Faculty of Information Technology

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Championing a more fair, equal and inclusive world

ANNUAL REPORT 2021
Here in the Faculty of Information Technology, we’re advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in big and innovative ways – for our students, staff and the next generation.

Although 2021 saw us navigating the ever-evolving pandemic again, we still made great strides towards the goals set in 2020.

Under the leadership of our Associate Dean (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion), we introduced and enhanced many initiatives that support our stakeholders. We also established new measures to bridge the gender gap in recruitment and shared novel research insights to inform the education sector and industry – among other outcomes.

By reinforcing a welcoming and supportive culture in our Faculty and community, we’re modelling the society we envision for the future.

Every action we take is one step closer to a fairer, more inclusive world for all.
A message from our Associate Dean
(Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)

In 2020 the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee launched the Faculty’s inaugural EDI plan which aims to solidify our focus and lay the foundations for lasting impact. We also developed measures to address the inequities emerging from, and exacerbated by, the pandemic.

Since then we have advanced our progress in these areas, with priorities around gender-balanced recruitment, empowering underrepresented groups, training staff, delivering impactful initiatives and recording progress for evaluation and improvement. Most importantly though, all our activities and efforts are furthering the equitable and inclusive culture within our Faculty.

As you will discover in this report, we have celebrated many highlights including almost doubling our LGBTQIA+ Allies since 2020, having all existing Faculty Executive members complete Inclusive Leadership training (unconscious bias) and sharing practical insights through our research.

We also appointed more mental health ambassadors, introduced new Dean’s Awards for EDI and co-launched Superbots – a program for girls in Years 7 to 9 that aims to spark interest and enthusiasm for IT, and showcase non-conventional, non-stereotypical careers.

But as with all missions, 2021 wasn’t without its hurdles as well.

From solidifying our data processes to gathering greater insights into the needs of students with disabilities, the challenges have helped us refine our direction and generate more priorities for 2022.

The past 12 months have been full of progress with purpose. I invite you to read more about our outcomes in this report, and look forward to continually sharing our impact with you over the years.
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2021 saw a number of significant insights uncovered and shared by the Committee – enriching our EDI initiatives while informing industry and community more widely.

2021 GOAL

Conduct targeted research to identify EDI challenges and understand the experiences of underrepresented groups.

Publicly report the Committee’s outcomes and research, while sharing our learnings with the IT education community and embedding findings into existing support initiatives.
Championing Girls and Women in IT

On 24 November 2021, the Faculty and Committee released a high-level report and full research paper that explores the challenges, opportunities and initiatives around championing girls and women in IT and computer science education.

They form an important evidence base for strategies to increase the representation of girls and women in our undergraduate degrees and beyond – and best direct our efforts for future programs.

The launch was amplified through social media and a media release, which received coverage from several outlets such as Science Meets Business and Technology Decisions. A publicly-accessible ‘Insights’ webpage was also developed to host Committee research findings moving forward.

Thanks to Trang Do, a PhD candidate from the Faculty of Arts, who led the research.
Inaugural EDI annual report

The Committee's first annual report for EDI was released in February 2021 accompanied by a media release and is available on the website. The document provides more details about the Faculty's three-year EDI plan and goals, which have been used to evaluate our actions in this edition.

Its release resulted in a number of radio and television interviews, and further media interest in the lead up to International Women’s Day. Noteworthy coverage includes articles by ZDNet and The Australian.

Faculty COVID-19 survey

The Committee was presented with key points revealed by a Faculty survey run from December 2020 to January 2021 on how COVID-19 has impacted work and wellbeing.

Following discussions, standards around equitable and inclusive meeting arrangements (eg. Shorter meeting times, available Zoom options, dedicated meeting-free days) were added to the Faculty meeting guidelines.

A range of other considerations, changes and initiatives were also taken up and delivered in response to feedback.

Monash biennial Diversity and Inclusion Survey

In the University's biennial Diversity and Inclusion Survey, the Faculty of IT had a ~15% response rate across all staff (including casuals and sessionals). It yielded both positive and negative feedback.

Associate Professor Yolande Strengers and Cally Martin analysed the results for the Faculty, including areas that have improved after introducing various initiatives and others in need of this. The results have been discussed with the Committee, Faculty Executive and relevant portfolios, and are further informing the faculty's policies and programs.
2021 GOAL

Provide meaningful opportunities and experiences to empower underrepresented students and increase their representation.

