What an honor and privilege it is to serve as the first Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer at Oregon State University. I am excited to build on the excellent work that has already been accomplished at OSU. This is an important time in the university's history; it is a time when Oregon State celebrates its first 150 years, and we look forward to what the next 150 years will bring. I am proud to lead the team in the Office of Institutional Diversity, some you will meet in this publication. As President Ed Ray said in his appointment, the position of Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer was created “to oversee institutional change and strategic initiatives to help advance Oregon State University as a community characterized in all we do by inclusive excellence.”

This is the first in a series of publications designed to celebrate the excellent work that happens on our campus and beyond by our faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners. We will tell these stories with the pride that comes from being a member of the OSU community as we celebrate these accomplishments and the excellence of an Oregon State education and experience. We will share your stories of the opportunities you create for students, staff and faculty to thrive, along with the transformational nature of your work locally, nationally and around the world. We hope to communicate the ways in which your work has had a life-changing impact on our community of scholars and the broader public.

I’ve observed that Oregon State is a place focused on innovation and excellence. You will find that the staff in the Office of Institutional Diversity has this same purpose and vision. Our efforts will focus on the five goals outlined in our strategic plan for 2018-23.

We have accomplished a great deal already this year. In addition to developing an institutional diversity strategic plan, we have reconfigured the President’s and Provost’s Leadership Council for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This council has reviewed institutional data and made recommendations on strategies for faculty, staff and student recruitment and retention. The council also examined two years of data related to bias incidents reported on campus. Additionally, each award presented during the MLK celebrations this year had a stipend attached, and during this year’s University Day celebration, we will announce the winner of the first Outstanding Diversity Advocate Award.

I want to congratulate our staff for leading the building and place name dialogues; the level of engagement from the campus and Corvallis community was amazing. We continue to be impressed by the efforts of our DACA work group and their efforts to support students, faculty and staff affected by recent policy changes. I want to thank the members of the Task Force on Diversity Training for their work and recommendations, including the creation of a director of institutional education for diversity, equity and inclusion. This position has been filled by Jeff Kenney, who is profiled in this newsletter. You will notice an increase in educational opportunities from the OID staff institutionwide, and we celebrate the work happening in various units across the university.
The climate survey launched in May and closed June 6. We collected feedback from faculty and staff in all areas of the institution, and we look forward to analyzing the data and using it as we develop plans to achieve our goals.

We are now institutional members of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the Southern Regional Education Board and Partners in Diversity. Each of these relationships brings opportunities to support all faculty, staff and students. Our staff has presented at conferences for the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education and the American Association of Colleges and Universities, for which I am especially proud. Finally, together with the President’s Council on the Status of Women, we celebrated the accomplishments of women at Oregon State at an inaugural event in Portland.

Thank you for welcoming me to Oregon State University, Corvallis and Oregon. I am optimistic about our future, and I trust that the compelling stories we share with you, in this first edition, will motivate you and confirm your understanding of the power and impact of an OSU education!

Sincerely,

Charlene Alexander
Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer

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**ON THE COVER:** About 200 members of the Oregon State community participated in a peace march from The LaSells Stewart Center to the Memorial Union as part of the university’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day events. Story on page 14. (Photo: Julian McFadden)
No one knows that better than Allison Davis-White Eyes, who has devoted her career to building relationships among students, staff and faculty to strengthen communities on campus and beyond. Since joining Oregon State in 2000, Davis White-Eyes has served in several roles, including coordinator of the Indian Education Program, director of Intercultural Student Services, assistant vice provost for Student Affairs and director of Diversity and Cultural Engagement (DCE). She recently took on a new role as director of community diversity relations in the Office of Institutional Diversity. Find out more about her vision for Oregon State’s future below.

Q: What brought you to Oregon State?

A: I really wanted to come to OSU to work because I had met so many amazing people as I traveled around the state at different conferences and community events. I was so impressed with the camaraderie Oregon State representatives had. The way they interacted with the community was really authentic and genuine, and that was something that really drew me here. I would say coming here was an opportunity to be in an institution that really values the people of the state of Oregon and the notion of community.

