

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 / 2026

UConn

OFFICE FOR INCLUSION
AND CIVIL RIGHTS



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A Message from Our Vice President

The 2025–2026 academic year was defined by transformation, adaptation, and purposeful action. Across higher education, healthcare, and public institutions, organizations operated within an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous national environment shaped by evolving legal interpretations, shifting federal priorities, heightened public discourse, changing expectations of institutional responsibility, and growing demands for transparency, accountability, and measurable impact.

Within this environment, the University of Connecticut and UConn Health faced an important challenge: how to remain anchored to mission and values while responding with agility to conditions that often changed in real time.

This report tells the story of how the Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights (OICR) met that challenge.

October 2025 marked a defining milestone with the formal merger of the former Office for Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Institutional Equity to create OICR. This transition represented more than organizational change. It required building a new identity, integrating distinct cultures and operational models, redefining priorities, establishing shared practices, and creating a unified vision for how inclusion, accessibility, civil rights compliance, education, engagement, and institutional effectiveness would advance together.

Mergers create uncertainty—but they also create opportunity.

Throughout the year, OICR embraced both. Our teams remained nimble, responsive, and solutions-oriented while continuing to deliver essential services across UConn and UConn Health. Rather than pause during transition, we built while operating—aligning people, processes, and purpose while continuing to support students, faculty, staff, patients, and community partners.

The result was a more integrated and collaborative office positioned to meet the evolving needs of a complex public research university and academic health system.

As a newly unified office, OICR expanded its role as a centralized institutional resource supporting civil rights compliance, accessibility, equal employment opportunity, consultation, education, community engagement, and strategic partnership development.

This integrated model strengthened coordination across campuses and health settings and created greater opportunity to move from reactive problem-solving to proactive institutional advancement.

During the academic year, OICR responded to more than 50 consultation requests from students, faculty, staff, managers, and departments across the University system. These consultations addressed workplace climate, accessibility, language access, bias concerns, leadership challenges, and inclusive practices. Beyond resolving immediate concerns, they generated insight that informed educational priorities, organizational interventions, and opportunities for long-term improvement.

Education remained central to our approach. In addition to administering required state employee trainings, OICR developed and facilitated educational experiences that strengthened leadership capacity, communication, accessibility awareness, workplace effectiveness, and professional growth.

Collaboration became not simply a strategy, but an operating principle. Working alongside academic departments, healthcare leaders, student affairs professionals, affinity groups, community organizations, state agencies, and external partners, OICR advanced initiatives focused on health equity, workforce development, educational access, leadership development, and community impact. This work included continued development of the Health Equity Dashboard, support for Master of Public Health practicum projects, leadership initiatives through the IMPACT Leadership Track, and programming addressing health equity and emerging issues affecting our communities.

Operationally, OICR's responsibilities continued to expand. The office strengthened oversight across the Americans with Disabilities Act, Titles VI and VII, Title IX, equal employment opportunity, and affirmative action obligations. In March 2026, responsibility for employee accommodations transitioned into OICR, further integrating accessibility and civil rights support into a coordinated institutional framework.

This report documents outcomes, partnerships, and milestones—but more importantly, it reflects the people who made this work possible. Faculty, staff, students, healthcare professionals, community partners, institutional leaders, state leaders, and learners across UConn and UConn Health demonstrated resilience, creativity, and commitment during a year of significant change.

This year affirmed that UConn and UConn Health remain committed to excellence, access, accountability, and public service—and that OICR plays an important role in translating those commitments into meaningful action.

As we look ahead, OICR will continue to evolve, respond, and lead with purpose—remaining flexible in changing conditions while staying grounded in our mission to support environments where every member of our community can fully learn, work, discover, receive care, and contribute.

Thank you for your partnership and your continued commitment to advancing the mission of UConn and UConn Health.

Executive Summary

The 2025–2026 academic year marked a significant period of growth and transition for the Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights (OICR). In October 2025, following years of discussion and planning, the Office of Institutional Equity and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion merged to form OICR. The newly integrated office brought together expertise in civil rights compliance, accessibility, equal employment opportunity, education, inclusion, belonging, health equity, consultation, and community engagement, creating a centralized resource that supports students, employees, patients, and community members across UConn and UConn Health.

Throughout its first year as a unified office, OICR expanded institutional capacity by integrating compliance, accessibility, education, consultation, and community engagement into a coordinated model serving UConn and UConn Health. The office delivered more than 4,400 required employee trainings, responded to more than 50 consultations, facilitated more than 110 employee accommodations, supported more than 220 civil rights matters, and strengthened partnerships that advanced health equity, leadership development, and community engagement.

Employee education remained a core component of OICR's work. OICR administered required state trainings while developing workshops, presentations, and learning opportunities focused on workplace climate, accessibility, leadership, communication, belonging, and professional development. During the reporting period, 3,096 UConn employees and 1,334 UConn Health employees completed required Diversity Awareness, Sexual Harassment Prevention, and Understanding Domestic Violence trainings.

Collaboration remained central to OICR's approach. The office partnered with academic departments, healthcare leaders, student support offices, community organizations, and external partners to advance health equity, leadership development, workforce pathways, and initiatives addressing emerging issues affecting the University community. Key collaborative efforts included continued development of the Health Equity Dashboard, support for Master of Public Health practicum projects, leadership development initiatives through the IMPACT Leadership Track, and educational programming addressing immigration, health equity, and professional practice.

OICR convened a range of signature events and engagement opportunities that fostered learning, dialogue, reflection, and community-building. These included the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Living Legacy Convocation and Awards, the TRHT Health Equity Research

Symposium, the National Day of Racial Healing, community dialogues, the Coffee Break series, and support for faculty and staff affinity groups across the University system.

The office's compliance responsibilities expanded significantly during the year. OICR continued oversight of the University's obligations related to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Titles VI and VII, Title IX, equal employment opportunity, and affirmative action compliance. In March 2026, responsibility for employee accommodations transitioned to OICR, further strengthening the office's role in supporting accessibility and equitable participation across the University community.

Beyond direct services and programming, OICR contributed to institutional planning, policy development, campus climate efforts, and statewide and national initiatives focused on health equity, community wellbeing, accessibility, and inclusive excellence. Through committee service, working groups, and community partnerships, OICR helped strengthen collaboration across the University while advancing strategic priorities that support students, employees, patients, and the communities UConn serves.

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report reflect the collective efforts of faculty, staff, students, learners, healthcare professionals, community partners, and institutional leaders. Together, these efforts demonstrate OICR's commitment to fostering accessible, equitable, and welcoming environments while supporting the University's mission of excellence in education, research, healthcare, and public engagement.

OICR at a Glance

2025-2026

By the Numbers

4,430

Required Employee
Trainings Completed

500+

Participants Engaged
Through OICR Events &
Educational Programs

350+

Title IX Reports
Received

220+

Civil Rights Matters
Addressed

110+

Employee
Accommodation
Requests Facilitated

50+

Consultations
Provided

42

Weekly Newsletters
Published

1,819

Newsletter
Subscribers

9

Faculty & Staff
Affinity Groups

Advancing UConn's Strategic Priorities

The Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights advances UConn's strategic priorities by integrating civil rights compliance, accessibility, education, consultation, and community engagement in support of student success, institutional effectiveness, research, and public impact.

