored in the fullness of their identities.

One way their voices are heard is through “[Still We Persist](#),” a student-led podcast

where women of color discuss the their experiences at OSU. The podcast is a collaboration between Orange Media Network and [AYA](#), an initiative supporting and nourishing women of color at Oregon State. AYA is housed in the Hattie Redmond Women & Gender Center.

Under Archer’s leadership, the center continues working to build a culture of care — a place where students can feel welcome to come together, ask for advice, discuss topics and issues that matter to them, make friends or receive direction to other campus resources.

And that culture of care exists for all identities. Title IX includes protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity — and OSU has the resources to show trans and nonbinary students that they matter and are equal members of the Oregon State community. Programs like SOL — the LGBTQ+ multicultural support network — and Transform! — a gender spectrum support group — provide space for students to share their experiences and find camaraderie. The support OSU offers is continually growing to better serve all students.

### STEPPING UP FOR OTHERS IN NEED

In addition to providing equal opportunities, Title IX also protects

survivors of sexual harassment and sexual violence, along with their ability to report incidents without the possibility of retaliation or punishment. Archer says many who step into the Hattie Redmond Women & Gender Center are survivors themselves — and her team is prepared to provide a safe, comfortable space where they can receive referrals to confidential resources, including the Center for Advocacy, Prevention and Education and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access.

To ensure Title IX is carried out consistently across the university, EOA develops policies, hosts panel discussions to educate the Oregon State community. EOA also publishes an [annual report](#) detailing related incidents on campus, including sexual harassment and misconduct.

While the university has made a great deal of progress, Archer says there’s still a lot of work to be done.

“The 50-year anniversary is a chance to say, ‘we can do even better,’” she says.

And just like the women who made Title IX possible, and all those who followed their lead, we won’t stop fighting for equality.



Patsy Mink



Edith Green



Cynthia Greiner



Laura Berg





## BUILDING CRITICAL MASS: Faculty cluster hire supports new Indigenous Studies minor.

For David G. Lewis, it frees up time for his groundbreaking work on Oregon Native American history. For Patricia Fifita, it's reaching "the pinnacle of the academic pathway." For Luhui Whitebear, it's opportunities to honor her mentors by mentoring Indigenous students at Oregon State University.

The three faculty members, all of whom have longstanding connections to the university, recently earned tenure-track appointments as assistant professors in the School of Language, Culture and Society in the College of Liberal Arts. Through what's known as a cluster hire, the school can launch a minor in Indigenous studies, with the potential to launch a major in the future.

**REALIZING A LONGTIME PRIORITY**  
Creating an Indigenous studies program has been a priority for Susan Bernardin since she came to lead the School of Language, Culture and Society in 2017. However, along with herself, there were only two tenured professors who specialize in Indigenous studies, Natchee Barnd and Qwo Li Driskill, too few people to support such a program. The cluster hire, she says, provides the critical mass they needed.

Universities often use cluster hires to bring in faculty with shared or overlapping areas of research or teaching expertise while enhancing the representation of minorities or other marginalized groups. The cluster hire also creates "a cohort that can support each other and build community," Bernardin says.

For a predominantly white institution like Oregon State, a cluster hire also sends a message across campus and beyond that diversity, equity and inclusion matter.

"It's long overdue and yet very urgent for Oregon State University to demonstrate its responsibility to the nine federally recognized Tribes of Oregon and to the Indigenous people who call the Pacific Northwest home," she says.

### NEW FACULTY, DISTINCTIVE STRENGTHS

The three faculty members each bring distinctive strengths to the Indigenous studies program. They say the appointment as assistant professors will allow them to pursue new research. It also gives them the opportunity to serve as mentors to students of color, in some cases, repaying the debt to someone who mentored them years ago.



Lewis, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, is the first tenure-track appointment

for a descendent of the Kalapuyan people whose land the university is located on. He's known throughout the state for consulting work and for his work researching Oregon Native American history. Lewis regularly blogs about Indigenous history on his website, *Quartux: A Journal of Critical Indigenous Anthropology*.



