

Equity Ambassadors: A Key Initiative for Building an Antiracist Institution

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Background

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, located in Central Illinois, celebrates its 50th anniversary embarking on the core mission to assist the people of central and southern Illinois in meeting their health-care needs through education, patient care, research and services to the community. Recognizing and dismantling systems of oppression is a foundational step in addressing this mission. Our population includes:

Medical Students	293
Residents	330
MEDPREP Students	65
Faculty (full time)	304
Faculty (part time)	47
Staff	241
Civil Service Employees	1087

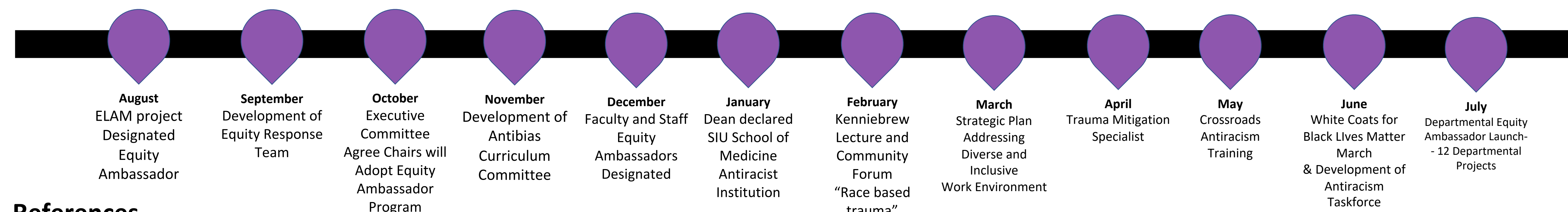
Purpose: Strategic Plan for an Antiracism Institution

1. Continue to advance a vital, forward thinking, mission driven culture.
2. Develop a diverse and inclusive workforce, promote equitable treatment, and revise governance structures and policies to support equity across the organization.
3. Become an organization that fully embraces and promotes equity and inclusion in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.
4. Identify, address and minimize overt and implicit bias.
5. Become an antiracist organization.

Method

This multi-year, longitudinal initiative integrates a participatory action research approach. The purpose of this project is to actively engage with members of our community to critically reflect and activate change within our community². Three action research core questions³ continue to shape the ongoing process: (1) Who is the community? (2) Is there conflict or collaboration within a departmental environment in which inquiry, learning, and research are compelling? (3) Are there biases at work (in policies, procedures, communications, and settings) in which additional voices are needed to bring about ongoing change?

