It is a privilege to serve as the vice president and chief diversity officer at Oregon State University and to present to you our second edition of *Taking Action*, a newsletter designed to celebrate the excellent work that happens on our campus and beyond by our faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners.

WE’VE MOVED! The Office of Institutional Diversity has relocated from 211 Kerr to 510 Kerr. We are delighted to be in our new office and invite everyone to stop by and celebrate this new space with us.

We started this academic year with a couple of firsts for OSU. First, we received the great news that Oregon State University received the **Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award** from INSIGHT into Diversity magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education. This is the first year Oregon State has applied for and received this national honor recognizing U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. Oregon State was featured along with 95 other recipients in the November 2018 issue. This national recognition is a tribute to our history and the efforts of the many individuals at OSU who work every day to ensure a welcoming community for all.

Second, the first Outstanding Diversity Advocate Award was presented to Becky Warner, professor of sociology in the College of Liberal Arts. This award was presented during University Day celebrations and recognizes a member of the OSU community who contributes to and enhances the environment of OSU through consistent and sustained efforts to improve opportunities for the diverse communities we serve.
In September 2018, we launched our “We Have Work To Do” campaign with a kickoff event featuring comedian Hari Kondabolu. This campaign is a university-wide effort led by OID for the 2018-19 academic year. While recognizing the strides we have made to advance diversity as a university community, we acknowledge that there is much to be done. We have outlined several initiatives and ways for our colleagues to engage across the state.

This June, OSU will host the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) Standards of Professional Practice Institute on the Corvallis campus. This event will bring together chief diversity officers from around the country and internationally to develop proficiency in the standards of professional practice for chief diversity officers. We look forward to welcoming our peers to OSU.

Finally, I would like to thank our outstanding staff, whose energy makes this all possible. I want to thank everyone for your continued contributions to the Office of Institutional Diversity and our efforts to grow our diverse and inclusive community where all can be successful.

Sincerely,

Charlene Alexander
Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer
“We Have Work To Do” evokes images of a campus rolling up its sleeves and getting down to business. That is exactly what the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) intends.

“The name of the campaign is meant to both allow us to feel really proud of the work we are doing while recognizing we have a long way to go,” says Scott Vignos, assistant vice president, strategic diversity initiatives for OID. “Doing equity work requires a consistent, creative process to continue to move it forward.”

The campaign focuses on five areas:

• Building equitable learning environments
• Establishing a sense of belonging
• Creating coalitions
• Transforming our future
• Confronting bias

Events focused on many issues will be held during the school year, including creating a safe and welcoming university climate, building alliances, learning about bias, and ways to intervene in situations where someone is experiencing bias.

“We Have Work To Do” aims to break down barriers to success for students, staff and faculty that might prevent them from completing their degrees, finishing their research or advancing in their careers. Keeping students and faculty on a path to success is high on the list.

Vignos says the campaign acknowledges there are gaps between university goals, and the experiences of some students, staff and faculty from underrepresented communities.

“We want all university community members to recognize that they are essential contributors to the work of inclusion and equity,” Vignos says.

“For some, it is a shift to think of their role as really important to creating equity on a college campus. In fact, there are many ways to be engaged with diversity work as students, faculty and staff, no matter what our role is within the university.”

Brandi Douglas, assistant director of outreach for OID, says a first step is for faculty, staff and students to talk to each other about these topics.

“We are finding that some of our colleagues don’t have these conversations with each other, which then makes sense why they struggle to have them with their students,” Douglas says.

“Small changes can make a big difference,” Vignos adds. “Attend events. Start conversations in staff meetings. Set aside a half hour to talk about a topic. We happen to live in a time when there is news worth talking about in this arena every day. Create communities of conversation.”

The Office of Institutional Diversity offers a wide range of diversity education programs that can offer students and staff a deeper look at how they can create an inclusive community. Programs range from social justice education to bias intervention to community dialogues on related topics.

For a list of upcoming events, visit diversity.oregonstate.edu/we-have-work-to-do.
For more on diversity education opportunities, see diversity.oregonstate.edu/diversity-education.
Keith Dempsey earned three degrees from Oregon State University. But he has not always felt a connection that many alumni experience. “After graduating, it took a nudge to get back,” he says. Now Dempsey and other black alumni are working to connect, engage and advocate for current students and staff through an Oregon State Alumni Association group, the OSU Black Alumni and Friends Network.

