

TAKING ACTION

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Office of Institutional Diversity team members Pamela Johnson, Temmecha Turner, Miguel Arellano and Scott Vignos support the community launch of Access OSU on Aug. 10 in Portland. Photo by @juliankdesigns.

HELLO:

I am excited to introduce this edition of Taking Action, the biannual magazine from the Office of Institutional Diversity!

Before I cover some of the important stories in this edition, you'll see a few changes for Taking Action moving forward. For starters, this will be the last regular print edition of the magazine as we reimagine how we share and amplify stories of university community members creating impact and change. Taking Action's web and social channels will expand, and we'll still create special print editions from time to time. Stay tuned for more and sign up to receive updates from OID at beav.es/taking-action.

In this edition, we're sharing stories of OSU community members advancing inclusive excellence indoors, outdoors and in the heat of the kitchen.

First up is the story of Oregon State alum Mike Truong, who received a 2023 James Beard Award for his work on the documentary "Restaurant Takeover ft. Matta," a YouTube short exploring themes of identity, family history and food. I definitely recommend checking it out online.

Next, Eric Slyman, a Ph.D. student in Stefan Lee's lab shares insights on his work to identify and address social identity bias in AI. And we catch up with Jose Torres, who recently graduated with an honors degree via Ecampus, taking advantage of an opportunity where Oregon State is leading the way.

As we prepare to spend more time indoors through the wet and snowy Oregon winter, we're excited to share more about an amazing initiative advancing inclusive excellence in the outdoors: Outdoor School in the Division of Extension and Engagement has been steadily expanding its ability to provide inquiry-based science education in the field to all fifth and sixth-grade students in Oregon, regardless of their location, background and income level.

We're excited to welcome the newest member of the Office of Institutional Diversity team, Carina Buzo Tipton! Carina recently earned her Ph.D. in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies from Oregon State and now serves as Assistant Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Education. In this role, she develops and delivers learning opportunities for students, faculty and staff at OSU to build capacity for change. Please join me in welcoming Carina!

Finally, we look forward to joining OSU community members across the state in January 2024 to celebrate the 42nd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration. We hope to see you at the Peace Breakfast and Peace March on January 15 and the Keynote Address on January 31. Visit beav.es/MLK for registration information and event details.

Thank you for being strong partners in advancing inclusive excellence.

Best regards,

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



THERE'S A STORY IN ALL OF US — OFTEN SHARED THROUGH FOOD.

Food is its own language. It creates the opportunity for connection, creative expression, celebration and understanding. For Mike Truong, '17, it inspired a new wave of content creation — and a once-in-a-lifetime award.

Truong became intrigued with cooking at a young age. When he was just 9, he decided he was tired of eating the same meals every week and opted to cook for himself. His first creation, a white fish with Fruity Pebbles cereal



on top, didn't turn out as planned. But it sparked an interest in expressing creativity through food and embracing failures when they happen.

Truong's love for cooking continued through his college years at Oregon State. A double major in computer science and pre-med, he worked for Levy, a restaurant and hospitality company, preparing food for Oregon State athletes. Immersed in the culinary world, he was inspired to challenge the idea of food — and how to present it in a unique, visual way.

Truong connected with Shinji Kawai, a faculty research assistant in the College of Agricultural Sciences, to learn more about using vegetable breeding to create a particular culinary taste. He studied under Kawai and other faculty members and worked at high-end restaurants across the country during his summer breaks. While he wanted to shift to food exploration full-time, his parents requested he finish his degrees.

"I was stuck in life not wanting to disappoint tradition and family but also wanting to pursue what made me personally happy," Truong says.

So he found a way. He continued his studies while documenting his cooking experiences through digital mediums like [Instagram](#). He photographed each of his dishes, showing how he built them with ingredients from the Corvallis Farmers Market. All the while, he absorbed as much video content as he could from YouTube creators like JK FILMS and Wong Fu Productions.

"Seeing other Asian Americans like me on a screen made me want to do the same," he says.