Student Success

OICR partnered with academic and student affairs units to reduce barriers to belonging, improve accessibility, deliver educational programming, and support initiatives that promote student wellbeing and equitable outcomes.

Research, Innovation, and Academic Excellence

OICR advanced research, innovation, and interdisciplinary collaboration through health equity initiatives, the TRHT Health Equity Research Symposium, support for ethical research practices, and partnerships that connected scholarship with community impact.

Health, Wellbeing, and Community Impact

Through partnerships with UConn Health, community organizations, healthcare systems, and state agencies, OICR advanced health equity initiatives, workforce development opportunities, and public engagement that strengthened relationships between the University and the communities it serves.

Institutional Effectiveness and Workforce Excellence

OICR strengthened institutional effectiveness through compliance oversight, employee education, accessibility initiatives, consultation services, leadership development, and participation in strategic committees and institutional working groups that promote accessibility, and continuous improvement.

Collectively, the initiatives highlighted throughout this report demonstrate how OICR advances UConn's strategic priorities by supporting student success, strengthening institutional excellence, advancing research and innovation, and expanding the University's impact across Connecticut and beyond.

Signature Events

The Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights (OICR) convenes university-wide events that create opportunities for learning, reflection, community-building, and engagement around issues that affect our campus, our state, and the communities we serve. During the 2025–2026 academic year, OICR’s signature events brought together students, faculty, staff, alumni, researchers, practitioners, artists, and community partners from across UConn, UConn Health, and beyond.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Living Legacy Convocation and Awards

In January 2026, OICR hosted the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Living Legacy Convocation and Awards at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts. This signature event reflects UConn’s continued commitment to equity, inclusion, belonging, and community-centered transformation. This year’s theme was *Rooted in Community, Rising in Joy* and honored Dr. King’s legacy through collective strength, creative expression, and the power of joyful resistance.

The convocation brought together more than 180 students, faculty, staff, alumni, artists, community partners, and university leaders for an evening of celebration and reflection. The program was hosted by emcee Dr. Justis Lopez and featured musical performances by Isaac Barber and Faith Walker-Tate, six Connecticut Poet Laureates, spoken word artists, and remarks from the Vice Chair of the Connecticut Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission, reflecting the growing partnership between UConn and statewide organizations committed to civic engagement, service, and community impact.

The program also included the presentation of the 2026 MLK Legacy Awards. These awards honor members of the community who have demonstrated a commitment to raising awareness, fighting injustices, assisting their communities, and embodying Dr. King’s philosophy of nonviolence. Award recipients are selected by a committee of representatives from across the University system.

The 2026 awardees included undergraduate students Mia Dansby and Djimpsy II Gilles; graduate student Kamal Gautam; faculty member Dr. Alaina Brenick; staff member Monique Nelson; alum Dr. G. Duncan Harris; and organization The GLEA Network. The spirit of the awards extended beyond the ceremony. Dr. G. Duncan Harris donated and matched his award prize to support emergency funds for the African American Cultural Center, furthering his longstanding commitment to mentoring and supporting students.

“ You can't rise unless you help
others rise with you. ”

— Mia Dansby

2026 MLK Legacy Award Recipient



2026 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Living Legacy Convocation and Awards. Students, faculty, staff, alumni, artists, and community partners gathered to honor Dr. King's legacy through music, poetry, recognition of community leaders, and collective reflection.

2026 TRHT Health Equity Research Symposium

The Annual Health Equity Research Symposium builds research, training, advocacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration while highlighting innovative work that advances equity, justice, and health.

This year's symposium was grounded in the values of the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) framework and themed *Rooted in Connection: Co-Creating Equity Through Collaboration*. The symposium centered community voices and interdisciplinary collaboration while exploring meaningful connections between research, practice, and lived experience.

Held on March 26, 2026, the symposium welcomed more than 110 students, faculty, practitioners, and researchers from UConn, UConn Health, and partner institutions including the University of New Haven, University of Saint Joseph, Providence College, and St. George's University. The event also featured showcase tables from the UConn Asian/Asian-American Faculty & Staff Association, the UConn Health Disparities Institute, the Department of Public Health Sciences, the UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, and the University of New Haven.

The symposium featured 36 poster presentations, a welcome address by Vice President Jeffrey Hines, MD, and four interdisciplinary panel discussions featuring participants from UConn, UConn Health, UConn School of Law, Yale University, Hartford Hospital, the Health Disparities Institute, the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.



2026 TRHT Health Equity Research Symposium. Participants engaged in interdisciplinary dialogue, shared research, and explored collaborative approaches to advancing health equity.

National Day of Racial Healing

On January 18, 2026, OICR commemorated the National Day of Racial Healing by welcoming Dr. Mays Imad, neuroscientist, educator, and nationally recognized expert in trauma-informed education.

With 145 RSVPs and 92 attendees, Dr. Imad explored how moral wounds affect individuals and communities and discussed pathways toward healing through moral imagination. Participants reflected on the importance of bearing witness, reimagining possibilities, and planting seeds for change as they considered the movement from moral injury to moral imagination.

Dr. Imad challenged attendees to practice moral courage through a series of actionable commitments: See Clearly, Speak the Truth, Stay in Relationships, Start Small, and recognize Well-being as a Human Right.

“Collectively, we are tired and often exist so individualistically. We need more of this energy, togetherness, and conversations. This is not a framework that we are taught.”

– Participant, National Day of Racial Healing

Community Engagement and Belonging

The Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights creates opportunities for members of the UConn and UConn Health communities to connect, engage in meaningful dialogue, build relationships across differences, and strengthen a sense of belonging. During the 2025–2026 academic year, OICR convened programs that fostered reflection, community-building, wellness, and engagement around issues affecting our campuses and the broader communities we serve.

Encounters: A Dialogue on Academic Freedom

In partnership with the Democracy and Dialogues Initiative, OICR hosted *Encounters: A Dialogue on Academic Freedom* on October 30, 2025. The program invited faculty, staff, and graduate students into facilitated small-group conversations exploring the evolving meaning and practice of academic freedom in higher education.

With 94 RSVPs and 47 attendees, the dialogue brought together participants from across UConn to explore how academic freedom is understood and experienced across roles and campuses. Together, participants considered how academic freedom shapes their work, the challenges they encounter, and the kind of academic community they hope to cultivate.

Collective Healing: A Full Spectrum Listening Exercise

The Collective Healing: A Full Spectrum Listening Exercise took place on February 18, 2026, in a virtual format to encourage participation from regional campuses and UConn Health. With 39 RSVPs and 17 attendees, the program created space to explore the questions: What does it take to cultivate environments where people feel seen, heard, valued, and where people can show up as their full selves? What work does creating a humanizing environment require?

