Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Biomedical Research

Advisory Committee to the Director Meeting
February 26, 2021

Marie A. Bernard, MD
Alfred Johnson, PhD
Lawrence A. Tabak, DDS, PhD

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Biomedical Research: Addressing the Challenges in 2021

- **Events of the past year have brought into sharp relief the ongoing reality of racial injustice in our country, and the responsibility of all of us to address this issue**
- **A series of intense Institute and Center Director meeting discussions were held to identify initial issues**
- **Two self-assembled affinity groups at NIH (8CRE, AA/B Scientists) and the Anti-Harassment SC met with NIH leadership for candid discussions that informed next steps**
- **We have arrived at a shared commitment to address structural racism: we must not allow this pivotal moment to pass**

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Biomedical Research: Addressing the Challenges in 2021

Initial Issues Identified:

- **We must ensure that biomedical research, and the administrative system that supports it, is devoid of hostility grounded in race, sex, and other federally protected characteristics**
- **In this new initiative, we are committed to delineate elements that may perpetuate structural racism in biomedical research both within NIH and the extramural community leading to a lack of personnel inclusiveness, equity, and diversity**

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Biomedical Research: Addressing the Challenges in 2021

Initial Issues Identified:

- **All ideas must be given an equal and fair review, without regard to current dogma, precedents, or who presents the ideas**
- **As COVID-19 has made painfully clear, health disparities and inequities continue to contribute to morbidity and mortality in our nation, making it essential to redress the fundamental causes of these disparities/inequities and identify research programs that could identify effective interventions**

The NIH UNITE Initiative to Strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: *Together, We're Stronger*

U Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning

N New research on health disparities, minority health, and health equity

I Improving the NIH Culture and Structure for Equity, Inclusion, and Excellence

T Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

The NIH UNITE Initiative to Strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: *Together, We're Stronger*

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Monica Webb Hooper, NIMHD; Mia Rochelle Lowden, ORIP/OD; Tara Schwetz, IMOD/OD

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Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning

CHARGE

To perform a broad, systematic self-evaluation to delineate elements that perpetuate structural racism and lead to a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the NIH and the external scientific community

Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning

FRAMEWORK

Focused on **systems and institutions**, versus individuals

ACKNOWLEDGING

The existence of **elements that perpetuate the status** quo in biomedical research both internal to NIH and the external community leading to a lack of inclusiveness, equity, and diversity

LISTENING

To **accounts and experiences** related to the charges of the NIH UNITE Committees

CATALYZING

Action, presenting immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term **recommendations for consideration** by NIH leadership

EVALUATING

The **qualitative and quantitative data** to inform structural changes, policy changes or additions, budgetary modifications, and programmatic reform ideas

Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning

Foundational Efforts

CREATE A PLAN TO GATHER INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FEEDBACK

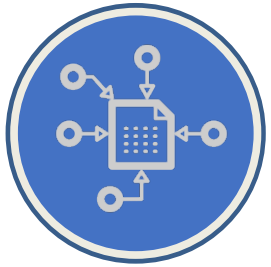
- **Connected with UNITE Committee Co-Chairs –** Complete (November 2020)
  - Identified data and information needs, committee foci to incorporate into action plan

- **Established an Action Plan –** Complete (December 2020)
  - Outlined a mixed-methods, multi-modal approach
  - Defined the expected timelines

- **Conduct Initial Listening Sessions** – Complete (November 2020, December 2020)
  - Held 2 listening sessions with the UNITE Committees

Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning

Current Efforts and Next Steps



- **Refine and Expand Qualitative Data Collection Plan**
  - Finalize Qualitative Data Collection Plan – March 2021
  - Conduct comprehensive assessment across stakeholders through listening sessions, focus groups, town hall(s), anonymous submission sites, etc. – Expected Completion: Summer 2021

- **Solicit Information from ICs**
  - Collect activities, materials, and other data from ICs on relevant past, ongoing, or planned activities – March 2021
  - Compile and analyze to inform UNITE activities – Expected Completion: Spring 2021

- **Publish a Request for Information**
  - Seek input on practical and effective ways to improve the racial and ethnic inclusivity and diversity of research-centered environments and workforce – Pending Publication
  - Summarize results and share publicly **–** Expected Completion: Spring 2021

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Anna María Nápoles, NIMHD; Robert Rivers, NIDDK; Michele K. Evans, NIA