Fifita, the first Tongan tenure-track appointment at Oregon State, is a medical anthropologist who has

studied women's health issues, climate justice and food sovereignty in the Pacific Islands. She says the appointment provides additional clout to pursue grant money for other community-based research projects.



Whitebear, an enrolled member of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, is the university's first Chumash tenure-track

appointment. She is also the director of Kaku-Ixt Mana Ina Haws, the first tenure-track faculty member to lead one of OSU's cultural resource centers. Whitebear's research includes work on Indigenous feminism, Indigenous identity and gender roles, murdered and missing Indigenous women and Indigenous resistance movements. She is excited about the opportunity to publish more of her scholarly work, having struggled to find work by Indigenous scholars related to her research when she was an OSU student.

All three faculty members say they're encouraged by the cluster hire, but they emphasize that the process shouldn't stop there.

"This shouldn't be viewed as, 'OK, we're done,'" Whitebear says. "We need more Indigenous faculty across multiple disciplines."

Lewis agrees, pointing to work he's been doing with faculty in the College of Forestry. "Native knowledge about our environment has meaning, and we need to bring that into our collective knowledge," he says.

Fifita says the cluster hire "sent a really strong message that (Indigenous) histories and knowledge are valued and should be prioritized."

Bernardin believes Indigenous knowledge shouldn't be confined to an Indigenous studies program.

"I think Oregon State needs to prioritize Indigenous excellence across the university. It is long overdue," she says. "My hope is this is the beginning of a transformative era for Oregon State in its history as a land grant institution." Along with racial diversity, she wants to make sure the LGBTQ community and people with disabilities are part of the conversation.

**A FLOURISHING FIELD OF STUDY**  
There's another important reason why Oregon State is offering a program in Indigenous studies: It's a field with strong and growing interest.

"Yes, the reparative aspect is really important, the institutional responsibility is also important, but Indigenous studies is this absolutely extraordinary flourishing field," Bernardin says. She believes the new hires will be a catalyst for other initiatives.

"It's a move that inspires, excites and helps folks see that we mean it and want to build this," she says. "This is absolutely critical to the future we want to envision for ourselves in the College of Liberal Arts, for our students and faculty and for our communities."

"This is not where we stop. This is where we start."

## GIVING VOICE TO INDIGENOUS WOMEN, ONE STORY AT A TIME.

It's the go-to site for a quick bit of information. Yet Wikipedia, an encyclopedia that anyone can edit, lacks entries about many notable women and people of color. One Oregon State Honors College class has filled in a few of those gaps.

Natchee Barnd, an associate professor in the College of Liberal Arts, frequently teaches an honors section of his Introduction to Native American Studies class. For winter term 2022, the class focused on writing Indigenous women into Wikipedia.

The project came to Barnd from the Smithsonian Institution and Wiki Education by way of Laurie Bridges, an outreach librarian at the Valley Library. The Smithsonian and Wiki Edu, which collaborates with universities on Wikimedia projects, had approached Bridges with a list of names and some preliminary sources. She, in turn, asked Barnd. It was an easy yes.

"I'm always looking for new, creative, engaging kinds of experiential learning for my classes," he says. Barnd, his students and Bridges wrote nine new Wikipedia entries:

- [Ramona Bennett](#) (Puyallup), an activist involved in protests over fishing rights in Washington state during the 1960s and 70s.
- [Mitchelene BigMan](#) (Apsáalooke/Hidatsa), a U.S. Army veteran who established Native American Women Warriors, the first all-female Indigenous color guard.
- [Diane Burns](#) (Anishinabe/Chemehuevi), an artist and poet who became prominent in the New York City poetry community.
- [Lena Frank Dick](#) (Washoe), a basket maker known for her tight weaves and figurative designs.
- [Lynnette Haozous](#) (Chiricahua Apache/Diné/Taos Pueblo), a painter, printmaker, jeweler and actor known for murals that blend art and advocacy.
- [Lili'uokalani Trust](#), which executes the deed of trust of Hawaii's last ruling monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani (Kanaka Maoli), and provides social services for vulnerable native Hawaiian children.
- [Ramona Lubo](#) (Cahuilla), a basket maker who became famous from the 1884 novel "Ramona," which was based on the controversial death of her husband.