Through structured storytelling and intentional listening, participants reflected on the role healing plays in creating humanizing environments. The Full Spectrum Listening activity is a guided community exercise that goes beyond traditional active listening by engaging multiple “wavelengths” of understanding, including emotions, values, actions, and relationships. Each participant shared a two-minute story about a time they engaged in a healing process while others practiced listening not only to what was said, but also to how people communicate experiences, meaning, and connection.

“ *Sharing is so important. It was validating to hear people reflect the emotional content of my story. Being connected to our feelings and our grief is essential for healing and social justice work.* ”

– Participant, Collective Healing Exercise

Staying Grounded During Global Uncertainty: Practical Strategies for Stress Management and Wellbeing

On April 2, 2026, OICR hosted *Staying Grounded During Global Uncertainty: Practical Strategies for Stress Management and Wellbeing*. Global events and ongoing uncertainty can create added stress for members of the academic community, particularly for those with personal or cultural ties to regions experiencing conflict or crisis. Many professionals find themselves balancing concern for loved ones, exposure to distressing news, and the responsibility of supporting students and colleagues while continuing to meet workplace expectations.

Facilitated by Dr. Dominique Shabazz, DSW, LCSW, MSW, the session offered practical, culturally responsive strategies to help participants manage stress, remain grounded, and care for their wellbeing during challenging times. Participants learned evidence-informed techniques to regulate stress, manage information overload, maintain focus, and support others while maintaining healthy boundaries. The recording was later shared through the OICR newsletter to extend access to the broader community.

29 individuals registered and 22 attended.

Dialogue for Community and Belonging

OICR partnered with the Democracy and Dialogues Initiative on August 12, 2025 to facilitate *Dialogue for Community and Belonging* for the Provost's Council of Deans. The session engaged approximately 30 academic leaders in a conversation focused on fostering community, strengthening relationships, and creating environments where individuals feel valued, connected, and supported.

Support and Advocacy Panel

On December 3, 2025, OICR hosted a Support and Advocacy Panel moderated by Dr. Mark Overmyer-Velazquez, Campus Dean and Chief Administrative Officer at UConn Hartford.

The panel focused on supporting colleagues and students with temporary or precarious immigration statuses while exploring what human-centered advocacy looks like amid uncertainty. While centered on immigration-related concerns, the discussion emphasized practical approaches to advocacy, resource navigation, and community support during periods of uncertainty. Panelists included representatives from the Hispanic Health Council, immigration legal services, UConn faculty, and graduate education, offering perspectives on advocacy, support resources, and community care.

This event drew 127 RSVPs and 62 attendees.

“

Continue to use my voice, assess my own risk level, and engage with community partners who are doing incredible work.”

– Participant, Support and Advocacy Panel

Coffee Breaks

Coffee Breaks provided welcoming and informal spaces for faculty, staff, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and trainees to connect and build community across campuses, roles, and disciplines. In a year shaped by significant institutional, national, and global events, these gatherings offered participants a consistent opportunity for conversation, reflection, and support. While some sessions included structured activities or guest facilitators, discussions were largely shaped by the interests, experiences, and needs participants brought with them, allowing conversations to evolve organically and respond to what was most relevant in the moment.

At UConn

Held weekly in alternating virtual and in-person formats, Coffee Breaks drew participation from faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows across the University. Throughout the academic year, the gatherings featured activities and conversations designed to foster connection, reflection, and shared learning while creating opportunities for participants to engage across campuses, roles, and disciplines.

Highlights included a Winter Potluck where participants shared dishes from their home countries and cultures, creating a community-building experience centered on food and storytelling.

Another gathering featured an immersive art experience using Visual Thinking Strategies and Native American artwork facilitated by Martina Rosenberg from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The session drew inspiration from the Native American Cultural Programs space, where participants engaged in observation, reflection, and dialogue through the artwork on display.

Melanie Sinche, Director of Graduate Student Success, facilitated a conversation with attendees about graduate student experiences, inviting participants to share perspectives on their academic journeys, areas where the University could better support graduate students, and opportunities to strengthen the graduate student experience.

Other discussions emerged organically from participants and reflected both personal and professional dimensions of community life. Recurring themes included balancing work and parenting, financial wellness, cultural traditions and cuisine, spirituality, and beliefs surrounding death, dying, and bereavement.

Sixty-two faculty, staff, and learners participated throughout the academic year.

Participants represented campuses including Hartford and Waterbury and units such as Student Health and Wellness, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Dean of Students Office, Facilities and Operations, Native American Cultural Programs, the Office of the Provost, Information Technology Services, The Graduate School, the School of Business, the School of Computing, and the College of Engineering.

At UConn Health

Offered bimonthly during the fall semester and monthly during the spring semester, the Hybrid Coffee Break Series provided faculty, staff, and learners with regular opportunities to reflect, connect, and build community.

A December Coffee Break, held in collaboration with the UConn Health Peer Support Program, featured Drs. Dyanne Tappin and Jason Carrese in a conversation focused on strengthening community and advancing a culture of care.

Other sessions explored topics such as respect and honor, well-being and burnout prevention, and the shared responsibility of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work.

While attendance varied throughout the year, the series reflected OICR's continued commitment to accessible engagement, visibility, and community care at UConn Health.



Coffee Break Series. Faculty, staff, and graduate students connected across campuses through conversation, reflection, and community-building.

Faculty and Staff Affinity Groups

OICR continued to support UConn's faculty and staff affinity groups, which play an important role in fostering connection, professional development, mentorship, and community across the University system. These groups are open to all and help cultivate a thriving, mission-driven university community by bringing colleagues together around shared experiences while welcoming all who wish to learn, support, and engage.

Throughout the academic year, affinity groups hosted programs that strengthened professional networks, supported employee wellbeing, encouraged leadership development, and created opportunities for engagement across campuses and units. OICR supported affinity group leaders through regular communication, consultation, and collaboration, including an annual leadership meeting that brought together affinity group representatives with partners from Human Resources, the Office of the General Counsel, and the UConn Foundation to discuss communication practices, fundraising guidance, and organizational planning.

African American Faculty and Staff Association (AAFSA) supported opportunities for connection, advocacy, and professional engagement, including co-sponsorship of the Black Excellence Summit. The summit brought together students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members to discuss shared experiences, strengthen professional and community networks, and promote collective success. AAFSA also contributed to initiatives and conversations that supported belonging and engagement across the University community.

Asian/Asian American Faculty and Staff Association (A3FSA) continued to support community-building, visibility, and engagement among faculty and staff. Activities included meetings, outreach efforts, and participation in university-wide events such as the Health Equity Research Symposium, creating opportunities for connection, representation, and engagement across the institution.

Association of Latino Faculty and Staff (ALFAS) continued to foster community, professional development, and cross-campus engagement through workshops, networking opportunities, and institutional partnerships. Programming included *Build Better Workplace Relationships: From Conflict to Collaboration*, facilitated by Marisol Cruz, which focused on strengthening workplace communication and collaboration. ALFAS also partnered with PRLACC during Hispanic Heritage Month, hosted gatherings across Storrs and Hartford, collaborated with El Instituto and the Connecticut Association of Latinos in Higher Education, and engaged in joint programming with affinity groups and campus partners throughout the year.

