



NIH UNITE Initiative

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June 11, 2021

Motivation to Act



- Driven by events of 2020 – the disparate morbidity and mortality of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd, and punctuated by the killings of Asian women in Atlanta in 2021
- This brought into sharp relief the ongoing reality of racial injustice in our country, and the responsibility of all of us to address this issue
- There were a series of intense Institute and Center Director meeting discussions, with input from internal stakeholders
- We developed a shared commitment to address structural racism: we must not allow this pivotal moment to pass

Approach



Create NIH-wide committees reporting to the NIH Steering Committee and reporting out to NIH Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) to address 5 interrelated, but distinct, workstreams

The NIH UNITE Initiative



- U** Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning
- N** New research on health disparities/minority health/health equity
- I** Improving the NIH Culture and Structure for Equity, Inclusion, and Excellence
- T** Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders
- E** Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

Initial UNITE Recommendations

- **Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism**



Acknowledgement



“

“To those individuals in the biomedical research enterprise who have endured disadvantages due to structural racism, I am truly sorry. NIH is committed to instituting new ways to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying and dismantling any policies and practices at our own agency that may harm our workforce and our science.”

— Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., NIH Director

”

<https://www.nih.gov/ending-structural-racism>

Initial UNITE Recommendations and Actions



- Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism – *Published 3/1/21*
- Continue to aggressively implement approaches to address the “Ginther Gap” and enhance portfolio diversity - *Ongoing*
- Launch a multi-phased, -tiered, and -integrated Common Fund Initiative focused on transformative health disparities research initiatives to reduce health disparities/inequities

Action



NIH Common Fund Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity – Committed up to \$24M

Two FOAs released 3/26/21:

- 1) RFA-RM-21-021 Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity (U01 Clinical Trial Allowed) - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-21-021.html>
- 2) RFA-RM-21-022 Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity at Minority Serving Institutions (U01 Clinical Trial Allowed) - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-21-022.html>

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- Launch a multi-phased, -tiered, and -integrated Common Fund Initiative focused on transformative health disparities research initiatives to reduce health disparities/ inequities – *RFAs published 3/26/21*
- Ensure a robust NIH Enterprise-wide commitment to support the NIMHD FOA focused on the effects of structural racism and discrimination on health disparities/ inequities; encourage funding levels that are commensurate with overall IC resources

Action



Funding Opportunity Title
Activity Code
Announcement Type
Related Notices
Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) Number
Companion Funding Opportunity
Number of Applications

Understanding and Addressing the Impact of Structural Racism and Discrimination on Minority Health and Health Disparities (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

R01 Research Project Grant

New

None

RFA-MD-21-004

None

See [Section III. 3. Additional Information on Eligibility.](#)

With the commitment of up to \$30.8 M by 25 ICOs:

- **Letters of intent due 7/20/21**
- **Applications due 8/24/21**

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MD-21-004.html>

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- Ensure a robust NIH Enterprise-wide commitment to support the NIMHD FOA focused on the effects of structural racism and discrimination on health disparities/ inequities; encourage funding levels that are commensurate with overall IC resources – *RFA published 3/23/21 with 25 ICOs*
- Develop a sustainable process to systematically gather and make public the demographics of our internal and external workforce

Action – NIH Data by Race/Ethnicity, Disability Status



REPORTS

[Home](#) > [Report Catalog](#) > Report Catalog Results

Search Results for Reports and Statistics

[NEW SEARCH](#)

Topic:
 Funding Mechanism:
 Fiscal Year:

Admin Institute/Center:
 Activity:

Portfolio:
 Variable:

2 records found.

Report Title	Topic	Variable	Start Year	End Year	Format
▶ Research Grant Investigators by Mechanism, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Disability Status, FY2016-FY2020	Investigators, Funded Investigators, Funding Rates Investigators, Gender Investigators, Race/Ethnicity	Disability Status FY Gender IC Mechanism Race/Ethnicity	2016	2020	VIEW REPORT