"[Into the Sun](#)," a mural by Indigenous artist [Lynnette Haozous](#), was part of the exhibition "Mesh" at the Portland Art Museum from November 2021 to May 2022.

- [Patricia Whitefoot](#) (Yakama), who served as President of the National Indian Education Association and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education.
- [Mary Cornelius Winder](#) (Oneida), who wrote a series of letters to the federal government related to the ancestral land claims of the Oneida Indian Nation.

Barnd says the six students in the class, a couple of whom identify as Indigenous, chose to write about people and topics "that spoke to them." They cited references from credible sources such as library books, archives, newspapers and articles and followed Wikipedia's protocol to write in a neutral voice.

That neutrality was challenging for some entries, particularly on Indigenous activism, so students incorporated direct quotes from their subjects. Barnd says that approach helped ensure their voices were not stripped away, "an ongoing challenge that Indigenous communities face."

Simply giving voice to these Indigenous women, some of whom are living, sends an important message, Barnd says. "I'm constantly having to convince people that not all native people have died. They actually exist. They're right here."

And they have stories that should be told.

## SHE DOESN'T WAIT FOR OTHERS TO TAKE THE LEAD. She's the first in line.



"If you don't do something, who will?"

It's a question Milikaleakona "Tonga" Hopoi, '12, continually

asks herself when she's faced with a new challenge. It fuels her drive to ask questions, bring people together and create positive change.

Hopoi, who goes by Tonga in honor of her home country, is used to blazing trails. She was the first person in her family to attend college and left the tight-knit Portland community she grew up in to do so.

She chose Oregon State after watching a football game with her dad, who recognized several Tongan names on the players' jerseys, like Walker Vave and Stephen Paea.

"There's a community there that supports our culture and beliefs," he told Hopoi. "There are opportunities for us."

Hopoi didn't just seek opportunities for herself — she sought them for others. After listening to the issues students were facing on campus, she decided to run for president of the Associated Students of Oregon State University in 2011. She became the first Pacific Islander to lead ASOSU.

Hopoi's lasting achievement at Oregon State and ASOSU is the Student Experience Center, with her administration playing an important role in lobbying the Oregon Legislature for funding. Following her presentation

to lawmakers, bonds for the SEC were approved, making OSU the only state university to receive funding for a new building that year.

After graduation, Hopoi interned for U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley, followed by an internship many dream of but few achieve: working for First Lady Michelle Obama in the White House. Following that, she was a special advisor at the Department of Energy in the Obama administration.

Today, Hopoi is Chief of Staff for Hawaii State Senate Majority Leader Dru Mamo Kanuha. In her first year, Hopoi saw an opportunity to improve the efficiency of her department — and jumped on it. As a result, 700 bills were sent from the Senate to the House in the Hawaii State Legislature. And for the first time in 20 years, two Senate bills were passed into law for every House bill.

Outside of work, Hopoi remains connected to her community, organizing a relief drive after a volcano erupted in Tonga. She's also driven by friends and family back home, especially the kids who look up to her.

"It's so inspiring to know that we came from the same upbringing," she says. "That they, too, can achieve something."

Hopoi would like to mentor students at Oregon State in the future. She wants to meet them, learn about their experiences and offer help and insight.

"I like to bring people together in places that have hope," she says. "To share more goodness with the world."

Tonga Hopoi has already done that — and much more.



# THEY DON'T JUST FACILITATE CHANGE. They inspire all of us in the process.

Moving equity and inclusion forward takes more than compassion and the desire to do better. It takes tireless research, the ability to listen to others, problem solve and address their needs.

Ana Ribero, Tenisha Tevis and Vrushali Bokil — this year's Outstanding Diversity Advocate Award recipients — practice all of the above, creating a space where their students can feel welcome and thrive.