Moms4Moms continued to strengthen support networks for faculty and staff parents through community-building, resource sharing, and collaboration. In partnership with the Student and Expecting Parent Program, the group supported diaper drives and Baby & Family Resource Gatherings that connected parenting students, faculty, and staff with resources and support. The group also continued to expand participation and strengthen its role as a hub for connection, advocacy, and information-sharing for parents across the University system.

Queer UConn Employees (QUE) continued to create opportunities for connection, visibility, and learning through educational programs, film screenings, social gatherings, and campus outreach. Programming encouraged discussion of gender, identity, belonging, and community while creating opportunities for employees across campuses to build relationships and strengthen support networks. Highlights included a screening and discussion of *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up*, a celebration of QUE's sixth anniversary featuring *ALOK: Biology*, collaborative events with other affinity groups, Pride Night with UConn Athletics and the Rainbow Center, and outreach efforts at UConn Waterbury's Pride Party.

Supporting Historically Excluded Writing (SHEW) Group began the 2025–2026 academic year with a new identity, reflecting the initiative's evolution and community ownership. The new name was selected by participants following the previous year's writing retreats. Supported by the Office of the Provost, SHEW provides structured writing retreats that foster scholarly productivity, accountability, and peer support among faculty across the University. The hybrid retreat model engaged participants from the Storrs, Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury campuses and included faculty from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, School of Social Work, and School of Pharmacy. Participants represented a variety of academic roles, including tenure-track, clinical, in-residence, research, and library faculty, and worked on internally and externally funded grant proposals, including NIH and NSF submissions, as well as scholarly manuscripts for publication. Through these retreats, SHEW strengthened opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, professional development, and scholarly productivity across the University.

Women's Affinity Group (WAG) hosted programs that combined wellness education, networking, and community-building. Programming included Pelvic Floor Workshops and seasonal gatherings that encouraged discussion of women's health and wellbeing while creating opportunities for faculty and staff to build relationships and expand professional networks across the University.

Women of Color Collective (WoCC) convened programs focused on leadership development, wellness, mentorship, and professional growth. The annual retreat, *ElevateHER: Whole, Skilled, Unstoppable*, brought together faculty and staff from across the University system for a day of learning and reflection centered on resilience, career advancement, and wellbeing. Programming featured Penny Davis, MBA, who led a session on supporting women through transitions; Dr. Lenora Williams, who provided insights on perimenopause and menopause; and Dr. Linda Barry, who facilitated an interactive networking session. The retreat also featured *Lessons from the Journey: Women of Color on Navigating UConn and Beyond*, a panel moderated by Dr. Jonelle Reynolds that highlighted the experiences and perspectives of faculty and staff across the institution. Additional programming throughout the year included workshops on resilience and opportunities for community-building and peer support.

Women of Color Collective (WoCC) Farmington Chapter organized workshops, book discussions, invited speaker events, and networking opportunities that encouraged dialogue, reflection, and professional development. Programs addressed topics including resilience, organizational development, identity, women's health, and community engagement. Featured speakers included Dr. Rocio Chang, who facilitated a SoulCollage workshop; Sarah Heffner, MFA, who presented on identity and fashion; Marisol Cruz, who led a discussion on resilience and organizational development; and Dr. Janaya Hernandez, whose presentation explored the role of community in advancing equity and professional growth. Additional programming included a discussion of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and invited conversations with faculty leaders from UConn Health.

Together, these groups contributed significantly to a sense of belonging across UConn and UConn Health by creating spaces where faculty and staff could build relationships, engage in professional development, share experiences, and strengthen connections across the University community.

Strategic Working Groups and Institutional Initiatives

Cross-functional working groups and institutional initiatives brought together faculty, staff, administrators, healthcare professionals, and community partners to address emerging challenges, strengthen institutional practices, and advance strategic priorities. These groups provided opportunities for collaboration, information sharing, problem-solving, and coordinated responses to issues affecting students, employees, patients, and the broader University community.

Collaboration with Leadership from the CSCU System

In partnership with leaders across the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system, OICR explored opportunities to strengthen workforce pathways, expand clinical placements, and increase employment opportunities for students pursuing careers in high-demand healthcare occupations. These discussions supported broader efforts to strengthen Connecticut's healthcare workforce pipeline and create pathways to employment and advancement.

DEI Representatives Group

OICR convened monthly meetings of DEI representatives from 48 units across UConn, regional campuses, and UConn Health, representing 74 members. The group served as a forum for sharing information, identifying emerging concerns, exchanging best practices, and strengthening coordination across schools, colleges, campuses, and administrative units. Discussions addressed topics including accommodations, immigration, active threat response, bias reporting, student and employee support resources, academic transitions, organizational change, and strategies for advancing institutional priorities during periods of uncertainty.

DEI Training Stakeholders Working Group

The DEI Training Stakeholders Working Group focused on strengthening alignment and collaboration across employee and manager training initiatives. Efforts included revisions to search committee training, development of guidance related to alternatives to diversity statements, and integration of compliance requirements with considerations related to belonging, bias mitigation, and inclusive workplace practices.

Gender-Affirming Care Working Group

This interdisciplinary working group advanced efforts related to culturally responsive education, LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and practices, community engagement, and quality improvement. The group's work supported UConn Health's successful participation in the Healthcare Equality Index and ongoing efforts to strengthen affirming care practices for patients, learners, faculty, and staff.

Rapid Response Team

The Rapid Response Team continued to monitor evolving federal policy developments and executive actions and assess their implications for students, faculty, staff, researchers, and other members of the University community. Comprised of 26 participants representing a broad range of institutional functions, the team served as a forum for sharing information, coordinating resources, and identifying potential impacts related to immigration enforcement, travel restrictions, government shutdowns, MSI grant funding, free speech, student loan eligibility, research activities, and other federal policy changes.

To support this work, the team was organized into two focus areas. The *Impact on People* team, led by Dr. Jonelle Reynolds, Director of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives, assessed how federal actions and policy changes affected individuals across the UConn community. The *Impact on Infrastructure* team, led by Kathleen Holgerson, Interim Associate Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, examined the structural and operational implications of executive orders and other federal communications. Together, the teams worked to support informed decision-making, coordinated response efforts, and timely communication during a rapidly changing policy environment.

SCOTUS Committee

Representatives from admissions, enrollment, and academic units continued discussions regarding admissions practices following *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*. The committee provided a forum for monitoring legal developments, sharing information, and discussing institutional implications for admissions-related policies and practices.

TJC Health Disparities Working Group

The TJC Health Disparities Working Group advanced efforts related to social determinants of health screening, race, ethnicity, and language data collection, and community feedback regarding culturally responsive health education materials. The group's work supported ongoing efforts to improve patient experiences, strengthen health equity practices, and meet accreditation-related expectations.