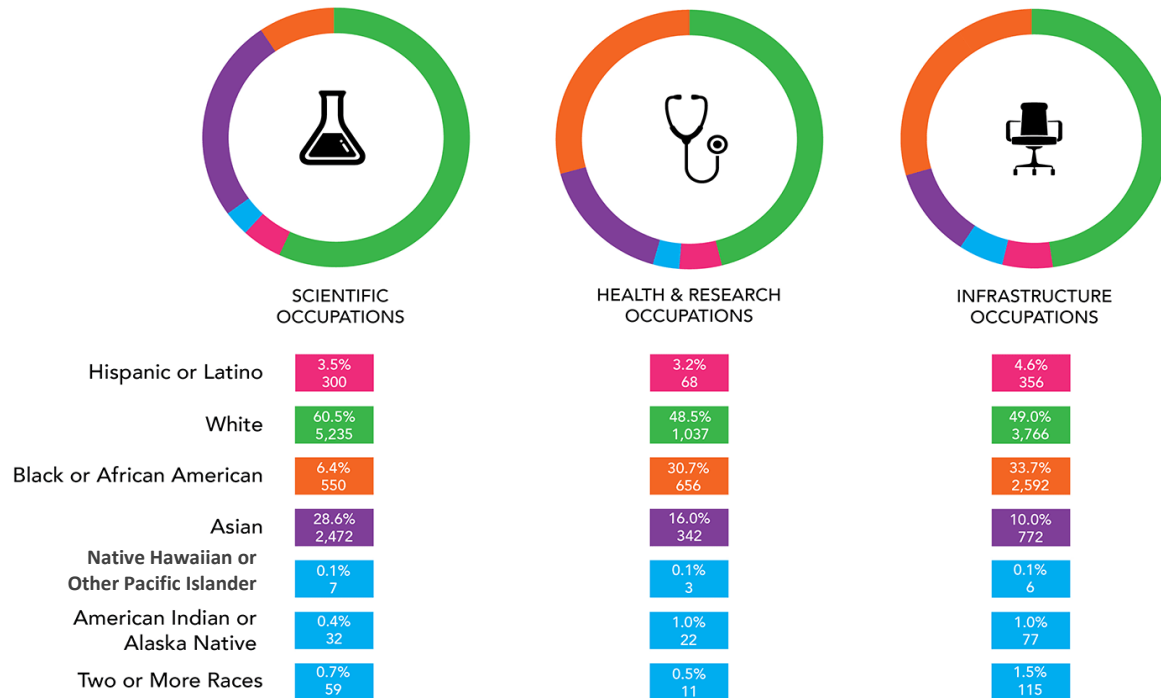
[https://report.nih.gov/sites/report/files/docs/NIH Principal Investigators by Gender Race Ethnicity and Disability 2016-2020 02 23 2021 PDF.pdf](https://report.nih.gov/sites/report/files/docs/NIH_Principal_Investigators_by_Gender_Race_Ethnicity_and_Disability_2016-2020_02_23_2021_PDF.pdf)

Action – NIH Internal Data FY 21, Q2



NIH Total Workforce by Job Category FY21, Q2

RACE & ETHNICITY



Employees classified in the five racial groups or Two or more races are all non-Hispanic or Latino. Employees classified as Hispanic or Latino may identify with any combination of the five racial categories.

<https://www.edi.nih.gov/people/resources/advancing-racial-equity/nih-workforce-profile-fy21q02>

Initial UNITE Recommendations

- **Implement policy changes that promote anti-racism and remove barriers to professional growth for staff from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups**



Action

Anti-Racism Steering Committee

ARSC Membership

- Open to ALL members of the NIH workforce – current membership 470+

Goal

- To redress issues regarding policies and procedures that lead to wrongs
- The ARSC does not address individual cases – that’s the role of EDI