**Tenisha Tevis** is charismatic and engaging, drawing students in with her compelling teaching style. An assistant professor in the College of Education, she works hard to stay up-to-date on all the latest technology and teaching tools to easily relate to her students and make learning inclusive and interesting, whether in person or online.

Tevis isn't someone who will wait for another person to take the lead — she steps up first. Through mentoring and advising Oregon State students, she shows them that they have a place here. She serves as faculty advisor for the Black Graduate Student Union and co-president of the President's Commission on the Status of Black Faculty and Staff Affairs. She has helped to create workshops that educate others about systemic racism in

education and around the U.S. and how to combat white supremacy.

In 2020, Tevis co-taught a seminar on Confronting Systemic Whiteness in Higher Education with College of Liberal Arts professor Dwaine Plaza, which received overwhelmingly positive feedback. She has also co-chaired the College of Education's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, moving many initiatives forward.

"Dr. Tevis gives outstanding feedback and counseling to her students both in class and in general on the OSU campus," Plaza says. "She has respect for the dynamics of the wide array of consciousness level of all students in her class as well as the students of color who seek out her mentorship."



**Ana Ribero** is always there for her students as a mentor and advocate. An assistant professor in the College of Liberal Arts, she actively recruits students of color to the Master of Arts in English program in the School of Writing, Literature and Film. She helps students discover their area of interest and place them in the top program of their choice. Many of her students have successfully graduated from Oregon State and begun Ph.D. programs across the country.

Ribero's commitment to social justice is also evident in her research and coursework. An expert in areas including feminism, critical race theory and immigration, she has suggested new and experimental courses focusing on diversity, including Rhetorics of Race, Stories of the U.S./Mexico

Border and Anti-Racism in English Studies. She continues to speak on the importance of anti-racist teaching methods at several conferences, assists Latinx students with résumés and job applications through the Centro Cultural César Chávez and encourages open classroom dialogues about pertinent issues like reproducing whiteness in the classroom.

Emalydia Flenory, an Oregon State alumna and University of Oregon Ph.D. student, says Ribero's support was integral to her success.

"The guidance and feedback she was able to bring to my work were absolutely crucial." Flenory says. "Without her support and expertise, my scholarship then and now would not be as robust, thoughtful and critical."



**Vrushali Bokil** is an advocate for making the study and profession of mathematics more accessible to all students and faculty. Now serving as interim dean in the College of Science, Bokil took the lead in developing the college's diversity action plan, as well as ways to recruit diverse students and faculty to OSU's health science programs. As a panelist at the 2016 STEM Leaders workshop, Bokil led discussions on creating more research internships for students of color.

Bokil also serves on several committees to keep equity and inclusion work moving, was an ADVANCE program facilitator and is chair of a Career Opportunities Committee at the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, which works to bring more women into STEM fields. And

her encouragement toward students has made an impact. She has been instrumental in recruiting women and students of color into math and computer science graduate programs — mentoring and convincing them to stick with the program when they had considered dropping it.

"Professor Bokil brings a deep understanding of the value of diversity and equity for faculty and student success, and has put into play important structural changes that can ensure sustainable impact," says Becky Warner, professor emerita and a principal investigator for Oregon State ADVANCE.

Progress can be a long road. But strong leaders like Ribero, Tevis and Bokil are lighting the way forward.

# INAUGURAL STATE OF BLACK AFFAIRS SUMMIT: Guiding a statewide community toward action.

Combating racism starts by understanding what it is and recognizing that it still exists. The inaugural State of Black Affairs Summit, held May 25 at the OSU Portland Center, sought specific, practical actions to address systemic issues while creating connections with members of the Black community across Oregon.

Tenisha Tevis, an associate professor in the College of Education, and Bridget Jones, senior associate director of transfer admissions, along with the other members of the executive committee for the [President's Commission on the Status of Black Faculty and Staff Affairs](#), organized the summit. Tevis also serves as co-chair of the commission, and Jones serves as secretary.