Upcoming Cuts to Medicaid Working Group

The office partnered with the Connecticut Department of Social Services and the Connecticut Hospital Association to support statewide planning and coordination efforts related to potential Medicaid funding changes. The working group brought together partners across finance, compliance, and operational areas to collaborate on strategies and tactics that would strengthen hospital and community readiness while helping protect access to care for Medicaid beneficiaries.

Consultations, Support, and Advocacy

The Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights serves as a consultative resource for students, faculty, staff, managers, and departments across UConn and UConn Health. Throughout the academic year, OICR responded to more than 50 consultation requests and provided guidance, advocacy, coaching, and resource navigation on a wide range of issues affecting the learning, working, and care environments across the University system.

Many consultations involved proactive problem-solving, policy interpretation, and resource navigation, allowing concerns to be addressed before they escalated into formal disputes or complaints. Through this work, OICR helped community members understand institutional processes, identify available resources, navigate complex situations, and develop practical approaches to addressing challenges.

This consultation and advocacy work is distinct from the formal complaint, investigation, and compliance functions carried out by OICR's Civil Rights and Equity teams. Consultation services are designed to provide guidance, information, coaching, and resource navigation to help individuals and units understand available options, address concerns, and identify appropriate next steps. Many consultations involve questions, concerns, or requests for support that do not result in a formal complaint or investigation. Consultations addressed topics including discrimination and bias, workplace climate, accessibility and accommodations, language access, immigration-related concerns, academic freedom, religious accommodations, patient and employee experiences, and inclusive practices. OICR also supported departments seeking guidance on website content, affinity group development, classroom dynamics, and strategies for fostering belonging and inclusion within their units.

A significant area of consultation involved supporting managers, supervisors, and academic leaders as they navigated complex workplace and educational environments. OICR provided coaching on addressing difficult conversations, responding to bias incidents, understanding power dynamics, managing group and team interactions, supporting employees through organizational change, and creating environments where all community members could contribute and succeed. Consultations also included discussions related to syllabus content, classroom activities, and academic freedom, with a focus on ensuring educational practices aligned with course objectives and disciplinary competencies.

OICR also served as a resource for individuals seeking support related to discrimination, bias, accessibility, and inclusion concerns. Staff provided information about University policies, available resources, reporting options, and potential pathways for addressing

concerns. In many instances, OICR helped individuals and departments identify practical solutions, clarify institutional responsibilities, and connect with appropriate campus partners.

At UConn Health, consultation topics included patient and employee experiences involving discrimination and bias, language accessibility, guidance for bilingual and multilingual staff interacting with patients in their native language, and considerations related to the use of interpreting services, including Video Remote Interpreting and American Sign Language interpretation. These consultations helped support equitable access to services while balancing regulatory, operational, and patient-centered considerations.

Although consultation work often occurs outside of formal programs and events, it remains a core component of OICR's mission. Through individualized support, coaching, problem-solving, and advocacy, OICR helps strengthen fairness, accessibility, accountability, and belonging across the University community. In addition, themes emerging through consultations frequently informed OICR's educational programming, workshops, and training initiatives, allowing the office to address recurring concerns proactively and at scale.

Education and Training

Education and training are central to Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights' mission of fostering inclusive, accessible, and equitable learning, working, and care environments across UConn and UConn Health. While many concerns and questions are addressed through individual consultations, recurring themes often inform broader educational initiatives that allow OICR to proactively build knowledge, strengthen skills, and support institutional capacity at scale.

Throughout the 2025–2026 academic year, OICR delivered required employee trainings, customized workshops, presentations, and learner-focused sessions that addressed topics including civil rights compliance, workplace climate, accessibility, bias, belonging, leadership, communication, ethical decision-making, and organizational culture. These sessions engaged faculty, staff, students, trainees, and institutional leaders across multiple campuses and disciplines.

Required Employee Training

OICR administered three training programs required of all Connecticut state employees at UConn and UConn Health: Diversity Awareness Training, Sexual Harassment Prevention Training, and Understanding Domestic Violence. These trainings supported the University's commitment to maintaining learning and working environments that are free from discrimination and harassment while ensuring compliance with state requirements.

All three trainings were delivered through online, self-paced modules and were required for new employees within 30 days of hire. In 2025, 3,096 individuals at UConn and 1,334 individuals at UConn Health completed these required trainings. Participants were invited to complete post-training evaluations, which OICR used to review and refine course content and delivery.

“

I enjoyed Diversity Training as it encouraged me to consider the perspectives and experiences of new colleagues.”

– Participant, Diversity Awareness Training

Workshops and Presentations

OICR developed and facilitated workshops and presentations tailored to the needs of departments, schools, programs, and faculty and staff groups. Topics included creating cultures of belonging, unconscious bias in decision-making, inclusive language and practices, supporting women in STEM, and navigating the evolving landscape of diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.

A frequently requested workshop, *Creating a Culture of Belonging: Addressing Bias, Exclusion, and Power Dynamics in the Workplace*, was developed in collaboration with Human Resources and delivered to staff and leaders in Dermatology, Neurology, Health Information Systems, and Nursing Leadership. The workshop focused on recognizing the impact of bias, exclusion, and power dynamics while providing practical strategies for fostering respectful, psychologically safe workplace environments.

Additional offerings included *Research Across Difference: Beyond IRB, Ethical and Cultural Competence in Research Practice*; *Culturally Competent Supervision: Power, Feedback, and Accountability*; and *Navigating Scientific/Scholarly Inquiry and Community in Challenging Times*. These sessions provided faculty, staff, researchers, and supervisors with opportunities to examine how culture, identity, power dynamics, and evolving external conditions shape research, mentorship, supervision, and academic communities.

OICR also delivered presentations to a variety of professional and academic audiences, including Peer Support Lunch and Learn, UConn Health Ambassadors, Psychiatry Grand Rounds, residency interview committees, Residential Life, and the Women in STEM Mentoring Program. These sessions provided opportunities to discuss emerging issues affecting higher education and healthcare while reinforcing best practices related to equity, inclusion, accessibility, belonging, mentoring, and leadership.

For undergraduate students and emerging professionals, OICR developed and facilitated educational workshops focused on professional identity, communication, leadership, and community-building. Sessions included *DEI in Practice: What It Looks Like Inside an Organization*, *The Professional You're Becoming: Values, Voice, and Boundaries*, and *What Does It Mean to Cultivate a Community?* Through these experiences, students explored organizational culture, ethical decision-making, navigating power and difference, and the skills needed to contribute to respectful, inclusive, and effective workplaces and communities.

Campus and Conference Engagement

In addition to workshops and formal training programs, OICR staff contributed to campus-wide conferences, panels, facilitated dialogues, and community-engaged learning initiatives throughout the academic year. These engagements provided opportunities to share expertise, support learning, and advance conversations related to belonging, student success, equity, leadership, and community wellbeing.

Highlights included co-facilitation of the Access and Equity track at UConn's 2026 Student Success Conference, where participants examined barriers to student success, explored opportunities to strengthen belonging and equitable outcomes, and generated recommendations to inform institutional improvement efforts.