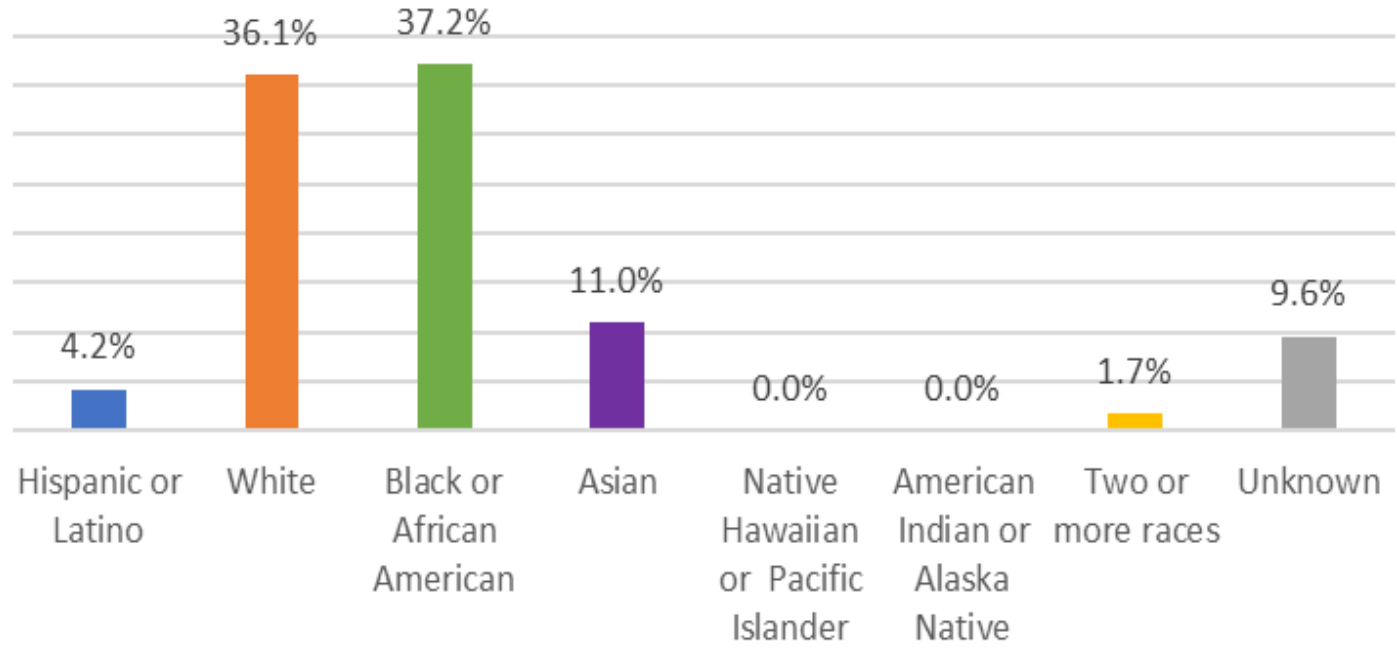
NIHANTIR-STEERINGCMTE@mail.nih.gov



ARSC Demographic Data from EDI

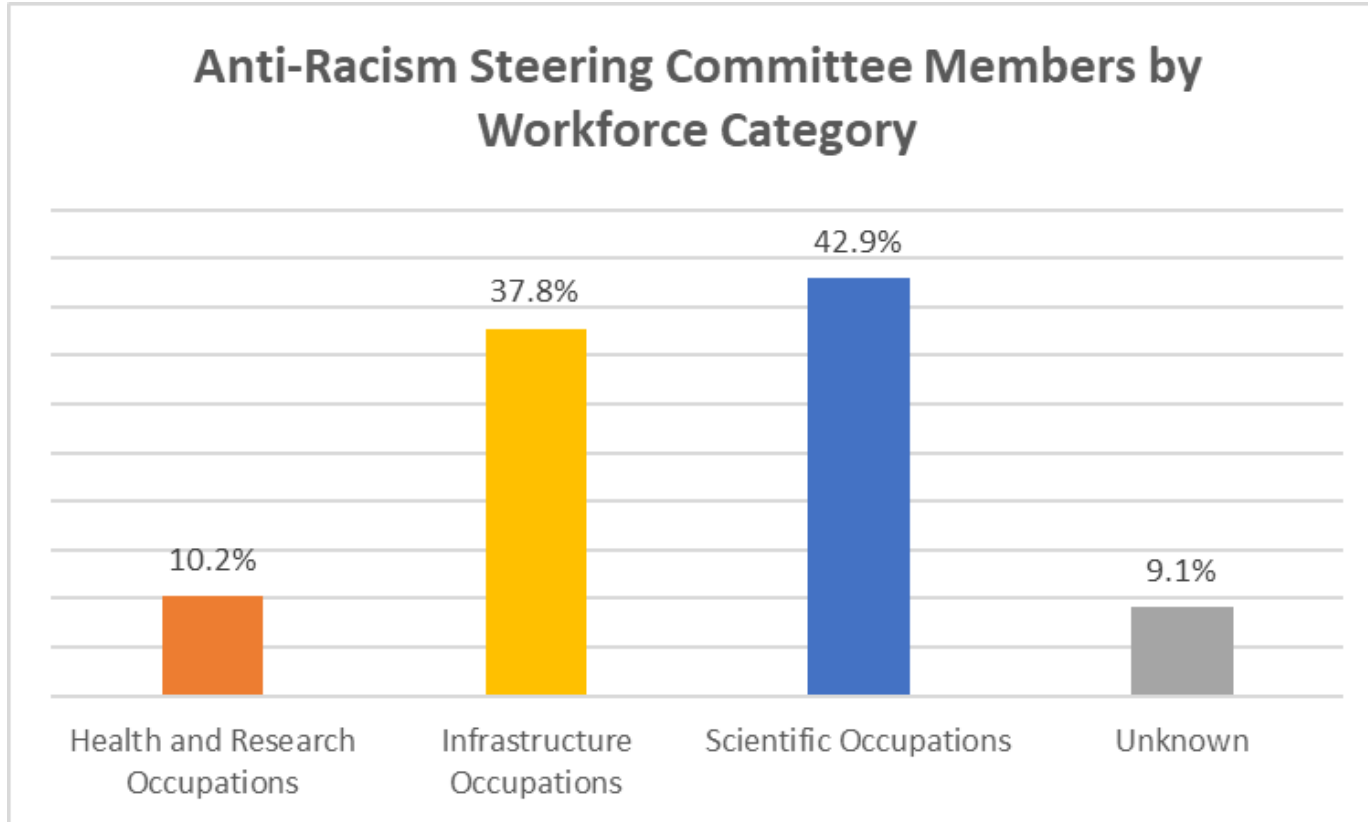


Anti-Racism Steering Committee Members by Race/Ethnicity



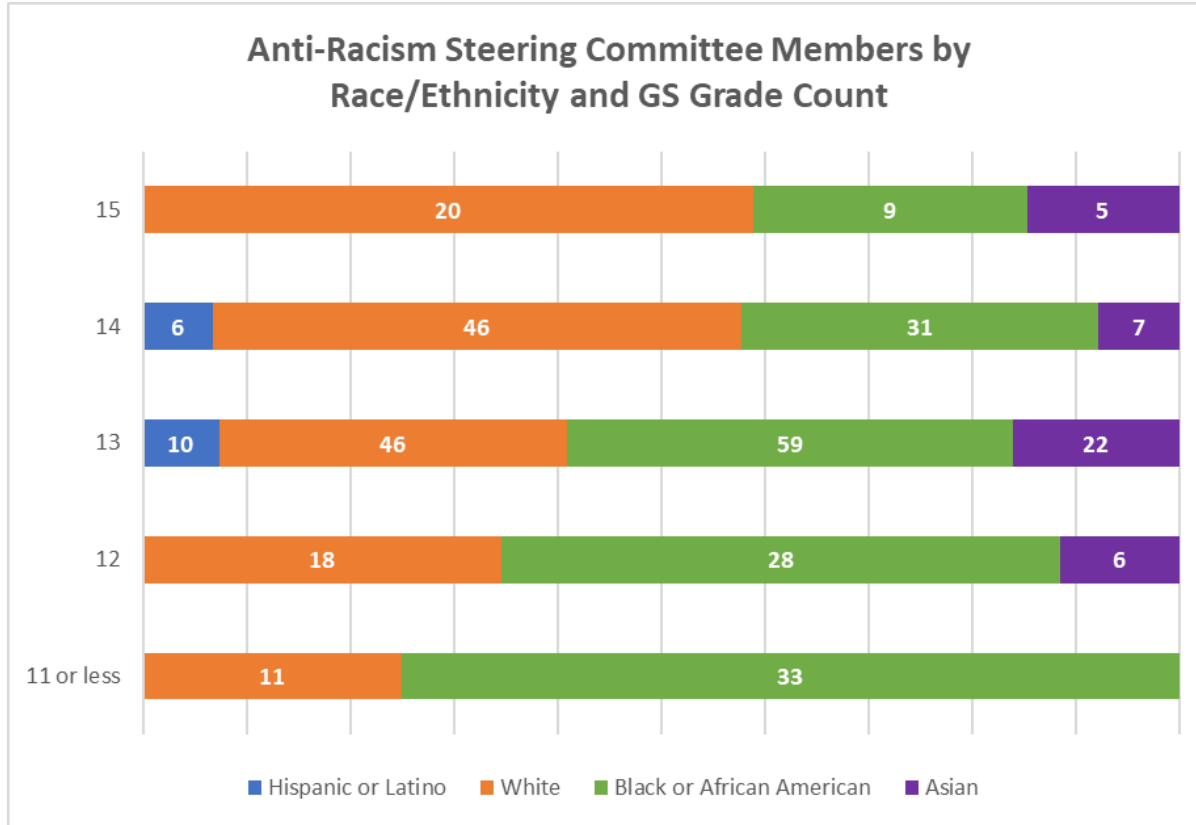
- 471 members of the NIH Racism Steering Committee.
- The pay plan breakout is as follows: GS = 370, GP = 7, AD = 1, CC = 3, ES = 4, RF = 21, RG = 22, 1 Unknown.
- Grade distribution is provided for the GS pay plan only.
- Demographics for all Fellows and Contractors (n=42) are unknown.
- Demographics for 3 FTEs is unknown (3 race, 1 disability and 1 sex).
- To maintain confidentiality and protect individual identification from deductive disclosure risk, some categories, are suppressed for reporting purposes

ARSC Demographic Data from EDI



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Initial UNITE Recommendations and Actions



- Implement policy changes that promote anti-racism and remove barriers to professional growth for staff from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups - *Initiated*
- *Develop a performance expectation for IC Directors to be accountable for equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts and actively participate in NIH-wide diversity efforts through a diversity, equity, and inclusion officer or other means appropriate for the IC, in coordination with SWD and EDI.*
- Expand the Distinguished Scholars Program to Senior Investigators hired with tenure and enhance recruitment of researchers from underrepresented groups as candidates for open IRP investigator positions - *Initiated*