**ONE PERSON CAN'T DO IT ALONE**  
Jones describes the state of Black affairs at Oregon State and across Oregon as “two steps forward, three steps back.” People and programs are put in place, but there are not necessarily resources or an infrastructure to disrupt systems that continue to exclude Black and other marginalized communities, she says.

“You can't just hire a Black person and then expect them to fix everything without recognizing that the culture of the organization needs to shift,” Jones says. “One person can't do that alone.”

Tevis says a significant outcome of the summit was to simply have conversations about Blackness in a state with a racist history and a small Black population, “to look at the harm that is both historical and contemporary.” Participants examined what diversity, equity and inclusion look like socially, economically and personally, not just in terms of race, but also around gender issues, LGBTQ rights, immigration and human wellness.

## GATHERING A RANGE OF BLACK OREGONIANS AND ALLIES

The summit, open to all Oregonians, drew 100 in-person and 50 online attendees. They included leaders from OSU and other universities, community colleges, state and local government agencies, businesses, grassroots organizations, the Urban League of Portland and the NAACP. Following the keynote by Lisa Willis, an apparel wear test analyst for Nike, USA Gold Medalist and retired WNBA player and coach, sessions covered K-12 and higher education, mental health, supporting Black faculty, the current DEI climate and Black athletics.

“It was really important for us to check in as a state, to tap into that pulse,” Tevis says. The summit was intentionally scheduled for May 25, the anniversary of George Floyd's



Patricia Anderson Wieck, director of human resources for the city of Beaverton, speaks on Recruiting and Retaining Black Talent: Black Employees in Oregon and Expanding the Network, one of the breakout sessions at the State of Black Affairs Summit.

murder, to call attention to how organizations serve — or do not serve — their Black populations.

## ACTIVISM STILL NEEDED

Tevis believes Oregon State as an institution is “caring about its staff and students,” and Jones adds that university leadership has “gone to bat for Black faculty and staff, paying attention to issues that matter to us,” as well as supporting the commission and providing resources for the summit. But they also recognize that not everyone at Oregon State supports DEI work, which requires continued activism to change cultures and value systems.

“What does it mean for me to advocate for Black humanity, Black thriving, Black safety and Black mental health while somebody advocates for what

they've always known?” Tevis says. Racist slurs and hanging Confederate flags “are byproducts of a greater systemic, intentional ideology intended for the harm, demise and disenfranchisement of particular groups.”

DEI training and workshops frequently address both subtle and explicit examples of racism, which can be eye-opening, Jones says. “It's important for people to recognize that they've had the luxury of not knowing. You can't be an ally if you don't know what the issues are.”

Tevis acknowledges terms like “white privilege” can be polarizing, but regardless of the label, the issue still needs to be addressed. Tevis, Jones and others have had some of these hard conversations about race around campus.

“We haven't had a terrible pushback, but we also know it's inevitable in this kind of work,” Tevis says. “If we can get people to be open, that's the first step. The next is to be willing.”

## TURNING GOALS INTO ACTIONS

At the start of the summit, attendees developed goals for themselves and their organizations following the SMART model — specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely.

Tevis says one of the first goals set during the summit was to make it an annual event, and the commission plans to offer smaller workshops as well. Attendees also created a networking group on LinkedIn to share ideas, collaborate and support talent in the Black community statewide.

Jones identifies several action items that anyone can implement. One is to pay attention to who is or is not included in conversations when decisions are being made. “There are very likely issues that exist that may be unspoken or are being ignored,” she says. “Listen to the voices of people who are speaking up and what they're saying.”

Jones also encourages people to make changes in areas where they have expertise, and in areas where they don't, do their own research to understand the issues. “Everyone has a part they can play and something practical they can do,” she says.

And so the work continues.





## INFORMATION IS POWER: Student researchers compile data to inform policy, promote environmental justice.

Benton and Linn counties have 223,794 residents spread over 2,988 square miles. And within those communities, there are disparities in environmental health and well-being. To quantify and define those disparities, particularly among people of color, the local chapter of the NAACP commissioned a report from Oregon State University — and a team of three undergraduates both searched for and analyzed the data.

