



**EQUITY,  
DIVERSITY, &  
INCLUSION**  
SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

**EDI @ SOU  
NEWSLETTER  
Volume 1**



**May, 2022  
EDI @SOU  
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# AAPI Heritage Month at SOU

Voices of Oceania and Fia Fia Night



If you watch the cultural heritage calendar as we do in EDI, you know that May marks Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage month. This year SOU community members and visiting scholars identifying among the heritages represented are offered from their best.

## Voices of Oceania

Under the leadership of Admissions Counselor and Multicultural Retention and Transfer Specialist, Ria Galo, a small group of SOU faculty, staff, and students attended the annual Pacific Islander Student Alliance Conference. Their experience together inspired Voices of Oceania, a two part program beginning with an evening of poetry and prose from faculty, staff and students on what it's like to be Asian at SOU.

Oceania programming continued when Instructor Kris Haina Galago opened her Introduction to Pacific Islander Studies course to invite the campus community to hear from two esteemed Samoan scholars in their respective fields: Dr. David Palaita and Makerusa Porotesano. Dr. Palaita brings his decades of knowledge and expertise on reframing access to education around the concept of how Pacific Islanders would navigate the "vasa" or ocean. Mr. Porotesano will share his vast experience and knowledge around climate change and its impact on Pacific Island Nations.

## Fiafia means happy

The Samoan Club hosted the first-ever Fiafia event at SOU on May 27, 2022 in the Music Recital Hall at 5:30pm. The event will portray cultural performances in celebration of the indigenous Samoan Pacific Island people.

The word "Fiafia" means "happy" or "to enjoy" in the Samoan language. So, prepare for a production of students presenting their culture with pride through singing, dancing, and more.

The goal of this performance is to provide an understanding of the cultural values Samoan students hold, while also educating our campus community on the traditions and customs of this specific group of Polynesians in the Pacific Ocean. Club members encourage students, staff, faculty, and the public to engage in this unique, and exciting event, sure to provide a different exposure of the Samoan culture.

# Pride Month

## A word from SJEC

### *Beyond Rainbow Merchandising*

As June approaches, many cities, businesses, and people will dawn rainbow flags to celebrate Queer and Trans people, host parties, build community, and sell merchandise. As you consider how to engage with Pride, the Southern Oregon University Social Justice and Equity Center invites you to remember that pride began as a riot in resistance to violent police harassment of Queer and Trans people.

### *Support, Learn, Contribute*

Queer and Trans communities are used to state-sanctioned violence as we continue to resist the nearly 240 anti-Queer and Trans bills filed in 2022 alone. This year, the Social Justice and Equity Center invited the community to go beyond rainbow merchandise by taking one or all of the following actions: learning about intuition and healing with the creators of the Black Queer Tarot at our in-person event held on May 12th, open to all; consider donating to the Gender and Sexuality Justice gift fund, which allows the Social Justice and Equity Center to buy gender-affirming garments for Queer and Trans students; come to our space and ponder the first of many new murals celebrating Queer and Trans histories and futures in the Social Justice and Equity Center (Stevenson Union 308); and join our newsletter to get regular updates about the issues and people you care about.



*New SJEC Mural  
Photo Courtesy of SJEC*



Despite the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Lincoln in 1863, until 1865, a quarter million adults and children of African descent remained in bondage and consigned to uncompensated labor in the state of Texas. In keeping with the Emancipation Proclamation's declaration that the nation would "maintain the freedom" of formerly enslaved people, the United States issued, General Order #3. On June 19th, Union General Major Gordon Granger and 2000 union soldiers debarked ex-confederate steamships on the shores of Galveston Island, Texas. Marching through the city, they read the Order that declared that the once plantation-owner/enslaved person relationship was now that of "employer and hired laborer." The commemoration of this event is known as Juneteenth.

#### **Celebrated as early 1866**

Also known as Emancipation Day or Jubilee Day, freed African Americans celebrated Juneteenth as early as 1866. Formal recognition as a holiday began in the Texas in 1980. Galveston Juneteenth celebrations begin with a reading of General Order #3 at Ashton Villa, the place of its first announcement. Commemorations the world over are known for their festival atmosphere of music, food, and entertainment, that are invariably dotted with orations recognizing the gravity of the history of the 200-year institution of slavery and the literal and figurative slow walk to freedom.

Those visiting Galveston can take the Freedom Walk tracking the historic sites where union troops first read General Order #3.