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E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

CHARGE

To address long-standing health disparities and issues related to Minority Health to advance health equity (HD/MH/HE) in the United States by ensuring NIH-wide transparency, accountability and sustainability in marshaling resources for HD/MH/HE research

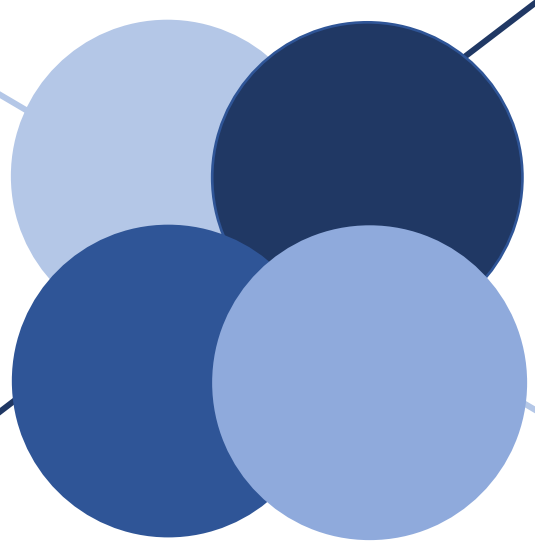
GROUP N
FRAMEWORK

SCOPING REVIEW

Of intramural and extramural NIH systems, methods, measures and definitions used to track MH/HD research to identify strengths and limitations of current systems and new models

COMMON FUND INITIATIVE

Focused on driving innovation and transformation in reducing health disparities and enhancing health equity across the country



NIH PORTFOLIO EXAMINATION

Of relevant intramural and extramural stakeholders: e.g. ODP, OBSSR, Tribal Health, SGMRO, and ICs

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Enhance** the necessary infrastructure to coordinate and conduct trans-NIH MH/HD research
- **Ensure** robust support for NIMHD and enterprise-wide commitment for MH/HD research
- **Expand** research on SDOH and structural racism
- **Embrace** community-driven research

New Research on Health Disparities, Minority Health, and Health Equity

Foundational Efforts

- **Phase 1 – Proposed Common Fund Initiative: "Innovations and Transformation in HD/HE Research"** (Proposed FOA Release: March 2021)
  - **FOA 1:** solicit transformative and novel investigator-initiated applications with potential impact focused on elimination of health disparities broadly and in high priority areas.
  - **FOA 2:** increase the competitiveness of investigators and the research base at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

- **Examine portfolios with NIH-wide stakeholders** (Targeted Completion: April 2021)
  - Meet with key NIH stakeholders to focus proposed Common Fund Initiative, discuss intersectionality in HD/MH/HE research, and highlight the importance of cultural competence and community engagement in HD/MH/HE research

New Research on Health Disparities, Minority Health, and Health Equity

Current Efforts and Next Steps

- **Conduct an accurate analysis** of current investments in HD/MH/HE research with key intramural and extramural stakeholders
  - **Develop and test budget and portfolio tracking** via AI data mining (Targeted Completion: December 2021)
  - **Develop Analytic Budget Tool (HD/MH/HE Resource Center Dashboard)** for use across NIH (intramural and extramural) to increase funding transparency by accurately reporting HD/MH/HE research funding (Targeted Completion: FY23)

- **Phase 2 – Proposed Common Fund Initiative on Interventional Research in HD FY23** (Immediate and Ongoing: Proposed FOA Release: Winter 2022)
  - **Create initiative on translation of multi-level interventions to reduce HD** through strategic planning process and engagement with scientific community
  - **Common Fund FOA:** focused on driving innovation and transformation in reducing health disparities and enhancing health equity across the country

Current Efforts and Next Steps (cont'd)

- **Develop Programmatic Proposals**
  (Immediate and Ongoing, by December 2021)

  - **Establish NIH-wide HD/MH/HE Working Group.** Develop infrastructure for NIMHD-based working group empowered to coordinate and track NIH MH/HD/HE research in context of Strategic Plan
  - **Address research and funding gaps** based on input from other key NIH stakeholders
  - **Increase research** using community-driven approaches to address SDOH, structural racism, behavioral interventions and prevention
  - **Identify actions to address** severe underrepresentation among NIH scientific faculty and staff and among NIH grantees
  - **Create sustainability action plan for recommendations** to ensure continuity and longevity

