

ADVANCING FACULTY EQUITY & RESILIENCE



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Advancing Faculty Equity & Resilience

The aim of this publication is to promote faculty diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in a resilient, empowering, and healthy academic environment.

This newsletter will present articles and other relevant materials on DEIB in addition to publishing news and activities from the Office for Faculty Equity and Resilience (OFER).

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> Dr. Mahdi Garelnabi, Faculty Director of ADVANCE Office for Faculty Equity & Resilience (ADVANCE OFER) at UMass Lowell, continues to earn national recognition for his leadership in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia.



NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR DEI LEADERSHIP: **DR. MAHDI GARELNABI** **+ ADVANCE OFER**

Dr. Garelnabi was recently invited to speak at the American Heart Association's prestigious Vascular Discovery conference during the ATVB Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) luncheon. His remarks highlighted UMass Lowell's strong institutional support for faculty equity and success, with a special focus on the ADVANCE OFER initiative. His presentation was met with enthusiasm and was subsequently featured in the Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology (ATVB) journal, which praised ADVANCE OFER as a national model for inclusive excellence in higher education. The journal included a dedicated link to the initiative, emphasizing its growing influence and innovation in promoting equity in academic spaces. [Read the article here.](#)

In even more exciting news, the American Heart Association has selected Dr. Garelnabi as the 2025 recipient of its highest DEI honor: the ATVB Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Recognition Award. This distinguished award will be presented at the AHA's Vascular Discovery 2025 Scientific Sessions, taking place April 22–25, 2025, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. Garelnabi's accomplishments reflect not only his personal dedication to equity and excellence but also UMass Lowell's broader commitment to advancing an inclusive academic environment where faculty of all backgrounds can thrive. His work continues to inspire national conversations and set benchmarks for institutional change.

COMMUNITY IN LOWELL:

CELEBRATING CAMBODIAN CULTURE

BY SUMUDU LEWIS

> Cambodia has a rich and complex history dating back thousands of years, notably marked by the rise and fall of the Khmer Empire, famous for the temples of Angkor Wat.

However, Cambodia's recent history has been profoundly shaped by the devastating events of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979), a brutal era responsible for one of the most horrific genocides of the 20th century—claiming approximately 25% of the Cambodian population and forcing millions to flee their homeland. In the 1980s, approximately 25,000 Cambodian refugees settled in Lowell, Massachusetts, drawn by existing community networks and opportunities in this welcoming city. Today, Lowell proudly has the second-largest Cambodian American population in the United States, enriching the local culture and community.

Given Lowell's vibrant Cambodian community, one would naturally assume that UMass Lowell attracts many Cambodian students, adorning the campus with their unique experiences, culture, and perspectives. Unfortunately, there is not an overabundance of Khmer students currently enrolled at UMass Lowell, a disparity that Professor Christine Su is actively working to address.

Offering classes like *WLKH.3200 Cambodian Culture in Lowell* is part of her commitment to demonstrating that UMass Lowell welcomes Khmer students, and that higher education is attainable for them. Professor Su, Visiting Faculty of Southeast Asian Studies through the Center for Asian American Studies and History, is among the very few Cambodian or Cambodian American faculty at the university, dedicating a significant portion of her role to community engagement.

Her course examines the emergence and evolution of Cambodian American culture in Lowell from the early 1980s to the present, highlighting key cultural and artistic organizations and events—such as the Angkor Dance Troupe and the Southeast Asian Water Festival—within the context of Lowell's changing political and historical landscape. While open to all students, the class notably attracted a majority (85%) of students of Khmer descent, highlighting both the existing underrepresentation and the importance



of Professor Su's efforts.

Students in Professor Su's class are involved in contributing to a gallery exhibit hosted at the Loading Dock Gallery in Western Avenue Studios in Lowell. The exhibit will showcase the broader narrative of Cambodian American experiences, particularly spotlighting the Khmer community's journey to Lowell. The project involves students interviewing community members—ranging from business owners and educators to artists and musicians—to authentically capture local experiences. One section of the exhibit will feature these personal stories, while another section will explore historical events behind the refugee exodus and the attraction of Lowell as a new home. The exhibit, opening on April 30th, will remain open to the public until June 1st.

