

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

April 2024

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Message from the Department Head, Eric Lenze, MD

Recently, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) issued important requests for information (RFI), entitled:

- [Moving beyond individual-level determinants of mental health to address mental health disparities](#) (Due May 31, 2024, at 11:59 pm ET)
- [Improving research frameworks to enable rigorous study of the effects of racism on brain and behavioral health across the lifespan](#) (Due June 14, 2024, at 11:59 PM ET)

NIMH is interested in hearing our voice on these gaps in U.S.-based research! Responses must be submitted electronically on the RFI submission websites. I encourage you to consider submitting a response.

DEI speaker Sessions: Coming Soon to the Department of Psychiatry

A new initiative that our department's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team will be starting is DEI Speaker Sessions. We will be inviting various folks throughout the year to come and speak to us about their research and passions in DEI. To start us off, **Dr. Jen Heemstra, Chair and Professor of Chemistry, Charles Allen Thomas Professor at Washington University in St. Louis**, will be speaking with us at 9:00 AM on Tuesday, June 4, 2024. The title of her talk is "Fostering a culture of equity and inclusion that cultivates diversity through positive mentoring practices." This event will be hosted on Zoom only. You can register for the event [here](#). If you have any questions regarding Dr. Heemstra's session, future DEI Speaker Sessions, or anything else DEI related, please don't hesitate to contact kavyas@wustl.edu.

Mental Health Equity

As discussed in our [February edition](#) of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Newsletter, we want to take the time to discuss what culturally competent care can look like with some examples from our department.

[Shannon Lenze, PhD](#) in collaboration with Co-PI [Ebony Carter, MD](#), [Kelly McKay-Gist](#) (St. Louis Integrated Healthcare Network) and the [EleVATE Collaborative](#) developed and studied the impacts of the EleVATE GC model (Elevating Voices, Addressing Depression, Toxic Stress and Equity in Group Prenatal Care). EleVATE GC is designed to improve pregnancy outcomes and promote health equity for Black birthing people. They found that a community-engaged process was essential to the development of EleVATE GC and training EleVATE GC facilitators and the health care teams at their respective clinical sites was a key part of the intervention. EleVATE GC has 3 important elements in its culturally competent design: 1) designed by and for Black birthing people 2) centers trauma-informed care and antiracism and 3) integrates behavioral health strategies into group prenatal care to address unmet mental health needs. Read more about the EleVATE teams' work in this recently published [article](#) in Health Equity.

Other examples of culturally competent mental health initiatives are found within 2 projects funded by our [Psychiatry DEI funding program](#).

[Tara Tinnin, LMSW, NBC-HWC](#) and [Eric Spiegel, MD](#) as part of the new Accelerated DBT and Family Resiliency Program, aim to address racial disparities and increase treatment efficacy in adolescent mental health. Their team plans to deliver DBT with an anti-racism lens, practice trauma-informed care with skills to address racial and intergenerational trauma, and provide culturally responsive safe spaces for youth to wholly engage in treatment. This will be accomplished by having cultural competence, safety and anti-racism trainings and integration of attention to culture in order to create more effective treatment models.

[Jessica Williams, MD \(PGY3\)](#) is using her DEI funds to expand knowledge in the field of Deaf/Hard of Hearing mental health care and bringing such education to WUSM psychiatry, WashU/BJC and STL communities. She hopes to create a curriculum informed by

knowledge gained by relevant conferences, professional memberships, coursework, textbooks and speakers. Her goal is for colleagues to feel more comfortable caring for patients with hearing loss and that these patients feel they are receiving extraordinary care.

Unity in Wellness

[The History of Desegregation on the Medical Campus permanent display and Sharing circles'](#) permanent display is up from our Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the link. Many of you, I am sure will be interesting in viewing and participating.