UNITE Recommendations and Actions Going Forward

Committee Updates



U Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning
Monica Webb Hooper, NIMHD; Mia Rochelle Lowden, ORIP/OD; Courtney Aclin, IMOD/OD

N New research on health disparities/minority health/health equity

I Improving the NIH Culture and Structure for Equity, Inclusion, and Excellence

T Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

U Committee Charge



To perform a broad, systematic self-evaluation to delineate elements that perpetuate structural racism and lead to a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the NIH and the external scientific community

U Committee: Priorities



Solicit feedback from NIH staff and the extramural community (e.g., RFI, listening sessions, focus groups, townhalls, anonymous options, etc.)

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- RFI received over 1100 responses (open March 1 to April 23)
- NIH Townhall on Racial Equity organized in collaboration with T committee
- Internal NIH listening sessions and focus groups launched in May

- **Next Steps**

- Listening sessions will continue across NIH through August 2021
- Listening sessions/focus groups/key informant interviews for external organizations will launch in Summer 2021

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Hear from a wide-range of NIH staff and external stakeholders, beyond those who are not frequently engaged

U Committee: Priorities



Conduct qualitative data analysis from listening activities (e.g., RFI, listening sessions, focus groups, etc.)

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Completed a preliminary analysis of the RFI question focused on research areas
- Finalizing analysis approach for other listening activity data

- **Next Steps**

- Complete RFI analysis and draft report (Summer 2021)
- Conduct ongoing analysis of listening session data, to be completed late 2021

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Reports provide insights to guide and support the work of UNITE

U Committee: Priorities



Submit IC Data Request to all ICs and review responses on recent past, ongoing, and upcoming DEI activities

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Received responses from all ICs
- Preliminary analysis of responses

- **Next Steps**

- Complete analysis and report results by Summer 2021

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Identify and report best practices, lessons learned, and areas for collaboration across NIH. Achieve a better understanding of DEI activities across the NIH.

Committee Updates



U Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning

N New research on health disparities/minority health/health equity
Anna María Nápoles, NIMHD; Robert Rivers, NIDDK; Michele K. Evans, NIA

I Improving the NIH Culture and Structure for Equity, Inclusion, and Excellence

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N Committee Charge



To address long-standing health disparities and issues related to Minority Health to advance health equity (HD/MH/HE) in the United States by ensuring NIH-wide transparency, accountability and sustainability in marshaling resources for HD/MH/HE research

N Committee: Priorities



Empower IC Leaders & POs w/ actionable data dashboard that tracks and provides visualizations of NIH HD/MH/HE research investments with key performance indicators and metrics to set and monitor targets

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Established and convened trans-NIH **N Committee Data Working Group** of experts to begin to characterize the HD/MH/HE research portfolio

- **Next Steps**

- Develop robust project plan with clearly defined milestones and measures of success

- **Metrics of Success**

- Easily accessible dashboard with funding metrics

N Committee: Priorities



Analyze and improve business process from ideation to funding in order to achieve equity

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Identifying expertise and resources required for analysis of business model
- Meetings with ICOs to identify best practices that result in better HD/MH/HE funding metrics

- **Next Steps**

- Interlinked and dependent on the progress and outcomes of data dashboard

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Guidelines and Best Practices for ICOs to increase HD/MH/HE research
- Increased and sustained funding of HD/MH/HE research

N Committee: Priorities



Achieve equitable support for HD/MH/HE research at NIH to measurably reduce health inequities

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Transformative Health Disparities Research: 2 FY21 Common Fund FOAs
- WG convened to develop FY23 Common Fund FOAs

- **Next Steps (Ongoing)**

- Developing additional FOAs that focus on the IC-specific disease/topic areas
- Identifying strategies for increasing CBPR and research on SDoH, structural racism
- Working with large cohort studies funded by NIH to increase HD/MH/HE research

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Increased and sustained funding of HD/MH/HE research

Committee Updates



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Trevor Archer, NIEHS; Marie A. Bernard, COSWD/OD; Alfred Johnson, OM/OD

T Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

I Committee Charge



To change the NIH organizational culture and structure to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the NIH workforce

I Committee: Priorities



Revise Manual Chapter 1311 - Preventing and Addressing Harassment and Inappropriate Conduct

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Received feedback from all stakeholders and Anti-Harassment Steering Committee representatives; in the process of reviewing and incorporating

- **Next Steps**

- Completion of edits, leadership review, submission for approval (managed by OHR) - Fall 2021