Truong's passion for authentic, homemade dishes and desire to share untold stories culminated in one single idea: the All the Homies Network. Created by Truong in collaboration with friends who share his love of food, this YouTube channel features videos of the meals they create together and the meaning behind them. Each gives a glimpse into life as a food creator. The homies are all owners of Portland-area businesses, including [Portland Cà Phê](#), [Hey Day](#), [Matta](#), [Baon Kainan](#), [Salvie Donuts](#) and [Deadstock Coffee](#). All the Homies videos are broken into different segments, including recipe sharing, restaurant events and more.

In one segment, Richard Le of Matta and Ian Williams of Deadstock Coffee cook meals while camping in the Oregon outdoors, working to decrease the fear and misunderstanding underrepresented communities face in these areas — encouraging them to get out and explore.

Truong says these stories represent each of the homies' authentic selves. While food is a key component of their storytelling, it is just the starting point.

"Sometimes humanity can be very difficult to understand, but a good meal shared makes it a lot easier," he says. "I'm inspired about sharing other people's stories, specifically the difficult ones because it shows the truth in being human."

Truong found his calling — in the place he had always wanted to be. And the road that led him there continued to Chicago, where the All the Homies Network earned a coveted James Beard Award.

The James Beard Foundation — a nonprofit organization that celebrates people in the world of food and culinary arts — presents awards each year to groups and businesses that exemplify exceptional work and a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the culinary arts, hospitality, media and broader food system.

The homies' video submission featured a restaurant takeover by Matta, owned by Richard and Sophia Le. At Portland's Whiskey Library, they prepared and shared authentic Vietnamese-American dishes that paid homage to Richard's aunt, grandmother and late mother, Teresa Le. These included her favorite snack — rice dumplings — and a crab and tomato salad based on the soup she loved. It was so well received that it beat all the competition, including entries from Bon Appetit and Top Chef Bravo.

"For me, winning a James Beard Award gives hope, not just to people who grew up in similar circumstances as me but to anyone who believes that these goals are unattainable," Truong says. "Moments like these are only unattainable if you don't try."

Moving forward, Truong says the homies plan to continue creating genuine, relevant content and may even branch out to include more lifestyle pieces, including a magazine that's in the works.

Like the content creators who inspired him, Truong is now doing the same — showing others that any path is possible.

Learn more about the All the Homies Network at allthehomiesnetwork.com or on [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#) @allthehomiesnetwork.

EVERYONE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

Carina Buzo Tipton shows us how.



Carina Buzo Tipton came to Oregon State in 2013 as a graduate student in the college student services administration program, where she earned a Master of Education with a concentration in intersecting identities at predominantly white institutions. She has worked in a variety of capacities and departments across campus while completing a Ph.D. in women, gender and sexuality studies. She joined the Office of Institutional Diversity in 2022.

Q Could you describe your role as assistant director of diversity, equity and inclusion education?

A My role is to support and facilitate the creation and distribution of DEI curriculum. I work with individuals and teams across the entire OSU enterprise including the offices of Faculty Affairs and Academic Affairs, the Center for Teaching and Learning, University Human Resources, the Division of Student Affairs, the Division of Extension and Engagement and other university entities. One of my ongoing roles includes leading the [Dialogue Facilitation Lab](#), a cohort-based applied learning experience for faculty, staff and graduate employees who work in teaching, research, leadership

or service. This experience helps participants gain confidence in leading intellectually and emotionally complex conversations, modeling courage and vulnerability, creating space for multiple perspectives, guiding others in expressing their point of view and more.

Q How did your path lead you to Oregon State, as both a student and an educator? How have your experiences and interests shaped your career in DEI work?

A My path toward my career in DEI education is decades long. My passion for DEI work is rooted in my family's experience with racial injustice throughout the 1930s to the 1960s during Mexican repatriation and racial segregation/desegregation. I grew up hearing stories about injustice from a very young age. My parents and grandparents always thought that they were age-appropriate conversations to have, because they were children when they faced racial oppression and state violence. I have had a language and desire for social justice my entire life.

Q Could you describe your work as a Ph.D. candidate in women, gender and sexuality studies? How do you incorporate this knowledge into your current position at OID?

A I completed my Ph.D. in women, gender and sexuality studies with a concentration in feminist institutional change in May 2023. My dissertation, *Curandera Feminism: Tracing the Possibilities of Healing Institutional Harm*, develops a framework for Curandera feminism that is deeply connected to my family's Curandera practices.

