**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, 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 actively change within our community. Three action research core questions 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 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.

**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.

**Kennebrew 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.

**Alliance for Women in Medicine (AWWM)**

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 cultivating inclusive practices.

**Engaging in Equity Transformation: Annual Activities and Events**

**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.

**References**

5. Consortium: Antiracism Organizing and Training Curriculum