NIH’s commitment to addressing structural racism in the biomedical research enterprise: Standing up the UNITE sub-committee to improve the NIH culture and structure for equity, inclusion, and excellence

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"To those individuals in the biomedical research enterprise who have endured disadvantages due to structural racism, I am truly sorry. NIH is committed to instituting new ways to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying and dismantling any policies and practices at our own agency that may harm our workforce and our science." — Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., NIH Director

**Charge**

The UNITE initiative was established to identify and address structural racism within the NIH-supported and the greater scientific community. With representation from across the NIH Institutes and Centers, UNITE aims to establish an equitable and civil culture within the biomedical research enterprise and reduce barriers to racial equity in the biomedical research workforce. To reach this goal, UNITE is facilitating research to identify opportunities, make recommendations, and develop and implement strategies to increase inclusivity and diversity in science. These efforts will bolster the NIH’s effort to continue to strive for diversity within the scientific workforce and racial equity on the NIH campus and within the extramural community.

**Methods: Action Tracker**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture Change</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Retention/Advancement</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define inclusive culture, promote positive behavior and growth opportunities, expand NIH anti-racism policies, make harassment and discrimination reporting and investigation safe and accessible, enhance anti-racism training, identify and dismantle processes that may perpetuate systemic racism</td>
<td>Expand NIH Oitating scholars program to tenure eligible investigators</td>
<td>Establish Anti-Racism Steering Committee. Promote practices that create effective mentoring and enhance retention and promotion at all levels within the NIH community</td>
<td>Demonstrated commitment to DEI as NIH element for each U54</td>
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<td>improve diversity and culture at NIH</td>
<td>Recruit to scientific leadership positions</td>
<td>Support and develop for NIH investigators, including those with tenure, from underrepresented groups. (Fall 2021)</td>
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<td>develop inclusive mentoring and clinical research placement of clinical investigators</td>
<td>Establish OHRM Anti-Racism Committee</td>
<td>Name Diversity Officer for each institute.</td>
<td>Expand NIH OHRM Anti-Racism Committee and coordinate actions with an anti-racism plan from each institute. (Spring 2021)</td>
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<td>enhance NIH policy—manual chapter 111</td>
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**Frameworks**

**CULTURE CHANGE**

- Define inclusive culture, promote positive behavior and growth opportunities, expand NIH anti-racism policies, make harassment and discrimination reporting and investigation safe and accessible, enhance anti-racism training, identify and dismantle processes that may perpetuate systemic racism.

**RECRUITMENT**

- Enhance and implement recruitment strategies for diversity at all levels within the NIH community.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Make diversity, equity, and inclusion a priority across NIH and amongst leadership. Name Diversity Officer for each institute.

**RETENTION/ADVANCEMENT**

- Establish Anti-Racism Steering Committee. Promote practices that create effective mentoring and enhance retention and promotion at all levels within the NIH community.

**Accomplishments**

- Increase Transparency. Provide granular data on NIH workforce based on position and supervisory status.
- Expand NIH policies to more explicitly acknowledge racial discrimination. Establish a campaign to make NIH staff aware of options for reporting racist actions. (published in NIH manual chapter: Summer 2021)
- Expand recruitment efforts for NIH investigators, including those with tenure, from underrepresented groups. (Fall 2021)
- Establish anti-racism steering committee and coordinate actions with an anti-racism plan from each institute. (Spring 2021)

**Chairs of UNITE initiative**

- Marie A. Bernard, M.D., Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity, NIH Office of the Director.
- Alfred Johnson, Ph.D., Deputy Director for Management, NIH Office of the Director.
- Larry Tabak, DDS, Ph.D., Principal Deputy Director, NIH Office of the Director.

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