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## Academic Affairs Update, March 2016

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# March Academic Affairs Update



## Diversity Matters at UNI

By Dr. Stephanie Logan, Assistant Professor (Curriculum and Instruction)

In early January, students, faculty, staff, and administrative representatives from the Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) and the Diversity and Inclusion Council began collaboration on a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for UNI.

The Plan is in response to the Discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion Forum held in November 2015. Student leaders who initiated the Forum shared stories of racial discrimination and other forms of marginalization on campus.

Central to the Plan's purpose is development of a strong community at UNI, where diversity is a foundational value and operating procedures are re-examined, in order to support significant and enduring change.

Plan topics will include:

- why UNI values diversity
- how the institution defines diversity
- guiding principles for diversity and inclusion, and five action areas.

Action areas are meant to offer specific information, such as:

- reviews of institutional diversity data
- transparent hiring practices
- university-wide diversity training
- investigation of structures designed to support diversity and inclusion, and
- future Discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion Forums.

Further, each action area will include timelines for implementation and continued review, as well as the university department(s) or individual(s) responsible for implementing the actions.

Since January, DAC sub-committees have continued working on revising the Plan and drafting a value statement. Sub-committees will provide updated drafts to the Diversity and Inclusion Council and the full DAC this month. Following review, the Plan will be shared with the larger UNI community to solicit feedback.

## A New Type of PIEER Group

By Julie Grunklee, M.A. Candidate  
(Community Health Education)

Last year saw the launch of the Panther Initiative for Environmental Equity and Resilience (PIEER). PIEER is a partnership among UNI students, faculty dedicated to sustainability issues, and the Recycling Reuse Technology Transfer Center (RRTTC).

The Initiative works with schools, UNI centers, and community organizations to provide educational awareness activities in areas such as environmental justice and diversity.

PIEER in particular offers education in patterns of environmental/health disparities and facilitates engagement between rural and urban lowan populations, with the aim of promoting positive change to address disparity. In addition, PIEER interns work on developing their own diversity and cultural competency skills through a guided book reading and engagement with a UNI-National Coalition Building Institute workshop.

Other topics raised during PIEER's efforts include the presence of radon, lead, arsenic, or other little-known environmental hazards in the home or community; lack of access to healthier food choices; community gardens; harvest of unused seasonal fruits and vegetables for the Northeast Iowa Food Bank; and making these actions sustainable to benefit future generations.

The Initiative is available to students in all majors, providing opportunities to earn a stipend and internship credit while engaging with the campus and local community in social justice issues. In the past year alone, students in Biology, Environmental Health, Global Health, Global Marketing, Health Promotion, and Community Health Education have participated.

Among students' current projects are collaboration with World's Window to promote fair international trade, the Tri-County Head Start to decrease lead absorption by those in older residences, and the Global Marketing Conference and Humanitarian Aid and Arctic conference calls, and planning this month's Cedar Valley Food and Film Festival.

For more information, visit the [website](#). To request programming or suggest an initiative, please contact [Julie Grunklee](#), Graduate Student Coordinator.

*March 2016*

*Academic Affairs Update is edited by Dr. Adrienne Lamberti  
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