The resulting [Environmental Justice Inventory](#) found environmental justice is lacking in multiple dimensions, including air quality and pollution, access to parks and transportation, energy costs and the availability of air conditioning, public safety and disaster preparedness. The report also made public policy recommendations to the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, including expanded advocacy, outreach and education.

Students Roman Patchell, Madeline Judokusumo and Halle Fisher produced the report. The project came by way of their faculty advisor, Christy Brekken,

a senior instructor in the College of Agricultural Sciences who serves on the NAACP committee. They also received funding from the URSA Engage program in the Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and the Arts.

Primary data for the report came from a 33-question survey the students developed with input from the NAACP, which also helped with distribution. In addition to collecting demographic data, the survey asked questions about people's homes and neighborhoods, access to government and community services, as well as an open-ended question about any environmental justice concerns. The survey received 201 responses.

Over several weeks, the students compiled secondary data from credible, up-to-date sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, Environmental Protection Agency, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and city and county websites. Judokusumo says they would layer the data from different sources to see where information

aligned or intersected, such as an area with lower incomes having lower water quality. This data was then compared and contrasted with responses to the survey. The final report includes more than 50 tables and graphs.

With the report completed, Judokusumo, an environmental science major from Indonesia, believes “research is not something that you put half of your heart in. Some people are suffering, and this project might help change their life or change their future,” she says.

Fisher, an environmental economics and policy major, says the research made her think further about studying environmental law so she can “go into the field and do something about it.”

Patchell, also an environmental economics and policy major, wants the report to serve as a pipeline for getting information from the people experiencing environmental injustices to the people who can address those issues.

“The research needs to mean something and have some kind of outward impact,” he says. The issues they've identified, and the larger challenges of climate change “are completely within our power to fix. We just have to hold people accountable and get everyone on board.”

With the Environmental Justice Inventory, making that impact moves a step forward.

## MILITARY AND VETERAN RESOURCES CENTER: Serving the OSU community that has served the nation.



**Willie Elfering** is Oregon State's [Military and Veteran Resources Advisor](#), working with students in Corvallis, OSU-Cascades and Ecampus. A veteran himself, Elfering joined the Oregon Army National Guard while attending OSU as an undergrad. He served for more than 25 years with the National Guard, including more than 22 years on active duty. His career included deployments in Panama, Japan and Germany, combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and humanitarian support after hurricanes in Louisiana. Read on to learn more about his story.

**Q Describe your role as Military and Veteran Resources Advisor. What are the unique needs of students who are active duty military or veterans that you address?**

**A** I have an amazing role here at OSU. They actually pay me to assist the members of my military family.

The military does a sometimes good, sometimes not so good, job of explaining the benefits our students and their families have earned through their military service. Our center helps them sort out what they could be eligible for and access them.

The center also serves as a place to come together as a community. One of the biggest things that is often lost when separating from the service is that sense of identity and belonging to something bigger than yourself. We work hard to help them make a connection to the community at OSU.

**Q How does your office support students at a distance?**

**A** Our OSU-Cascades students get supported from here to help with the benefits and services questions, and thanks to some grant dollars, we were able to establish a resource center at OSU-Cascades where they can study and connect as a community.

Our Ecampus students are the most challenging, and I don't think we will ever be fully satisfied with the support we are able to provide. We connect with them through phone and email, and we have also set up a Discord Server and Canvas Community to provide assistance and connection in a better way.

**Q Oregon State has a reputation for being a military- and veteran-friendly university. Why do you think that is the case?**

**A** I think it all starts with the basics. Oregon State University does a good job of supporting students. Starting there, we have built an effective program to focus on the specific benefits and services available for the military-connected community and that also capitalizes on all of the great work other programs are doing.

**Q What do military and veteran students tell you about their experience as Oregon State students?**

**A** I'm happy to say that one of the major themes that I have heard is how instrumental the Military and Veteran Resources Center and the community here have been in helping them through their time at OSU.