Curanderas practice Curanderisma. Curanderisma comes from the Spanish word *Cura* which means to heal. I come from a lineage of Curanderas, and I have learned many things about what Curanderisma witnesses as harm or what we call *sustos*. *Sustos* translates directly to scare or fright, so as Curanderas cure *sustos*, they really work to address trauma and soul sickness.

My research makes connections to the idea that Curanderisma gives new insight for analyzing institutional harm and new insight on the possibilities for institutional healing. I posit that if harm exists, so must healing, and if institutions cause trauma, so must they become locations of accountability with less harm and more healing.

I use my knowledge and research gathered from my Ph.D. in so many ways. As someone who works in OID, I am often at the table of conversations about diversity-related issues. I use my knowledge to share new or creative ways of looking at problems and solutions. I approach all social justice or DEI work through the lens of healing — meaning that I want to engage in this work in a way that leaves individuals safer and more whole.

Q In the trainings and workshops you facilitate at Oregon State, what are some of the main takeaways you hope attendees apply to their daily lives?

A I facilitate all kinds of different topics within DEI. Some common content areas include identity-specific advocacy, navigating bias and dialogue skills for conflict. But across all the

content under the DEI umbrella, I think there are two key takeaways that I hope people can apply to their daily lives.

First, I hope people understand that DEI work can be done from any place that you already inhabit. Meaning, in your life on or off campus, no matter what your role is, you can help in efforts of DEI work. You do not have to make huge changes to your context or content to be a part of DEI commitments.

Second, I hope people feel that DEI is accessible and applicable to their values. I believe that progress toward DEI goals does not need everyone to care and act on everything, but we do need people to feel confident and competent to act on the things they do care about. And while there might be things that you do not center in your own DEI education and engagement, I hope that you can be thoughtful and reflective about things that aren't on your radar. I truly believe that to be our best selves — best supervisor, teammate, mentor, student, researcher, faculty, administrator — we need to have some element of DEI literacy within our tool belt of resources.

Discover more about OSU's DEI education programs at diversity.oregonstate.edu/diversity-education. Choose Request a Consult at the bottom of the page to schedule a meeting with Carina.



Jose Torres collects samples for bighorn sheep research in the Mojave Desert.

OREGON STATE'S FIRST ONLINE HONORS COLLEGE GRADUATE FINDS ONE OPPORTUNITY AFTER ANOTHER.

At the end of the 2023 winter term, Jose Torres became the first Oregon State University student to complete an honors degree online.

Ask him how he got here, and his story might surprise you.

“Nobody in my family’s ever gone to college or university, so it wasn’t even in my mind. We’re all working class people, and so that was my thing,” he says.

Torres is a U.S. Navy veteran who joined the service straight out of high school and did three deployments in Japan, San Diego and Guam.

“I was going to become an aircraft mechanic. That was my goal,” he says.

But while stationed in Guam, he saw another possible path for himself when he decided to volunteer at the Guam Wildlife Refuge. There, he worked with the Indigenous Chamorro people to help support native species in the refuge.

“I was just like — ‘How do I get your job?’” he says. “I just had no idea this was a possibility or a career choice that somebody could get paid for.”

So when his contract with the Navy ended, Torres applied to the [fisheries, wildlife and conservation sciences bachelor’s program](#) through Oregon State [Ecampus](#). He also applied to the

Oregon State [Honors College](#), which is known for high levels of faculty engagement and creating research opportunities for undergraduates.

Torres reached out to Professor [Clinton Epps](#) in the College of Agricultural Sciences to ask if he would be willing to be his honors advisor.

“I got very lucky,” Torres says. “My honors thesis is on bighorn sheep morphology, and Dr. Epps is one of the biggest desert bighorn researchers in America.”

Determined to do in-person research while pursuing his degree online, Torres also applied for a [VIEW Fellowship](#) through Oregon State’s Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Sciences. Through the fellowship, he received funding to spend two months in the Mojave Desert during the summer of 2021, assisting Epps with bighorn sheep research.