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Publication of revised manual chapter - Fall 2021

I Committee: Priorities



Publication of reliable and accessible data regarding the demographics of the NIH workforce by sex, race, ethnicity, and job grade

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Data published on EDI website (May 14, 2021)

<https://www.edi.nih.gov/people/resources/advancing-racial-equity/nih-workforce-profile-fy21q02>

- **Next Steps**

- Refine and expand data, allow specific use (e.g., make queries possible) - Summer 2021

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Utilization of data in developing hiring/retention/promotion programs across ICs; Fall/Winter 2021

I Committee: Priorities



Establish an NIH Anti-Racism Steering Committee (ARSC) and work collaboratively with the committee to develop racial equity plans (REPs) for each IC

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- ARSC established Spring 2021; over 470 members

- **Next Steps**

- Determine ARSC/SME and task-specific working groups (Summer 2021)

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- IC representation in ARSC; obtaining outside consultants to assist with development of REPs (Summer 2021) and draft/publication of IC REPs (Fall/Winter 2021)

Committee Updates



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T Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

Anna E. Ordóñez, NIMH; Ericka Boone, OER/OD; Jon Lorsch, NIGMS

E Committee Charge



To perform a broad systematic evaluation of NIH extramural policies and processes to identify and change practices and structures that perpetuate a lack of inclusivity and diversity within the extramural research ecosystem

Includes developing strategies to address funding disparities and increase applications that would support individuals from under-represented groups

E Committee: Priorities



Build and Sustain Research Capacity to Enable Fuller Participation in Modern Research Enterprise

- **Progress, Accomplishments**
 - Actively engaging with internal/external stakeholders to understand issues impacting MSIs
- **Next Steps (Summer 2021- Early 2022)**
 - Develop more comprehensive communications/outreach strategies (e.g., toolkits, webinars, workshops, “SPAD/SuRE-like” academies, institutional/leadership “think tanks”, etc.)
 - Strategize initiatives/funding models addressing construction, infrastructure, endowment needs, small business/contracting opportunities and non-traditional partnerships
- **Metric(s) of Success**
 - Sustained increases in #s of applications and awards to HBCUs, TCUs, other MSIs; more engaged communication between NIH and MSIs

E Committee: Priorities



Identify NIH Processes and Policies Contributing to Inequities in Extramural Funding

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Meeting with subject matter experts in NIH peer review, extramural funding opportunity/concept development, and extramural staff training

- **Next Steps (Summer/Fall 2021)**

- Listening sessions w/ NIH POs/SROs & review UNITE RFI responses
- Generate proposal of new programs and policy recommendations

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Successful implementation of evidence-based interventions and programs to address inequities and biases in NIH processes and policies
- Centralized repository containing themes from listening sessions available to all UNITE members

E Committee: Priorities



Extramural Institutional Culture: Develop and Launch Programs to Spur Institutional Culture Change in Support of Inclusivity and Equity

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

Developing proposals for new programs to assist extramural institutions to:

- Conduct institutional climate surveys and self studies using validated instruments
- Test innovative interventions to improve institutional culture

- **Next Steps (Summer 2021)**

- Draft outline of programs and receive internal feedback
- Identify sources of funding

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- BUILD Hallmarks of Institutional Culture Change

E Committee: Priorities



Increasing Career Opportunities for URGs

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

Exploring strategies to:

- Scale up existing NIH programs that increase and foster career opportunities for URGs
- Increase awareness of funding opportunities for URGs

- **Next Steps (Summer/Fall 2021)**

- Garner IC support to expand Science Education Partnership Awards (SEPA) participation/funding
- Encourage inclusion of data science focus within SEPA
- Assess strategies to target communications to URGs

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Sustained increased number of SEPA awards, URG-supported research experiences, and training and career development awards

Committee Updates



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T Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

Sadhana Jackson, NCI, NINDS; Amy Adams, NINDS; John Burklow, IMOD/OD

E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

T Committee Charge



To ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability of all UNITE efforts amongst NIH Internal and External Stakeholders.

Includes coordinating NIH-wide efforts and communicating findings from UNITE committees to internal and external stakeholders and the general public, and facilitating communication among NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices

T Committee: Priorities



Develop a webpage to communicate NIH efforts including a data dashboard to highlight and be transparent with NIH and UNITE data (demographic, listening sessions, focus groups, survey, HD/HE Data, etc.)

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Worked collaboratively with OCPL on the development of the NIH *Ending Structural Racism* webpage; started designing data dashboard.