Staff also moderated *Community-Engaged Learning in Action: Building Solidarity in Challenging Times*, a faculty and community engagement panel co-hosted by UConn and Trinity College in partnership with the Provost's Office for Outreach and Community Engagement and the Research on Resilient Cities, Racism, and Equity Collaborative.

At the Wellbeing Collective Forum, OICR staff participated in a panel discussion focused on supporting regional campus students and students navigating campus change.

Through these engagements, OICR contributed expertise in inclusion, belonging, civic engagement, student support, and organizational change while supporting dialogue among faculty, staff, students, and community partners.

Compliance

The Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights (OICR) manages University system-wide compliance with state and federal civil rights, accessibility, non-discrimination, and equal employment opportunity laws and regulations. OICR administers the University's Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence and related policies concerning civil rights and non-discrimination. Compliance work includes education, prevention, accommodations, supportive measures, policy implementation, monitoring, and response efforts designed to ensure that all members of the University community can work, learn, participate, and receive services free from discrimination and harassment.

As part of the merger of the Office of Institutional Equity and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, OICR brought together expertise in civil rights compliance, accessibility, equal employment opportunity, education, and inclusion. In October 2025, the newly created role of Director of Civil Rights Compliance was established, serving as the University's ADA, Title VI, and Title IX Coordinator. OICR's compliance portfolio includes the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; affirmative action and equal employment opportunity requirements; and related laws, regulations, and policies governing accessibility, discrimination, harassment, and equal opportunity.

Employment Equity and Search Compliance

The Equal Employment Opportunity and Search Compliance Team within OICR plays a vital role in upholding the University's commitment to equity and legal compliance. This team is chiefly responsible for ensuring adherence to state Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO) rules and regulations, which include monitoring the entire search and hire process to ensure non-discrimination based on protected classes. To support these efforts, they provide comprehensive search compliance education and training focused on equitable and proactive recruitment, applicant evaluation, non-discriminatory interviewing, and selection. Additionally, this team compiles essential data to prepare state affirmative action plans and required demographic reports for both Storrs & Regionals and UConn Health. Their compliance mandate also extends to the federal level, where they write federal affirmative action plans for Individuals with Disabilities and Veterans for all campuses, as required by VEVRAA and Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974.

Search Review

For the Storrs and the regional campuses, searches are substantively reviewed by the

Employment Equity team at two stages of the process: pre-interview and pre-offer. At the pre-interview stage, the review ensures that proactive recruitment strategies were implemented by search committees and hiring departments. The review also assesses whether disposition reasons for applicant ranking are qualification-related, objective, and specific. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Employment Equity team conducted search reviews throughout the academic year at both the interview and hire stages to support equitable and compliant hiring practices.

Figure 1.

Search Reviews Conducted by the Employment Equity Team, Storrs and Regional Campuses, July 2025–May 2026



For UConn Health, searches are reviewed at the end of the process. The staff also provide support and guidance to search committees, hiring departments, and search administrators as well as on-line resources to support an equitable and compliant search and hire process.

Affirmative Action Plans

Affirmative Action Plans (AAPs), as required under Connecticut General Statute (CGS) §46a-68 and sections 46a-68-75 to 46a-68-114, inclusive, are submitted to the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) annually.

The AAPs focus specifically on the University's full-time permanent workforce. Comprising sixteen required sections, the report thoroughly examines and seeks to improve upon policies and employment practices that may adversely affect members of protected classes across all facets of employment. By quantitatively and qualitatively measuring the

University's degree of success in meeting regulatory requirements, each AAP serves to illustrate UConn and UConn Health's good faith efforts to ensure equal employment opportunity, mitigate discrimination, and achieve a workforce that is fully representational of relevant labor markets. Ultimately, it establishes key hiring, promotional, and program goals designed to actively promote affirmative action and equal opportunity moving forward.

The Storrs and Regionals AAP covered the period from December 1, 2024, through November 30, 2025, and was submitted to CHRO on March 30, 2026. The AAP included a detailed narrative for 318 new hires, outlining the qualifications posted, the recruitment strategies employed, and an overview of the applicant pool, along with detailed justifications for how each applicant was evaluated against the qualifications posted in the job description. This section illustrates the University's good faith effort with an objective, equitable and complaint search and hire process. This AAP was approved by CHRO on June 10, 2026.

The UConn Health AAP covered the period from June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025, and was submitted September 30, 2025. This AAP included the same detailed narratives for 514 new hires. This AAP was officially approved by CHRO on December 10, 2025.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

In addition to the ADA team's ongoing work addressing student, employee, applicant, and visitor inquiries regarding accessibility and accommodations, two significant areas of focus during the year were digital accessibility and employee accommodations.

Title II of the ADA requires the University to comply with enhanced accessibility standards for websites and digital communications. In coordination with Information Technology Services and Communications, the ADA team participated in awareness and training initiatives across UConn and UConn Health and supported efforts to remediate and maintain existing documents and websites consistent with accessibility standards. This work remains ongoing as the University's digital presence continues to expand.

In March 2026, responsibility for managing employee workplace accommodation requests transitioned from Human Resources to OICR. The team coordinated closely with Human Resources at both UConn and UConn Health to ensure a seamless transition. A new OICR website and accommodation request system was implemented to provide information and

resources for employees, applicants, and supervisors participating in the accommodation process. Since the transition in March 2026, OICR's accommodations team facilitated more than 110 accommodation requests across UConn and UConn Health.

Title VI and Title VII

OICR serves all members of the University community by responding to inquiries and complaints related to discrimination, discriminatory harassment, and other forms of prohibited conduct under the Policy Against Discrimination. OICR's response may include providing information about policies and resources, facilitating supportive measures, conducting reviews and assessments, and carrying out investigations when appropriate.

During the fiscal year, OICR responded to more than 220 matters across the University system. This work enables the University to identify opportunities for education, accountability, and systemic improvement while ensuring that concerns are addressed in a fair and consistent manner.

As the office of the University's Title VI Coordinator, OICR also reviews reports of identity-based bias and discriminatory conduct to identify patterns, assess institutional response processes, and recommend educational and supportive interventions. These efforts help strengthen the University's ability to respond to concerns while fostering learning, accountability, and community trust.

Title IX

OICR serves as the office of the University's Title IX Coordinator and receives reports involving sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and related interpersonal harm. The Title IX team ensures that reports are appropriately documented, connects impacted individuals with resources and supportive measures, and oversees compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

During the fiscal year, approximately 350 reports were submitted to the Title IX Coordinator. These reports included matters occurring within the University community as well as situations in which individuals sought information, resources, or support. In all cases, impacted individuals were provided information regarding available resources, reporting options, and investigative processes.

Beyond case response, the Title IX team develops and facilitates educational programs for students and employees throughout the year. In collaboration with campus partners, the

team provided in-person training to all Athletics teams on topics including consent, identifying and reporting harm, supporting peers, and understanding available resources and accountability processes.