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Julie Segre, NHGRI; Marie A. Bernard, Acting COSWD/OD, NIA; Alfred Johnson, OM/OD

T Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

CHARGE

To change the NIH organizational culture and structure to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the NIH workforce

Improving NIH Culture & Structure for Equity, Inclusion, & Excellence

FRAMEWORK

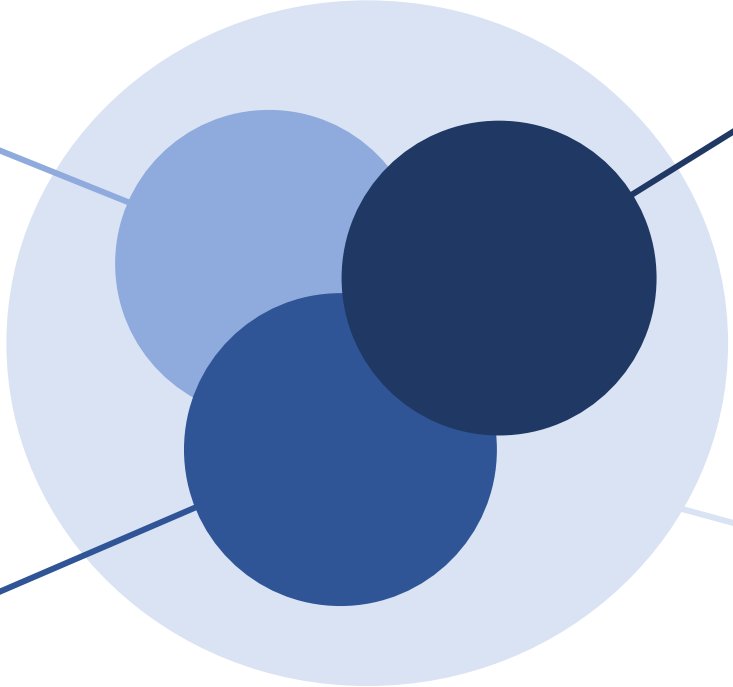
Focused on **Culture Change, Recruitment and Retention/ Advancement with Accountability for NIH Internal Workforce**