**Q The Memorial Union was originally dedicated to the memory of students who fought in World War I. In 2009, it was rededicated to honor all students, faculty and staff who have served their country. Why do you think that recognition is important?**

**A** Personally, I think it is a great reminder for younger generations that freedom isn't free. It comes with a cost, and sometimes that cost is people laying down their lives so that others don't have to.



# WHEN WE HAVE A PLACE TO BE OUR TRUE SELVES, IT'S A BEAUTIFUL THING.

Oregon State's [Pride Center](#) has come a long way since it was established in 2001. And it's thanks to dedicated students, volunteers and allies.

In 1999, members of the Rainbow Continuum Student group decided it was time for LGBTQIA+ students to have a dedicated space to connect, share, work and learn. Together with Student Involvement, they fought through opposition from some on campus and budgeted for a temporary space outside the Student Involvement office. Originally known as the Queer Resource Center when it was approved by the Student Fees Committee in 2001, it was renamed the Pride Center and moved to its current location on SW A Avenue in 2004.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS GENERATIONS

More than two decades of progress is a significant milestone — and the Pride Center marked the occasion in collaboration with the OSU Alumni Association by hosting the Rainbow Connect event in May. It included music, prizes and updates on a renovation of the center that began last summer. Most importantly, it opened opportunities for conversation and

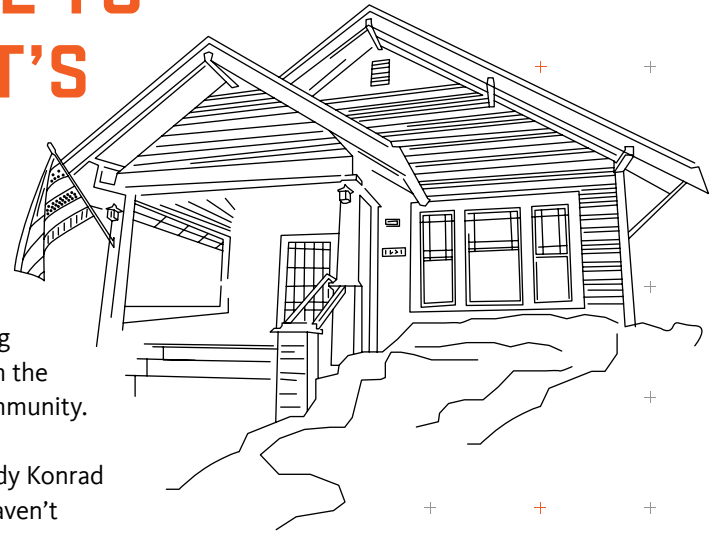
relationship-building between alumni and current students, including first-year students living in the Pride Special Interest Community.

Pride Center Director Cindy Konrad says community spaces haven't always been set up for the LGBTQIA+ community to build intergenerational relationships, making events like Rainbow Connect essential.

## EXPANDING A WELCOMING SPACE

Many students already call the Pride Center home, but its current size doesn't have the space to accommodate its growing community. The renovation will provide a quiet area for meditation, a covered outdoor area for gatherings and a space for Counseling and Psychological Services counselors to hold one-on-one sessions. In addition, the building will become more accessible to accommodate neurodivergent students and those with disabilities.

To create a place that would feel like home to the LGBTQIA+ community, Pride Center staff worked with groups of interior design students in the College of Business to bring their vision



to life — using furniture, colors and styles that represent those who gather there.

## PERSISTENCE COMES FULL CIRCLE

Konrad says one of the best things about her role is seeing students find their voices — exploring who they are and who they want to be. For Ellen Dishman, one of the center's founders, the effort has been constantly affirming.

Dishman, who now serves on the Rainbow Connect Alumni Network Board, says it feels incredible knowing the fight for equality and a space for LGBTQIA+ students to call their own has made such an impact on the university for the last two decades.

"The snowball effect of that one change has been a true inspiration to me," she says. "It gives me so much hope for the future and so much belief in the power of students to change the world."



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