

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion November 2024

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## Message from the Department Head, Eric Lenze, MD

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, I want to express gratitude to each of you for your dedication to help individuals impacted by mental health conditions. Each day, I am inspired by your commitment to excellence across our missions. Thanks to your cutting-edge research, high-quality education, and transformative clinical care, the department is making a positive impact. I hope each of you enjoys some time off over Thanksgiving break to relax and spend time with your families and friends.

### DEI Speaker Sessions

Thank you to everyone who attended our last session with Dr. Seanna Leath and "Counterspaces, Identity Development, and Wellbeing among Black Youth." If you missed it or want to revisit her session, you can find the recording [here](#). Our next sessions will be Tuesday January 28, 2025, at 11:00 AM with Jennifer Holzhauer, LCSW, MSW, presenting the results to the Department-wide Climate and Culture survey that was active from February-April 2024. This session is open to staff only. Join us in FLTC 205 or on Zoom. At this session, there will be an opportunity to connect with department head, Dr. Eric Lenze. Register for the session [here](#).

### SAFE Reporting Flowchart

Earlier this year, the Climate & Culture Implementation Task Force provided information about our single "front door" for reporting unprofessional or inappropriate behaviors through the [Supporting a Fair Environment \(SAFE\) program's online portal](#). Through collaboration with HR and the SAFE program, we now can also share flowcharts for students, trainees and staff that illustrate the streamlined process for reporting and what happens after a report is made. The flowcharts are available on the [SAFE website](#).

### Ending Unequal Treatment for People With Behavioral Health Conditions

Ending Unequal Treatment for People With Behavioral Health Conditions by Dr. Ruth S. Shim and Dr. Margarita Alegría addresses the persistent inequities in the treatment of individuals with mental health and substance use disorders. It highlights how systemic barriers—such as discriminatory practices, stigma, and lack of access to quality care—exacerbate these disparities. The authors advocate for comprehensive reforms, including integrating behavioral health into primary care, enhancing workforce diversity, addressing social determinants of health, and ensuring equitable resource distribution. Their call to action emphasizes creating a healthcare system that prioritizes equity and justice for all populations. For more details, you can explore the article [here](#).

### Native American Heritage Month

November marks Native American Heritage Month, a time to honor the rich histories, diverse cultures, and significant contributions of Native and Indigenous peoples across the United States. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the resilience of these communities and acknowledge the ongoing challenges they face. Let us commit to fostering respect, understanding, and inclusivity while amplifying Indigenous voices and stories.

### Building Mental Health Equity: Examples of Mental Health Disparities

Last month we highlighted the importance of identifying mental health disparities in working towards mental health equity.

There is great work going on at WUSM in the area of mental health disparities. There has been important work published by our department emphasizing these disparities as they relate to [opioid overdose deaths](#), [infant development](#), [prenatal social disadvantage](#) and [sexual and gender diverse young adults](#).

At the Brown School, [Vetta Sanders Thompson's](#) research focuses on the health and well-being of diverse communities, with a particular focus on the socio-cultural determinants of disparities. Her work emphasizes the critical lens of intersectionality when it comes to understanding disparities in mental health. She has published on disparities found in [COVID vaccine distribution](#) and [drug overdose](#).

Building a meaningful understanding of mental health disparities also requires exposure to this work in training settings. This is the goal of WUSM's [LEAD Program](#), (co-directed by Patty Cavazos). The goal of LEAD is to train pre and post doctoral students from universities across the US in various disciplines (Psychiatry, Social Work, Public Health, Pharmacy, and others) to recognize, investigate and work toward correcting disparities in access to mental health care. LEAD students have consistently [published](#) in the area of global mental health disparities.



### **Disentangling socioeconomic status and race in infant brain, birth weight, and gestational age at birth: A neural network analysis**

A recent study published in *Biological Psychiatry: Global Open Science* by Kathryn Sarullo and collaborators at Washington University in St. Louis utilized neural network analysis to explore how race and socioeconomic status influence birth outcomes and brain development in infants. The research highlights the independent and intersecting impacts of these factors on birth weight, gestational age, and infant brain characteristics, providing insights into the complex social determinants of health. This work emphasizes the need for interventions addressing structural inequities to improve early developmental outcomes. Notably, some of the authors are faculty in the Department of Psychiatry at Washington University School of Medicine, contributing valuable expertise to this critical area of study. Read more [here](#).

### **Disparities in Mental Health Symptoms Among Sexual and Gender Diverse Subgroups in a National Sample of College Students**

A recent study published in *The Journal of Adolescent Health* explores disparities in mental health symptoms among sexual and gender-diverse (SGD) subgroups within a national sample of U.S. college students. The findings reveal that mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, are disproportionately high among these populations, with variations based on specific SGD identities. This research underscores the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the unique mental health needs of SGD college students, ensuring equitable access to care and fostering inclusive campus environments. Notably, some of the authors are faculty in the Department of Psychiatry at Washington University School of Medicine, contributing valuable expertise to this critical area of study. Read more on this topic written by [here](#).

### **Our Only Hope**

**September 4, 2024 - January 6, 2025 | John M. Olin Library, Ginkgo Reading Room**

The exhibition *Our Only Hope* at Washington University Libraries highlights student activism during the Civil Rights Movement. It showcases archival materials and stories from individuals who worked to promote social justice and equality, offering a powerful look at grassroots efforts for change. Visit the exhibit to explore how students shaped the fight for civil rights. More details are available [here](#).

### **Addressing Barriers to Access of Services for Children with Developmental Disabilities in Refugee Settings in Uganda**

**December 3, 2024 | 12:30 PM  
Zoom**

**This presentation highlights key findings from a study conducted by the AfriChild Centre, which explored the functional limitations and barriers to accessing early intervention services for children with developmental disabilities in the Kyaka II refugee settlement, Uganda. Neurodevelopmental disorders, such as cerebral palsy, are prevalent among children in refugee camps. Factors like trauma, poor nutrition, and limited healthcare services heighten the risk of these disabilities. While early intervention is crucial for fostering independence and improving outcomes, children in refugee contexts face significant challenges in accessing these essential services. Learn more [here](#).**

### **Diversity Perspectives: A Conversation with Haben Girma**

**December 6, 2024 | 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM  
Knight Hall, Emerson Auditorium**

WashU Olin's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is proud to welcome Haben Girma, an author, keynote speaker and human rights lawyer advancing disability justice and accessibility. She'll share her story and experience as a deafblind woman navigating the many challenges and obstacles she's encountered along the way. We'll also hear about her triumphs and the work she's doing to champion change, not only for those with disabilities but also for those without. Register [here](#)

### **Families in Crisis: Research and Policy Solutions for Ending Family Homelessness**

**December 12, 2024 | 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM  
Virtual**

This event explores evidence-based strategies and policy interventions to address family homelessness. Drawing on research and practical solutions, the discussion highlights innovative approaches like Housing First and culturally specific crisis responses. The focus is on integrating equity, accessibility, and trauma-informed care into homelessness prevention and support systems. Join experts to learn how data-driven and community-oriented initiatives can transform outcomes for vulnerable families. For more information, visit the website [here](#).