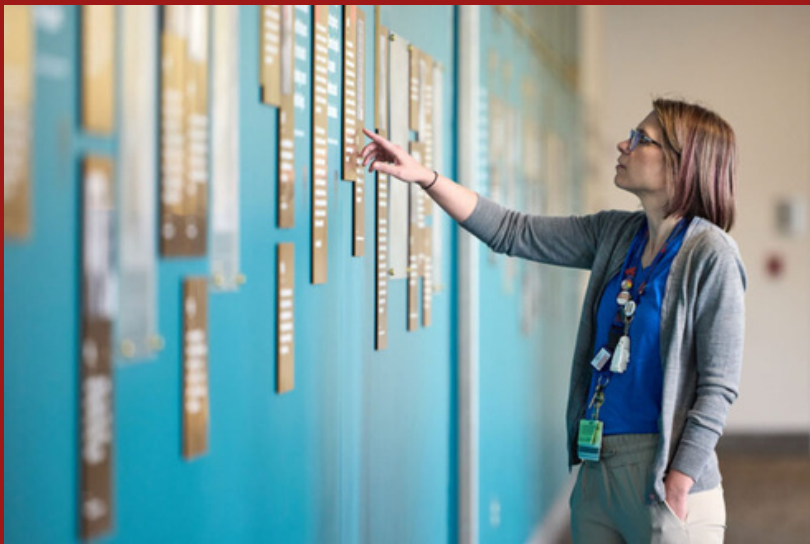
Here is another reason to do so that I am not sure most of us have thought about, reviewing an exhibit that portrays the historical experiences of black individuals within the medical school can be a transformative experience that contributes to individual and institutional wellness by fostering understanding, empathy, action, and healing. Here is how it happens:

- **Understanding Historical Context:** By exploring the historical experiences of black individuals within your institution, everyone can gain a deeper understanding of the systemic racism and discrimination that may have occurred in the past. This understanding is crucial for recognizing how these past injustices continue to affect present-day dynamics.
- **Validation of Experiences:** For black employees, students, and patients, seeing experiences represented in such an exhibit can be validating. It acknowledges struggles and challenges within the institution, which can be empowering and affirming of identities and narratives.
- **Building Empathy and Compassion:** Witnessing the experiences of others fosters empathy and compassion. Understanding the challenges faced by black individuals within your institution can encourage a greater sense of solidarity and a commitment to supporting marginalized communities.
- **Inspiring Action:** Reviewing the exhibit can serve as a catalyst for action. It can motivate individuals and the institution as a whole to actively engage in anti-racist work, whether through policy changes, diversity initiatives, or educational programs aimed at addressing systemic inequalities.
- **Promoting Healing and Wellness:** Engaging with difficult truths and histories can be a part of the healing process. By confronting the past and acknowledging the harm that has been done, individuals and the institution can begin the process of healing and reconciliation. This can contribute to a healthier and more inclusive environment for everyone.
- **Educational Opportunity:** The exhibit provides an opportunity for education and self-reflection. It allows all individuals to learn about the contributions, struggles, and resilience of black individuals within the medical field, expanding their awareness and understanding of racial dynamics in healthcare.
- **Catalyzing Dialogue and Community Engagement:** Reviewing the exhibit can stimulate meaningful dialogue and discussions within the institution. It provides a platform for individuals to share their perspectives, experiences, and ideas for creating positive change. This dialogue fosters a sense of community engagement and collective responsibility for addressing issues of racism and inequity.

Wellbeing Survey

Thank you to everyone who completed the department wellbeing survey. The winners of the raffle for one of five \$100 gift cards have been chosen and contacted. We will be mindful in analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data that the results provide. We look forward to planning action items and presenting them to the department in the near future. If you have any questions about the wellbeing survey and any plans moving forward, please do not hesitate to contact us at deipsych@email.wustl.edu.

Recognizing Our Past, Reshaping Our Future



The Desegregation History Wall has been installed at the BJC Institute of Health, 2nd floor link. The exhibit includes images, narratives, and quotes narrating the experiences of Black employees, students and patients at Washington University. Read more about the exhibit [here](#). The exhibit can also be viewed [online](#). The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will also be hosting [Sharing Circles](#) to reflect on the timelines in community.

Administrative Professionals Day

On April 24th, we celebrated Administrative Professionals Day. Thank you to all of our Administrative staff in the Department of Psychiatry. From Clinical Operations, Business Office, Education, DEI, and Research, Administrative Professionals are the backbone of our department and keep things running smoothly.

