

June 14, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to ask for your attention to a serious matter: the current operations of the EDISA unit at UW-Eau Claire. In this letter, we state our concerns and explain their importance to us as faculty members at UWEC who, like you, care deeply about our community. Our hope is that you will consider joining us as we advocate for greater transparency and accountability from Vice Chancellor Diaz and Chancellor Schmidt.

Our major concerns are (1) the marginalization of our students served by EDISA, especially our students of Color; (2) the resignations of multiple EDISA staff members, especially colleagues of Color; (3) the disregard for collaboration and shared governance in EDISA decision-making.

(1) We believe that the proposed reorganization of EDISA units lacks transparency and care, to the detriment of our students. In our eyes, nothing symbolizes its disregard for student voice and welfare more than the elimination of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and Blugold Beginnings (BB). It is our understanding that EDISA discussion of this plan began as early as October 2021 but did not become widely known until February 2022. On March 7, 2022, the UW-Eau Claire Student Senate passed a resolution (by a vote of 25-0-1) [condemning the unilateral decision to “merge” the two units without sufficient student input.](#)

As word of the proposal spread informally among students, staff, and faculty, VC Diaz organized a series of open houses beginning on February 14 that allowed the campus at large to ask questions about the proposal. At these meetings, a diverse range of students expressed doubt about whether the reorganization was in their best interest. Faculty and staff joined them, protesting the reorganization's hegemonic and outmoded assumptions about minoritized identities and affiliations. The meetings did not allow the opportunity to revise the plans that had already been put into motion, however; their purpose was largely to present new organizational charts and nomenclature.

(2) We believe that institutions should endeavor to retain their valued members, especially in student services where continuity in personal relationships can make all the difference to student success. We are deeply troubled by the resignations of key EDISA staff members beginning in July 2021. They include Dua Ci Khang (OMA Program Associate), Diana Zarate (OMA Latinx Student Services Coordinator), Michael Thomas (OMA Black Student Services Coordinator), Demetrius Smith (Special Assistant to VC Diaz and BB Director), Dang Yang (OMA Director), Jacqueline Nevarez (OMA Latinx Student Services Coordinator), and Joann Martin (Activities, Involvement, & Leadership Coordinator of Student Activities). In January, some individuals from the undersigned sent a letter to VC Diaz and other administrators expressing concern over the departures. Those individuals met with VC Diaz in February to discuss the matter but left without any sense of resolution or mutual understanding. Such an exodus in such a brief time is extraordinary, and we fear that other colleagues in EDISA will surely follow or want to.

We understand that colleagues pursue career opportunities beyond UW-Eau Claire for personal and professional reasons, often both. However, if we accept that an institution has no control over such departures, then why bother talking about retention at all? Those of us who met with VC Diaz in February asked her to commit to creating a retention plan for OMA and BB staff members as they transition to the new organizational structure. We have heard no update. Faculty members of Color know what it is like to have one's commitment to UW-Eau Claire questioned, the assumption being that one foot is out the door. Let's not make sense of the EDISA resignations in this same, hurtful light. To do so absolves institutional leaders of the responsibility to create an inclusive culture and climate in every unit and department. EDISA staff dynamics exist in a state of disarray, so much so that an outside consultant has been hired and tasked with assessing and repairing strained relationships within the unit.

(3) We believe that EDISA is a unit whose outreach should extend to every part of our university, but this charge requires a respect for shared governance and an authentic desire for relationship-building. We have witnessed neither. For example, more than a dozen alumni, students, faculty, and staff met regularly over the course of a year to create the 2025 EDI Strategic Plan, presented to VC Diaz on June 30, 2021. Later that summer, VC Diaz led a review of the plan—one that included no members of the committee—and in September met with the

committee only to voice wholesale disapproval of it. To date, the original Plan has not been shared with the university community, and there is no sign of any implementation of any of its recommendations.

Over the course of our careers, we have volunteered to advance EDI at UW-Eau Claire in various capacities—too often unseen as “invisible labor”—because we want to put our expertise to work for the greater good. In return, we expect that our knowledge production will be respected by its stewards, not only because of our academic qualifications but also because of our firm grasp on institutional history. The comprehensive, research-based 2025 EDI Strategic Plan could and should have guided EDISA process over the past academic year. For it to be dismissed without a serious alternative strikes us as not only a waste of human and material resources but also as inexplicably reckless given the stakes in our current political landscape. The success of our students and staff depends on a principled course of action from EDISA. We deserve no less.