When Dempsey first came to Oregon State, there was an informal support network for black students — the Black Cultural Center, the Black Student Union and the Educational Opportunity Program. Dempsey also joined a historically black fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi. In the 26 years since Dempsey was an undergraduate, there has been progress in identifying and addressing barriers to student success. But the need to encourage and assist black students remains. “There are unique challenges for a black person at a predominantly white college,” Dempsey says.

And Dempsey is in a position to know. Not only has he served as an advisor and volunteer with the Oregon State Alumni Association, but he also works in higher education as department chair and associate professor in the graduate counseling program at George Fox University.

The idea for the Black Alumni Network came from campus colleagues and alumni feedback, according to Suzanne Phillips, regional network director with the alumni association. “We know that in our world, alumni stay well-connected,” Phillips says. “We want to put energy around them being able to support each other, as well as the university.”

The Black Alumni Network supported the multicultural tailgater at a home football game last fall. That led to a Civil War watch party in Portland. The network also promoted campus and community events in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Black History Month.

Beyond social activities, Phillips says the network will be used to connect students with alumni to provide informal networking and possibly mentoring. Dempsey says finding meaningful roles for alumni to stay connected is key. He hopes through volunteering and serving, others will experience what he has. “I feel really good about the education I received at Oregon State despite the challenges,” Dempsey says. “I am proud about having a connection with OSU as we work together to support current and future black students.”
It’s a continuous cycle of trying, assessing, revising and trying again. Just like science, there is not an end to the work.

That’s the perspective of Becky Warner, a professor of sociology and principal investigator of OREGON STATE ADVANCE — a National Science Foundation program designed to increase the representation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers.

“Science never stops,” Warner says. “You take the results of your research and ask the next question. ‘Will this work under different conditions? Will it work for all people?’ That’s what is involved in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion. Every time we try something, we ask ourselves who benefits and who doesn’t?”

Warner adds that if we engage in our diversity and equity programs the way we engage in our research projects, it could be transformative. The ADVANCE team has taken that approach. The 54-hour ADVANCE seminar uses a theory of systems of oppression and privilege to examine policies and practices in higher education.

So far, the team has led 10 cohorts of faculty and university leaders through the seminar. The outcome for each participant is an action plan for how they can use their new theoretical understandings to inform their own work. But the action plan is really just the beginning. Ongoing follow-ups give the opportunity to assess plans and outcomes and make modifications when necessary. A piece summarizing the project will appear in a special issue of the medical journal The Lancet next month.

Last fall, Warner was recognized for her longstanding and multifaceted work in diversity, equity and inclusion both as a faculty member and as a university administrator. At the annual University Day celebration, Warner was the first recipient of the Outstanding Diversity Advocate Award.

Both science and diversity work require a theoretical understanding supported by action. To see the desired results, we must continuously reflect on our actions and be willing to change.
Coming to Oregon State changed his life. Now he’s changing others.

Jeremiah Allen ’15 had two goals when he arrived at Oregon State: getting into medical school and “fleeing any thought that I could possibly be part of the LGBTQ community,” he says.

Allen achieved neither. And both he and his community are better off as a result.

A single parent of three and a first-generation college student, Allen struggled initially. “I had no friends. My grades were suffering, and I didn’t think I could continue,” he says.

Enter Charlene Martinez, then the associate director of integrated learning for Diversity and Cultural Engagement (DCE). Martinez encouraged Allen to apply for a personal development and mentoring program, and with support from the DCE team, Allen came to embrace his intersecting identities.

“I am a queer, transmasculine, black and indigenous tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and Lakota Sioux tribe,” Allen says.
His own journey spurred Allen to become an advocate on campus. He worked as a liaison for SOL, an LGBTQ+ multicultural support network. He also interned at Student Health Services, leading Oregon State’s first social justice and health inequity symposium.

Academically, Allen also began to thrive. After taking a social determinant of health class, he changed his major to public health, with an option in health promotion and health behavior.

“That class was really the first time I was exposed to health disparities,” Allen says. “I learned that people were really looking at how different social identities affect access to health care.”

Allen believes his degree prepared him to work with different communities and evaluate their access to services. “It gave me the tools to ask really critical questions about barriers that affect different communities and how intersectionality really matters.”

Allen continues to battle barriers. As a project director for the Pride Foundation in Seattle, he leads a statewide public education campaign — TRANSform WA — that celebrates the dignity, diversity and humanity of transgender and gender-diverse people. He also leads the Washington SAFE Alliance and sits on the executive committee of Washington Won’t Discriminate, helping to defeat two anti-transgender ballot initiatives in 2016 and 2017.

