

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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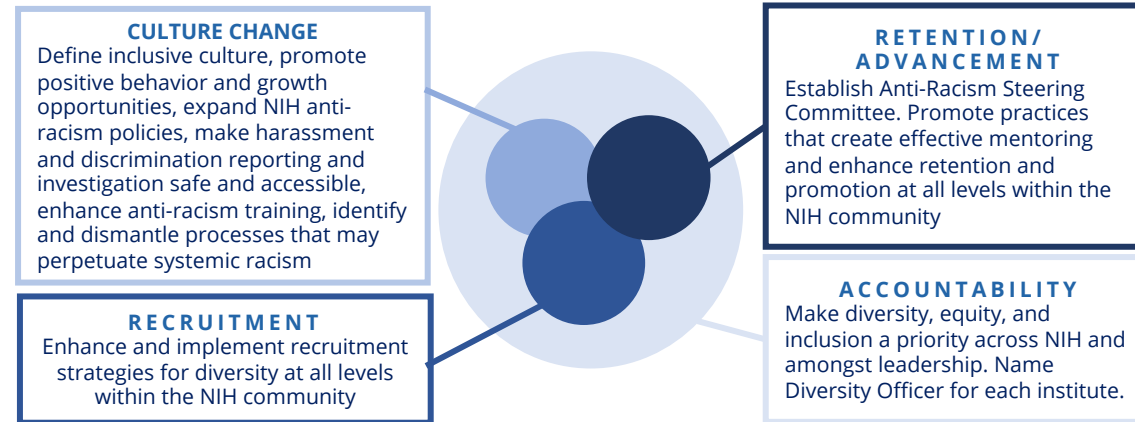
Acknowledgement & Commitment

“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.

Framework



Methods: Action Tracker

Category	Task	Responsible	Timeline	
Culture Change	Define an inclusive culture at NIH	AHSC, Civil, EDI		
	develop/enhance NIH training on anti-racism	AHSC, Civil, EDI		
	enhance NIH policy - manual chapter 1311	OHR, EDI, 8cre		
	establish NIH anti-racism committee	AHSC, 8cre		
Recruitment	Expand NIH Distinguished Scholars program to tenure eligible investigators	OSWD, DDIR, Senior AA-B scientists		
	Recruit to extramural scientific positions	OSWD, DER		
	Expand use of OSWD tool kits by NIH institutes	OSWD, DDIR		
	Establish/optimize co-mentoring and clinical research placement of Howard medical students	OD, OITE, each I/C		
	Expand OSWD search tool to include URG students and postdocs for TT recruitment	OSWD, OITE		
	Recruit diverse pool of NIH trainees and then continue to mentor and connect through their careers	OSWD, OITE		
	Retention	Perform exit interviews for all URG/URI staff, employees, including those who have left NIH in last 3 years	OD, each I/C	
		Require SD/senior AD to develop retention plans/procedure to (reduce or report?) departures of URGs	DDIR, each I/C	
Emulate elements of programs such as NSF Advance, SEA		OSWD, E committee		
Provide a specific (?) promotion pathway/mechanism for		OD, each I/C		
Mechanism to address/identify supervisors that don't promote URGs / provide guidance in the application		OD, each I/C		
IC specific listing mechanisms to ensure equal access to available positions/promotions		OD, each I/C		
Accountability	Specific mentoring/Sponsoring programs to enhance the	OD, each I/C		
	Creation of an office in OSWD (NIH or IC specific) dedicated to retention/promotion/leadership	OHR, OSWD, I/C		
	Demonstrated commitment to DEI as PMAAP element for	OD, OM		
	Expand CDO to every institute	each I/C, OSWD		

Accomplishments

- Increase Transparency. Provide granular data on NIH workforce based on position and supervisory status.

Category	Scientific	Health and Research	Infrastructure
Scientific (n=8476)	~65%	~25%	~10%
Health and Research (n= 2072)	~55%	~35%	~10%
Infrastructure (n=7,654)	~55%	~35%	~10%
- 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