Engaging in Equity Transformation: Annual Activities and Events

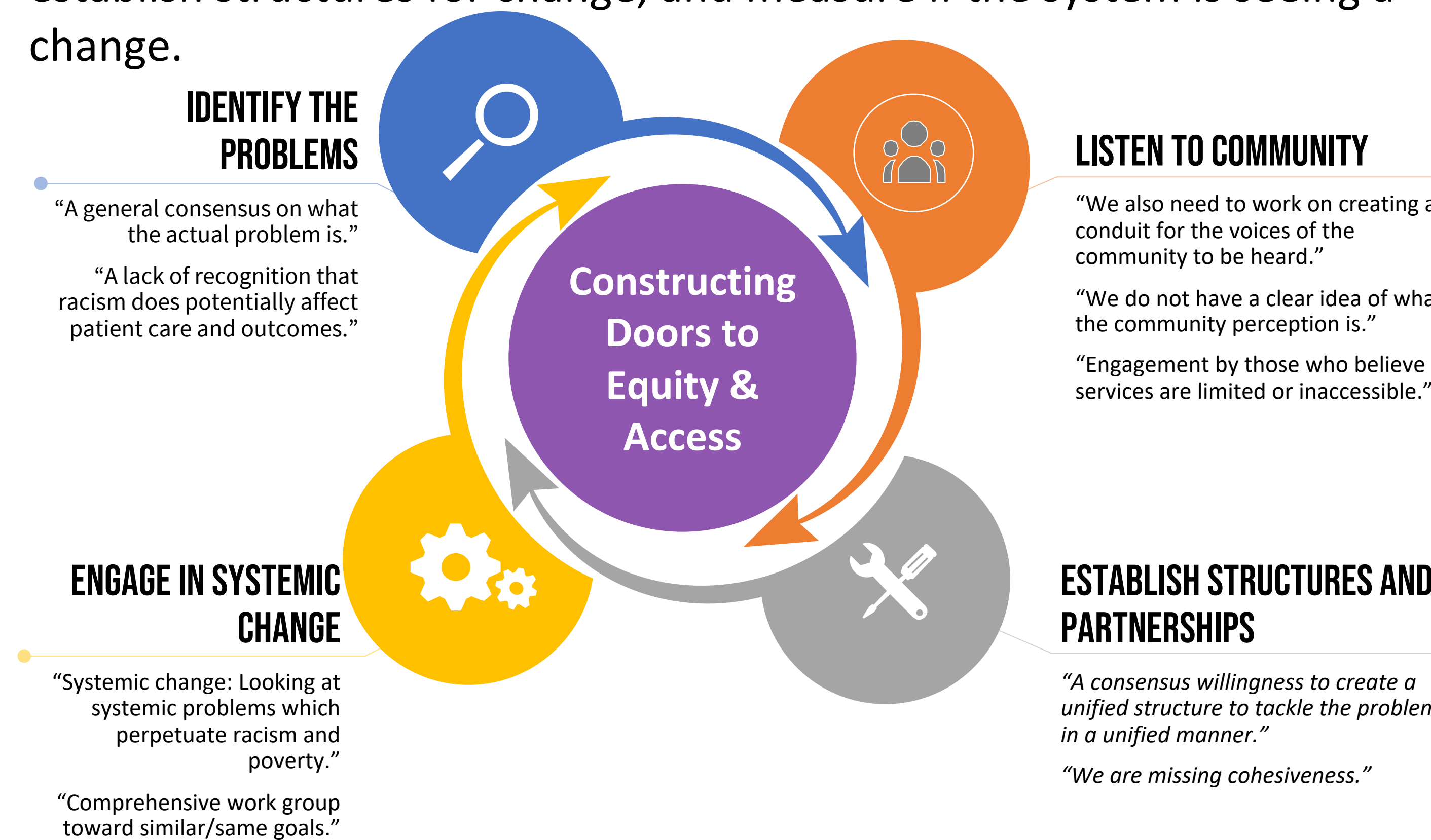


References

1. Center for Assessment and Policy Development (2020). Retrieved from <http://www.capd.org/>
2. Chiu, L. F. (2006). Critical reflection: More than nuts and bolts. *Action Research*, 4(2), 183-203
3. Stoecker, R. (2012). *Research methods for community change: A project-based approach*. Sage publications.
4. El-Amin, W. & Koehler, J.L. (2017). Race, racism, health, and healthcare. A community forum held at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine on January 11, 2017.
5. Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and TrianingContinuum

Our Longitudinal Approach/ Discussion

We have taken a multi-phase, multi-stakeholder approach in order to build many doors within the institution. All of them are aimed at building an anti-racist institution. This construction process is ongoing, and our assessment is based on different indicators across the organization. The Antiracism taskforce and Equity Ambassadors focus on metrics, organizational analysis, training, and policies. The following visual and quotes emerged from a community forum with a cross range of stakeholders. This approach is iterative, and the community continues to look for inequities, engage diverse community voices, establish structures for change, and measure if the system is seeing a change.