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



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

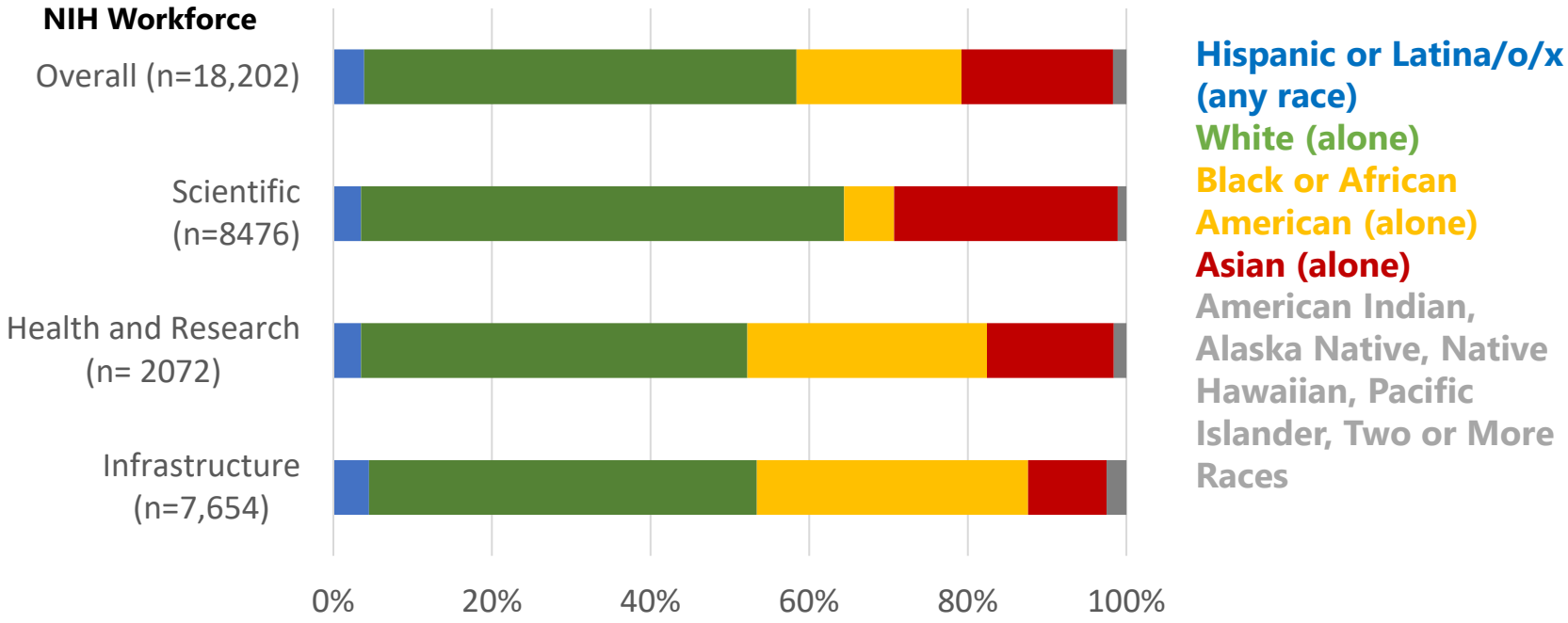
ACCOUNTABILITY

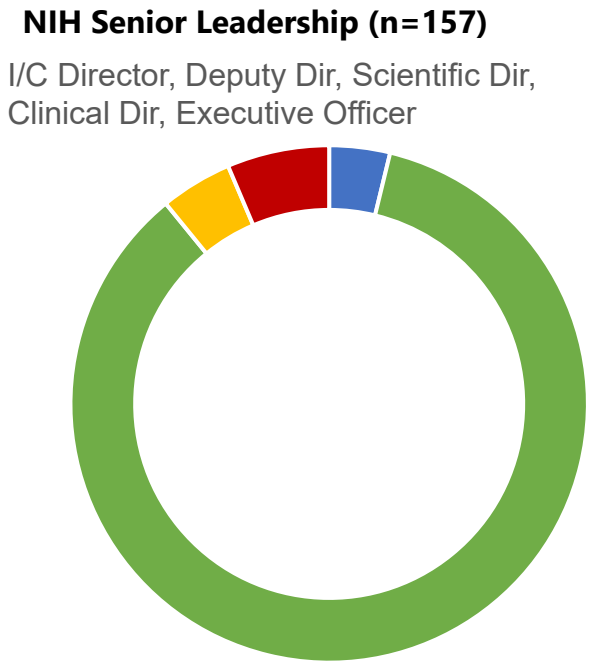
Make diversity, equity, and inclusion a priority across NIH and amongst leadership. Name Diversity Officer for each I/C

Improving NIH Culture & Structure for Equity, Inclusion, & Excellence

Foundational Efforts

- Provide granular data on NIH workforce based on position and supervisory status. (Immediate: 2020 data will be analyzed Spring 2021 and shared publicly Summer 2021)





Scientific Workforce leads or has oversight over research; e.g., investigator, staff scientist, health science administrator
Heath and Research Workforce supports research; e.g., nurse, lab technician
Infrastructure Workforce undergirds the scientific enterprise but not "scientific" or "health and research"; e.g., program analyst, grants management, IT

Improving NIH Culture & Structure for Equity, Inclusion, & Excellence

Current Efforts and Next Steps

- Expand NIH policies to more explicitly acknowledge racial discrimination. Establish a campaign to make NIH staff aware of options for reporting racist actions. (Revised policies finalized: Spring 2021; 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)

- Work with NIH senior leadership to appoint a diversity, equity, and inclusion officer in every IC, with direct access to the IC Director, to track, advance, and coordinate IC-specific diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and actively participate in NIH-wide diversity efforts. (2021, on a rolling basis)

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E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