STUDENT INITIATIVES

2021 was a year that saw big updates to our mentoring program, as well as new initiatives in collaboration with students and industry.
90% of students were more confident in their knowledge of technology, IT and STEM after participating in Superbots, compared to only 26% before the program.

70% were more (50%) or highly likely (already planning) to enrol in a STEM-related course after school.

95% were more (50%) or highly likely (already planning) to consider a STEM-related career after school.

Superbots Industry Immersion Day

Partnering with the Faculty of IT and Women in Voice ANZ Network, Monash Tech School launched the Superbots Industry Immersion Day on 22 November 2021 – a pilot program for girls in Years 7 to 9.

The initiative aimed to spark participants’ interest and enthusiasm for IT, and explore non-conventional and non-stereotypical career options. The content was co-designed with the Faculty of IT, drawing on Associate Professor Yolande Strengers’ research on voice assistants and the Committee’s studies into increasing the representation of girls in IT and computer science.

The program involved industry mentors from the Women in Voice ANZ chapter, and featured the Faculty’s Arts and IT double degree as a potential pathway into conversational design and AI. Associate Professor Strengers jointly facilitated the pilot with Monash Tech School and the Faculty’s recruitment staff.

Participating students received digital badges after completing the program. The Monash Tech School plans to run the initiative again in 2022.
With a focus on responses from LGBTQIA+ students, the Committee discussed the findings of a survey conducted by DiversIT – a student-led group that connects underrepresented learners in IT to industry, faculty and each other.

It was suggested that teaching teams may not be aware or have much guidance on how to address students using the right pronouns, highlighting a need for more targeted LGBTQIA+ guidelines.

In response, the Learning, Education and eXperience (FLEX) team organised Diversity and Inclusion training for new sessionals and academics.

The Committee has also been working with the Faculty’s Student Engagement team on events and activities to promote greater inclusivity, especially for underrepresented students. The issue of inclusive teaching and relevant support programs is also under consideration for progression in 2022.

DiversIT: A voice for the students

Women in Technology (WIT) mentoring program

Building on the long-standing success of our WIT mentoring program, in 2021 we took the opportunity to revamp the initiative by:

- recruiting only women mentors
- running the structured program as a six-week launch pad
- including additional professional development
- introducing digital badges for mentors.

During the program, we held four events that focused on enhancing the confidence, professional development and connections of all participants. We will be further improving the program for 2022 based on feedback from mentees and mentors.
Women in IT profiles

The Faculty’s longstanding ‘Women in IT’ webpage has been updated with profiles put forward by the FIT Women Graduate Research Network. The site now features PhD students who are accessible and relatable role models.

We also profiled a range of women students completing double degrees to showcase diverse pathways and the complementary nature of IT. Other fields of study covered include Commerce, Business, Arts, Science and Law.

Strategic advertising

As part of its paid advertising, the Faculty pursued channels focused on priority cohorts such as women in IT, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and First Nations learners (aligned with our Indigenous Engagement strategy). These included Taboola, Year 13, Careers with STEM, dedicated emails and more.

We also developed targeted assets such as interviews with women in cybersecurity, articles, TikToks of women in technology, support-focused creatives and inspirational profiles of diverse students and academics.

Our strategic advertising has successfully raised awareness and driven a number of conversions from priority cohorts. Results will be used to refine creatives and messages for 2022.
Increase the proportion of women and other underrepresented groups through recruitment targets and initiatives.

Amid operationally-funded recruitment freezes due to COVID-19, we endorsed new targets for external appointments and senior women in 2021. We also introduced additional measures to support the employment of women and candidates from other underrepresented groups.
Performance against targets

We exceeded our academic women at Level B targets for externally-funded appointments and overall. Between October 2020 and October 2021, the proportion of women at Level B also increased from 21% to 36% (significantly exceeding our 5% target).

To counter progress at other levels, which has been either slow or reversed, we established women-only positions in focus areas and gender-balanced recruitment targets.

As reference, below are our recruitment targets:

- **40%**
  - Proportion of women professors in the Faculty by 2025.

- **5%**
  - Increase of women hired as Research Assistants or Research Fellows on externally-funded appointments over 12 months.
Proposed gender-balanced shortlists

In addition to the gender-balanced recruitment targets, the Committee and Faculty also endorsed a proposal in 2021 which requires gender-balanced shortlists for continuing academic positions.

This process has already been successfully adopted in the Faculty of Engineering, where women are also underrepresented. The change will follow a similar process to the current requirements for shortlists, which are approved by the Dean (with exceptions made at their discretion).