In addition, Allen partnered with Oculus VR for Good Creators Lab as a producer and casting director for “Authentically Us: Stories from the Transgender Community.” The three-part film series has been screened at South by Southwest, Tribeca, Cannes and other film festivals around the world.

“We hope to combat mass media messaging by showing the true and authentic humanity of transgender and gender-diverse people,” Allen says. “It’s not a film about them being transgender, it’s about people just living their lives.”

Nominated by the College of Public Health and Human Sciences, Allen was among eight OSU Alumni Association Fellows recognized last fall for their professional and community contributions.

Allison Davis-White Eyes, director of community diversity relations in the Office of Institutional Diversity, moderated a discussion with Allen during his on-campus celebration. “Jeremiah’s experience shows we can all take individual social responsibility for making the world a better place,” she says.

Allen believes the transformational experience he had at Oregon State has been a catalyst for his storytelling and advocacy work.

“My time at OSU and the relationships I built are a direct influence on the person I am today and my work as a social change agent,” Allen says. “I’m working to remove barriers and inequity, so all people, regardless of their identity, can have access to the tools necessary to live full, healthy lives.”

His own life offers a prime example.
For Mia Arvizu, caring for people and caring for the planet are one and the same.

Tenacious. Curious. Powered by purpose. Ecological engineering major Mia Arvizu is a Beaver through and through. Helping small communities thrive and retain their voice in the midst of serious environmental shifts is her number one goal.

“There is so much to explore in this world. It’s easy to think with a narrow mind and get stuck in daily routines, but I want to remind people that there is great diversity of life to learn from, respect and protect,” Arvizu says. “Every day I wake up to learn — and not just in classrooms.”

For a student at the early stage of her undergraduate career, Arvizu has already accomplished a great deal. This past December, she presented to an audience of 30,000 at the American Geophysical Union conference in Washington, D.C. Her presentation detailed the environmental impact of fire, landscape position and nitrogen availability on carbon dioxide and methane emissions in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in Alaska.

It might sound like a mouthful, but Arvizu believes her research, conducted during a summer-long internship with the Woods Hole Research Center’s Polaris Project, could help build better models for predicting future greenhouse gas emissions in the region.

“Participating in research has always been an important goal of mine,” she says. “As an undergraduate in STEM, it is a great way to dig deeper into the real-world applications of your science and judge if you want a career similar to that of your mentors.”

When she’s not in the field or busy in Assistant Professor Alyssa Shiel’s lab, Arvizu serves as a student peer facilitator for the Hattie Redmond Women and Gender Center’s women of color initiative, AYA.

“My role is to create events that highlight diversity and inclusion for OSU students, ensuring that critical discussions are being held around social justice and that students feel welcome at the center;” she says. “Being able to gather students and have discussions around social issues is what inspires me about the work, because that’s where change starts.”
A million-dollar investment will make STEM classes more inclusive.

Oregon State University has been awarded a five-year, $1 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Inclusive Excellence Initiative to improve instruction in the STEM fields — science, technology, engineering and math — and better meet needs of undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds.

Oregon State will use the grant to establish Inclusive Excellence @ Oregon State (IE@OSU), a sustainable model for faculty development that will strengthen teaching for instructors of STEM classes both at OSU and at nearby community colleges. The project is a collaboration of the Center for Research on Lifelong STEM Learning, the College of Science and the Division of Undergraduate Education.

“Faculty teaching foundational STEM courses at OSU and nearby community colleges play a critical role in shaping these students’ early college experiences and success,” says Martin Storksdieck, director of the Center for Research on Lifelong STEM Learning and the project’s principal investigator (PI).

“Embedding issues of diversity and inclusion into everyday learning experiences in STEM will expand current efforts to make OSU a welcoming and nurturing learning environment.”

Changing how STEM classes are taught.

Data trends indicate the need. In 2015, about 41 percent of Oregon State students in Corvallis and Ecampus were Pell-eligible, and 27 percent were first-generation students. Fall term 2017 enrollment data show that 25 percent of science majors are the first in their family to attend college, 23 percent are students of color and 35 percent are both minorities and first-generation students.

However, longer term data reveal that the gap in graduation rates for underrepresented and Pell-eligible students ranges from six to 18 percent across various science disciplines and that science is not retaining students of color at the same rate as they are students from majority groups.

In response, IE@OSU aims to develop a more inclusive science education. This includes replacing the traditional lecture format with a combination of active learning strategies and culturally responsive teaching practices to create classrooms where all students, but particularly students of color and first-generation students, feel welcome and can succeed.