This exhibit coincides with the 50th anniversary commemoration, *Proleung Khmer: A 50-Year Journey of Remembrance*, aspiring to preserve Khmer heritage by creating safe spaces for healing and

celebration. As part of this commemoration, UMass Lowell hosted its inaugural Khmer Literary Arts Day on March 21st. The event featured morning readings by four esteemed Khmer American authors: poet and novelist Bunkong Tuon, children's book author Chanda Ouk Wolf, poet and artist Chath Piersath, and journalist and poet Sanary Phen. In the afternoon, participants engaged in workshops led by each author, exploring their respective areas of expertise and receiving personalized feedback on their writing. Participants found the event to be enriching, with one attendee expressing gratitude directly to Professor Su, saying, "I just want to say thank you for the wonderful day of learning from our four authors. Thanks for creating the space for them to tell their stories—stories that inspired me and others to tell our own or learning to tell our own."

Professor Su is coordinating other related campus events, including film screenings, further enriching UMass Lowell's vibrant connection with the Cambodian American community.



COMMUNITY THURSDAYS EVENT WITH CAMBODIAN MUTUAL ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATION (CMAA)

On Thursday, February 20th, the Community Thursdays event organized by the Center for Community Research and Engagement showcased the impactful work of the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA). This well-respected Lowell organization highlighted its dedication to enhancing the quality of life for Cambodian Americans and other underserved communities through educational, cultural, economic, and social initiatives.



IMAGE:
PROLEUNGKHMER.ORG

Attendees, including UMass Lowell faculty, staff, students, and members of the public, learned about CMAA's essential services. These include Khmer language translation, support in providing food and shelter to underserved groups, and engaging community-building events. CMAA's significant contributions include civic engagement programs that educate and empower community members about voting systems and participation. Their Khmer Language Services

offer affordable and precise translation and interpretation to bridge communication gaps within and beyond the Cambodian community.

Additionally, CMAA's Monorom Family Support Program collaborates with the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services to provide tailored assistance, counseling, and educational opportunities for families with special-needs members. The Healthy Living Program for seniors emphasizes holistic health, addressing issues such as gambling and substance abuse. Youth Programs offered by CMAA include after-school cultural and academic support activities, Khmer language classes, and Cambodian dance, art, and music lessons. Their Summer Youth Program specifically targets gang reduction by keeping youth engaged in meaningful activities.

CMAA also engages the community through special projects aimed at boosting economic resilience, such as energy efficiency workshops and support for small businesses. Their comprehensive Wrap-Around Community Services ensure community members have access to essential daily support, accommodating diverse needs effectively. UMass Lowell faculty, staff, and students who attended this event participated enthusiastically, discussing collaborative opportunities and reinforcing collective efforts to strengthen and support our community.

For those interested in exploring Cambodian culture further or seeking volunteer opportunities, please visit the [Proleung Khmer website](http://ProleungKhmer.org) for additional information.

For Community Thursday Events and learn about the work at [Center for Community Research and Engagement](http://CenterforCommunityResearchandEngagement.org).

TRANSFORMATIVE MENTORING PROGRAMS: LONG-TERM SUCCESS FOR NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS

> Professor Ashleigh Hillier (Psychology) spearheads two transformative programs designed to promote college preparation and long-term success for neurodivergent students, particularly high school and college students.



These programs, “Horizons” and “Horizons Plus,” have been instrumental in supporting students with autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, and other neurodivergent conditions, helping them not only navigate the challenges of higher education but thrive in it.

The “Horizons” program focuses on high school students, offering a tailored curriculum that prepares them for the transition to college life. It is more than just academic readiness; the program provides neurodivergent students with the tools they need to manage social challenges, develop executive functioning skills, and build confidence in their ability to succeed in a college setting. By

addressing both academic and personal growth, “Horizons” ensures that students are equipped to face the diverse and sometimes overwhelming environment of college.

Building on this foundation, “Horizons Plus” provides critical support for neurodivergent students as they navigate their college journey. The program offers personalized guidance, resources, and mentorship throughout a student’s academic career, ensuring they have the academic and social tools they need to overcome obstacles and remain on track. Whether it’s managing coursework, engaging in campus life, or accessing accommodations, “Horizons Plus” helps students navigate the complexities of college life with confidence.

Both programs, established over a decade ago, have served hundreds of students, creating lasting impacts on their academic journeys and beyond. Research conducted after students participate in these programs highlights impressive outcomes, such as improved academic performance, enhanced social integration, greater persistence toward degree completion, and higher levels of overall college satisfaction. These results underscore the importance of creating



tailored support systems that cater to the unique strengths and needs of neurodivergent individuals in higher education.