Q: What are your responsibilities as the new director of community diversity relations?

A: The position is designed to build up Oregon State’s relationships with underrepresented communities by collaborating with school districts, business and industry partners and governmental agencies like Oregon tribes. More importantly, these collaborations will give Oregon State a higher resolution and create opportunities and pathways for students in those communities to come to OSU. I will also be working to identify the needs and interests of each community and determining how OSU can use its technical, research and faculty expertise to advance each of their goals.

Q: What do you envision for the future of OSU?

A: I see an institution that will become ever more nimble in our responses to global, national and state trends. For example, we can expect the mass migration of people all over the world to continue — and even increase. The mobility of people and cultures enriches all of us on a local and even national level by enhancing our research outcomes, economy...
and more. In addition, the demographics of our country will continue to shift. It’s imperative for the institution to review and take all of these changes into account through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens. And I think we are already ahead of the curve.

Q: What would a just and inclusive campus look like and how can we get there?

A: A just and inclusive campus is one that is welcoming and nurtures a sense of belonging and a sense that everyone matters. Coupled with this sense of community and belonging is the ability to identify where there are challenges and to address those challenges in meaningful and intentional ways that lead to creating a just environment. This is not easy because it means confronting inconvenient truths with courage and creativity.

Currently, OSU is setting the foundation to move us in that direction. We have a thriving Difference, Power and Discrimination program in the curriculum. We’re the only institution in the nation to have seven stand-alone cultural resource centers. And we are committed to ensuring diversity is embedded throughout the institution.

Q: How has Oregon State evolved since you first started working here?

A: It’s amazing to see the amount of change that has taken place on this campus. When I first came here, we had about 15,000 students, and now we have over 30,000. Back then I rarely saw international students or students of color. Now I can walk across campus and hear all manners of languages and accents — a very rich diversity of people that wasn’t here in the early 2000s. Coupled with that, President Ray’s vision and commitment to creating a just and inclusive culture are exemplified through his dedication to rebuilding the cultural resource centers. We have rebuilt the Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center, the Native American Longhouse, the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center and the Centro Cultural César Chávez. We also added the Ettihad Cultural Center and are in the process of revamping the Pride Center.

We’ve hired more faculty and staff from communities of different cultures. It’s a reflection of our commitment to creating a culture where people and diversity are valued and a true community of people continue to be dedicated to seeing the potential in humanity.

Q: What is your vision for the future of the Office of Institutional Diversity?

A: I’m really excited for the Office of Institutional Diversity because we have an amazing leader in our new vice president and chief diversity officer, Dr. Charlene Alexander. She is incredible, brilliant and energetic — and brings ideas that help shift our gaze in new ways. My colleagues have talents in areas that are all critical right now: the ability to engage in difficult dialogue, to have a depth of understanding about inclusivity and to be able to share that understanding with others around campus.

We will always have challenges, but I don’t think they are insurmountable. We have enough creative minds on campus. We are committed to making justice and inclusivity a cornerstone for OSU.
BUILDING NAMES

Speaking up points out what needs to change. Listening makes change happen.

For years, Oregon State University students, faculty, alumni and members of the Corvallis community have raised concerns about the potentially racist and exclusionary views held by the namesakes of four buildings on campus: Arnold Dining Center, Avery Lodge, Benton Hall, Benton Annex and Gill Coliseum. Listening to their concerns has led to new names for Avery Lodge, Benton Hall and Benton Annex that will be announced this spring, and it has changed how Oregon State connects its history to building and place names.

Scott Vignos, the director of strategic initiatives for the Office of Institutional Diversity, has learned a lot as a member of the Building and Place Name Evaluation Subcommittee of the Architectural Naming Committee. The committee was charged with developing the criteria for evaluating building names — incorporating history, the university’s mission and values and considerable community input.