“We were collecting fecal samples and behavioral information, so we had to go out and track them,” Torres says. “We were hiking 6 to 8 miles a day. I got a lot of great experience from that.”

Torres went on [to write and defend his honors thesis](#) on how climate impacts bighorn sheep morphology. For his thesis, Torres used a dataset from the California Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, which has collected data from bighorn sheep captures

since 1978. Epps continued to advise Torres remotely throughout his honors research and thesis, despite being in different states.

While working and completing his honors degree, Torres learned about a United States Geological Service fellowship, and Epps gladly nominated him for the opportunity.

“I did three interviews,” Torres says. “And when I got to the Burmese python opportunity in Florida, I said, ‘This is what I want to do. Pick me.’ It turned out to be such a great experience.”

That great experience would lead Torres to an even bigger opportunity. When his fellowship ended, the USGS offered him a full-time position in Florida, helping to combat invasive Burmese pythons throughout the Everglades and South Florida. In addition to working on ongoing scientific research at the USGS, Torres will help train the next round of interns, teaching them how to do captures, autopsies and necropsies as well as how to use outdoor vehicles like swamp buggies and airboats.

Oregon State is one of the only universities in the nation that offers [an honors degree online](#), and Torres has advice for future students who decide to pursue this opportunity.

“I’m not gonna tell you it’s easy,” he says. “I’ve been working hard. But it’s been a very rewarding experience.”

REMAKING OUTDOOR SCHOOL INTO A GREAT EXPERIENCE FOR ALL.

[Outdoor School](#) can be the world's greatest classroom where students learn about themselves and the environment in Oregon's diverse natural landscapes.

But for Indigenous students, families and communities, it wasn't always a welcoming experience.

Until recently, most outdoor education programs perpetuated a "myth of the wilderness" in which Indigenous people are portrayed as relics of the past. In some cases, the curriculum was presented as if nobody lived in Oregon prior to white settlement. Cultural appropriation and stereotyping of Indigenous culture were rampant. Stories and songs belonging to Tribal communities' sacred traditions were taken without permission and out of context.

"The white settler experience was often the only experience that was represented in the curriculum," says Spirit Brooks, Director of Outdoor School for the OSU Extension Service, which manages the program statewide.

But Outdoor School in Oregon is changing.

With guidance and professional development opportunities for outdoor educators provided by Oregon State, community-based and culturally responsive programs are becoming grounded in equity, diversity, access and inclusion.

STEEPED IN INEQUITY

When Brooks joined Outdoor School in 2017, she was struck by the lack of cultural responsiveness in many programs.

An enrolled citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Brooks visited outdoor schools to observe and collect information statewide. Except for a few instances, Native Americans had not been asked to help shape what was being taught at Outdoor School. And Native parents were concerned and hesitant to have their children go.

"Prior to statewide funding, it was white, privileged students who were able to attend," Brooks says. "There was real inequity in who actually got to participate."

There are several reasons Indigenous people hadn't been consulted or involved with Outdoor School. "I think mostly it was a lack of support, a lack of knowledge and a lack of resources," Brooks says.

Outdoor School programs had become steeped in the traditions of a district, and it was easy to continue using an existing curriculum. One district had been using the same curriculum since 1978. Now that resources are available, districts are using them to improve the Outdoor School experience.

"They were open to us helping update their curriculum to better reflect their communities," Brooks says.

ADAPTING OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Oregon is the first state in the U.S. to use lottery funds to pay for an immersive outdoor education experience for all fifth and sixth graders. Since 2017, OSU Extension has been responsible for distributing funds to school districts, education service districts and other organizations to establish and operate outdoor school programs.

Brooks co-wrote a [self-paced online course](#) that is offered through OSU Professional and Continuing Education. The course is most helpful for white educators and challenges assumptions and misinformation about Indigenous people and cultures, Brooks says.

Districts still design and deliver their Outdoor School programs to meet state guidelines. The legislature was intentional in not mandating a statewide outdoor education curriculum.

"It is important that schools and districts have agency in how they develop curriculum for their communities," Brooks says.

All Outdoor School programs must address soil, water, plants and animals and offer a field study component. They can cover the interrelationship of nature and natural resources, economic development and career opportunities. Social studies and history components are also common.