A distinctive feature of both programs is the involvement of university students as mentors. These mentors not only assist in running the program sessions but also gain invaluable experience that directly complements their academic and career goals. Through hands-on work in the Horizons and Horizons Plus programs, mentors apply classroom learning in real-world settings, refining their leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. The experience also helps them explore potential career paths in education, social services, and neurodivergent advocacy, solidifying their future professional aspirations.

In addition to the direct support offered by Horizons and Horizons Plus, Prof. Hillier's initiatives are deeply embedded within the university's broader commitment to community engagement. These programs are now an integral part of the university's Center for Autism Research and Education (CARE), a UMass Lowell Community Engagement center, which also offers additional resources such as The Network program—a social networking initiative designed for neurodi-

vergent adolescents and young adults. Through The Network, participants can connect with their peers, share experiences, and build a sense of community.

The center further extends its impact through an Expert Speaker series, which brings thought leaders and advocates into the university to address key issues faced by neurodivergent individuals. This initiative provides a platform for learning, discussion, and advocacy, ensuring that the university remains at the forefront of inclusive education and support. Additionally, the center works closely with an Affiliates group composed of neurodivergent individuals who offer their insights and guidance, helping shape and direct the work of the center.

Through these multifaceted programs, Prof. Hillier and CARE are not only enhancing the educational experience for neurodivergent students but also fostering a greater sense of inclusion and support within the wider community. These initiatives are a testament to the university's ongoing commitment to creating a more inclusive, diverse, and accessible academic environment for all students.

For more information:
www.uml.edu/research/autism/

THE CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT:

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY IN CURRICULUM



BY SUMUDU LEWIS

> [The Civil and Environmental Engineering \(CEE\) Department](#) at UMass Lowell is making significant progress in incorporating transportation equity principles and standards into the civil engineering curriculum, particularly in the CIVE.4850 Capstone Design and CIVE.3400 Transportation Engineering courses.

While the department has long considered the societal impact of engineering designs, formalizing transportation equity principles in coursework became necessary to better align with evolving professional standards. Professor Hajduk explained, “Given the impact civil engineering design can have on people and communities, addressing transportation equity principles in civil engineering design is the right thing to place in the curriculum.”

The two courses at the forefront of this initiative each provide unique opportunities for embedding transportation equity principles and standards:

CIVE.4850 Capstone Design

This senior-level course, taught by Professor Gary Gordon already includes real-world projects through its long-established Service-Learning (S-L) model. Students collaborate with community partners to develop preliminary designs addressing local civil and environmental engineering challenges. The course explicitly considers transportation equity and community impact, incorporating guidelines from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT).



CIVE.3400 Transportation Engineering

Taught by Professor Yuanchang Xie, this course covers the movement of people and goods across various transportation systems. It now includes discussions on equitable transportation planning and design, ensuring that all communities have fair access to safe and efficient mobility.

Members of the CEE Industrial Advisory Board (IAB) have played a critical role in supporting this initiative by sharing how transportation equity is considered in civil engineering design in practice. Two UMass Lowell engineering alumni—Neil Boudreau (MassDOT) and Loretta Doughty (NHDOT)—have provided valuable insights on current industry standards, publications, and real-world applications of transportation equity.

Additionally, Dr. Liz Williams, Director of Equity and Climate Policy at MassDOT, delivered a guest lecture to Capstone Design students focusing

on the importance of wide-ranging engineering practices. This lecture followed discussions between course instructors and MassDOT personnel, reinforcing the department's commitment to making transportation equity a key component of the curriculum.

Boston provides countless examples of how civil engineering and urban planning shaped communities for generations, often highlighting issues of transportation equity. The Central Artery Tunnel project, for instance, had long-lasting impacts on accessibility and mobility, especially when considering Scheme Z, which raised concerns about how highway design choices can either connect or further divide communities. Another important case is The West End, a neighborhood that was dramatically altered by urban renewal, displacing residents and reshaping transportation access.



THE BEDFORD PROJECT

Professor Gary Gordon, the instructor of the Capstone Design course, has been incorporating relevant MassDOT standards on transportation equity into the class for several semesters. By partnering with the town of Bedford, MA, he has developed multidisciplinary civil engineering design projects that reflect real-world challenges.

This semester, students are working on an intersection redesign project in Bedford—a site with historic features that must be preserved while improving accessibility and safety. “Since all people have the right to use a roadway, transportation equity is an integral part of the planning and design process,” said Professor Gordon.