Vignos identifies three takeaways from the process:

• History is important. “In some cases, we did not know much about why some of these buildings were named what they were named,” he says. “The process of evaluating their names has given us important context about the names and their namesakes, a view into the institution’s history, what we’ve become and where we’re heading.” President Ed Ray has committed to engaging this history to examine the names of buildings across the university.

• Involve the community. “We sometimes forget that the OSU family is large, broad and very diverse,” he says. “We’re speaking to constituents, stakeholders, alumni, friends and students that are all over the state, all over the country and the world.” As a result, the university offered multiple community engagement sessions and collected survey data from those sessions. Feedback and suggestions for new building names could also be submitted online, giving anyone who wanted a chance to participate.

• Focus on dialogue. “Rather than creating a situation in which people try to convince each other of how right they are and how wrong someone else is, we wanted to provide opportunities for community members to talk with each other and to actually listen to each other,” Vignos says. “Sometimes that can be really hard when we’re talking about difficult concepts like history and exclusion.” Trained facilitators helped attendees at the community events have productive conversations and listen to each other’s perspectives.

Oregon State has worked to be open and transparent throughout the building name review process. A website documents all of the research on a building namesake’s life and legacy, the renaming criteria, recordings of the community engagement sessions and an assessment of the data gathered from those sessions.

Vignos believes it’s important to remember that this process goes beyond the names of buildings and the values they represent. It is a tangible step toward creating a campus environment where everyone feels welcome and heard.

“By talking about these names, we are also talking about what it means for the university to reconcile that maybe it hasn’t always been the most welcoming place for underrepresented groups and how we’re trying to change the experience for students, faculty, and staff in the present,” he says. “Having these conversations has advanced larger goals around working to make OSU a more inclusive place.”
Everyone has a role in creating an equitable community. Jeff Kenney’s role is to find ways for everyone at Oregon State University to contribute.

Kenney recently joined the Office of Institutional Diversity to expand diversity, equity and inclusion education initiatives campuswide.

Kenney has been at Oregon State since 2012. He previously worked in student affairs for Diversity and Cultural Engagement (DCE), where he coordinated LGBTQ+ services and programs. He later served in a broader role with DCE in research and assessment. Most recently, he worked on community dialogues, a quarterly series where students, faculty, staff and community members learn about and discuss social issues.

Kenney says the first step to institutionalizing change is to bring people together to create a shared plan for diversity and social justice learning. In the coming months, he will convene a group of experts and stakeholders to identify where strong programs and services exist at Oregon State, then find ways to support that work and further invest where resources are needed most. From campus climate surveys, they know the classroom is the place to begin.

“We know that our teaching faculty are particularly interested in developing skills for creating inclusive classrooms where students can feel respected and thrive,” he says.

For that to happen, Kenney believes faculty must learn to recognize when a student feels marginalized and then know how to respond to incidents of bias.

“We want to help them to be able to identify and make sense of those dynamics and have the confidence and skills to respond,” he says.

The standards of success were established in Oregon State’s five-year Diversity Strategic Plan and a committee report by the Diversity Training Task Force by the Office of Institutional Diversity. Students, faculty and staff should know that they are entitled to a productive, affirming learning environment. They should feel empowered and know the steps to take if they do not.

Kenney points to the important work that’s already being done on campus. To determine the vision and curriculum for social justice education at Oregon State, he and the group of stakeholders will consider OSU’s current programs and resources, along with the educational goals identified in the diversity plan and task force report.

“Our aim is to develop meaningful and relevant learning opportunities so that every person at OSU can further contribute to a more equitable and inclusive community,” he says.
Changemakers never stop learning — and always keep going.

Elizabeth Kaweesa demonstrates the power of perseverance. In the lab, perseverance propels her to keep experimenting with potential biomedical solutions. Perseverance also drives her work toward a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus community.

