

Colorado State centers diversity, equity, and inclusion in education

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It is an exciting time for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in veterinary medicine, and Colorado State University (CSU) is working to build a more just, equitable, inclusive, and diverse profession in multiple ways.

Our College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences named DEI as one of our strategic pillars in 2019 and in 2021 hired our first Assistant Dean of DEI, Naomi Nishi, PhD. In our first 3 years, we have focused on education, building our community's understanding of foundational concepts.

Beginning at DVM student orientation, we educate incoming students on microaggressions¹ to define language and strategies that root our education of tomorrow's veterinarians in equity and inclusion. We are working to create a shared language and responsibility for building an inclusive community.

Across the broader college, we offer ongoing education to our faculty and staff on microaggressions and equity-mindedness. We post regularly on our Biodiversity blog, which is shared through the college and on social media.

We manage a support system that invites faculty, staff, and students to share their experiences of exclusion, bias, and/or microaggressions. We create a space to connect with support systems and resources, and with permission from those sharing, we work to educate those who may have been involved in the harm experienced. This support system is an important signal to our community that we take our commitment to DEI seriously and continue to look for opportunities to do better.

We contribute to DEI-related research in veterinary medicine, and particularly related to DVM education. Our initial research has focused on microaggressions,¹ intersectionality, and equity-mindedness² in clinical and educational settings.

Our students continue to be DEI leaders, expanding on our work. In the last year, we have celebrated the following students receiving DEI-related awards (**Figure**):

- Summer Lara (third-year DVM student), Humane Society Compassionate Care Award
- Johnny Altwal (fourth-year DVM student), Merck Animal Health Diversity Leadership Scholarship
- Natalia Sanchez (fourth-year DVM student), Chewy Veterinary Leaders Scholarship

In 2024, CSU's Veterinarians One Inclusive Voice for Empowerment program hosted the national conference focused on access to care, and we celebrated the inception of our National Association of Black Veterinarians Chapter, an initiative led by DVM student Mercer Butts.

Our college launched an initiative in 2023 focused on sustainability, equity, and accessible care (SEA). This initia-



Award-winning CSU students Johnny Altwal, Natalia Sanchez (top), and Summer Lara. (CVMBS photo.)

tive acknowledges the interconnectedness of the health and well-being of people, animals, and the planet. The SEA initiative is building a curriculum in our DVM program that includes comprehensive DEI objectives, connected to environmental sustainability and access to care in our new Veterinary Health and Education Center.

These initiatives coincide with our intention to create a more inclusive environment for learning and discovery, enhancing underserved areas in the veterinary workforce and strengthening our program by adding diverse perspectives.

References

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2. Nishi NW, Watley E, Collier MJ, Morales GI. Applying intersectionality and equity-mindedness to CVM policy and practice. Paper presented at: American Association for Veterinary Medical Colleges Annual Meeting; April 11-13, 2024; Washington, DC.