“Identifying the needs of roadway users—vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists—early in the design process is critical. Doing so later can make accommodating those needs more difficult and costly. Our capstone projects address these needs from the start, benefitting our community partner, the town of Bedford in Massachusetts, and ensuring transportation equity is addressed in a timely manner.”

Mike Sprague, PE, Town Engineer for Bedford MA. and a UMass Lowell alumnus, has been highly supportive of integrating transportation equity into the project. He described the many benefits to including transportation equity practices in transportation design projects. “Providing multiple options for people to access an important historical site is crucial,” he stated. “Walking, biking, driving, and using public transportation should all be considered when redesigning an intersection and a park. Providing handicap-accessible means of accessing the park is something we want the students to explore and keep in mind.”

Students are encouraged to consider historical preservation, pedestrian access, and equitable traffic solutions as part of their designs. Mr. Sprague emphasized the importance of engaging students at the earliest stages of the project timeline: “In many cases, the students are the first ones to really think about the design, layout, and challenges associated with the site, so this is the perfect opportunity to incorporate transportation equity principles. Their fresh perspectives and unique solutions are invaluable to the town’s planning efforts.”

He also noted the broader industry relevance of these projects: “These Capstone projects—and the Willson Park intersection project in particular—expose students to other modes of transportation that the wider industry is trying to incorporate into designs. People walking, biking, rollerblading, using wheelchairs or mobility devices, buses, and other modes of transportation all need to be included in the design process when talking about roadway users.”

MOVING FORWARD

As the CEE department continues refining its approach, faculty are working on formally incorporating transportation equity principles as a course objective for the Capstone Design course. Students will have access to key industry standards, and faculty will continue engaging with transportation agencies to ensure course materials remain aligned with current best practices.

It is clear that the department is deeply committed to ensuring that their graduates enter the workforce with a strong understanding of how engineering decisions affect diverse populations. By promoting partnerships with industry leaders and embedding equity considerations into core coursework, UMass Lowell is preparing students to design infrastructure that truly serves all communities.

MANNING SCHOOL OF BUSINESS HOSTS INSPIRATIONAL PANEL FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

> To celebrate International Women's Day, officially observed on March 8th, the Joy Tong Women Business Group at the Manning School of Business hosted an empowering panel discussion on February 26th. The event brought this year's theme, "Accelerate Action," to life, encouraging meaningful progress for women in business and beyond.

BY SUMUDU LEWIS

This event celebrated the power of community, encouragement, and collective action, embodying the spirit of International Women's Day.

The evening kicked off with time for attendees to network over lunch. This atmosphere created space for connection and conversation. Once the networking wrapped up, moderators Nicole Karp, a senior, and Anna Bethune, a sophomore, took the stage to introduce four panelists: Nicole Tabak – a Freelance Content Strategist and Copy-

writer, Jenny Li Fowler – Director of Social Media Strategy at MIT, Jennifer Gingras – Director of Planning, and Terumi Okano – Owner of Boston Tech Creative LLC. Each panelist brought unique experiences and powerful stories to the discussion, captivating the audience with their authenticity and insight. The conversation was dynamic, filled with memorable moments, inspirational advice, and plenty of laughter—a perfect mix of learning and enjoyment.



The wisdom shared by the panelists left a lasting impression. Terumi Okano inspired the audience to seize opportunities, saying,

“Even if you don’t feel qualified, take those opportunities when they come your way. If it was a man, they’d probably say, ‘heck yeah, I’ll take it!’”

Jennifer Gingras highlighted the importance of civic engagement, emphasizing, “Most of your government representatives at the local level are male... Get involved as a young female or young person—we need you on those committees. They are the policymakers shaping the future.”

Nicole Tabak offered valuable insights on career growth and the power of community, sharing, “One of the things I’ve learned throughout my career is that you don’t know what you need to ask for until you talk to other people.” She encouraged attendees to “find your hype people who understand your value and what you’re providing... Find your community, find your people.” Jenny Li Fowler echoed this spirit of support, urging everyone to “help and encourage your friends to do the things that seem scary. Always be that person your friends can rely on. Be the friend who hooks others up.”

The event concluded on a high note, with students and panelists deepening their connections through more one-on-one conversation. The evening ended with smiles and photographs including a group picture that captured the sense of unity and empowerment this event brought to life.



BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

BY MELISSA JUCHNIEWICZ



> To teach in the First Year Writing Program at UMass Lowell is to accept a special responsibility. This two-semester sequence is unique in that it is the one class all undergraduates take, across the disciplines.

