

During the 2020-21 academic year, the Rubenstein School engaged in scenario planning to create a bold vision for the School to be a catalyst for positive change in response to rapidly evolving world conditions. Through this unique process the Rubenstein community created the School's current mission question, which asks:

How can RSENR unleash empathy, passion, innovation, and creativity to heal and radically change human-environment systems in a just, equitable, and ecological direction?

In short, how can we **UNLEASH EPIC** (empathy, passion, innovation, and creativity)? [The Rubenstein School's full strategic plan, including its core and enabling strategies, is available online.](#)

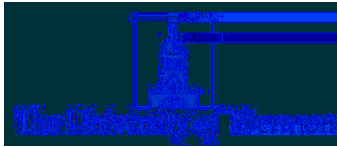
The students, faculty and staff of the Rubenstein School recognize that environmental and natural resource problems are thoroughly intertwined with issues of equity and social justice. We have made progress in the decades following the founding of our School and in the years since the [Diversity and Equity Assessment](#) completed in 2018. There is always more that can be done, and we reaffirm our commitment to our 1996 diversity plan mission statement:

The environmental and natural resource disciplines and professions have been conspicuously underrepresented by both individuals and perspectives that reflect all peoples of the nation and the world. We recognize that enhancing diversity in our School, University, and professions entails much more than simply including people of color. As we strive to create an inclusive, equitable, and truly pluralistic perspective for natural resources, we must be willing to change what we teach and how we teach, incorporating diverse ideas and values into our curriculum.

Although not all our overarching goals fit neatly into categories, our vision for the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources is to create a diverse community in which:

- All members feel welcome and included
- Equity is centered in our curriculum, business practices, and policies.
- Opportunities for personal and professional growth are available to all.
- Our curriculum reflects diverse perspectives and ways of knowing and being in the environment.

The content of this Inclusive Excellence Action Plan was gleaned from conversations with the RSENR community from Summer through Fall 2022. We recognize that our students, staff, and faculty are very active community members but often we are not aware of current opportunities or possibilities for collaboration and synergy. The goals crafted below represent a desire to be with and learn from each other, to amplify our efforts, and to deepen relationship across communities. We also acknowledge that some of the goals from different categories in this plan are interrelated and lead to redundancies among subsections of our plan.



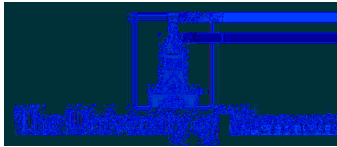
Inclusive Excellence Committed Implementation Team Members

Name	Title	College/Division/Department/Unit
Allan Strong	Interim Dean, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Alayna Howard	Communications Lead, IDEA Committee Member	UDC RSENR
Marie Veal	Assistant Dean Student Services, IDEA Committee Member	UDC RSENR
Luben Dimov	Senior Lecturer, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Mariano Rodriguez Cabal	Research Assistant Professor, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Julianna White	Research Program Coordinator, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR, Lake Champlain Sea Grant, Vermont Water Resources and Lake Studies Center, Northeastern States Research Cooperative
Soham Mehta	Undergraduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Troy Ahmed	Undergraduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Juliana Ward	Undergraduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR
Grant Burton	Graduate Student, IDEA Committee Member	RSENR

Unit(s) within College, Division, Department or Unit

The Rubenstein School is structured as a complex system within one department that the following teams and programs represent crucial functions across the School:

- Undergraduate Programs:
 - Environmental Sciences
 - Forestry
 - Parks, Recreation and Tourism
 - Sustainability, Ecology and Policy
 - Wildlife and Fisheries Biology
- RSENR Business Service Center
- RSENR Student Services
- Dean's Office and Leadership Team
- Graduate, Teaching, and Research Faculty
- Rubenstein Graduate Student Association

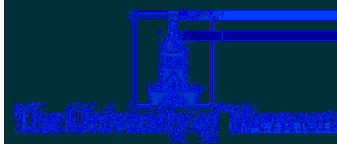


met and course content is revised regularly.		
Create a useful and accessible repository of resources to aid faculty in building DEI content in courses Outcome: RSENR community accesses and continuously updates shared knowledge to improve DEI learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RSENR Community of Practice and IDEA Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete by end of Spring 2024
Assess equity content across syllabi in RSENR core courses and required courses in each of the majors. Create a curricula and research/scholarship portfolio that includes Traditional Ecological Knowledge, global perspectives, environmental justice, and diverse ways of knowing and being. Outcome: Determine the current level of equity-centered content and diverse perspectives shared in RSENR and take steps to ensure these topics and perspectives are integral and intentionally scaffolded in curricula and scholarship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim Dean, Assistant Dean for Student Services, Associate Deans, Program Directors, RGSA, SAB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment completed by the end of 2025 academic year. With long-term goal of scaffolded DEI content in each of the programs in RSENR by 2027.

