MANA TAURITE, KANORAU ME TE WHAKAWHĀITI
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

We are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment that enables every member of our community to thrive. We hold equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at the heart of our operations, including our teaching, learning, research, and engagement. Our EDI Framework outlines our policy goals related to the recruitment, development, and retention of a diverse community of talented staff and students and informs our practices across the university.[13]

We have made strong progress on two areas of priority identified by the EDI Steering Group as a result of the current state project undertaken last year. To address our priority for EDI visibility, we have developed a new EDI page for the University's website. The page provides information to current and prospective staff and students, as well the wider public, about how we enact the kaupapa of equity, diversity and inclusion through our people, policies, and practices. The webpage is intended to be a live space, with additional content and resources being continually added as they become available.

Our priority for structural/systemic change is centred on a university-wide Anti-Racism Initiative. Work in 2022 focused on initial research and engagement, and on building a dedicated and diverse project team of staff and students from across the university. We conducted a stocktake of relevant Te Herenga Waka reports and data, and reviewed similar initiatives in both national and international tertiary institutions. In addition, we spoke to a small group of staff and student leaders and members of diverse university communities about what a meaningful and effective response might look like within our context, drawing on their expertise and lived experiences.

Our initial findings from those reviews and discussions were that the university faces a culture of tolerance of racism which exists to varying degrees across the community, and a lack of clarity on how to respond when racism occurs. These challenges manifest in incidents going unreported, and bystanders being unable or unwilling to intervene. Staff and students alike discussed the importance of leadership having a well understood role in combating racism, and the key role that middle management plays in the reporting process. As we reflected on these conversations and the University's goals and commitments, we were able to identify three strands of work—education, reporting, and accountability.

The Anti-Racism Initiative is committed to striking a careful balance between our work being driven by the needs and perspectives of those with lived experience of racism, and ensuring responsibility, commitment, and labour are shared by everyone at the University. We are planning a series of facilitated community wānanga in 2023, where staff and students can share their personal experiences, perspectives, and expertise with the project. These learnings, alongside findings from a review of the University's policies and procedures against national and international standards of good practice, will inform our future programme of work for 2023 and beyond.

Our commitment to EDI can also be seen in programmes like Te Hāpai – which supports our staff community to increase their understanding of and engagement with Māori culture, language, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi – and the work of teams like Āwhina, Pasifika Student Success, and Te Pūrengi-Student Experience and Wellbeing, who offer specialist services for students including Indigenous students and students with disabilities, refugee backgrounds, international backgrounds, and rainbow identities.

The role of Refugee-Background Student Adviser continues to be the only such role in a New Zealand university which results in Te Herenga Waka being more attractive to refugee-background students. During 2022, the Adviser provided significant enrolment support to many incoming students and their whānau, as well as both critical and ongoing support for students at high risk. The development of a strong relationship with the student rep group VIC.Without.Barriers provided opportunity for several collaborative and community building events throughout the year.

A new Rainbow specific space (Rainbow Room) was established on level 2 of the Student Union Building and the number of Rainbow Student Leaders employed increased from two to three. Totoweka Scholarships specifically for Rainbow school leavers have also been introduced. There continues to be ongoing review and updating of systems to support students wishing to change their names and supporting accessibility and avoidance of being deadnamed. Events, peer support group and services are informed by student voice, often delivered by students for students.

Work to support students with disabilities included ensuring the University's COVID-19 response was inclusive of these students. This included developing resources, contributing to decision making, leading events to promote mask wearing, and coordinating the University wide provision of free masks/RATS for students and staff. Recognising that our note taking services are not resilient in times of high sickness, Disability Services introduced Glean digital note taking software to 170 students. This service is now scalable, digital savvy and resilient. We also worked closely with the Centre for Academic Development to select Canvas/Nuku and Ally teaching tools and maximise their accessibility functionality. In collaboration with school administrators and key academic staff we introduced a new approach to obtaining the assessment information we need from across the University which has decreased staff workload and student stress. True advances in disability inclusion take a whole of organisation approach and this year more than ever our team enjoyed closely collaborating with other student services, student leaders, and academic staff to support student success, particularly those with the most need.

13 https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/documents/policy/academic/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-framework.pdf