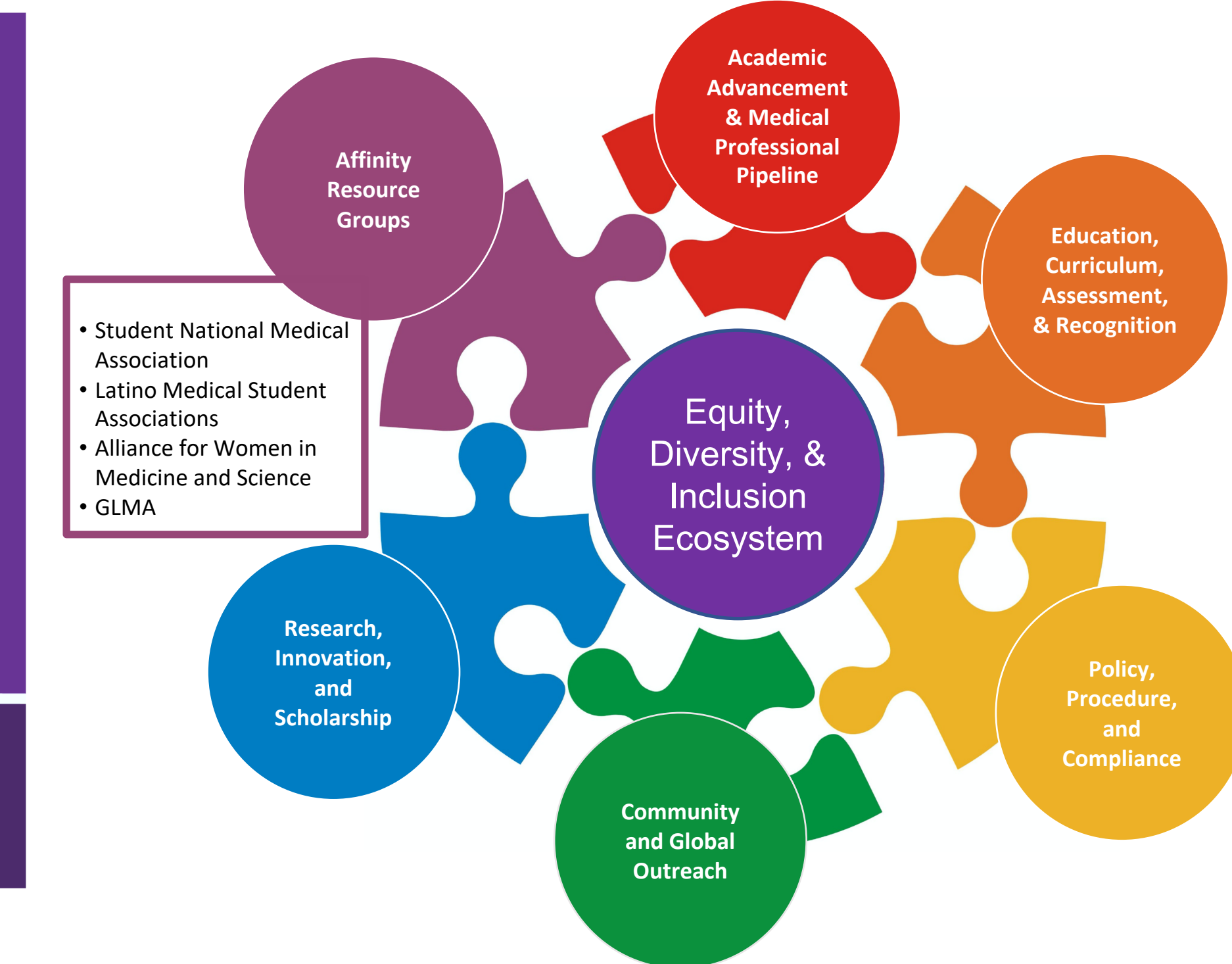


Objectives

Our overall objectives are below:

- Recognize systems of power that operate to hinder equity and create strategies that support inclusive excellence.
- Invite people into collaborative spaces to discuss and solve issues of inequity.
- Analyze indicators within the system to find opportunities to open additional doors to tough conversations around race and identity.

As a result of our approach, core groups, activities, and initiatives have emerged.



Findings and Implications

Throughout this participatory action initiative, 12 equity departmental projects have developed. As the Associate Dean of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, I provide overall guidance and support, but equity ambassadors are central to driving the efforts and impacts.

Equity Response Team	A cross-departmental, cross-role group that provide services to those impacted by bias, create a supportive safe space, and help develop strategies against microaggressions.
Kenniebrew Lecture & Forum	Annual community event that includes external expert/ community insight, community action planning, and equity recognition.
Department Equity Ambassador	Key representatives identified through each department. Ambassadors share relevant information, lead difficult discussions, and increase departmental accountability around equitable environments.
Anti-Bias Curriculum Committee	Task force charged with ongoing review of the curriculum aimed at eradicating stereotypes and cultivating inclusive practices.
Alliance for Women in Medicine (AWIMS)	An organization that promotes honest discussion and positive change in the realm of gender equity, career advancement, work-life balance, and community service, and to champion professional development and promotion of women in medicine and science
Medical Humanities Equity PAC	Collaborative space to promote internal reflection around issues of equity across the medical continuum.
Race Equity Health Partnership with Community Leaders	A collaborative community task force designed to address issues of inequity throughout the community that impact the health and well-being of community members.
Patient Anti-Discrimination Policy	Active effort to change provider policies so that it sets expectations and standards around the treatment of medical staff based on individual's race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity will not be honored.