Additionally, as part of these recruitment shortlist principles and in line with the Faculty’s Indigenous strategy, any qualified Indigenous person who applies will automatically be shortlisted.

Previously, the Faculty of IT policy has required at least one woman on academic shortlists for continuing positions. This has not led to significant growth in the recruitment of women for teaching and research (T&R) contracts.

In 2022, preparing for the full re-opening of recruitment activities, a revised set of recruitment principles that includes underrepresented groups is being developed with Monash HR.
INITIATIVES FOR STAFF

COVID-19 has been challenging for our staff, resulting in new forms of disadvantage and vulnerability. In 2021 we implemented a range of initiatives to support Faculty members who have been impacted by the pandemic – as well as other challenges.

2021 GOAL

Develop initiatives to support staff from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.
Mental health and disabilities

A Committee working group established three initiatives to enhance support for staff and students facing mental health issues and living with disabilities:

- Integrate an Embedded Counsellor from Monash Counselling into the Faculty to provide a common point of contact, support for training and consultations or referrals.

- Establish a Mental Health and Disability Liaison role to help teaching staff support students struggling with their studies, and provide a connection between Disability Support Services, student support services, the Embedded Counsellor and other ongoing initiatives for mental health and disability support in the Faculty.

- Provide a disability support fund for Faculty staff and HDR students in circumstances not covered by the primary mechanism of reasonable workplace adjustments, or who have exhausted all other support offered by the University.

These initiatives are being implemented in 2022.

Support for women

Chaired by Professor Maria Garcia de la Banda, the STEMM Women Academic Network gives women academics opportunities to form new connections and secure mentorships within Monash.

In the past year the Network established its Advisory Group, with leaders in academic promotion, mentoring, grant applications and HDR students, and collaborations with external networks, event planning and internal communications.

During 2021, the Group organised the first peer-to-peer networking event, a PhD-ECR mentoring program, four grant webinars and sponsored masterclasses focusing on leadership, navigating uncertainty and challenges, and the art of influence.

Support for primary carers (academics)

Recognising the significant impact of the pandemic and lockdowns on parents of pre-school and school-aged children, and other primary carers, the Faculty is offering additional teaching and research support in 2022 to impacted staff.
AWARENESS AND TRAINING

Among many highlights, all of our 2021 Faculty Executive members completed Inclusive Leadership training (unconscious bias). We also almost doubled our LGBTQIA+ Allies since 2020.

2021 GOAL

Provide targeted training for all staff and senior leaders to raise awareness of EDI matters.
Faculty Executive, as well as supervisors and managers, were given priority access to the Inclusive Leadership course (MEA accredited), with plans to make additional sessions available.

25 people undertook the training. This brings the number of Faculty members with valid inclusive leadership training to 58 – 35 academics and 23 professional staff.

The Committee updated its training shortlist to raise awareness of what’s on offer for staff in 2021 and encourage participation. It begins with priority training (aligned with Faculty, Athena SWAN and/or University EDI goals) and is then grouped by theme:

- Gender equity, inclusion and bias
- Disability and mental health
- Cross-cultural and inclusion
- Parents and carers

Committee members provided reviews for some of the training, links to MyDevelopment for dates and bookings, and indication of modules recognised by the Monash Education Academy (MEA).

The Faculty arranged for tailored UMH training with the Monash counselling team, primarily targeted to teaching and research staff and sessionals.

UMH aims to build empathy and understanding of mental health and illness, warning signs and strategies to support mental health and crisis situations. It also intends to enhance awareness of relevant support resources at Monash.

The goal was to help the teaching team respond to the significant and ongoing mental health challenges in our community that have emerged since the onset of the pandemic.

18 staff completed this program in 2021.

We also increased our Faculty Mental Health Ambassadors with the appointments of Dr Roisin McNaney (Committee Academic Representative) and Dr Amin Sakzad (education leadership team). They join Phillip Abramson and Matt Chen from the FLEX team who are existing ambassadors.
LGBTQIA+ Allies

2021 saw 18 people complete Ally Training, bringing the total number of Faculty members with valid completions to 37 – 25 academics and 12 professional staff.

30 of the Faculty members completed the training in the past two years since the EDI plan was established and this development was targeted.

Dedicated sessional training

Sessionals completed both the aforementioned counselling-run UMH session as well as the Respectful Communities-run ‘Diversity Inclusion Training’ (DIT).