“InVISIBLE: A Reclaiming of the Asian Gaze” Workshop and Exhibition

InVISIBLE: A Reclaiming of the Asian Gaze, a multi-day, multicultural and multigenerational showcase of art, a creative expression workshop (in March), and an accompanying booklet of written and digital expressions. This program is conceived to uplift the perspectives and voices of the AAPI community in the greater St. Louis region. InVISIBLE also provides opportunities for St. Louis AAPI residents to share their culture and experiences and to come together to create connections and engender pride around shared heritage, history, and identity. Find more information [here](#). **The exhibition will take place May 17-19, 2024.**

Diversity Advisors Website

The Diversity Advisor program is one of our DEI initiatives for the Department of Psychiatry. The program includes a cohort of faculty and staff available to assist hiring managers with ensuring diversity and equity in the hiring process. We now have a website that outlines the program and provides more information about how the Diversity Advisors can assist! You can access the website here:

<https://sites.wustl.edu/psychdiversityadvisors/>. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at deipsych@email.wustl.edu.

Open Classroom – Humanizing First: Intervention Development with a Community- Engaged Focus to Support Health Equity

Tuesday, May 6, 2024 @ 12:30-1:30 PM – Virtual Event

Community-engaged research practices are found to be effective in working with diverse communities and reducing racial inequities. Dr. Sonya Richardson will provide strategies for developing community-engaged interventions with an approach she has coined as Humanizing First. Through her NIMH-funded research project, she will discuss strategies her team employed for developing an intervention aimed at preventing Black youth suicide. Register for the event [here](#).

Reframing: A Call to Inclusion

Tuesday, May 31, 2024 @ 11:30AM – 4:30 PM at the Eric P. Newman Education Center Auditorium

Join us for an **EMPOWERING** half-day symposium designed to **UPLIFT** voices and **CELEBRATE** the diversity of experiences among individuals with genetic, physical, behavioral, or intellectual differences. Attendees will engage with inspiring stories, form meaningful connections, and promote education and advocacy. We aim to model inclusion through our shared humanity and acknowledgment of more similarities than differences. RSVP for the event [here](#).

AAMC Group on Diversity & Inclusion Conference



Led by WUSMs [Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(ODEI\)](#) members, Neha Navsaria joined other Equity Champions to present a poster at the [AAMC Group on Diversity & Inclusion conference](#) in March. This conference brought together seasoned, mid-career, and new leaders, graduate learners, faculty, administrators, staff, and stakeholders working in diversity, equity and inclusion within academic medicine and biomedical sciences.

The poster, titled “Equity Champions and Understanding Systemic Racism: A Shared Equity Leadership Approach to Address and Dismantle System Racism,” highlighted the different strategies WUSMs departments have used to implement the Understanding Systemic Racism (USR) curriculum. Psychiatry was one of the four departments featured with a focus on the implementation of USR with our residents and fellows over the past 2 years. Other departments included were Anesthesiology, Physical Therapy and Orthopedic Surgery. Poster session attendees commented on WUSM/ODEI's ability to have flexible processes for curriculum roll out to match different department needs. There were also requests to access the USR curriculum as many attendees indicated the need at their institutions to have a broad curriculum that is relevant to an entire medical school.

Pride CVD-CGE Program for Inclusion and Diversity is accepting applications for Summer 2024

Enhancing the diversity of the biomedical research workforce through PRIDE CVD-CGE Mentored Program offering research experiences, skills development and grant writing training for Junior Faculty from Diverse Backgrounds. This program was designed to provide mentees with a working knowledge and appreciation for Cardiovascular Disease Comorbidities, Genetics, Epidemiology, Global Health, Implementation Science, and Data Science/Bioinformatics and to integrate these skills with their substantive research interests in CVD and HLBS problems.

Must be a US Citizen or Permanent Resident to be eligible. Participation in the program will require mentees to:

- Participate in a 2-week Summer Institute during each of two consecutive summers;
- Attend a 2 day, mid-year meeting between summers (Feb-March);
- Attend a 3-4 day PRIDE Annual Meeting in the Washington, DC area (April);
- Develop a competitive grant application for a Small Research Project (SRP); and
- Establish a long-term networking relationship with a Mentor to advance your own research career.

Find more information on the [website](#) and view the [flyer](#).

A Short History of Black Happiness

African American history does not provide a great vantage point in the history of human flourishing. Instead, it is one of the most depressing subfields in American history – second perhaps to only Native American history. It tells the story of a people that suffered stark forms of oppression and subjugation in a society where others flourished. It chronicles a long struggle to achieve full participation in American democracy that been only partially successful at best. In this era of #BlackLivesMatter and racism re-ascendant, can we draw meaningful connections between the study of African American history and positive psychology – or any form of study of the cultivation of well-being?” Read more in “A Short History of Black Happiness” by Mia Bay [here](#).