



Equity & Diversity

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The University of Canterbury, in line with the Human Rights Act (1993) and Education Act (1989), is committed to ensuring quality of opportunity in employment and education for all its staff and students, irrespective of background. It is accepted that age, gender, ethnicity or disability should not disadvantage or hinder appointment, professional development, promotion, advancement or successful study.

The University recognises its responsibility to adopt procedures to ensure the absence of discrimination in relation to all facets of university life in accordance with prevailing community standards of best practice and relevant legislation.

Equity and diversity issues underpin the core business of the University and are therefore considered to be of concern to every member of the University community. The aim of the University's equity and diversity programmes is to foster a campus environment of inclusion, knowledge and understanding in which students and staff learn to value diversity and to respect individual differences that enrich the University community.

In 2014, we have clarified and augmented roles and responsibilities for equity and diversity matters. Formal oversight of equity and diversity rests with the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Māori), the Director of Student Services and Communications, and the Director of Human Resources who jointly hold the Equity and Diversity portfolio within the University's Senior Management Team. A Central Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee (CEDAC), under the facilitation of the Student Success Manager, meets monthly to share plans, initiatives and best practice, and lead educational initiatives across the UC community. Responsibilities have also been incorporated into the role of Team Leader for Disability Resource Services to co-ordinate equity and diversity programmes and assist in the implementation of University, College and service undertakings.

CEDAC has also undertaken significant steps to augment its committee representation by three additional student representatives to be appointed for 2015. In addition, the University of Canterbury Students' Association has created its own Equity and Diversity Committee to improve its ability to incorporate a wide range of student needs and views into its services.

In 2014, the University also undertook an inventory of existing and proposed programmes with a view to developing a more coherent UC-wide equity and diversity strategy. The University also sees this exercise as an opportunity to develop more student-focused strategies to support student success and retention, and to clarify the equity and diversity reporting framework.

Significant effort has been devoted in 2014 to developing the University of Canterbury Pasifika Strategy 2014-2018, which was officially launched in November. The strategy was developed in consultation with the Pasifika community and outlines the University's approach to supporting the educational aspirations of Pasifika learners, who have been identified as a priority learner group by the Tertiary Education Commission. The strategy also supports the University's goal of providing a learning environment that encourages the participation and educational success of all students in all areas of study, providing them with the skills to fully contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of their communities.

The UC Pasifika Strategy comes after the adoption Te Rautaki Whakawhanake Kaupapa Māori, the UC Māori Development Strategy, which was developed in 2012 and reasserts Māori developmental and student-centred strategies in supporting and empowering students while they achieve personal and academic goals.

As the University progresses its remediation and building projects following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, consideration is being given as to how to incorporate universal building design and improvement to support all students, staff and community members, including those with disabilities. Current and future building plans are continually considered for their impact on serviceability and accessibility.

In 2014, CEDAC continued to develop its equity and diversity strategy and to respond to opportunities created by events on campus. Factors including student gender, ethnicity, disability, age, citizenship and culture have been taken into account when updating the strategy. One significant educational initiative to emerge was the creation of UC Diversity Week - A wide scale inclusion intervention. "Everyone Belongs" is the theme for the inaugural UC Diversity Week, which will be held in March 2015. The events occurring during the week will provide opportunities for individuals to come together to celebrate the rich diversity of our university community. The goal is to promote some of the different spectrums of diversity that continue to grow on our campus and to create more widespread awareness of diversity as a UC priority.