Co-Curricular Learning

Co-curricular learning is a large part of the overall experience for RSENR students and it is supported in various ways by staff and faculty. Scaffolded and intentionally designed for content and skills-based learning, the required [Core Curriculum](#) includes NR 1010: Natural History and Human Ecology, a year-long lecture and field labs for all first year students. It also includes a long-standing Diversity 1 course, NR 600 Race & Culture in Natural Resources, which serves as a means for first year students to build relationship with their peers and RSENR faculty through the practices of critical reflection and dialogue around issues of environmental justice and multiple ways of knowing.

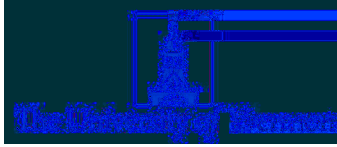
Rubenstein seniors participate in a core capstone senior learning course—NR 4060: Environmental Problem Solving—with community partners where skills in working across difference are applied to real problems. Students also participate in many internship and research experiences, including our [Perennial Internship Program](#) now in its tenth year, that features over 30 community partners offering paid academic experiences. Many students participate in



The 2022 Campus Climate Survey provided a set of quantitative benchmarks that has allowed us to address areas of improvement for the Rubenstein School to work toward creating a more inclusive community. There are several areas in which RSENr performed strongly (upholding principles of Our Common Ground, dialogue around cultural awareness, recognition of bias, willingness to engage with difference, engaging with tension, and a feeling of belonging). However, there are a number of areas in which RSENr can show improvement. We note that it can be challenging to disentangle whether issues noted by RSENr respondents are specific to the Rubenstein School or are systemic across UVM. Regardless, it is important that we play our role in striving for continual improvement in creating an inclusive and equitable climate at UVM.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
RSENr faculty, staff, and students work to create a more inclusive community. Outcome: Improve the RSENr score for satisfaction with UVM's efforts towards equity on the basis of race. / Increased sentiment of inclusivity within RSENr, reflected in an increased score on the Climate Survey Data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RSENr Students; RSENr Staff; RSENr Faculty; RSENr Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous over the five-year period of the plan. Measure via Campus Clim550 Td (Tc 0 Tw 112.7 (i <00539.5



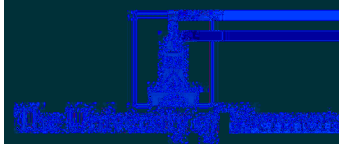
“The University of Vermont’s future success will be assured by following these three strategic imperatives: student success and experience; focusing on and expanding upon distinctive research strengths (“healthy societies and healthy minds”); and better realizing our land-grant mission by partnering with communities, businesses, and the state.” [Amplifying Our Impact: Strategic Vision for UVM](#)

[The Rubenstein School Strategic Vision](#) aligns with the statement above. RSENr must transform our recruitment and retention practices toward equity and justice. Expanding interdisciplinary collaboration, new partnerships, and a global presence will inspire innovative and excellent research and education. It will also assist in networking with and recruiting lifelong learners and contributors. The RSENr community must focus on shared power, team building, communications, intercultural competence, multiple ways of knowing, and facilitation in its professional and curricular development. Arts, humanities, creativity, and expression are critical pathways to wellbeing and unleashing empathy.