The Title IX team also continued to advance prevention, assessment, and compliance initiatives. During the spring semester, a campus climate survey was distributed to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students across all campuses, including UConn Health. Ongoing efforts included reviewing and updating educational materials, monitoring data and trends, preparing statutorily required reports, and evaluating University processes related to prevention, response, support, and accountability.

Through its compliance work, OICR helps ensure that the University meets its legal obligations while fostering environments where community members can learn, work, conduct research, and receive care in settings that are accessible, equitable, safe, and free from discrimination and harassment.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Collaboration is central to Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights' approach to advancing inclusion, belonging, accessibility, health equity, and institutional effectiveness. Throughout the academic year, OICR partnered with academic departments, healthcare leaders, community organizations, affinity groups, student support offices, and external stakeholders to develop programs, strengthen systems, and address challenges that no single office could effectively address alone.

Advancing Health Equity Through Data and Practice

A major area of collaboration focused on advancing health equity across UConn Health. OICR continued development of the Health Equity Dashboard, a centralized tool designed to help leaders and providers examine patient outcomes, workforce demographics, patient grievance data, and community health trends. By consolidating information from multiple sources into an accessible format, the dashboard supports evidence-informed decision-making and helps identify opportunities to improve patient experiences, reduce disparities, and strengthen accountability.

OICR also partnered with academic programs to support Master of Public Health practicum placements. Student projects contributed to key institutional initiatives, including the Health Equity Dashboard and coordination of UConn Health's submission to the Human Rights Campaign's Healthcare Equality Index, a national benchmarking tool that evaluates policies and practices related to LGBTQ+ inclusion for patients, visitors, and employees.

Community Engagement and Educational Partnerships

OICR partnered with numerous campus and community organizations to provide educational programming responsive to emerging needs and current events. In collaboration with the Dean of Students Office, Junta for Progressive Action, the New Haven Immigrants Coalition, and the John Dempsey Hospital Diversity Council, OICR hosted Know Your Rights workshops for students, faculty, staff, and learners. These sessions provided practical information and resources related to immigration concerns and community support.

Additional collaborations included *Reframing Your Perspective as a Health Care Professional*, a LAUNCH session developed in partnership with the Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine, and *The (M) Factor: Shredding the Silence on Menopause*, a screening and panel discussion held in collaboration with the Health Disparities Institute's Menopause Equity Initiative. Together, these initiatives expanded opportunities for

learning, dialogue, and engagement around issues affecting health, wellbeing, and professional practice.

Developing Future Healthcare Leaders

OICR collaborated with UConn Graduate Medical Education through the Integrating Medicine, Purpose, and Action through Collaborative Thinking (IMPACT) Leadership Track. As part of the program, OICR developed team-based projects focused on health equity and organizational improvement, including the creation and implementation of a Health Equity Data Dashboard and development of a Community Health Needs Assessment implementation plan. These projects provided residents and fellows with opportunities to apply leadership and systems-thinking skills to real institutional challenges while advancing strategic priorities related to health equity and community engagement.

Leadership and Professional Development Partnerships

OICR collaborated with partners across the University to support leadership development, mentorship, networking, and professional growth opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and trainees.

One example was the Women's Leadership Forum, a collaborative initiative that brings together women leaders and allies from across UConn who are committed to supporting leadership development, mentorship, and professional advancement. During the academic year, the Women's Leadership Forum hosted *The Power of Connection: Mentoring, Sponsorship, and Coaching*, a panel discussion featuring leaders from academic medicine, global affairs, alumni relations, and higher education administration. The program explored the distinct roles of mentoring, sponsorship, and coaching in career advancement while creating opportunities for participants to connect with colleagues across disciplines and campuses. Thirty-three individuals attended the event.

OICR also partnered with the Office of Multicultural and Community Affairs in the School of Medicine and numerous campus partners to host Dr. Sylk Sotto for the OICR Leadership Session, *Words Don't Change the Goal: Centering the Mission of Academic Health and Health Systems*. The visit included a campus lecture attended by approximately 75 to 80 participants, meetings with leaders in quality and research, engagement with the WoCC-Farmington network, a presentation to the DEI Representatives Group titled *Advancing the Mission in Uncertain Times*, and a student roundtable attended by 18 students and trainees. The roundtable was organized in collaboration with the School of Medicine, School of Dental Medicine, Graduate School at UConn Health, Graduate School Diversity Committee, IMPACT Leadership Track, Department of Public Health Sciences, CT AHEC,

and UConn Health leaders. Together, these engagements created opportunities for dialogue about leadership, organizational culture, health equity, and advancing institutional missions during periods of change and uncertainty.

Supporting Inclusive Excellence at UConn Health

OICR continued to support institutional partners across UConn Health through ongoing collaboration with the John Dempsey Hospital Diversity Council and the Emergency Department DEI Committee. These partnerships included professional development programming, educational initiatives, community engagement activities, and recognition of heritage and observance months. Topics addressed through these collaborations included active listening, race, ethnicity, and language data collection, microaggressions, and strategies for fostering inclusive and welcoming environments for patients, employees, and learners.

Through these and other partnerships, OICR leveraged collective expertise, strengthened relationships across institutions and communities, and expanded the impact of its work in support of equity, health, belonging, and organizational excellence.

Word of the Month

In partnership with UConn Health Communications, OICR launched the Word of the Month initiative during Fall 2025. Each month, a selected word highlighted the accomplishments and strengths of the UConn Health community while encouraging reflection on values that support respectful, inclusive, and collaborative environments. The initiative provided a recurring opportunity to reinforce community-centered themes through internal communications and was featured through January 2026.

University Service and Institutional Engagement

OICR contributes to the University's mission not only through programming, consultation, and compliance activities, but also through participation in institutional committees, advisory groups, and strategic initiatives. Throughout the academic year, OICR staff provided subject-matter expertise and leadership on issues related to student success, employee wellbeing, accessibility, campus climate, health equity, safety, and belonging.

OICR also contributed to community partnership development and external engagement efforts designed to strengthen relationships between the University and the communities it serves. Throughout the year, staff engaged with municipal leaders, community organizations, and university-community collaborators to identify opportunities for partnership, dialogue, and shared programming. Activities included engagement with representatives connected to Greenwich's Diversity Advisory Committee regarding youth engagement initiatives and Black History Month programming opportunities.

At the University level, OICR participated in a range of committees and working groups focused on institutional planning, policy development, student support, and organizational effectiveness. These included the Safe Environment Ad Hoc Taskforce, One Stop Steering Committee, Health Promoting University Steering Committee, Graduate Student Life Sub-Committee, Code of Conduct Revision Working Group, Graduate School Diversity Committee, Expecting and Parenting Student Working Group, and the Advisory Committee on Supporting Our University Community with Temporary and/or Precarious Immigration Statuses.