DIT focuses on developing understanding of diversity in the broader community, the value Monash places on inclusion, the interplay between inequality/inequity, power and privilege – and how these impact people from a variety of backgrounds and contexts.

Participants also develop empathy, knowledge and familiarity with the language and behaviours that support a positive, cohesive environment, and helpful resources available to them.

These programs are provided as part of induction training for new teaching associates, however some sessional staff missed out before their introduction. Further sessions were made available in 2021 to longer-term sessionals, with the roll-out intended to continue until the majority have had the chance to participate.

Overall 179 completed UMH and 174 undertook DIT. Several sessionals also finished Ally training or Mental Health First Aid, and a further six participated in the Mental Health Basics for Educators MEA module (out of 15 total Faculty staff who did so in 2021).
2021 GOAL

Establish a Dean’s Award for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (professional and academic) to recognise staff who are champions of EDI – with the view to expand to students.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The past year saw many of our staff members recognised and celebrated for their contributions to EDI at a Faculty, University and community level.
Dean’s Awards for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

In September 2021 we announced the inaugural winners of our new Dean’s Awards for EDI, which spanned multiple categories: Community, Environment and Culture, Research and Education.

- Dr Kirsten Ellis and Hashini Senaratne (Community)
- Phillip Abramson (Education)
- Dr Amin Sakzad (Environment and Culture)
- Dr Guanliang Chen (Research)
- Dr Delvin Varghese, Professor Patrick Olivier, Dr Tom Bartindale, Meriem Tebourbi and Joshua Seguin (Community)

This new category recognises Faculty members who have made significant contributions to ensure a more accessible and fair world.
Vice Chancellor’s Excellence Awards (Diversity and Inclusion)

Three Dean’s Awards winners were finalists in the Vice Chancellor’s Excellence Awards for Diversity and Inclusion. Dr Kirsten Ellis also received a Special Commendation for partnering with community disability organisations to make STEMM activities more accessible to people with disabilities.

The other two finalists were Dr Amin Sakzad and the Action Lab group, Dr Delvin Varghese, Joshua Seguin, Meriem Tebourbi, Dr Tom Bartindale and Professor Patrick Olivier.

2021-2022 Superstar of STEM

Associate Professor Rashina Hoda from our Faculty was one of only 60 exceptional women to be chosen for the acclaimed 2021-2022 Superstars of STEM program. The initiative enhances the skills and confidence of women in STEM so they can step into expert commentary roles in media.

Since her appointment, Associate Professor Hoda has featured in kid’s magazine K-Zone, been interviewed by The Girls in STEM and hosted a Science meets Parliament forum on how to be a great STEM ambassador.

Multi-award winning woman in IT

In 2021, Associate Professor Yolande Strengers won two prestigious awards that recognised her impact and contributions as an inspirational woman in IT.

The B&T Women Leading Tech Award celebrated her leadership in education and research, including her role as Associate Dean of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. And within the Women in AI Awards, Associate Professor Strengers won the AI in Innovation category – a result of her research that embeds social sciences and humanities into AI to address gendered problems with digital voice assistants.
BUILDINGS AND OPERATIONS

Navigating the restrictions of COVID-19, in 2021 we audited parenting rooms, provided guidance around these facilities for staff and PhD students, and created new meeting guidelines to enhance workplace wellbeing.

2021 GOAL

Undertake an EDI audit of all Faculty buildings.
Facilities for parents

We are committed to supporting staff and students by providing accessible spaces for breastfeeding and expressing. Where possible the Faculty also offers private and lockable expressing rooms close to staff or PhD student offices.

In 2021 we audited the parenting rooms and expressing/breastfeeding spaces available to staff and PhD students across all our Monash campus buildings. We produced a map identifying nearest rooms, and worked with the Buildings and Property Division to ensure the facilities in our new and refurbished buildings were fit for purpose.

To further support staff and PhD students, we updated our intranet with more information about expressing and parenting rooms in Faculty buildings, and arranged Mobile Mothers Kits.

Additionally, our supervisors continue to play a critical role in fostering an inclusive culture by enabling workplace flexibility and translating procedures into practice.

New meeting guidelines

From our Faculty COVID-19 survey run in 2021, we received feedback around meeting preferences and options.

As a result, we were able to introduce and integrate new standards around equitable, inclusive meeting arrangements to our Faculty guidelines to enhance workplace wellbeing.