Through grants, OSU Extension supports districts in revising their Outdoor School programs and training staff. The latest funding cycle includes grants for professional development on the topics of culturally responsive education and cultural humility, along with grants for physical improvements for buildings, landscapes and other shared spaces.

INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE WITH WESTERN SCIENCE

A major task in overhauling Outdoor School has been incorporating Indigenous Knowledge, the evolving body of observations, written and oral knowledge about the natural environment acquired by Indigenous people over hundreds or thousands of years.



"Western modern science is one way of knowing," Brooks says. "Indigenous knowledge is also a way of knowing."

The problem is they don't always integrate. One area of improvement has been teaching Outdoor School using field science through an Indigenous lens. It's been a positive and transformative experience for many participants, she says. And not only for Native students but also for students who may not do well in a traditional classroom. Instead of just observing and recording outcomes as data, students are learning critical thinking, teamwork and a shared history.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRIBES

At least one program was already incorporating Indigenous Knowledge. Camp Tamarack in Central Oregon worked closely with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to develop a specific curriculum for Native students who attend the Warm Springs K-8 Academy in Jefferson County. It's become a standard for others to follow, Brooks says, with OSU Extension encouraging districts to include Indigenous communities from the start.

Brooks says educators are thoughtful, cautious and respectful in approaching Tribes as they develop and nurture new relationships with Outdoor School. They must be careful not to burden Native communities with telling districts what to do.

"We continue to be humble, show up and be open to listening about what's working and what's not," she says. "It's always evolving."

MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted and delayed implementation of many of the changes to Outdoor School, but there has been definite progress, particularly in the areas of developing more culturally responsive curriculum and in outreach to families and traditionally underserved communities.

Brooks says there are still communities who are often left out, including students with disabilities, students who are refugees, low-income students and students of color. In response, OSU Extension flexed its funding guidelines to provide additional staff, transportation and adaptive equipment to accommodate more participants. Extension is also creating a promotional video that introduces Latinx students and their families to the Outdoor School experience.

"We have to think about how we can market Outdoor School to communities who have been less comfortable participating," Brooks says. "Our commitment is to equity."

It's a commitment that's delivering results — and ongoing.

COMMUNITY CULTIVATOR: Dennis Brown uses gardening to enrich underserved communities.

The sunflowers that tower over the Victory Garden at Portland's Bybee Lakes Hope Center aren't there just to supply seeds to the neighborhood birds.

Twice a month, volunteers at the transitional housing complex harvest a few sunflower bouquets to sell at the St. Johns Farmers Market. The rest of the bright-yellow blooms form a living billboard for the residents, who had previously experienced homelessness.



The OSU Extension Master Gardener Program and nonprofit Oregon Master Gardener Association presented Dennis Brown with their first Growing and Belonging Award in 2023.

"The flowers attract people to come out here and look at things," says Dennis Brown, a Master Gardener who invites anyone who visits to attend his monthly drop-in classes in the garden — or simply join him for a few minutes as he harvests potatoes, green beans or ears of corn.

"The garden is both educational and a place of respite," Brown says.

Brown's work with the Bybee Lakes Hope Center is just one of his innovative volunteer projects. This past summer, the [Oregon State University Extension Master Gardener Program](#) and nonprofit [Oregon Master Gardener Association](#) presented Brown with their first [Growing and Belonging Award](#) for his work teaching gardening skills to African American community organizations, immigrant workers, military veterans and people experiencing homelessness.

"The key to the success of each of these community projects has been how well Dennis listens to the needs of the community and adapts how Master Gardeners can support, educate and serve," says Marcia McIntyre, program representative for the Metro Area OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Program. "He's a community cultivator."

"Leading garden education classes for the Bybee Lakes community and other local nonprofits knits together my interests in environmental stewardship, sustainable agriculture and connecting communities," Brown says.

He hopes that the award will inspire other Master Gardeners to search out creative ways to share their expertise with people from historically underserved communities.