To faculty, the operations of EDISA can seem far afield from our day-to-day work. But they should concern us all, if only because they run counter to our cherished principles of academic freedom. Despite not knowing each of you personally, we venture that we believe in the same things. We believe in the importance of diversity to learning. But how will constant staff turnover and no strategic plan aid in recruitment and retention of diverse members of our community—of students, staff, and faculty? We believe in collaboration and shared governance for consequential decision-making. But how is an opaque, insular unit issuing rushed dictates emblematic of any definition of inclusivity? And we believe in knowledge as the foundation of a better life. But how have the proposed changes to EDISA reflected the findings of the best research on EDI in higher education?

There is so much more to add, but we thank you for the time you have given us already. We do have one more thing in common. Every one of us cares about UW-Eau Claire, which is to say that we care about the people of UW-Eau Claire, especially our students. And if we value and uphold the reputation of our institution, we do so for their sake as much as ours. If what you have read leaves you wanting to know more about how you can help, please reach out to any one of

the undersigned. It's our hope that we can organize as faculty to ensure that EDISA operations are as rigorous and student-centered as the finest learning in our own classrooms.

Yours sincerely,

- 1) Rose-Marie Avin, Professor and Chair, Department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- 2) David Shih, Professor, Department of English
- 3) Heather Ann Moody, Director and Associate Professor, American Indian Studies Program
- 4) Nga-Wing Anjela Wong, Associate Professor, Department of Education for Equity and Justice
- 5) Kong Pheng Pha, Associate Professor, Department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- 6) Ari Singh Anand, Associate Professor, Department of Geography and Anthropology
- 7) Sarita Mizin, Assistant Professor, Department of English
- 8) Gerardo Licon, Assistant Professor, Program of Latin American and Latinx Studies
- 9) José Felipe Alvergúe, Associate Professor, Department of English
- 10) Asha Sen, Professor, Department of English
- 11) Dorothy Chan, Assistant Professor, Department of English
- 12) Kati Barahona-López, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
- 13) Cheryl Jiménez Frei, Assistant Professor, Department of History
- 14) Kaia Simon, Assistant Professor, Department of English, and Director of the Blugold Seminar Writing Program
- 15) Leah Olson-McBride, Professor and Chair, Department of Social Work
- 16) Kirstin Rossi, Associate Professor, Department of Special Education and Inclusive Practices
- 17) Karsten Powell, Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education and Inclusive Practices
- 18) Bob Nowlan, Professor, Department of English
- 19) Mary K. Canales, Professor, Department of Nursing
- 20) Cedar Marie, Associate Professor, Department of Art & Design
- 21) Stephanie Farrar, Associate Professor, Department of English
- 22) Nora Mitchell, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology

- 23) Silviana Amethyst, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 24) Bibiana Fuentes, Associate Professor, Department of Languages and Program of Latin American and Latinx Studies
- 25) Ryan Jones, Professor, Department of Music and Theatre Arts
- 26) Rae Langes, Assistant Professor, Department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- 27) Jessica Miller, Professor of French, Department of Languages
- 28) Paul J. Hoff, Professor of Spanish, Department of Languages
- 29) Joel Pace, Professor, Department of English
- 30) Der-Fa Lu, Professor, Department of Nursing
- 31) Theresa D. Kemp, Professor, Department of English
- 32) Joshua Potter-Efron, Professor, Department of Social Work
- 33) Elizabeth Glogowski, Associate Professor, Department of Materials Science & Biomedical Engineering
- 34) Cathy Rex, Professor, Department of English
- 35) Paul Kaldjian, Professor of Geography and Interim Chair, Department of Art & Design
- 36) Lynsey Wolter, Associate Professor, Department of English
- 37) Karen O'Day, Professor of Art History, Department of Art & Design
- 38) Matt Haffner, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Anthropology
- 39) Lisa Quinn-Lee, Professor, Department of Social Work
- 40) Angela Dalhoe, Associate Professor, Department of Special Education and Inclusive Practices
- 41) Jeffrey M. Janot, Professor and Chair, Department of Kinesiology
- 42) Jennifer Chapman, Professor, Department of Music and Theatre Arts
- 43) Wayne Carroll, Professor, Department of Economics
- 44) Stephanie Turner, Professor, Department of English
- 45) Sara Monahan, Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of English
- 46) Maria DaCosta, Professor, Department of Economics
- 47) Yan Li, Professor, Department of Economics
- 48) Collin Hawkins, Lecturer, Department of Economics