A third-year Ph.D. student from Uganda, Kaweesa was drawn to Oregon State to work in the research lab of Sandra Loesgen, an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry. In the Loesgen lab, Kaweesa’s research focuses on mensacarcin, a natural product obtained from a soil bacterium that is selectively cytotoxic against melanoma.

Kaweesa studies how mensacarcin kills melanoma cells. She says knowing the mechanism is the basis for what experiments can move the research forward.

There is potential for therapies using specific pathways of proteins that mensacarcin targets. However, it could take 15 to 20 years and testing up to 10,000 different compounds to produce a drug for treating melanoma, if one can be found. That’s where Kaweesa’s perseverance comes in.

“Every step is a learning process. Know that you are going to fail, but you learn how to persevere,” Kaweesa says. She keeps a quote attributed to Winston Churchill in her office: “Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”

Kaweesa presented her findings on mensacarcin in April at the New England Science Symposium, hosted by Harvard Medical School. Her presentation was part of the Biomedical Science Careers Conference,
which aims to provide networking opportunities and resources to minority graduate students in science, medical and dental school. The Office of Institutional Diversity provided a travel scholarship for Kaweesa to attend.

While Kaweesa is moving forward in the lab, she’s also making progress toward a more inclusive and diverse environment at Oregon State. As a student representative on the President and Provost’s Leadership Council for Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice, Kaweesa works on a student recruitment initiative. The team is contacting high school counselors across Oregon to learn how the university can reach more students of color and find out what these students and their parents want to know about OSU and the admissions process.

In her own experience as a student, Kaweesa has sought out and found supportive communities. In the chemistry department, “I’m surrounded by wonderful colleagues,” she says. “My Principal Investigator (PI), Dr. Sandra Loesgen, is amazing — patient, supportive, hardworking and goal-driven.” Kaweesa is active in the Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center and president of the Black Graduate Student Association. She also has a group of friends, different women of color who rely on and support each other.

Kaweesa has a long list of mentors at Oregon State. Besides her PI, she names her graduate committee members, academic advisor Marilyn Stewart, Chief Diversity Officer Charlene Alexander, Black Cultural Center Assistant Director Terrance Harris, Diversity and Cultural Engagement Associate Director Jason Dorsette and Sociology Professor Dwaine Plaza. She also meets regularly with Jennifer Brown, outgoing dean of the Graduate School and advisor for the Black Graduate Student Association. Brown was an early source of inspiration.

“I remember being in the auditorium at my first Graduate School orientation and seeing someone who looked like me in a position of leadership,” Kaweesa says. “I thought, ‘she did it, I can do it!’”

Kaweesa believes policies affecting diversity should be made a priority, and beyond statements and initiatives, “we need to start living it,” she says. That means more diversity training for faculty and staff tailored for what they need to know, including the history of race in Oregon.

On an individual level, Kaweesa says it starts with having a conversation and being willing to listen. “When you hear my perspective, the thoughts I have walking down the street or going to a store, your eyes would be opened to a different worldview,” she says. It’s important to have these conversations, share experiences, learn from someone else’s point of view and not immediately become defensive.

Throughout her time at Oregon State, in the lab and in the community, Kaweesa says she’s “learned to keep learning, keep fighting and never give up.” The reason she perseveres is simple:

“Education is freedom, and once you know better, you do better.”
When Vicki Guinn was a student at Oregon State University 30 years ago, there were fewer African American students, but it was a close and connected community. Today, she’s working to encourage more students of color to come to Oregon State and help them feel welcome when they get here. Guinn, a 1985 Oregon State alumna and public relations manager for Legacy Health in Portland, serves on the university’s Board of Visitors. Read more about her role and vision for Oregon State below:

Q: What is the function of the Board of Visitors? What is your role as a board member?

A: The function of the Board of Visitors is to become aware of the cultural climate of Oregon State University so that we can affect change or influence the recruiting, sustainability and retention of faculty and students of color. We hope to provide consultation and engage with those at the university to break down barriers so students can have a successful experience at the university, ending in graduation. We engage and work closely with the university’s diversity and inclusion officer and others. We believe it is possible to change the climate and create a more welcoming environment. As a board member, it is my role to bring change — to be candid and direct when I hear of negative experiences from students and faculty. I ask the tough questions of the president and others responsible for diversity and inclusion.