POST-RETIREMENT RETURN TO THE GARDEN

Brown grew up on his family's Iowa farm, where they maintained a large kitchen garden and orchard. He became so interested in growing plants that he studied horticulture all through college and graduate school, earning his doctorate in plant biology from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

For 30 years, Brown worked in the San Francisco Bay Area as an environmental consultant for engineering and planning firms. Nearing retirement, he found his way back to horticulture, becoming a California-certified Master Gardener in 2010. After moving to northeast Portland in 2015 and now retired, Brown enrolled in OSU Extension's Master Gardener training — not to repeat his education, he says, but to meet like-minded people and learn how to share his skills with his new community.

Brown was drawn to be a Master Gardener by its sense of mission. In 2022, the [Portland Metro Area's 361 Master Gardeners](#) provided more than 22,000 hours of volunteer service in

their communities. Brown has taught classes at libraries and [Fix-It Fairs](#) and answered questions at the [Metro Area Master Gardener helpline](#). Then a volunteer request from the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority set him on a new path.

The Portland Alumnae chapter of this African American public-service organization has operated the [June Key Delta Community Center](#) in north Portland since 2011. In 2019, the Deltas were looking for a community partner to renovate the building's gardens. Brown helped the sorority secure a grant to build new raised beds, then organized a team of Master Gardeners to show volunteers how to assemble them.

Brown also taught OSU Extension's [Seed to Supper program](#) for participants in the Voz Worker's Rights Education Project, which empowers day laborers and new immigrants to improve their working conditions. Aided by an interpreter, Brown taught the six-week gardening class to workers who had moved to Portland from across the U.S. and Latin America.

GARDENING AND GRANT-MAKING

Brown has continued to use his grant-making skills to help both the Deltas and Voz fund new projects. He also introduced the two groups to each other. Thanks in part to a grant Voz won in 2020, Brown helped Voz workers landscape the June Key Center gardens with native plants, then taught several rounds of gardening classes.

In 2021, Brown came across a newspaper article about the Bybee Lakes Hope Center and the 3-acre Victory Garden that Portland nonprofit VetREST was planting on site. Brown approached VetREST and Helping Hands Re-Entry Centers, the organization that had transformed this never-used prison facility into a transitional residence for 300 people. Together with Hope Center residents, Brown and VetREST volunteers have planted watermelons, peppers, tomatoes, corn and squash.

For the past two years, Brown and a team of four Master Gardeners have taught monthly Horticulture for Life classes at Bybee Lakes. He also secured a grant to buy 30 cubic yards of compost to amend the soil and build trellises for grapes and berries. Brown comes to the garden several days a week to tend the plants, advise staff who grow food that's served to residents and greet anyone attracted by the yellow sunflowers.

Brown doesn't see the classes he's teaching as job training programs or as a way to help people grow their own food.

"It's not just about gardening," he says. "It's providing people with an experience to enrich their lives. Some people I teach have been houseless for a while and haven't had structure.

"Gardening is a hopeful, forward-looking process. You plan the garden. You plant seeds. The seeds grow. You might have some difficulties along the way, but at the end, you get a harvest."

ADDRESSING BIAS IN AI: Eric Slyman builds tools to uncover where artificial intelligence makes mistakes.

Specifically, the Ph.D. student in artificial intelligence and computer science looks at how AI learns social biases. And they've built a tool to help AI auditors address it — quickly, accurately and economically.

Bias in AI can show up, for example, when a user asks it to find or create an image of a doctor. More than likely, the result will be an image of a 30- to 50-year-old white man. Or if the query is if there's a doctor, and the photo input is a Black woman in a lab coat with a stethoscope, AI's response would likely be, "No, but there's a nurse."

So where do these stereotypical responses come from?

Slyman explains that it's a matter of numbers. AI is trained on the internet, making the connection between vision and language from this massive dataset — the images and descriptions uploaded to social media, news outlets and other websites. Those inputs lead AI to problematic outputs, including racism, sexism, ageism, heteronormativity and other biases that reflect the internet's dominant culture: white, male and cisgender.

For Slyman, this isn't just a technical problem. It's personal.

Slyman is queer, and if they ask for an image of someone wearing makeup or a dress, "I will never see a picture of

someone that looks like myself. This technology doesn't work for people that identify the way I do," they say. "AI is hard to use when there's some way that you're not in the mainstream — and almost everyone has some way in which they're not in the mainstream."