Anna Ordóñez, NIMH; Ericka Boone, OER/OD; Jon Lorsch, NIGMS

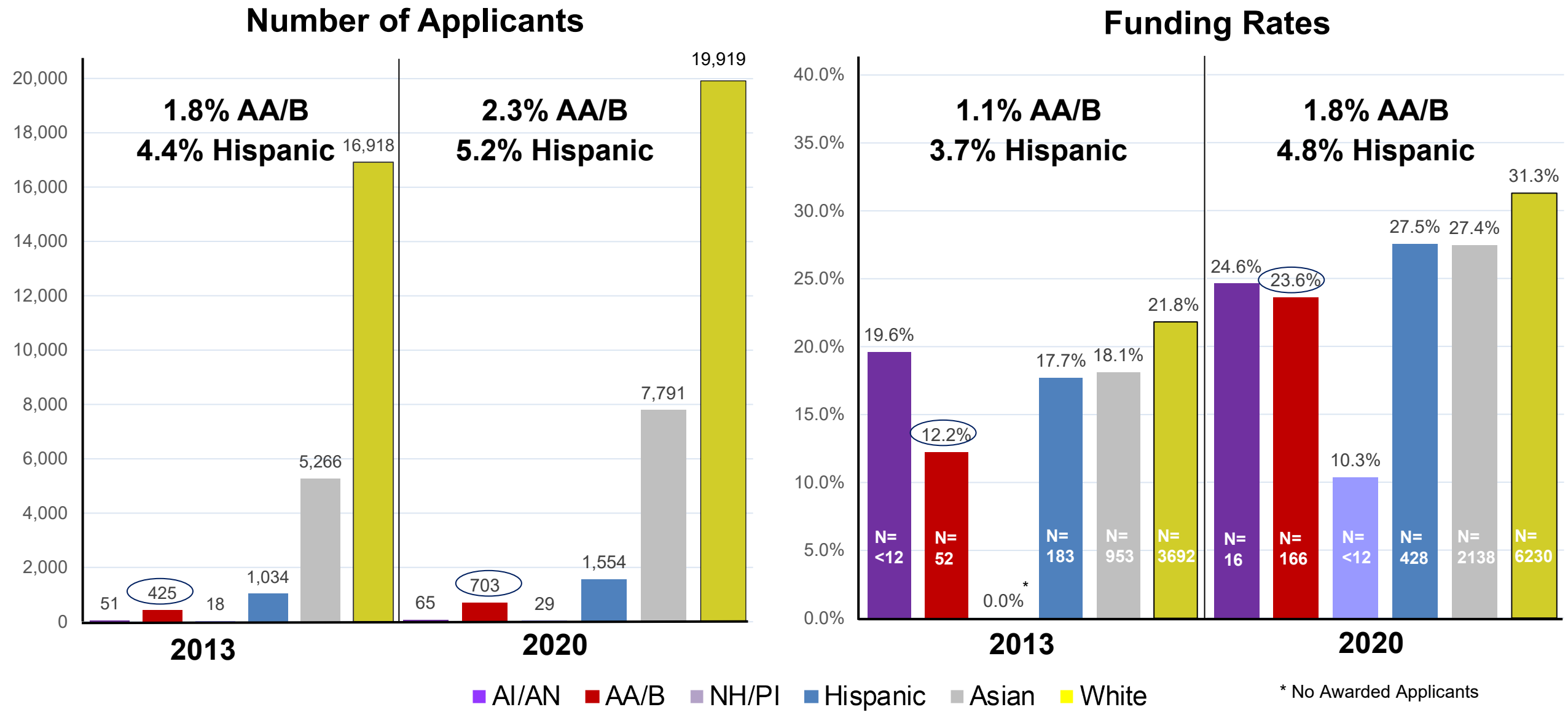
Extramural Research Ecosystem

CHARGE

To perform a broad systematic evaluation of NIH extramural policies and processes to identify and change practices and structures that perpetuate a lack of inclusivity and diversity within the extramural research ecosystem

Includes developing strategies to address funding disparities and increase applications that would support individuals from under-represented groups

R01eq Applicants and Funding Rates
Type 1 and Type 2: FY2013 and FY2020 (by Race/Ethnicity)



Extramural Research Ecosystem

FRAMEWORK

Changing NIH policies, culture and structures to promote extramural workforce diversity and inclusion

URG
CAREER PATHWAYS

INEQUITIES AT
EXTRAMURAL INSTITUTIONS:
ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE

Evaluation &
Stakeholder Engagement

Immediate Actions

Develop
Short- & Long- Term
Objectives

LIMITED
RESOURCES/ CAPACITY
AT HBCUs & MSIs

INEQUITIES AT NIH:
PROCESSES & PROCEDURES

Extramural Research Ecosystem

Foundational Efforts

DEVELOP A COMMITTEE FRAMEWORK AND ACTION PLAN

- **Establish Committee Framework –** Complete (November 2020)
  - Identify key areas of focus for the committee

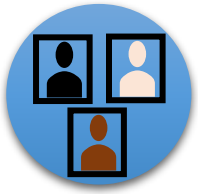
- **Develop Committee Working Groups –** Complete (December 2020)
  - Divide committee focus in working groups