My personal interest is breaking down barriers to help kids of color get to college. That could even be something as simple as helping them fill out the college application. Also, asking that OSU doesn’t overlook these barriers. If you build it, they won’t always come. We can’t assume that students have ever left their neighborhood. We need to expose them to this amorphous idea of “college” and make it very concrete to them. My desire is to make OSU visible and as a viable option for students of color in the Portland area.

Q: Why do you believe the values of diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice are important to every aspect of a university’s mission?

A: This is a public university where all students and staff should be respected for the diversity they bring — in terms of race and ethnicity, perspective, thought, religion, sexual orientation and more. No one should feel marginalized, offended, assaulted emotionally and physically or feel they are not welcomed while trying to get a quality education and enjoy the college experience. If the university has those words in its mission statement, they have to ensure this is what is experienced day-to-day by each and every person. Also, the university must hold individuals accountable when these words are breached and violated.

Q: What do you believe still needs to happen to achieve the vision for diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice at Oregon State? What actions do you believe we can take, as a campus community and individually, to make that happen?

A: I commend OSU on allocating resources to diversity and inclusion and trying to recruit more students of color and on completing the cultural centers. President Ray is phenomenal; he really cares, and I feel he is in
direct contact with the students and faculty, more so than previous presidents. I appreciate the town hall gatherings he’s held when there has been an issue on campus.

Oregon State still needs to work on its reputation. If youth still feel that OSU is racist, that’s concerning. That’s where we need to spend time on dispelling this, even if one feels that way. There are tactics that the diversity and inclusion staff are engaging in, such as student visits and bringing students to the campus. Clearly communicate to students of color all the resources that are available to them on campus and key contacts. Continue and build upon those.

Q: What would you tell a potential student from an underrepresented community about why they should come to Oregon State and what they will find here?

A: It is a beautiful campus that offers so much. You will get a quality education. Any campus is about engaging and taking advantage of all that it has to offer. You can be a very active student versus being a passive student. OSU supports diversity and inclusion training for faculty and students as a method to create a welcoming environment for all. OSU’s current president cares about the success of all students and has allocated resources and support to ensure that once you start, you can graduate.

OUR EMPLOYEES WORK HARD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

And it shows.

It takes dedication, passion and drive to ask the hard questions, put yourself out there and inspire change. Many Oregon State employees possess these qualities — and that deserves recognition. The Diversity Advocacy Award will be presented to an OSU employee who has worked for the university for at least five years and has actively promoted and enhanced diversity, equity and inclusion on campus and beyond. In addition, the awardee will exemplify the following criteria:

- Actively enhancing the recruitment of diverse students and faculty.
- Creating innovative curriculum and program development across communities of difference.
- Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion through academic research and scholarship.
- Developing experiential or immersive learning that expands consciousness and responsibility related to social justice.
- Pursuing grants that promote diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Advising individual students or student organizations and creating pathways to their success.

Nominations for this award were made by Oregon State students and employees and will be reviewed by the Office of Institutional Diversity Awards Committee. The winner will be announced at University Day on Sept. 11.
The best way to honor an extraordinary leader is through service to others.

And that is how Oregon State students, faculty, staff and their families commemorated the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., by volunteering in the community and attending events and presentations during the university’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration.

A total of 279 people volunteered at the MLK Jr. Day of Service on Saturday, Jan. 13, completing 11 projects and contributing nearly 700 hours of service. Projects ranged from cleaning garden beds at a local elementary school to packing boxes of food for Linn Benton Food Share to painting the Arc’s Philomath thrift store.