Many come from high schools in Massachusetts, some are international students, and some are student athletes far from home. First generation students have likely overcome significant obstacles to get to the college classroom. When the fall semester starts, they must all acclimate to a new culture, and from there, “scholar” becomes one of their identities.

I often use an assignment I call “entryways” as a first essay, whereby students observe and take pictures of a literal entryway they encounter at

UMass Lowell – whether a dorm door, highway ramp, archway, locker room, library door – and use that as a metaphor for an analysis of their individual experience of entering into this new phase of life, its difficulty or ease of access, its level of familiarity, what lies beyond, and so forth. Each student works with the skills and learning they come with to compose. They use their own experiences as the foundation for their writing and their own curiosity as a basis for research. These are applied to an introduction to or support of academic writing and research skills.

UMass Lowell’s reputation attracts a diverse student body. My classroom practices are rooted in equity, and I foster a classroom community that models and fosters inclusion. FYWP (First Year Writing Program) professors are highly attuned to individual needs, and united in our regard for first-year students as scholars. This is not political; it is good and effective teaching.



BEST PRACTICES: RECRUITING FACULTY FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

BY SUMUDU LEWIS

> On March 19, 2024, the ADVANCE Office for Faculty Equity & Resilience (OFER) took a major step in addressing faculty diversity at UMass Lowell by hosting a planning summit focused on improving recruitment and retention strategies.



The summit, chaired by Dr. Mike Beers and organized alongside Drs. Brita Dean, Mahdi Garelnabi, and Sumudu Lewis, brought together deans, associate deans, department chairs, legal and human resources representatives, and external experts for a full day of discussions.

The ADVANCE OFER Personnel Practices Committee (PPC) assembled a **Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Search, Hiring, and Retention** to provide a roadmap for ensuring that faculty searches are transparent, equitable, and designed to attract candidates from a broad range of backgrounds. This guide combines ideas and recommendations collected from the summit meeting and best practices extracted from resources collected from other institutions.

The PPC identified key areas to focus on, which include strengthening recruitment and outreach, implementing bias-free hiring practices, and supporting retention and career growth. In addition, the committee proposed a more involved and active role for deans and chairs for integrating UMass Lowell mission and values.

STRENGTHENING RECRUITMENT AND OUTREACH

One of the key priorities in the faculty recruitment strategy is to ensure that job descriptions are inclusive and reflective of our university's commitment to fairness. The PPC recognizes that thoughtfully crafted job postings can help attract a broad and diverse pool of applicants, setting the foundation for an equitable hiring process. In addition to refining job descriptions, expanding the university's outreach efforts by leveraging professional networks, minority-serving institutions, and recruitment platforms can assist in connecting UMass Lowell with diverse scholars. Another major initiative that the committee believes will strengthen recruitment and outreach is to develop pipeline programs to support and mentor students and encourage them to pursue graduate studies and faculty positions. By investing in these outreach efforts, we can work to increase representation in academia and build a stronger, more inclusive faculty community.

IMPLEMENTING BIAS-FREE HIRING PRACTICES

Ensuring fairness and equity in the hiring process requires a structured and intentional approach. UMass Lowell is already committed to forming inclusive search committees and ensures that

those involved in faculty recruitment are trained in unconscious bias awareness and equitable evaluation. Search committees should be continuously supported and encouraged to use structured interviews and standardized rubrics to ensure that candidates are assessed based on their qualifications, experience, and potential contributions, rather than subjective or biased perceptions. Furthermore, to strengthen these efforts, we suggest the use of implicit bias training programs such as [STRIDE](#), a model successfully implemented at other universities. We believe these workshops will equip the faculty with the knowledge and tools needed to recognize and counteract biases to adopt a more transparent and merit-based hiring process.

SUPPORTING RETENTION & CAREER GROWTH

Recruiting a diverse faculty is just the first step—ensuring long-term retention and career development is equally critical to building an inclusive academic environment. UMass Lowell is committed to mentorship and professional development programs that provide faculty with the guidance and resources needed to thrive. To enhance support structures, we suggest exploring mentorship and cohort programs, possibly through HR, to ensure new hires are well-integrated into the academic community. Additionally, HR and departmental leadership are encouraged to share all available resources with new faculty to support their professional and personal growth.