“In biology courses, culturally responsive teaching practices will potentially include the use of diverse representations of scientists, having a diverse teaching team, using a variety of assessments as opposed to just exam-based evaluations and incorporating social justice ideas related to biology in the classroom discussions,” says Lori Kayes, a senior instructor in integrative biology and a project Co-PI.

Mathematics and science faculty from OSU and community colleges will participate in a 40-hour training to develop teaching practices for inclusive STEM pedagogies and individual course redesigns that will be then implemented in their classrooms. By the end of the five-year grant period, IE@OSU aims to have a community of 100 faculty committed to the success of students of color in STEM courses.
If there’s one thing Scott Vignos believes about advancing equity and justice, it’s that the work is a community effort. Since joining Oregon State in 2015, Vignos has been walking the walk, using his position as assistant vice president to conceptualize new diversity initiatives and advance the university’s mission to become a place where every person feels supported and at home. Read on to learn more about his vision for Oregon State.

**What brought you to Oregon State?**
I moved to Corvallis to start working at Oregon State in October of 2015. I was originally drawn here by my husband’s job — he’s an assistant professor in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences. I was incredibly fortunate to land a position in the former Office of Equity and Inclusion, working on issues related to civil rights compliance and other institutional equity initiatives. It was a perfect next step in my career, which has consistently focused on advancing equity and justice, whether in legal practice or in higher education.

**What are your responsibilities as the assistant vice president for strategic diversity initiatives?**
In my role, I contribute to the planning and implementation of strategic initiatives that advance diversity, equity and inclusion at Oregon State. I work closely with Charlene Alexander, our vice president and chief diversity officer, and the OID team to conceptualize new initiatives and advance the Office of Institutional Diversity’s strategic plan.

On a day-to-day basis, I meet and collaborate on programs and initiatives with partners from across the university and help develop and implement unit-level strategies that align our work with the incredible efforts taking place in the colleges and other units at Oregon State. I analyze data to examine inequities, assess efficacy and tell stories about our work. I also lead our Bias Response Team and develop strategies to proactively respond to bias incidents impacting Oregon State community members.
we all have a part to play.

How does your study of law inform your work day to day?

My legal education has been very helpful in my position. In terms of substance, I frequently encounter subjects that I learned about in law school, including free speech and immigration. My training as a lawyer also informs how I approach asking hard questions, developing solutions and creatively overcoming obstacles.

What does an inclusive university look like?
And how can we get there?

I love this question. I think an inclusive university looks like a place where students, faculty and staff feel like they belong and know they can succeed because the university, and their colleagues, support them and truly value their lived experience.

An inclusive university is continually creative, looking for new opportunities to create equity, while recognizing and reconciling historical and present inequities. How we get there starts with every Oregon State community member recognizing that they play a central role in this endeavor.

Diversity, equity and inclusion work is not limited to a particular office or community. It’s continual and iterative, and necessarily involves every community member contributing in their own way within their own sphere of influence. Whether as a student, dean, instructor, extension agent, coach, librarian or Ecampus administrator, we are all essential to this work at Oregon State.

Has OSU changed much since you first started working here?

I arrived at a time of important upheaval at Oregon State. A month after I started my job, students organized the Students of Color Speak Out, which served as an important catalyst to the progress we’ve made in the last three years.

Since that time, I have observed the university moving continually in the right direction. Outwardly, President Ray created our office, Dr. Alexander was hired as OSU’s first vice president and chief diversity officer, and our staff has grown to meet a range of needs – from delivering more comprehensive diversity education, to creating opportunities for dialogue, to using data and evidence to articulate and advance strategic equity goals, to building relationships with diverse external communities.

Most importantly, I have observed an amazing willingness within the Oregon State community to engage in hard conversations about hard topics to take steps toward creating a more equitable future. These conversations are necessary for true institutional change to take root, and we’re having them every day.

What do you envision for the future of OSU?

I am excited and hopeful about the future of OSU. We’re making advances in so many areas and creating new opportunities for excellence along the way. This path is never smooth. We’ll suffer setbacks and be faced with barriers that are out of our control. But we’re building incredible capacity to overcome adversity and work together as a community motivated by a pursuit of equity and justice. I’m very honored and humbled to be part of this work at Oregon State.
On Sept. 20, 2017, on the west coast of Puerto Rico, Alanis Morales awoke to the sound of her windows flapping open. Winds reaching 200 mph rushed by the house she shared with her father and siblings, sending their tin shed into a pizza parlor. Water streamed under the doors, through electrical sockets and lights in the ceiling.