At the peace breakfast, held on Martin Luther King Jr. Day Jan. 15, three outstanding members of the Oregon State community were recognized:

- Linda Marie Richards, a history of science instructor, received the Phyllis Lee Award. The award honors a member of the Oregon State community who exemplifies Lee’s commitment and dedication to social justice and King’s teachings.

- Leonora Rianda, an office specialist for ethnic studies and president of OSU Local 083, received the Frances Dancy Hooks Award. It recognizes Oregon State students, staff or faculty who exemplify Hooks’ work building bridges across cultures and showing courage in promoting diversity.

- Demetrius Watts, president of the OSU Phi Beta Sigma chapter and a student in human development and family sciences, received the Oscar Humberto Montemayor Award. Created this year, the award honors Montemayor, who served the Oregon State community with diligence and grace over a 30-year career. It is given to a student who embodies his ethos of selfless service; steady, strong, considerate leadership; and trailblazing spirit and heart.

Following the breakfast was the keynote presentation by Melissa Harris-Perry, Maya Angelou presidential chair at Wake Forest University, executive director of the Pro Humanitate Institute and founding director of the Anna Julia Cooper Center. Her presentation covered what she believes has changed and what hasn’t in America since King’s murder in 1968. She encouraged the audience to continue his cause for social justice.

After Harris-Perry’s keynote, about 200 people marched from The LaSells Stewart Center to the front steps of the Memorial Union, where a recording of King’s 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech was played.

2018 Martin Luther King Jr. keynote speaker Melissa Harris-Perry. (Photo: Julian McFadden)
A march from The LaSells Stewart Center to the Memorial Union follows the peace breakfast during Oregon State’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration.

(Photos: Julian McFadden)
Angel Mandujano-Guevara has gone down several paths during his time at Oregon State. As Memorial Union president, a member of the university’s Board of Trustees, co-chair of the Chicanx Student Movement of Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A.) and prospective member educator of Omega Delta Phi Fraternity Inc., he works to make all people feel welcome, included and heard.

Even small, symbolic gestures can be deeply meaningful. The Memorial Union flag ceremony is a yearly tradition where the flags in the MU Concourse are updated to represent the home countries of all international students. As MU president, Mandujano-Guevara led the discussion to change the ceremony after a student from Puerto Rico pointed out to him that the flags of U.S. territories were not part of the display. The ceremony now includes these territories, and a student from Puerto Rico had the opportunity to personally hang her flag.

“It was right after Hurricane Maria hit,” Mandujano-Guevara says. “It wasn’t just something emotional for her to see her country represented, it was a sense of pride that commemorated the resilience and strength of her people.”

Mandujano-Guevara is the third student to serve on the university’s Board of Trustees, and he represents both students’ voices and the people of Oregon on issues like tuition increases and reducing the university’s carbon footprint. In M.E.Ch.A., he provides information to high school and college students on the decolonized history of the United States, in addition to socioeconomic and political situations in other countries. And through Omega Delta Phi, he makes prospective and new members feel comfortable and supported throughout the intake process.

Among the many people who have helped Mandujano-Guevara get to where he is today, he credits the late Oscar Montemayor, former associate director of academic success in the Office of Diversity and Cultural Engagement. From day one, Montemayor went out of his way to make Mandujano-Guevara feel welcome and showed him all the opportunities he had to get involved at Oregon State.

Mandujano-Guevara would like to offer new students the same kindness and guidance he received. He says building a more inclusive campus community starts with really listening to students’ needs and taking a more holistic approach to retention, not just increasing the number of underrepresented students.

“We have to make the effort to show our students of color that we are actively doing things to keep them here, to make them feel supported rather than just a diversity number,” he says.

After he graduates, Mandujano-Guevara plans to continue working toward this goal. He will attend the OSU Graduate School and work with the Human Services Resource Center, one of the largest departments on campus that focuses on serving underrepresented students. From there, he hopes to become director of a university cultural center or work in an office of institutional diversity.

Mandujano-Guevara’s future path is open to unlimited possibilities — all because he was surrounded by others who empowered him to pursue his dream.