- **Next Steps**

- Roll out data dashboard by September 2021 with quarterly updates of high-level internal, external demographic data

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Acknowledge NIH and UNITE progress through fully transparent, one-stop data shop with links to more granular data

T Committee: Priorities



Develop an NIH intranet page and disseminate a UNITE “toolkit” (slides, TPs, bibliographies, best practices, lists of IC efforts) to assist ICs with DEI efforts

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Supported NIH Town Hall. NIH intranet site in development. Defined toolkit top priorities for NIH ICs through stakeholder engagement.

- **Next Steps**

- Roll out toolkit, Town Hall FAQs to NIH ICs on a UNITE-specific intranet site by September 2021. Update as needed.

- **Metric(s) of Success**

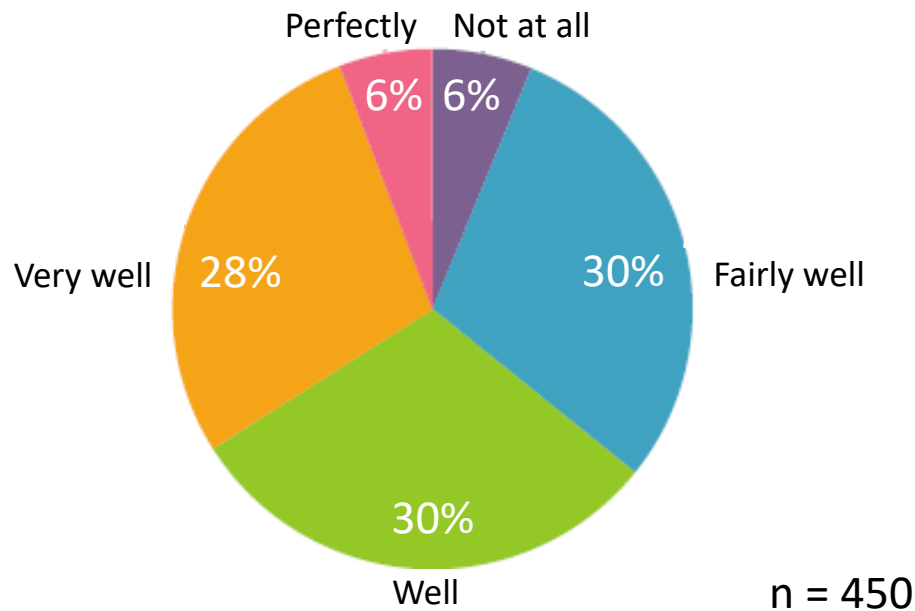
- Easily accessible central hub for resources that enable NIH alignment and progress towards achieving racial equity.

Engagement with NIH Staff

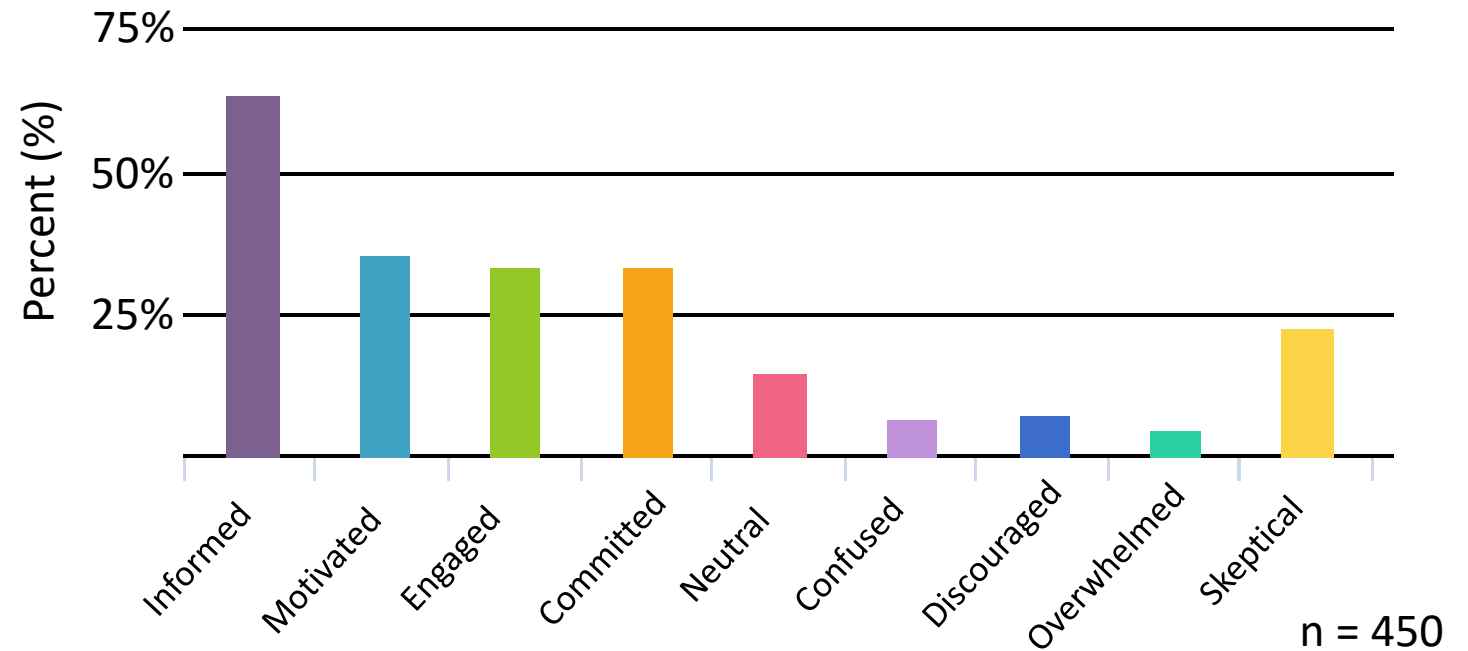
NIH Internal Town Hall (>8000 participants)