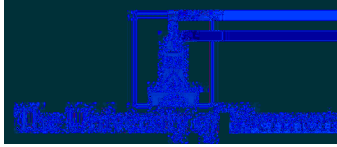
Reaching our goals requires intentional, integrated, and sustained commitment over the long haul. Amer Ahmed, Vice President for DEI is known to say, “Retention is recruitment.” The goals below build upon the strengths and potential embodied in the people that have been and are already here, on the relationships and initiatives that are going, and the emotional and intellectual labor already done.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Evaluate and revise communications to highlight ongoing and longstanding DEI initiatives and services. Align our messaging with our actions (see goals under professional development which can provide material for this goal) Outcome: Current and prospective students hold a collective awareness of opportunities for professional and personal growth, and of DEI initiative results. Initiatives highlighted in messaging and materials for prospective students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Lead, Student Services, Dean and Program Directors. Office of DEI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer and Fall 2023
Strengthen RSENr Alumni networks and increase career development programming. Outcome: Current and prospective students have acce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Gifts Officer, UVM Foundation Alumni Relations Staff, RSENr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2023 and Spring 2024



<p>to environmental professionals (particularly RSENR alumni) and can identify well paid and meaningful environmental career pathways.</p> <p>Determinedly search for and hire faculty and staff that represent diverse identities, cultural backgrounds, and ways of</p>	<p>Professional Advisors, Communications Lead</p>	
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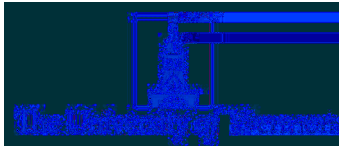


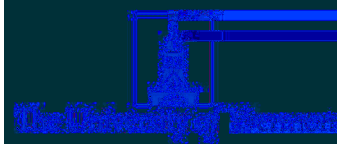
development opportunities available to our community. Both faculty and staff have DEI work as one component of workload planning and annual review. Consequently, it may be relatively straightforward to require faculty and staff attend at least one workshop per semester as part of their workload planning/annual review process. We want to consider how to create accountability around attending professional development opportunities as well as how to incorporate new learnings into daily practices. We have struggled with the scheduling of advising here and have tentatively deleted it as our PD goals are broader.

Advising

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Update RSENR RPT Guidelines to align with the Rubenstein School's Annual Review Criteria and UVM's Green Sheets. Outcome: Faculty see alignment of their DEI work across all measures of performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dean with Special Project support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2023
<p>Conduct an annual faculty survey on antiracism practices. Outcome: Present results back to faculty and identify areas for improvement and further development collectively.</p> <p>Create and conduct annual staff survey on antiracism practices. Outcome: Present results back to staff and identify areas for improvement and further development collectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dean, Faculty IDEA Committee, Community of Practice, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual survey deployment in Fall, beginning in 2023.

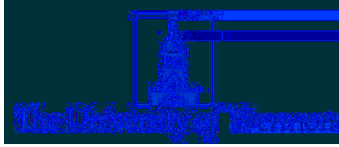




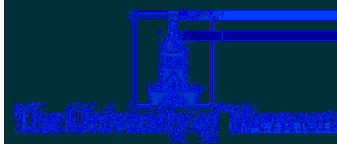
Cognitive Accessibility

S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
<p>Host a workshop on neurodivergent learning for faculty, teaching assistants, and any other interested groups in RSEN. Outcome: People in a teaching or advising role to have the knowledge and resources necessary to best serve students with neurodivergence and they take steps to adapt their practices to do so.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean, AD for Academic Affairs, Faculty, Teaching Assistants, Advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023
<p>Host a workshop on best practice for teaching across language difference. Outcome: People in a teaching or advising role have the knowledge and resources necessary to best serve students for which English is not a predominant language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean, AD for Academic Affairs, Faculty, Teaching Assistants, Advisors 	



Facilitate payment to BIPOC



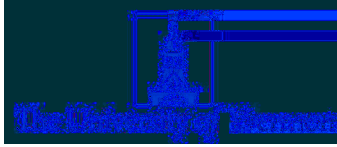
<p>opportunities. Create a subcommittee of the IDEA Committee or a Working Group to assess and build RSENr's international network. Outcome: RSENr international relationships and research opportunities increase</p>		
<p>Establish a mechanism to fund visiting international faculty and/or research at institutions outside the U.S. Prioritize international research by RSENr faculty and graduate students to support network building. Outcome: Increase RSENr's work and partnerships globally by reducing barriers to current collaboration with international partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA Committee International Subcommittee, Dean, Major Gifts Officer, OIE, AD of Business Operations, Provost's Office, OVPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund and proposal process in place by end of Spring 2024.

Analysis of Support

How does your unit support inclusion of internationally identifying individuals who are in your unit or are served by your unit?

