

# UW-Stout: Three Fellows announced by new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office

Posted on Thursday, Oct 7, 2021

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Menomonie, Wis. — A student, staff member and instructor will help represent the new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office at University of Wisconsin-Stout for the 2021-22 academic year.

The office, established Aug. 1, recently announced the three EDI Fellows for the fall and spring semesters:

- Student Fellow of EDI: Anri Bien-Aime, of Springfield Gardens, N.Y., a senior majoring in [business administration](#)
- Staff Fellow of EDI: Fred Brown, an adviser in [Multicultural Student Services](#)
- Instructional Academic Staff Fellow of EDI: [Jim Handley](#), senior lecturer in [peace studies](#) and geography

The fellowships help provide representation from across the university community as the [EDI Office](#) begins its pilot year.

“We wanted to ensure faculty, staff and students are given the opportunity to have a voice in the creation of this unit and in every step of its future,” said Dominique Vargas, interim executive director of EDI, calling it a “team-based approach” to developing the unit.

“Each individual will work to assist with unit initiatives, and the fellowship will allow them to have greater access to EDI-related professional development and be able to explore personal areas of interest that furthers our plan to develop a more equitable and inclusive campus,” Vargas added.

The goal of the EDI Office is to prioritize the university's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

"Our focus is to improve the campus climate for faculty, staff and students by helping to break down barriers for individuals from our most historically excluded populations and ensuring our faculty, staff and students feel as if they can thrive in the UW-Stout community," Vargas said.

The Fellows commented on their hopes for the university's EDI efforts.

Bien-Aime: "As the first student fellow for EDI I couldn't be more excited and happy to help Stout progress further forward in their EDI efforts. As a transfer student these last four years, I have seen some gradual changes, but I've also seen missteps that made me question my decision to attend Stout. Some hopes that I have in my position in particular are to try to make more people proactive in speaking up when there are issues regarding underrepresented students, putting forward groundwork for future student fellows, and lastly making this campus safer and more enjoyable for students like me."

Brown: "It is very exciting for me to see EDI initiatives growing in prominence in higher education. Stout deciding to further their EDI efforts and 'do the necessary work' is exciting for me. Being new to the Midwest and a new employee, I am very pleased with the efforts here at Stout. And being a part of the EDI office at its inception is just dope. As a fellow I hope to be able to have impact on the future of EDI initiatives and the campus at large. I cannot wait to get started."

Handley: "This is my 15th year at Stout, and I feel like I've been doing EDI work in one form or another my entire time on campus. When there are students, faculty, or staff that don't feel welcome, included or even safe on our campus, the experience is diminished for all of us. As an EDI Fellow, I hope to help create a framework that not only makes our campus more inclusive and welcoming but also helps our students find their voices when it comes to our struggle for justice and equity. I'm excited to play a role in shaping Stout's EDI framework and looking forward to working with great people committed to making our campus more equitable, more diverse and more inclusive."

The office is in the process of hiring a faculty Fellow of EDI for spring 2022 and fall 2022 semesters.

Vargas and Associate Professor Rickie-Ann Legleitner, Inclusive Excellence Action Plan coordinator, work directly with five other units at UW-Stout on EDI initiatives: Multicultural Student Services, [Student Support Services](#), [Fostering Success](#), [LGBTQIA+ Resources](#) and the [McNair Scholars Program](#).

“Collaboration is key in EDI work, and the Fellows are a crucial part of our collaborative efforts in the EDI Office,” Legleitner said. “The more diverse voices we have at the table shaping our projects, proposing new ideas and offering constructive criticism, the stronger our initiatives will be. We want to be intentional and mindful of how we structure the EDI Office moving forward, and representation, inclusivity and equity will be at the center of our work to improve our campus climate and serve our community.”

Inclusive excellence is one of five goals in UW-Stout’s [FOCUS2030](#) Strategic Plan.

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