# Towards an Infrastructure for Health Equity Research at the Larner College of Medicine

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## 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

1. **Literature search:** Pub med from 1970 till present and internet: **Health Equity, building capacity in Health Equity Research**, **Vermont investigators** publishing in Health equity, potential funding sources.
2. **Interviews and discussions** with leadership at UVM (15).
3. **Meetings with community leaders** and stakeholders.
4. **Survey to Departmental Diversity Champions.**
5. **Development of a Focus Group Questionnaire.**
6. **IRB approved Focus group study** via zoom to determine **understanding, interest, and needs;** involving junior to mid-career faculty in *nine LCOM departments.*

## 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/programing*** 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.
4. **Community Leader themes:**
- **Language access**, translation services.
- **Communication** of results back to community.
- **Incorporate: Job, career development, mentoring** opportunities in research.

5. **Source of internal funding source for Health Equity Research: UVMMC** Three grant application programs will have Health Equity is a priority topic for funding under this mechanism.
6. **Research Retreat: Health Equity and Women.**
7. **Website, White paper (in progress).**
8. **Structure/Budget: Office of Health Equity Research.**

## 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/Busines 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: Office of Health Equity Research**
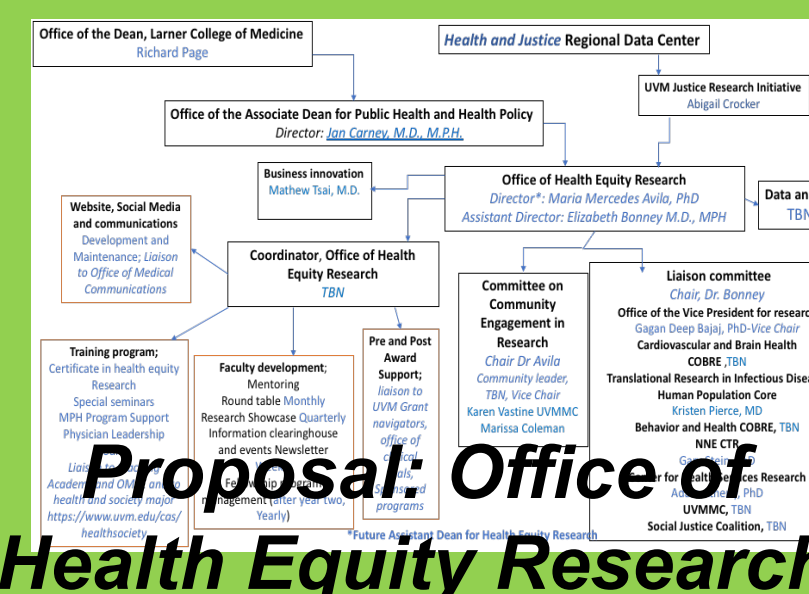
# Proposal for the Office of Health Equity Research
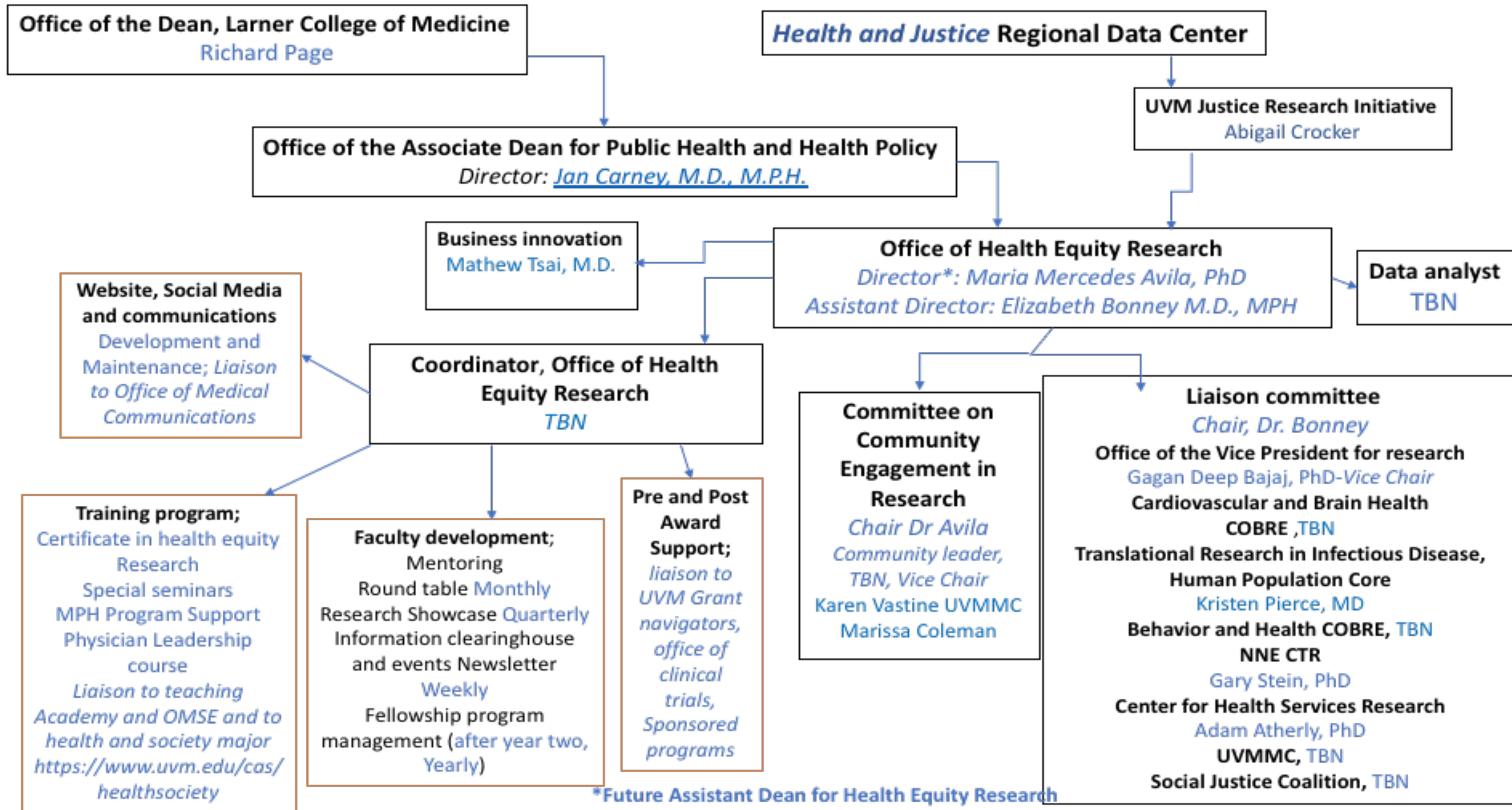
# Budget Proposal Office of Health Equity