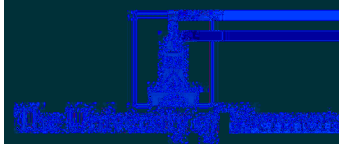
S.M.A.R.T. Goal(s)

Goal	Responsible Group	Time Frame
<p>Build an onboarding guide to RSENr and UVM for international faculty, staff, and students. Include a list of willing mentors and the languages they speak, list of public services, and FAQs. Encourage mentorship through stipends and create formal pairings of existing international faculty and students with incoming faculty and students. Outcome: RSENr's international faculty and students are aware of support systems at UVM and in the surrounding community, strong connections and formal mentorship relationships are available upon arrival in RSENr</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA Committee International Subcommittee, RSENr HR, AD of Academic Affairs, OIE, DEI Office, RSENr Communications Lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023 and Spring 2024



Conduct a RSENR community audit of international partnerships including research collaborations, professional contacts, current international faculty and graduate students, to expand our marketing reach. Outcome: RSENR has a map of its network of international partners to better share its current reach and identify opportunities for increasing diversity and facilitating recruitment of students outside the U.S.

- IDEA Committee, Provost's Office (UVM GO), Advanced GIS Student, UVM Foundation Alumni Relations Staff



Part 6 – Review Schedule

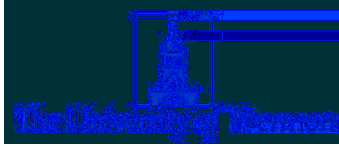
Spring 2023

Spring 2024

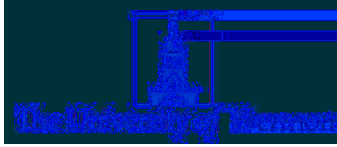
Spring 2025

Spring 2026

Spring 2027



Part 7 (Optional) – Process



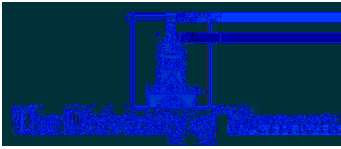
Appendix – Engagement and Survey Notes from RSENR Stakeholders

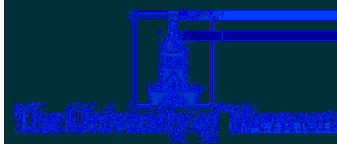
Academics/Curriculum

- Structured and intentional feedback processes and improvements ~~are needed~~.
- DEI should be integrated to all courses, not just one or two classes that check a box & Scaffolded equity curriculum throughout this should include differences that go beyond racial identity.
 - Creative and varied opportunities to do this, does not have to be and should ~~generate~~ approach to meeting DEI requirements
 - CONTENT & FACILITATION: NR 6/5/95, NR 306/395 geared toward white students who need exposure and education
 - Requirement with Resources and accountability
 - Global perspective from first year on
- (Grad) Consider ~~an~~ colloquium with outside facilitators for students on DEI topics, more dynamic and more community building
- Expand BIPOC speaker series. Guest speakers, experts, practitioners can provide ~~dominant~~ narratives
- Centering Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge in aspects of curriculum and research.
 - Hiring TEK Tenure Track
 - Reconsider use of 'centering'
- ~~Difficult to do~~
- (Grad) Barriers of required courses (306 and 395) these become obstacles (scheduling wise?)
- (Grad) Consider creating a seminar for graduate students to have dedicated space/time to work on research proposals also a community building outcome with this model

Co-Curricular Learning

- Placebased education is important, but the result feels like we're missing global perspective, all emphasis is on VT and thhsse becl1.6 (2-1.7 EM5(n)12.9 (g(t)-2.6 (ae)11.2 ()12.9 (g TTc 0 (m)612 (e)k





RSENR to connect and collaborate with programs, students, scholars and faculty overseas.

- f* Support systems for faculty conducting research overseas and connect with faculty from different academic institutions and organizations “Global Fellows program”, “Fulbright Explorer”- university of Florida;
- f* “Supporting faculty to teach with a global lens” University of Florida. Access to trainings, advising and resources on curriculum in internationalization and virtual exchange

Communication

- Straightforward language, simple shared values we can remember that are socialized
- Regular surveys of students about experiences with RSENR staff and faculty
-