Background

Definitions: Health means physical and mental health status and well-being; broader in scope than health care. Health disparities are differences in health or in the key determinants of health Health equity is both a process and a measurable outcome whereby health disparities are reduced or eliminated. Health Equity Research is the process of developing and evaluating mechanisms to reduce health disparities.

Rationale:
- Several institutions of similar size and research funding have established research structure to support Health Equity Research.
- Vermont is a state with a rapidly changing and fluid demographic.
- The lack of connection to and mistrust in BIPOC communities.
- While many senior faculty work in the area of race-based difference in disease, they do not understand the importance of social determinants of health and health equity.
- Support of Health Equity research is a potential mechanism to enhance both recruitment and retention of URM/BIPOC faculty.

Objectives

- Begin a conversation: the importance of Health Equity and the need for Health Equity Research.
- Connect with faculty stakeholders and begin a needs assessment.
- Compile potential allies and resources.
- Build an engaged community.
- Obtain structural and financial support for ongoing work and programing.

Methods

   2. Interviews and discussions with leadership at UVM (15).
   3. Meetings with community leaders and stakeholders.

Preliminary results and Products

1. Identified specific Health Equity journals and delineated specific sources of funding; found ~60 Vermont Investigators.
2. Leadership interview themes:
   - Confusion: health disparities, health care delivery/access and health equity.
   - In Vermont, relevant Health Equity Research relates to rurality and aging.
   - Need: evidence-based approach to repair relationship with communities of BIPOC.
   - Use social determinants of health to drive policy/programming and Network needs as part of an accountable care organization.
   - Significant barriers exist to redirect current NIH funding to Health Equity Research.
   - Lack of understanding: role of systemic racism and discrimination in academic medicine and health.
   - The importance of personal relationships and networking.
3. Faculty focus group themes:
   - Lack: meaningful ongoing engagement and partnerships with BIPOC and with UVM academic communities.
   - Difficult to measure racism: easier to measure representation.
   - Willingness to incorporate social determinants not justice into research.
   - Advocacy versus Academy: Is Health Equity work considered Research?
   - Lack of support from idea to grant to award.
   - Need: Mentorship, collaboration, protected time, funding.

Future directions

- Focus groups with trainees.
- Return-on-investment study: expanded translation services.
- Health Equity Research Units in Research Centers.
- Health Equity Visiting Scholars program.
- Health Equity roundtable discussion series.
- Enhance funding mechanisms/Business plan.
- Launch the Office of Health Equity Research.

Summary and Recommendations

- Building research infrastructure requires personal relationships with leaders, buy-in from senior researchers, external funding, a significant mechanism to support junior faculty in all elements of development and internal access to field leaders.
- Institutionalize the value of cultural knowledge and understanding.
- Operationalize community engagement as part of an ongoing paradigm in research.
- Align financial priorities with Health Equity.
Proposal for the Office of Health Equity Research

Office of the Dean, Larner College of Medicine
Richard Page

Health and Justice Regional Data Center

Office of the Associate Dean for Public Health and Health Policy
Director: Ian Carney, M.D., M.P.H.

UVM Justice Research Initiative
Abigail Crocker

Office of Health Equity Research
Director*: Maria Mercedes Avila, PhD
Assistant Director: Elizabeth Bonney M.D., MPH

Data analyst
TBN

Website, Social Media and communications
Development and Maintenance; Liaison to Office of Medical Communications

Training program;
Certificate in health equity Research
Special seminars
MPH Program Support
Physician Leadership course
Liaison to teaching Academy and OMSE and to health and society major
https://www.uvm.edu/cas/healthsociety

Business innovation
Mathew Tsai, M.D.

Coordinator, Office of Health Equity Research
TBN

Committee on Community Engagement in Research
Chair Dr Avila
Community leader, TBN, Vice Chair
Karen Vastine UVMCC
Marissa Coleman

Pre and Post Award Support;
liason to UVM Grant navigators, office of clinical trials, sponsored programs

Faculty development;
Mentoring
Round table Monthly Research Showcase Quarterly Information clearinghouse and events Newsletter
Weekly Fellowship program management (after year two, Yearly)

Liaison committee
Chair, Dr. Bonney
Office of the Vice President for research
Gagan Deep Bajaj, PhD-Vice Chair
Cardiovascular and Brain Health COBRE TBN
Translational Research in Infectious Disease, Human Population Core
Kristen Pierce, MD
Behavior and Health COBRE, TBN
NNE CTR
Gary Stein, PhD
Center for Health Services Research
Adam Atherly, PhD
UVMCC, TBN
Social Justice Coalition, TBN

*Future Assistant Dean for Health Equity Research
# Budget Proposal

Office of Health Equity

## Personnel Costs

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## Proposed Budget

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## Total Grant Budget

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EA Bonney et al 2021