Feed back survey results:

How well do you understand the goals of NIH's commitment to achieve racial equity?



After attending the town hall, I feel (Check all that apply):



T Committee: Priorities



Update the portraiture and art installations in the halls and on the walls of the NIH as well as throughout the NIH's online presence to reflect the diversity of identity and career paths at NIH.

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Developed concept design with NIH medical arts for physical and electronic campaigns.

- **Next Steps**

- In-person walking tour of display changes in three major NIH buildings including the clinical center (December 2021).

- **Metric(s) for Success**

- Physical campaign evident at all NIH campuses and fully operational online campaign (e.g., Instagram) showcasing diversity of all NIH employees.

UNITE Actions/Priorities Going Forward – Next 6 Months



- **Continue to listen and learn from a wide variety of stakeholders, including those who are not frequently engaged**
- **Begin pilot study of actionable data dashboard prototypes that track and provide visualizations of intramural and NIH HD/MH/HE research investments**
- **Additional FOAs that focus on IC-specific disease/topic areas related to HD/MH/HE**
- **Develop programs to spur institutional culture change in support of inclusivity and equity**
- **Increase URG career opportunities, starting with increasing IC participation in SEPA**

UNITE Actions/Priorities Going Forward – Next 6 Months



- **Examine NIH staff (e.g., PO, SRO) interactions with applicants (e.g., URG applicants) to address bias or inequities that may impact funding opportunities**
- **Develop programs to expand NIH interactions with and support of HBCUs, TCUs and other MSIs**
- **Change physical and virtual representations at NIH to more accurately reflect the diversity of our society**
- **Publish revised NIH internal guidance for reporting of racial discrimination**



*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice
everywhere*

Martin Luther King, Jr



Cell

Leading Edge

 CellPress

Commentary

Affirming NIH's commitment to addressing structural racism in the biomedical research enterprise

Francis S. Collins,^{1,*} Amy Bany Adams,² Courtney Aklin,³ Trevor K. Archer,⁴ Marie A. Bernard,^{5,6} Ericka Boone,⁷ John Burklow,⁸ Michele K. Evans,⁶ Sadhana Jackson,^{2,9} Alfred C. Johnson,¹⁰ Jon Lorsch,¹¹ Mia Rochelle Lowden,¹² Anna María Nápoles,¹³ Anna E. Ordóñez,¹⁴ Robert Rivers,¹⁵ Victoria Rucker,^{5,16} Tara Schwetz,³ Julia A. Segre,¹⁷ Lawrence A. Tabak,³ Monica Webb Hooper,¹³ Carrie Wolinetz,³ and NIH UNITE

[DOI: 10.1016/j.cell.2021.05.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2021.05.014) (2021).

The NIH UNITE Initiative

UNITE Co-Chairs

- **Marie A. Bernard**, NIH Office of the Director/
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- **Alfred Johnson**, NIH Office of the Director/
Office of Management
- **Lawrence Tabak**, NIH Office of the Director

UNITE Program Manager

- **Victoria Rucker**, Center for Information Technology/
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UNITE Program Support

- **Brittany Chao**, NIH Office of the Director
- **Marzjah Esther**, NIH Office of the Director



U

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Shelli Avenevoli (NIMH)
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Laura Cooper (NIAMS)
Kevin Davis (CIT)
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+Vanessa Marshall (NIMHD)
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N

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Nakia Makonnen (NIDCD)
Eric Refsland (NIAID)
Eric Sid (NCATS)
Wayne Wang (NHLBI)
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+Jesse Isaacman-Beck (IMOD/OD)

E

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Leah Hubbard (NCI)
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***Committee Co-Chairs**
+Staff Leads