- 49) Alex Smith, Professor, Department of Mathematics and Interim Chair, Department of Computer Science
- 50) Lori Bica, Professor, Department of Psychology
- 51) Jonathan J. Rylander, Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Center for Writing Excellence
- 52) Kate Hinnant, Professor, McIntyre Library
- 53) Stacy Thompson, Professor, Department of English
- 54) Ryan Harrison, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 55) Jennifer Harrison, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 56) Jan Stirm, Professor and Chair, Department of English
- 57) aBa Mbirika, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 58) Susan Tily, Assistant Professor, Department of Education for Equity and Justice
- 59) Jessica Kraker, Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 60) Arthur Grothe, Associate Professor, Department of Music and Theatre Arts
- 61) Beth Crotty, Assistant Professor, Department of Education for Equity and Justice
- 62) Josephine Kipgen, Assistant Professor, Department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- 63) Jill Markgraf, Professor and Director of Libraries
- 64) Laura Dunbar, Associate Professor, Department of Music and Theatre Arts
- 65) Teresa Sanislo, Professor of German and European History
- 66) Rose Battalio, Professor, Department of Special Education and Inclusive Practices
- 67) Gretchen Peters, Professor and Chair, Department of Music and Theatre Arts
- 68) Robin Miller, Professor, McIntyre Library
- 69) Damir Kovačević, Assistant Professor of Political Science
- 70) Jason Spraitz, Associate Professor, Criminal Justice Program
- 71) Andrew Sturtevant, Associate Professor, Department of History
- 72) Analisa DeGrave, Professor, Department of Languages and Program of Latin American and Latinx Studies
- 73) Douglas Faulkner, Professor, Department of Geography and Anthropology
- 74) Gloria Howerton, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Anthropology
- 75) Molly Bonlender, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work

- 76) Alisha Meinen, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work
- 77) Manuel Fernández, Professor, Department of Languages and Director, Latin American and Latinx Studies Program
- 78) Jennifer Muehlenkamp, Professor, Department of Psychology
- 79) Peter Hart-Brinson, Associate Professor, Departments of Sociology and Communication/Journalism
- 80) Ezra Zeitler, Professor and Chair, Department of Geography and Anthropology
- 81) José Valero, Professor, Department of Languages
- 82) Ami Christensen, Senior Lecturer, Department of Languages and Intensive English Program Coordinator
- 83) Tali Lee, Professor, Department of Biology
- 84) J. Erik Hendrickson, Professor and Chair, Department of Physics & Astronomy
- 85) Sue Fondrie, Professor and Chair, Department of Education for Equity and Justice
- 86) Christine Calderon Vriesema, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology
- 87) Helena Sumbulla, Assistant Professor, McIntyre Library
- 88) Marcela Depiante, Associate Professor, Department of Languages
- 89) Mckenzie West, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 90) David Lonzarich, Professor, Department of Biology
- 91) Tara Putnam, Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology
- 92) Nicholas M. Beltz, Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology
- 93) Colleen Duffy, Chair, Council on Internationalization and Global Engagement
- 94) Pamela J. Forman, Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology
- 95) Carolyn Otto, Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 96) Abra Brisbin, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Mathematics
- 97) Blake Westerlund, Associate Professor, Department of English
- 98) Erica J. Benson, Professor, Department of English, and Interim Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
- 99) Barbara S. Meier, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Special Education & Inclusive Practices
- 100) Cathy Thorsen, Professor, Department of Special Education & Inclusive Practices
- 101) Joanne Jahnke-Wegner, Assistant Professor of Early American History

- 102) Erin Hisey, Assistant Professor, Department of Music and Theatre Arts
- 103) Brad Carter, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology
- 104) Jamie Tester Morfoot, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work
- 105) Matthew Meyer, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
- 106) Liliana LaValle, Assistant Professor, McIntyre Library
- 107) Molly Patterson, Associate Professor, Department of English
- 108) Emily Freeman, Assistant Professor, Department of Education for Equity and Justice
- 109) Yoonsin Oh, Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology
- 110) Allyson Loomis, Associate Professor of English, Department of English
- 111) Sarah Vitale, Assistant Professor, Department of Geology and Environmental Science
- 112) Sanchia Hati, Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
- 113) Katrina Stullken Rothrock, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics
- 114) Winnifred Bryant, Professor and Chair, Department of Biology
- 115) Frank A. Watkins, Associate Professor, Department of Music and Theatre Arts
- 116) Ellen Mahaffy, Professor, Department of Communication and Journalism
- 117) Eric Jamelske, Professor, Department of Economics
- 118) Scott Lester, Professor, Department of Management and Marketing
- 119) Mia Kelly, Assistant Professor, Criminal Justice Program
- 120) Jan Larson, Professor and Chair, Department of Communication and Journalism
- 121) Mary Beth Leibham, Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology
- 122) Jarrod Hines, Associate Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology
- 123) Karen Mumford, Associate Professor and Chair, Public Health & Environmental Studies
- 124) Matt Seymour, Assistant Professor and Chair of English Language Arts Education
- 125) Kyle Whipple, Assistant Professor, Department of Education for Equity and Justice