**Budget Proposal**
UVM Click#:
PI:
Proposal Due Date:

| Personnel Costs | | | | | | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Name | FTE Salary | Salary Cap | Effort % | Salary Requested | Benefit Rate | Benefit Requested | Total Personnel | Total Personnel | Total Personnel | Total Personnel | Total Personnel |
| SR Faculty | $ 295,000.00 | $ 199,300.00 | 10% | $ 19,930.00 | 20.4% | $ 4,065.72 | $ 23,995.72 | $ 24,475.63 | $ 24,965.15 | $ 25,464.45 | $ 25,973.74 |
| Research Faculty | $ 107,723.00 | | 25% | $ 26,930.75 | 47.2% | $ 12,711.31 | $ 39,642.06 | $ 40,434.91 | $ 41,243.60 | $ 42,068.48 | $ 42,909.84 |
| Outreach Specialist | $ 60,000.00 | | 100% | $ 60,000.00 | 47.2% | $ 28,320.00 | $ 88,320.00 | $ 90,086.40 | $ 91,888.13 | $ 93,725.89 | $ 95,600.41 |
| Admin/Business Specialist | $ 45,000.00 | | 50% | $ 22,500.00 | 47.2% | $ 10,620.00 | $ 33,120.00 | $ 33,782.40 | $ 34,458.05 | $ 35,147.21 | $ 35,850.15 |
| **Total** | | | | | | | **$ 185,077.78** | **$ 188,779.34** | **$ 192,554.93** | **$ 196,406.03** | **$ 200,334.15** |
| General Costs | | | | | | | Total Costs | Total Costs | Total Costs | Total Costs | Total Costs |
| Computers | | | | | | | $ 10,000.00 | $ 2,000.00 | $ 2,000.00 | $ 2,000.00 | $ 2,000.00 |
| Equipment Rental | | | | | | | $ 4,800.00 | $ 4,800.00 | $ 4,800.00 | $ 4,800.00 | $ 4,800.00 |
| Materials / Su[pplies | | | | | | | $ 3,500.00 | $ 3,500.00 | $ 3,500.00 | $ 3,500.00 | $ 3,500.00 |
| Vice Chair Stipends | | | | | | | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 |
| Speaker Stipends | | | | | | | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 | $ 5,000.00 |
| Telephone / Data | | | | | | | $ 2,500.00 | $ 2,500.00 | $ 2,500.00 | $ 2,500.00 | $ 2,500.00 |
| UVM Work Orders | | | | | | | $ 6,000.00 | $ 1,000.00 | $ 1,000.00 | $ 1,000.00 | $ 1,000.00 |
| Travel | | | | | | | $ 3,000.00 | $ 3,000.00 | $ 3,000.00 | $ 3,000.00 | $ 3,000.00 |
| **Total** | | | | | | | **$ 39,800.00** | **$ 26,800.00** | **$ 26,800.00** | **$ 26,800.00** | **$ 26,800.00** |
| **Proposed Budget** | | | | | | | **$ 224,877.78** | **$ 215,579.34** | **$ 219,354.93** | **$ 223,206.03** | **$ 227,134.15** |
| **Total Grant Budget** | **$ 1,110,152.22** | | | | | | | | | | |