- **Initial Review of Existing NIH Programs, Literature, Gaps, and Best Practices** – Complete (January 2021)

- **Identify Recommendations for Programmatic Efforts** (In Progress)

Extramural Research Ecosystem

Current Efforts and Next Steps



- **Stakeholder Engagement** – With U committee
  - Publish RFI - Spring 2021
  - Listening sessions - Spring/Summer 2021

- **Report Grantee Demographics in NIH Databook** – With OER, U, and T committees
  - Expand existing extramural grant funding data – Spring/Summer 2021

- **Develop Possible Programmatic Proposals** (Spring 2021), **e.g.,:**
  - **Career Pathways** – Strengthen NIH's centralized education, outreach and evaluation efforts for existing training and diversity programs
  - **Institutional Culture** – Provide support for academic institutions to conduct in-depth climate assessments and self-studies and to act on the results
  - **NIH Processes** – Assess interactions between NIH staff and extramural community to identify barriers and bias to inform new programs and enhance equity in NIH processes
  - **Minority-Serving Institutions** – Expand technical assistance and funding opportunities for HBCUs and MSIs

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T Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

Carrie Wolinetz, OSP/OD; Sadhana Jackson, NINDS, NCI; Amy Bany Adams, NINDS

E Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

CHARGE

To ensure Transparency, Accountability, and Sustainability of all UNITE efforts amongst NIH Internal and External Stakeholders.

Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

FRAMEWORK

Focused on **Transparency, Accountability, and Sustainability**

COMMITMENT

To identify and correct **elements that may perpetuate structural racism** across the entire NIH workforce and the biomedical research community leading to a lack of inclusiveness, equity, and diversity of thought

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Of the **overall goals of the UNITE Initiative, data that inform those goals**, and efforts to attain those goals to internal and external stakeholders

EVALUATION

Of **qualitative and quantitative data and conducting analyses** to inform structural changes, policy changes or additions, budgetary modifications, and programmatic reform ideas

COORDINATION,HARMONIZATION

Across the UNITE Committees to **limit redundancy and ensure consistent efforts** to attain UNITE's goals over the course of the initiative and beyond

Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

Foundational Efforts

- **Develop an Action Plan –** Complete (January 2021)
  - Outline a framework based on transparency, accountability and sustainability
  - Establish short, medium and long-term goals based on recommendations from 8CRE, Senior NIH Black scientists, and UNITE

- **Coordinate UNITE communication with NIH Stakeholders -** Complete (January 2021)
  - UNITE Co-Chairs
  - Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL)

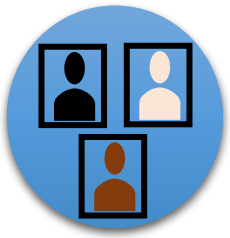
- **Generate Tracking Tools for UNITE Efforts –** Complete (February 2021)
  - Establish UNITE liaisons' committee
  - UNITE action tracker, data repository

Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

Current Efforts and Next Steps

- **Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism (w/ OCPL)** – February/March 2021
  - **Webpage**
    - Central portal for anti-racism policies and efforts
    - Acknowledge internal, external workforce demographics and funding metrics
  - **External Facing Awareness Campaign**
    - Editorials in scientific journal, mainstream media, townhall style meetings

- **Launch Internal Awareness Campaign –** March 2021
  - "Racism, Discrimination, and Harassment don't work here!"
  - Implement and communicate policy changes promoting anti-racism (with Committees I and U)



- **Diversify the portraiture around the NIH** – Spring/Summer 2021
  - Digital campaign of UNITE: "Together We're Stronger"
  - Additional portraits and exhibits reflecting our goals for recruitment and retention
    - starting with Buildings 1, 10, 31

Summary of Initial UNITE Recommendations

- Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism
- Continue to aggressively implement approaches to address the "Ginther Gap" and enhance portfolio diversity
- Launch a multi-phased, -tiered, and -integrated Common Fund Initiative focused on high-risk, high-reward investigator-initiated projects to reduce health disparities/inequities
- Ensure a robust NIH Enterprise-wide commitment to support the NIMHD FOA focused on the effects of structural racism and discrimination on health disparities/inequities; encourage funding levels that are commensurate with overall IC resources
- Develop a sustainable process to systematically gather and make public the demographics of our internal and external workforce