Another key aspect of retention item that was identified is the importance of addressing service role distribution for faculty members. Research shows that faculty from underrepresented groups carry a disproportionate service load, which can





impact their research productivity and career progression. We propose that departments need to actively work in balancing service responsibilities to ensure that faculty are not overburdened with committee work while also providing them with prestigious and valued leadership opportunities—such as program directorships and campus-wide leadership roles—to assist in their career advancement.

Finally, from a data-driven perspective, HR is encouraged to capture and maintain records of faculty demographics, including gender and race/ethnicity, in accordance with federal and state laws and UMass Lowell policies. These statistics, which should be updated regularly by the respective colleges, allow the Office of the Provost and OFER to analyze trends, identify gaps, and implement strategic responses to enhance retention. Moreover, honest and reliable exit interview data must be systematically collected and classified, offering deeper insights into why faculty leave and how retention strategies can be improved.

ROLE OF DEANS AND CHAIRS

University leadership, including deans and department chairs, plays a pivotal role in advancing the university conducive environment. To drive meaningful change, these values must be fully integrated into department and college mission statements, ensuring that fairness is not just an aspirational goal but a core principle guiding hiring, retention, and faculty development policies.

Leadership should take proactive steps to improve hiring and retention culture, particularly by implementing equitable governance practices that minimize bias and promote transparency in faculty searches. One effective strategy is to offer





cluster hires across colleges, a model that has been shown to enhance faculty diversity and promote interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, establishing robust data collection mechanisms for faculty diversity hiring and retention is essential—HR should consistently track and analyze demographic trends, using these insights to inform strategic recruitment and retention efforts. Leadership must also take an active role in recognizing and rewarding faculty achievements that contribute to fairness and inclusion, reinforcing a campus culture that values these contributions. Finally, deans and department chairs should support and mentor students, encouraging them to pursue graduate and postdoctoral pathways, and—when possible—providing incentives for them to return as faculty. By implementing these recommendations, UMass Lowell leadership can create a more inclusive, representative, and thriving academic community

LOOKING AHEAD

A diverse faculty enriches teaching, research, and mentorship, providing role models for an increasingly diverse student body. It also strengthens UMass Lowell's reputation, enhances institutional innovation, and improves funding opportunities. ADVANCE OFER created the **Guide to Best Practices in Diverse Faculty Search, Hiring, and Retention** to set a new standard for inclusive faculty recruitment at UMass Lowell. It provides a clear framework for advancing diversity, equity, and excellence in hiring practices. The recommendations outlined in this guide emphasize proactive recruitment strategies, equitable hiring processes, and long-term retention efforts. By implementing these best practices, UMass Lowell can build an academic community that prioritizes excellence, representation, and inclusion—not just in words, but in action.

CELEBRATING SRI LANKAN NEW YEAR: A TIME FOR RENEWAL AND TOGETHERNESS

> While we welcome the arrival of spring in April, Sri Lankan communities around the world gather to celebrate the Sri Lankan New Year—*Aluth Avurudu* in Sinhala and *Puthandu* in Tamil.

Falling around April 13th or 14th, this celebration marks the astrological transition from Pisces to Aries. It's a time grounded in ritual, reflection, and the deep joy of reconnecting with family and community.

Here at UMass Lowell, a small Sri Lankan community of students and faculty brings this tradition to life. The Sri Lankan Graduate Student Association embraces cultural exchange and mutual support, offering a space to celebrate heritage while also navigating academic commitments.

Among the faculty are Dr. Oshadha Ranasingha from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Dr. Sumudu Lewis from the School of Education. Graduate students like Prasan Malintha Wijayaweera, the current president of the Sri Lankan Graduate Student Association, along with with Ishara Abeywickrama (Vice President), Chani Sahabandu (Secretary), and Kithma Sajini (Treasurer), all from the Chemistry Department, contribute richly to the campus through both scholarship and cultural perspective.

Beyond the festivities, this celebration is a time for renewing relationships and strengthening community bonds. It is a moment to express



gratitude, seek blessings from elders, and share joy with neighbors and friends. The Sri Lankan community at UMass Lowell embodies this spirit, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride.

Whether you are part of the Sri Lankan community or simply an admirer of its rich traditions, this New Year offers a gentle reminder to pause, reflect, and embrace new beginnings with intention. Wishing all who celebrate a joyful and prosperous Sri Lankan New Year!



2025
**ADVANCE
OFFER**
CONFERENCE

Cultivating Equity: Building an Inclusive
UML Faculty Community

Tuesday May 13, 2025
9:00AM – 5:00PM

Moloney Hall, UC,
UMass Lowell

Scan to Register

