at a glance

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5 Embrace and grow a culture of respect, diversity, inclusion and caring

At UAF, we deeply value a culture of respect, diversity, inclusion and caring. We are a positive, human-centric university focused on individual and community well-being and safety. We celebrate the unique nature of our students and employees through strengths-based approaches.

A culture of respect at UAF would include honoring and valuing the individuals in our community whose different experiences and perspectives contribute to a greater whole. As a result, UAF employees and students would all feel a sense of worth and value.

A culture that embraces diversity at UAF would respect and take pride in the diverse backgrounds of our community, and would strive for the UAF population to reflect our state demographics. Students should be able to see themselves represented at all levels and in all positions at UAF.

An inclusive culture goes beyond embracing diversity to ensure all members of our community are welcomed and supported. A culture of inclusion at UAF would mean that our environment — from displayed artwork to marketing materials — would reflect our diverse community.

In a culture of caring, we would demonstrate care toward others and ourselves, and we would recognize one another as a "whole person." There would be a proactive and preventative focus on improving mental health and well-being.

Below are the committee's recommendations for actions to achieve this goal:

- **Hire a chief diversity officer** at the vice chancellor level to establish direction, goals and strategies, to take concrete actions on diversity, and to demonstrate UAF's commitment to diversity and inclusivity initiatives. In addition, hire a student affairs professional to coordinate diversity and inclusion in student programming.

- **Establish policies to promote diversity in recruitment and hiring.** (a) Ensure job ads are posted to diverse email groups and networks for Black, Indigenous and other people of color in academia. (b) Require a diversity statement from both new hires and promotions into leadership positions. (c) Require applicant review criteria assessing candidates' potential to support and enhance diversity and inclusivity at UAF. (d) Establish hiring and promotion practices aimed at diversifying UAF leadership. (e) Require search committee training on implicit bias, stereotype threat and recognition of systemic privilege and oppression. (f) Create a policy prohibiting the hiring or retention of employees or contractors with a history of sexual harassment and misconduct, stalking, domestic violence, racism and other discriminatory acts.

- **Establish clear, visible signs of cultural respect throughout campus.** As a symbol of traditional land ownership acknowledgment (and with direction from local tribal groups), consider including dual language street and building signs and, at the entrance/welcome points to campus, a welcome in the Dena language on existing or new stand-alone signs (e.g. "Basi' chwkh, Troth Yeddha' khwts'en' nwkhdatl," meaning "Thank you for coming to Troth Yeddha'") and a Dena art installation.

- **Expand resources to support mental health, well-being, connection and safety.** (a) Improve and expand access to a variety of culturally competent mental health care options for students and employees (such as a tribal counselor). (b) Increase the number of counselors at the health center. (d) Fund the counseling center run by the clinical mental health program in the summer and academic year. (e) Train employees on crisis management to connect students to mental health care. (f) Create and support programs to prioritize and strengthen student and employee well-being.

- **Increase family-friendly policies and resources.** (a) Increase availability of breastfeeding rooms across campus. (b) Institute paid parental leave and the ability to share sick leave for parental leave among employees. (c) Allow for flextime or job-share programs universitywide. (d) Expand on-site child care.

- **Take unequivocal steps against harassment.** (a) Define harassment as research misconduct equivalent to fabrication, falsification and plagiarism (as done by the American Geophysical Union), and institute a process for reporting any misconduct to funding agencies. (b) Streamline and strengthen processes for reporting and disciplining harassment, assault and bullying at UAF. (c) Ensure there are clear measures in place to support victims throughout the processes of reporting and disciplinary action.

- **Ensure that compensation of UAF staff and faculty is appropriate and fair.** This includes wages that meet national norms, annual step increases, a standardized and livable wage for adjunct professors, and transparent salary negotiations for new employees.

- **Create and communicate clear pathways for employee career advancement** at all levels through workshops and information meetings on career strategies, planning and pathways within UAF, and assessments to identify transferable skills among positions.

- **Establish diversity, equity, inclusion and caring as criteria for faculty and staff evaluation/accountability.** Require UAF leaders to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of implicit bias, stereotype threat, favoritism and systemic privilege and oppression. Individuals in leadership positions must lead by example, by engaging in and supporting self-care among employees and students and promoting diversity and inclusivity in their work environments. Safety and equitable teaching practices will be explored as a metric in the evaluation process. Require individuals in management positions to prioritize conflict management among employees, and swiftly and unequivocally discipline individuals with a record of poor or unacceptable behavior toward other UAF community members.

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