#### **A national holiday**

Following the 2021 civil unrest precipitated by George Floyd's death in Minneapolis, President Biden signed a proclamation recognizing Juneteenth as a national holiday. In February,

**Southern Oregon University announced its recognition of this paid holiday. SOU will observe Juneteenth on Monday, June 20th, closing campus for usual activities. See the events section of the newsletter for ways you can participate in commemorating the day and celebrate with friends and colleagues the lives of those whose work and legacy urge us daily toward a more perfect union for us all.**



# More Than A Shot In the Arm

## Pop-up Vaccine Clinics on Campus: The role of

Nearly 100 vaccines or boosters were administered on campus this spring during the series of free clinics hosted by Southern Oregon University in conjunction with the Oregon Health Authority, SOU's Native America Studies program, and community organizations Red Earth Descendants and UNETE Center for Farm Worker Advocacy. In all, SOU hosted three clinics for visitors to receive vaccines/boosters and enjoy food and entertainment.

Dr. Brook Colley, Chair and Associate Professor of Native American Studies and the Coordinator of Ethnic and Racial Studies received support from Natives of One Wind Alliance for these pop-up clinics to provide Moderna, Johnson and Johnson, and Pfizer vaccines as well as meals for vaccine/booster recipients. The clinics were an opportunity for community members and university friends and family to stop by for convenient and easy-to-access vaccines/boosters. More importantly, they were outreach efforts meant to provide support and education to those who may not have otherwise received the vaccine, such as members of the Native community.

Jaimie Bernhagen, a support specialist with Businesses Service, and the Co-Director of Red Earth Descendants embodied the spirit of the initiative most when she said, "It's important for people to see one another and be able to say, "We're all still here." The clinics gave the Native community a new avenue through which to see its own members facilitating available resources; this is especially important for people who value, esteem, and rely heavily on trusted relationships.

After years of the pandemic and a public exhausted by safety protocols, the clinics were a great reminder to the community that vigilance and consideration of others' health was and is vital to keeping everyone safe.

The hosts wanted to reinforce this idea and support the message that getting vaccinated and staying current with vaccination, including by getting a booster shot remains an important public safety tool.

It is no secret that fear and uncertainty have created barriers to successful widespread administration of vaccines, but still others exist. Family commitments come first in these communities: work schedules, child care/caretaking, food meal preparation. Events like the one hosted by SOU and organized by Dr. Colley and Ms. Bernhagen are much needed resources to support families and people in prioritizing their health.

The clinics were intentionally planned in a way that necessitated family participation. They were held at a time when working families could more easily attend; provided information regarding local resources that addressed issues like employment, food and housing insecurity; involved entertainment and games for children; included food boxes for the families and free dinner with the vaccine or booster.

The clinics demonstrated the crucial role of interpersonal relationships when communicating to Native communities and other communities of color, and highlighted the need for trusted kin like Dr. Colley and Ms. Bernhagen. But they also highlighted that while COVID is not gone, we can stay vigilant and offer care, support and educate one another through our available resources.

Those still needing resources can contact UNETE at <https://uneteoregon.org/> or (541)-245-1625.

# U.S. Embassy in Mexico Awards Grant to Dr. Anne Connor



The OEDI recently sat down with Professor of Spanish, Anne Connor, PhD to discuss the exciting grant award of \$20,000 from the US Embassy in Mexico she received in partnership with Centre College Professor of Spanish, Dr. Chantell Smith Limerick, PhD. The grant was developed to generate Afro-Mexican exchanges with US Universities, to deepen bilateral understanding and connections on human rights and shared values during the current UN Decade of People of African Descent (2015-2024), and in support of the Department of Education and State's joint commitment to enhancing international educational ties. The grant will bring to SOU's campus three academics and artists with specializations in Afro-Mexican culture this fall. In addition, five historians, artists, and activists will be visiting SOU's Summer Language Institute for Spanish Teachers, a Master's degree program for Spanish teachers that takes place in our sister city at the Universidad de Guanajuato in June and July.

## **Origins of the Program**

It all began when Dr. Connor applied for and received a Fulbright Hays Scholarship. This program, funded by a congressional appropriation to the United States Department of Education, awards grants to U.S. individuals, institutions, and organizations involved in education either at the K-12 level or in higher education with funding to support research and training efforts overseas that focus on non-Western foreign languages and area studies.

