• A broad array of stakeholders across UW SMPH Departments and Centers are engaged
• Social-biological phenotyping linkages were of particular interest to both internal and external stakeholders
• Knowledge gaps were noted as key barriers to progress, with biases/beliefs about the area noted as a particular opportunity for change through widespread education
• New infrastructure investments can synergize efficiently with existing programs to fulfill needs.
• External stakeholders confirmed that strong opportunities exist, and that the area is likely to grow rapidly with initiatives progressing at other academic institutions.

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are fundamental drivers of health inequity, and a cornerstone of social-biological mechanistic-focused research. This emerging area of research, links cells to communities and neurons to neighborhoods. It can uncover new interventions to mitigate health disparities, and is of increasing interest to NIH and other large funders.

GAP: Although UW SMPH has been a past national leader in SDOH theory and community partnership, expansion into next-generation social-biological mechanistic-focused trans-disciplinary research is needed to maintain this reputation and to compete for emerging NIH funding in the area.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE: Grow social-biological mechanistic-focused SDOH research across the UW SMPH

IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE: Build a foundational framework towards establishment of a Center in this trans-disciplinary research area. Including key stakeholder engagement, organizational positioning, and needs assessment.

Key research stakeholders primarily from within the UW SMPH (N=31) were recruited to provide feedback and insight on these areas. External stakeholders (N=11) were drawn from NIH, foundations, and large nationally-known academic programs on social determinants. Notes were analyzed. Themes emerged and are presented.

Proposed Components – Center on Social Determinants of Health

1. Administrative
2. Multi-Level Analytics
3. Social-Biological Phenotyping
4. Education

Stakeholder Identified Barriers, Needs

EDUCATION:
- Need for additional knowledge and practical experience regarding current mechanistic theory approaches to social-biological health equity research
- Need for additional expertise in latest methods, measurements and analytic approaches to facilitate rigorous social determinants of health research
- Knowledge gap on current approaches for linking social and biological data
- Bias that health equity research, particularly R01-level funding, is rarely supported by NIH
- Definition of ‘health equity research’ that does not embrace the full NIH definition
- Belief that health equity research does not include basic science

INFRASTRUCTURE:
- Lack of expert consultants and infrastructure for designing, conducting and analyzing NIH-level, cutting-edge social determinants of health studies
- No universal system infrastructure for individual-level and contextual-level data collection on social determinants of health within clinical affiliates
- Need to increase coordination amongst multi-disciplinary faculty interested in the topic (e.g., matching a social scientist with a basic scientist and helping them know how to work together towards a fundable proposal)
- Limited number of NIH-funded, nationally recognized experts on social determinants of health at UW for mentoring, building investigator teams

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