OICR staff also contributed to institution-wide initiatives focused on hiring practices, curriculum, engagement, and organizational development through participation in the Diversity Statement Alternatives Working Group, Dialogue and Information, Digital, and Media Literacy (IDML) Subcommittee of CCC+, Menopause Equity Initiative Planning Group, HSI Tertulia Planning Committee, Alumni Engagement Stakeholders Group, and the Provost's Awards for Excellence in Community Engagement Committee.

OICR staff also served on committees focused on campus safety, wellbeing, and institutional accountability, including the Workplace Violence Steering Committee, Abuse and Neglect Committee, Wellness Committee, and the President's Council on Combating Sexual Violence and Harassment. Through these roles, OICR helped advance coordinated approaches to prevention, support, policy development, and community wellbeing.

Beyond the University, OICR contributed to statewide and national initiatives focused on health equity, civic engagement, and inclusive excellence. These efforts included participation in the Connecticut State Comptroller's Health Equity Cabinet, the Connecticut Hospital Association Health Equity Committee and Health Equity Advisory

Working Group, the North Hartford Triple Aim Collaborative, the Governor's Council on Women and Girls, and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Action Collaborative. Through these engagements, OICR helped bring institutional expertise to broader conversations while strengthening partnerships that benefit both the University and the communities it serves.

Campus Climate Committee

The UConn Campus Climate Committee traces its origins to the 2023–2024 academic year, when a cross-functional Crisis Response Team was convened and chaired by the Provost to address campus issues related to student activism, protest activity, and community concerns following the events of October 7, 2023. As campus conditions stabilized, the committee's focus broadened beyond immediate crisis response.

In October 2025, the group was formally reconstituted as the Campus Climate Committee and leadership transitioned to Jeffrey Hines, MD, Vice President for Inclusion and Civil Rights. Reflecting its expanded mission, the committee adopted a more holistic and proactive approach to assessing and addressing issues affecting campus climate across the University community.

The Campus Climate Committee is a multidisciplinary, cross-sector, and interprofessional body that convenes biweekly and includes representatives from Student Life and Enrollment, International Affairs, Public Safety, Compliance, Civil Rights, Communications, and other key institutional functions. The committee serves as a forum for identifying emerging concerns, sharing information, coordinating institutional strategies, and promoting a campus environment that supports safety, belonging, civil discourse, academic freedom, and community wellbeing. During the year, topics included lethal means restriction strategies, institutional responses to federal immigration enforcement activity, employee and student morale, academic freedom, hate speech, and other issues affecting campus climate.

Public and Community Engagement

OICR leadership and staff contributed to a variety of community, professional, and public engagement initiatives throughout the academic year. These activities strengthened relationships with community partners, elevated the University's commitment to equity

and inclusion, and connected institutional expertise to broader conversations occurring across Connecticut and beyond.

Vice President Jeffrey Hines, MD, delivered keynote addresses at the Connecticut Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission's annual commemoration at the Connecticut State Capitol and the Connecticut Public Health Association Annual Meeting. These invitations reflected OICR's leadership in advancing conversations related to health equity, community wellbeing, civil rights, and inclusive excellence.

Additional community engagement activities included participation in the Connecticut Latino Policy Summit; Puerto Rico | Puerto Ricans in Connecticut: Building a Collective Economic Agenda; the Black Excellence Summit; UConn's Iftar Dinner; the Migrant Teach-In; Nowruz; the Opening of the Caribbean Heritage Museum; the 2025 Women of Innovation Awards; and the 2025 Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans Business Showcase and Awards Ceremony. Through these engagements, OICR strengthened partnerships, supported community dialogue, and contributed to initiatives that promote educational opportunity, belonging, civic engagement, and community wellbeing.

Communications

Effective communication plays an important role in advancing OICR's mission by increasing awareness of resources, promoting educational opportunities, recognizing the diversity of our community, and fostering engagement across UConn and UConn Health. Throughout the academic year, OICR's communications efforts focused on visibility, accessibility, community connection, and information sharing.

Heritage and Observance Messaging

Heritage and observance messaging remained a cornerstone of OICR's communications strategy. Each month, the team develops original written content and visual materials recognizing the diverse cultural, religious, and identity-based communities that make up UConn. These messages are created in collaboration with community members and campus partners and serve as opportunities to celebrate contributions, increase awareness, and foster a greater sense of belonging across the University community. During the 2025–2026 academic year, OICR recognized 64 heritage months, commemorative events, and observances through coordinated communications and educational messaging.

Weekly Newsletter

The OICR Weekly Newsletter continued to serve as a primary communications channel for faculty, staff, students, and learners throughout the academic year. The newsletter highlights OICR programs and initiatives, upcoming events, heritage and observance recognitions, educational resources, and opportunities for engagement across the University community.

Between September 2025 and May 2026, OICR distributed 42 newsletter editions to 1,819 subscribers. The newsletter maintained an average open rate of 19.3 percent, generating approximately 346 opens per edition. In addition to sharing information about OICR programs and services, the newsletter served as a platform for elevating campus resources, highlighting partner initiatives, and connecting community members with opportunities across UConn and UConn Health.

In partnership with campus and health system partners, OICR's communications efforts increased awareness of resources, highlighted opportunities for engagement, recognized the diversity of the University community, and helped connect faculty, staff, students, and learners with programs and services across UConn and UConn Health. Through these efforts, OICR continued to strengthen awareness, promote engagement, and create opportunities for connection across the University's diverse communities.

Campus Outreach and Visibility

OICR also participated in employee resource fairs, student welcome events, heritage celebrations, and campus-wide engagement activities, using these opportunities to connect directly with community members and increase awareness of the office's expanding portfolio following the October 2025 merger. Through tabling and outreach activities, OICR introduced faculty, staff, students, and visitors to the office's services, answered questions, distributed educational materials, and increased awareness of resources related to civil rights, accessibility, education, consultation, accommodations, and reporting options. These efforts strengthened OICR's visibility across the University while reinforcing its role as a trusted resource for the campus community.



Campus Outreach and Resource Fair. OICR staff connected with students, faculty, staff, and visitors to share resources and increase awareness of the office's services and programs.

Looking Ahead

As the Office for Inclusion and Civil Rights continues to evolve, OICR remains committed to advancing accessibility, civil rights compliance, health equity, belonging, and institutional excellence across UConn and UConn Health.

Building upon the work highlighted throughout this report, OICR will continue strengthening its integrated approach to compliance, education, consultation, community engagement, and organizational development. Priorities for the coming year include expanding accessibility resources and communications, including the launch of a dedicated ADA-focused newsletter; enhancing data-informed approaches to health equity and institutional effectiveness; supporting student success and employee wellbeing; and strengthening partnerships across the University and the communities it serves.

As higher education and healthcare continue to navigate evolving legal, regulatory, and societal challenges, OICR will remain focused on providing guidance, fostering collaboration, supporting compliance, and creating opportunities for learning, engagement, and community-building. Through these efforts, OICR will continue to support the University's mission and help create environments where all members of the UConn community can learn, work, conduct research, receive care, and thrive.



Building Our Foundation: OICR staff at the inaugural retreat following the merger of the Office of Institutional Equity and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion.

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