## **SOU Gets Involved**

As a Fulbright scholar, Dr. Connor participated with faculty and administrators from across the country on a travel program focusing on the African presence in Mexico. It was in this group, that included scholars from many different disciplines, such as Geography, Art, Spanish, History and Anthropology, where Dr. Connor met Dr. Chantell Limerick Smith. Impressed by Limerick-Smith's experience and expertise as a Spanish professor specializing in Afro-Hispanic Studies, Dr. Connor, who directs the Summer Language Institute for Spanish Teachers, invited her to teach a graduate course for SOU, entitled, "Afro-Hispanic Identity: Race, Nation and the American African Diaspora."

In the Fulbright-Hays program, Connor and Smith Limerick traveled from Harlem, NY to Mexico City, Xalapa, Veracruz, Tlacotalpan, Puebla, Oaxaca, and Costa Chica. In all, they attended and participated in over 30 presentations, lectures and events. The African diasporic reach and intermingling of populations were and continue to be clearly present and influential in Mexican culture and history, despite the fact that up until recent changes in census-reporting, a longstanding and generational sentiment of anti-blackness served to discourage identification with any part of African or indigenous ancestry. The program presented participants the opportunity to delve deeper into this rich history.

Inspired to expand on what they had experienced, Connor and Smith Limerick aimed to bring programming like this to the SOU campus and the program at our sister university, la Universidad de Guanajuato. They applied for and then received the US Embassy in Mexico grant.

## **Plan for the Future**

While programming is still coming together for this Fall, the intention is to create awareness and celebrate the very type of specialists in Afro-Descendant History and Culture of Mexico that Connor and Smith Limerick learned about through their Fulbright experience. What they are most excited about is bringing experts with specializations in Afro-Mexican culture to the U.S., both at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky and SOU's campus. They hope that students and the community learn about and engage in the meaningful work this group is doing and come to appreciate the complexities of Afro Mexican culture. Dr. Connor welcomes opportunities for collaboration and support from SOU Departments, Student Clubs or other community members. The OEDI for one cannot wait to meet these scholars!

Contact for More Information:

Anne Connor

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# Did you know that...

## **... the Campus Climate Survey is open?**

SOU has launched its Campus Climate Survey. Your input will inform university program efforts, policy, and practices that support our commitment to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community where we all flourish.

The survey is voluntary and anonymous. Your participation enters you into a drawing for a chance to win select prizes, like a \$50.00 Visa or MasterCard gift card, or a meal voucher you can redeem from the Empanada Caba or the Sultan's Delight food truck coming to campus on June 2nd. Survey closes May 31st.

## **...SOU Samoan Club is hosting first-ever Fiafia event on campus?**

The SOU Samoan Club is currently preparing to host their first ever Fiafia Night Event on May 27, 2022 in the Music Recital Hall at

5:30pm (Doors open at 5:00PM).

Pre-sold tickets are available for \$15 and can be purchased by going to the Samoan Club Instagram Page @sousamoanclub or by contacting the Samoan Club Secretary, Mandelyn Tuufuli: [tuufulim@sou.edu](mailto:tuufulim@sou.edu). In addition, tickets will also be sold at the door for \$20.

## **... The Asian Student Union is active and encouraging members to join?**

Come join ASU! The Asian Student Union works to promote Asian cultures by fostering dialogue, enriching SOU campus diversity, and providing a social network for students on campus. Meetings are TBD so please feel free to reach out to Daniel Chong [chongd@sou.edu](mailto:chongd@sou.edu) or Kanaili Singkeo [singkeok@sou.edu](mailto:singkeok@sou.edu) for more information.





Coming to a Venue Very Near

## JUNE 2022

**Thursday, June 2**

### Food Truck Feast

11:30 AM | SU Courtyard

Complete the Campus Climate Survey for a chance to win a free

A 50% Student Response Rate = 340 food truck meals drawings.  
Submit your survey to increase your chance to win!

**Saturday, June 11th**

### Commencement

9:00 AM | SOU Raider Stadium

**Saturday, June 18th**

11:30 AM | Churchill Hall

SOU Juneteenth Flag Raising

**Sunday, June 19th**

11:00 AM | Pear Blossom Park

Base Southern Oregon Juneteenth

**Monday, June 20th**

### SOU Juneteenth Holiday

Campus Offices Closed

### All June

### Pride Month

To learn more visit:

<https://www.loc.gov/lgbt-pride-month/about/>

Have an event or story you'd like to share?

Please contact Us!

If you have an event or other contribution you'd like to make for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community where we all flourish, contact us at [edi@sou.edu](mailto:edi@sou.edu).

# CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2022!