NIH
UNITE

Summary of Initial UNITE Recommendations

- Implement policy changes that promote anti-racism and remove barriers to professional growth for staff from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups
- Appoint a diversity, equity, and inclusion officer in every IC, with direct access to the IC Director, to track, advance, and coordinate IC-specific equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts and actively participate in NIH-wide diversity efforts
- Expand the Distinguished Scholars Program to Senior Investigators hired with tenure and enhance recruitment of researchers from underrepresented groups as candidates for open IRP investigator positions

NIH
UNITE

The NIH UNITE Initiative to Strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: *Together, We're Stronger*

UNITE Co-Chairs:

- Marie A. Bernard, National Institute on Aging/NIH Office of the Director
- Alfred Johnson, NIH Office of the Director/Office of Management
- Lawrence Tabak, NIH Office of the Director

UNITE Program Manager

- Victoria Rucker, Center for Information Technology/NIH Office of the Director

UNITE Program Support

- Jordan Gladman, NIH Office of the Director
- Bryant Maldonado, NIH Office of the Director

U

Monica Webb Hooper (NIMHD)
Mia Rochelle Lowden (ORIP/OD)
Tara Schwetz (IMOD/OD)
Shelli Avenevoli (NIMH)
Dexter Collins (FIC)
Laura Cooper (NIAMS)
Kevin Davis (CIT)
Leslie Littlejohn (NIAMS)
Troy Muhammad (NCI)
Ian Myles (NIAID)
Roland Owens (OIR/OD)
Kelly Ten Hagen (NIDCR)
Brian Trent (NEI)
Della White (NCCIH)
+Cara Finley (IMOD/OD)
+Vanessa Marshall (NIMHD)
+Kamilah Rashid (IMOD/OD)

N

Michele K. Evans (NIA)
Anna María Nápoles (NIMHD)
Robert Rivers (NIDDK)
Gwen Bishop (NIDCD)
Vence Bonham (NHGRI)
Juanita Chinn (NICHD)
Janine Clayton (ORWH/OD)
Kathy Etz (NIDA)
Justin Hentges (AoU/OD)
Daryl Holder (CC)
Samantha Jonson (NCATS)
Joan Romaine (NIAAA)
Asha Storm (NIBIB)
Shannon Zenk (NINR)
+Bryant Maldonado (IMOD/OD)
+Jejeola Oresanya (IMOD/OD)

I

Marie A. Bernard (Acting COSWD/OD; NIA)
Alfred Johnson (OM/OD)
Julie Segre (NHGRI)
Trevor Archer (NIEHS)
Talin Barnes (NIEHS)
Gwyn Collins (NCI)
Charles Egwuagu (NEI)
Courtney Fitzhugh (NHLBI)
Kenneth Gibbs (NIGMS)
Bernard Harper (CC)
Kendall Hill (CSR)
Camille Hoover (NIDDK)
Shawn Lewis (NINR)
Marguerite Matthews (NINDS)
Shaun Sims (NIBIB)
+Melissa Espinoza (NIA)

T

Amy Bany Adams (NINDS)
Sadhana Jackson (NINDS, NCI)
Carrie Wolinetz (IMOD;OSP/OD)
Mohammed Aiyegbo (NIAID)
Albert Avila (NIDA)
Samantha Calabrese (NICHD)
Nelvis Castro (NCI)
Angie Cruz-Albertorio (NCATS)
Carla Garnett (OCPL/OD)
Carl Hashimoto (OIR/OD)
Nakia Makonnen (NIDCD)
Eric Refsland (NIAID)
Wayne Wang (NHLBI)
Cassie Williams (NIAAA)
+Jesse Isaacman-Beck (IMOD/OD)

E

Ericka Boone (OER/OD)
Jon Lorsch (NIGMS)
Anna Ordóñez (NIMH)
Eddie Billingslea (ORWH/OD)
Tiffany Calvert (NIBIB)
Rena D'Souza (NIDCR)
Zeynep Erim (NIBIB)
Leonardo Garzon-Velez (FIC)
Bettie Graham (NHGRI)
Leah Hubbard (NCI)
Patricia Jones (NIA)
Vonda Smith (CSR)
James Washington (NINDS)
Maryam Zaringhalam (NLM)
+Mark Stevens (OM/OD)

Committee Co-Chairs
+Staff Leads

The NIH UNITE Initiative to Strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

A marathon, not a sprint…together, we're stronger.