The current process for addressing vision and language bias in AI is to rely on auditors, most of whom work in academia, independent AI research institutions or companies like Adobe, Google and Microsoft that are developing AI products. Auditors identify stereotypes such as "men wear suits" by gathering and annotating examples to form large datasets, a process that's time-consuming and expensive.

Slyman's solution is VLSlice, an interactive bias discovery tool that uses AI itself to replace manual data collection, doing in just a few minutes work that would have previously taken weeks. Auditors can query an AI system specifying a subject, such as a photo of a person, then a specific potential bias they want to evaluate, like what types of people represent a CEO. The AI responds with sets of images that might demonstrate a stereotype, for instance, men wearing suits. Auditors can then collaborate back and forth with the AI to gather more supporting evidence, actively teaching the AI how to better identify these biases.

Tests of VLSlice indicate it helps auditors identify biases with greater precision and with less cognitive fatigue, Slyman says. They have made VLSlice open source to encourage more widespread testing and further refinement of the tool.

Slyman recognizes that there's a race to get AI products into the marketplace and that having a faster, less expensive tool for identifying and correcting AI bias can be a competitive advantage. They say VLSlice is not just for the Googles of the world but for smaller companies with fewer resources who want to build more accurate, more representative AI technology.

"The more your product works for everybody, the more you're able to sell it to everybody, and the more money you're able to make," Slyman says. "That's a pretty good incentive."

Or put another way, it's smart business.

Ph.D. student Eric Slyman has built a tool to root out biases in artificial intelligence, such as AI tools that produce images of a middle-aged white man when asked for an image of a doctor or identify a Black woman in a lab coat as a nurse.



HELPING OTHERS SUCCEED IS THEIR TOP PRIORITY.

It takes compassion, empathy and consistent action to truly make a difference in another person's life. Kate MacTavish, Gerrad Jones and José García — this year's Outstanding Diversity Advocate award recipients — go beyond what's expected in their positions in multiple ways. And it's all in the interest of one common goal: to see students and faculty gain the support, confidence and connections they need to thrive — at Oregon State and beyond.



Associate Professor **Kate MacTavish** has spent much of her career recruiting, retaining

and supporting marginalized students and faculty. She has been a faculty member in the College of Health since 2001 and the college's director of equity, inclusion and diversity initiatives for nearly a decade. For the past 20 years, MacTavish has studied rural mobile home parks, the stigmas attached to those who live in them and the related environmental, economic and health injustices. She also served as co-principal investigator for the Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative, which included a student experiential learning opportunity focused on understanding rural housing insecurity, hunger and poverty. In this experience, students lived in rural Oregon communities for two weeks, studying their surroundings. And many have described it as one of the most impactful moments of their college career.



In both teaching and research, Assistant Professor **Gerrad Jones** works to eliminate gender

bias in the traditionally male-dominated field of engineering. In his Fundamentals in Ecological Engineering course, students take quizzes and hold discussions about how gender bias impacts people in the workplace. A member of the Quechan Tribe, Jones brings in representatives from Oregon's Indigenous communities to address water rights and access issues across the state. He has developed a senior capstone project to create a low-cost system to measure water consumption for the Quechan Tribe. In addition, Jones actively recruits underrepresented students for his research program. He is humble, listens intently to his students and is passionate about creating an open, welcoming environment in the classroom.



José García makes time to help anyone who needs it and encourages others to do the same. Being

there for his students can extend from giving them a ride to events to connecting them to important resources. As OSU Open Campus Juntos Coordinator for Yamhill, Polk, Malheur and Lincoln counties, García provides families of underrepresented students with information and skills to help them stay in school through graduation and encourage them to keep going. He also leads summer Juntos STEM camps, where students gain valuable leadership skills. García has worked with more than 1,500 students and parents — most of whom primarily speak Spanish at home. And the impact of his dedication is evident: More than 92% of these students graduated high school, and 92% have continued on to attend a college, university or trade school.

When people feel seen, heard and understood, they are empowered to make a difference. And it's leaders like MacTavish, Jones and García who make sure they are.



Oregon State University
Office of Institutional
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