Hurricane Maria had made landfall.

In the face of one of the worst natural disasters to ever strike the U.S. territory, Morales didn’t panic. She sprang into action, helping her father remove the nearly two inches of water that flooded their home.

Morales’s family knew they needed to get out. As fate should have it, her father had recently accepted a job at Hewlett-Packard in Corvallis. Wasting no time, she applied right before the admissions deadline and moved with her family from Puerto Rico to Oregon in just one week.

The move was advantageous in other ways as well. A long-time animal lover — especially marine mammals — Morales was interested in pursuing scientific research or medicine. And Oregon State offered the opportunities she needed for both.

Now, Morales is beginning her second term in Oregon State’s chemistry program. She is an active member of STEM Leaders — a program that helps increase the success of undergraduates in science, technology, engineering and math fields. Through STEM Leaders, she will have the opportunity to conduct research under the guidance of three faculty members. For her first rotation, Morales will study the symbiotic relationship between algae and sea anemones.

Out of everything Oregon State has given her so far, Morales is most grateful for the wide range of class offerings.

“I can’t believe how many experiences I’d been missing out on until now,” she says.

Morales is thankful to call Corvallis home. She and her family plan to stay, but she has also returned to visit family members who remain in Puerto Rico, including her macaw, Monk.

Sometimes, it’s hard to see light at the end of a storm. But as Morales has found, a twist of fate can lead to unexpected opportunities.
Oregon State is extending its footprint beyond Corvallis and into urban areas to increase access and academic success for black students.

Hosting events like the African American Youth Leadership conference and participating in the parade for Portland’s Good in the Hood celebration signal a willingness to connect with the African American community, says Allison Davis-White Eyes, director of community diversity relations at Oregon State.

“If you want to create opportunities for access and success, it involves communities, and it involves families,” Davis-White Eyes says.

More than 300 high school and middle school students visited campus in 2018 to attend the annual youth conference, and the event returns to Oregon State in 2020. Students hear from leaders who emphasize the value of education, empower leadership, establish a sense of community, increase self-esteem and affirm cultural awareness, as well as encourage personal goals.

“It is about motivating students and allowing them to see all of the potential they have,” Davis-White Eyes says.

To build credibility and be present in the black community, Oregon State participated in Good in the Hood in 2016 and 2018. Having a booth and participating in a parade gives prospective students and families a chance to learn about Oregon State.

“It’s really about igniting that energy and passion,” Davis-White Eyes says. “OSU is here for them.”
Because longstanding ties are not enough, Oregon State seeks to advance relationships with tribes.

Land that Oregon State University is built on once belonged to Native Americans, but was ceded long ago in treaties with the U.S. government. Acknowledging this complicated history is a starting place to advance relations with tribal nations in Oregon and throughout the Pacific Northwest.

“As a land grant university, Oregon State has a legal, moral and ethical obligation to engage with First Nation people of this area,” says Allison Davis-White Eyes, director of community diversity relations.

Davis-White Eyes, an expert in tribal engagement, along with Native American faculty members, leveraged the OSU150 celebration of the university’s 150th anniversary to raise awareness of issues affecting indigenous people.

They brought forward a speaker’s series, We Are All Treaty People, with topics on indigenous issues. Events continue in 2019, along with the College of Forestry’s Starker Lecture Series, which focuses this year on tribal forestry.

Last year, Oregon State hosted the Oregon Indian Education Conference, with more than 200 participants. The conference brings Native American educators together to discuss educational opportunities. Based on the success of the conference, Oregon State was able to garner interest and support from tribal communities to engage in more intentional ways.

Feedback from the education conference also led to an invitation from President Ed Ray to tribal leaders for a summit. In October, representatives of Oregon’s nine tribes came to Oregon State to discuss improving student access and success with Ray, Provost Edward Feser, Vice President for University Relations and Marketing Steve Clark and Vice President Chief Diversity Officer Charlene Alexander. The leaders also talked about possible partnerships between tribes and the university. Previous summits have resulted in a variety of collaborative projects that benefit tribal communities.

In addition, as a symbol of the continued presence and sovereignty of Oregon’s tribal people, the flags of Oregon tribes have also recently been added to the international flags displayed in the Memorial Union concourse.

Beyond symbolic gestures, the work by Davis-White Eyes and others to increase a tribal presence ensures that the university’s land grant mission extends to serve all the people of Oregon.