We also established and encouraged meeting-free Fridays and a full meeting-free week to alleviate stress and fatigue caused by online working during the pandemic.
In 2021 we celebrated and shared our expertise in equity, diversity and inclusion through a range of events featuring our researchers and students. Discover several key ones here, with others listed throughout the report.

2021 GOAL
Deliver high-profile and meaningful events that showcase our inclusive culture, share our world-leading EDI research and empower underrepresented groups.
Monash Tech Talks

In 2021, we organised a number of Monash Tech Talks dedicated to EDI.

‘Defining your path: Success stories from women in tech’ was an International Women’s Day special featuring successful women in IT across research and industry. Together, they shared insights into the diverse career paths in IT open to women and how to navigate persistent stereotypes.

‘Beyond Braille: Inclusive tech for a fairer world’ saw esteemed experts from the disability and tech sectors speak about the needs of people living with impairments and assistive technologies.

Finally, ‘The new future of ageing: Smart homes for seniors’ expanded on an award-winning film and transformative research by the Emerging Technologies Research Lab that explored innovative technologies for ageing populations.

Digital Open Day

Building on 2020, during last year’s Digital Open Day we held a rerun of our informative ‘Do you feel like an IT imposter?’ exhibition session that deep dived into overcoming imposter syndrome in the IT sector.

Monash Tech Talks

‘Defining your path: Success stories from women in tech’ was an International Women’s Day special featuring successful women in IT across research and industry. Together, they shared insights into the diverse career paths in IT open to women and how to navigate persistent stereotypes.

‘Beyond Braille: Inclusive tech for a fairer world’ saw esteemed experts from the disability and tech sectors speak about the needs of people living with impairments and assistive technologies.

Finally, ‘The new future of ageing: Smart homes for seniors’ expanded on an award-winning film and transformative research by the Emerging Technologies Research Lab that explored innovative technologies for ageing populations.

Women in Technology (WIT) mentoring program

To support the professional development and networking of our mentees and mentors, the 2021 WIT mentoring program consisted of four key events:

- **Presenting Your Inner Professional**: Equipping students to get the most out of their mentorship.
- **Launch Event**: A chance for participants to meet and learn more about the program.
- **Networking Event**: An opportunity for participants to hone their networking skills and expand their professional connections.
- **Celebration Event**: The program’s conclusion which recognises the exceptional progress of our mentees and mentors.
LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2021 we established our first high-level KPIs to evaluate our progress on key EDI indicators, and embedded EDI responsibilities across the leadership team.

2021 GOAL

Assess and establish baseline data and benchmark reporting, and enhance inclusive leadership and accountability for EDI.
To increase accountability and transparency of EDI objectives, and embed responsibility across the Faculty, senior leadership position descriptions and KPIs have been updated to reflect our EDI commitments. We have also integrated EDI actions into Faculty portfolio plans and created opportunities for Faculty Executive, supervisors and managers to participate in training on reducing unconscious bias in decision-making.

**Reporting and benchmarking**

The Faculty has developed a data reporting process for identifying and tracking KPIs related to staff and student progress on equity, diversity and inclusion benchmarks. The new process will help evaluate current initiatives and identify where further work is required.

**Responsible governance**

To increase accountability and transparency of EDI objectives, and embed responsibility across the Faculty, senior leadership position descriptions and KPIs have been updated to reflect our EDI commitments.

We have also integrated EDI actions into Faculty portfolio plans and created opportunities for Faculty Executive, supervisors and managers to participate in training on reducing unconscious bias in decision-making.
2022 priorities at a glance

1. Establish the Embedded Counsellor and Mental Health and Disability Liaison roles to provide tailored support and advice for staff and students.

2. Drive gender-balanced academic recruitment to increase the proportion of underrepresented groups in key areas, particularly senior women.

3. Revise and update our curricula with further EDI content and teaching practices to support the Faculty’s education transformation.

4. Undertake research into the needs of students with disabilities to support and develop relevant initiatives.

5. Conduct focus groups with women students to understand their perspectives studying with us, and develop meaningful initiatives that improve their experience.

6. Support EDI outcomes across Monash’s campuses through collaboration with our international colleagues.
We would like to thank our Committee members and collaborators for their dedication and contributions to equity, diversity and inclusion in 2021.
Phillip Abramson
Professional Staff Representative

Peter Barton
Ex Officio Member

Katerina Peri
Ex Officio Member

Trang Do (special mention)
Monash Flex team member – leading the research ‘Championing Girls and Women in IT’.

Nicole Cox
Ex Officio Member

Cally Martin
Ex Officio Member