

# Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Biomedical Research

Advisory Committee to the Director Meeting  
February 26, 2021

Marie A. Bernard, MD  
Alfred Johnson, PhD  
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# 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—Issues

## **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—Issues

## **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/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*

**U** Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning  
*Monica Webb Hooper, NIMHD; Mia Rochelle Lowden, ORIP/OD; Tara Schwetz, IMOD/OD*

## 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

### CATALYZING

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



### LISTENING

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

### 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](#)

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

**N** New research on health disparities/minority health/health equity  
*Anna Nápoles, NIMHD; Robert Rivers, NIDDK; Michele K. Evans, NIA*

## 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**

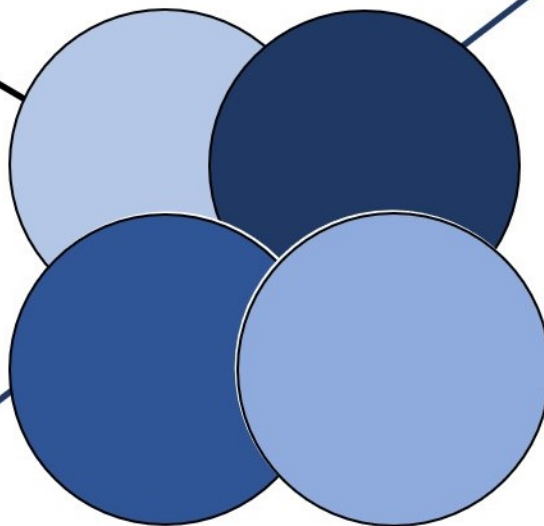
# GROUP N FRAMEWORK

## 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/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/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



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

Improving the NIH Culture and Structure for Equity, Inclusion, and Excellence  
*Julie Segre, NHGRI; Marie A. Bernard, Acting COSWD/OD, NIA; Alfred Johnson, OM/OD*

## 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

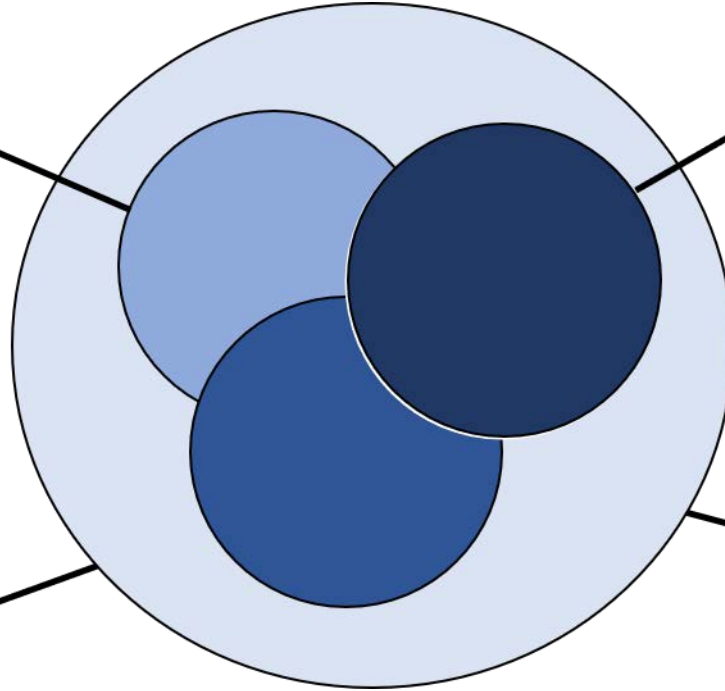
**FRAMEWORK** Focused on **Culture Change, Recruitment and Retention/ Advancement with Accountability for NIH Internal Workforce**

## **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

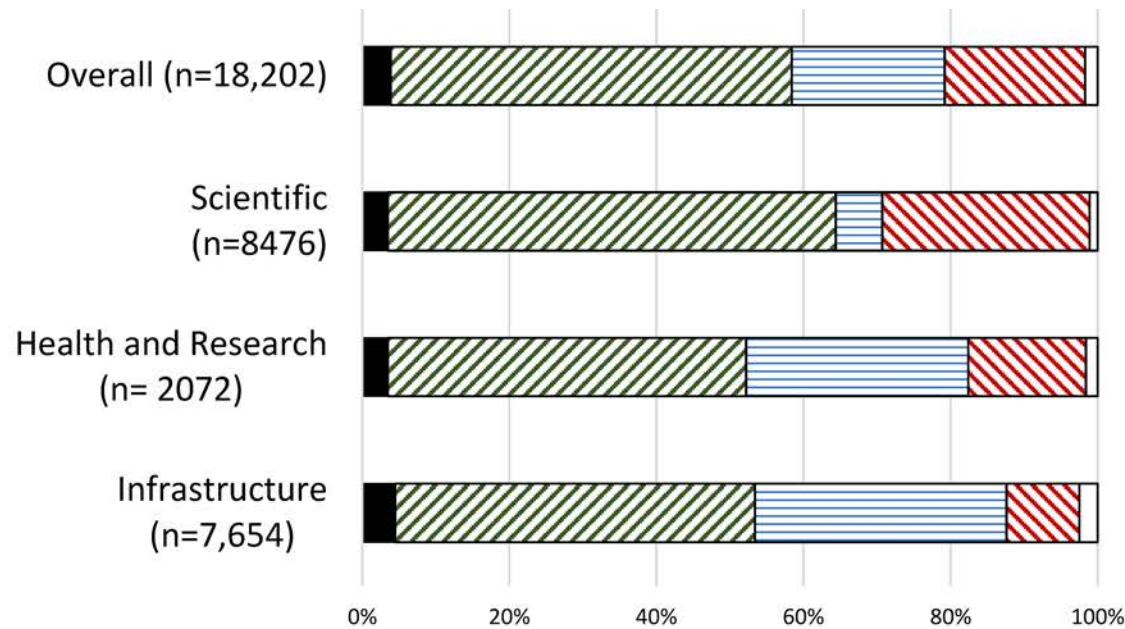
# Improving NIH Culture & Structure for Equity, Inclusion, & Excellence



## Foundational Efforts

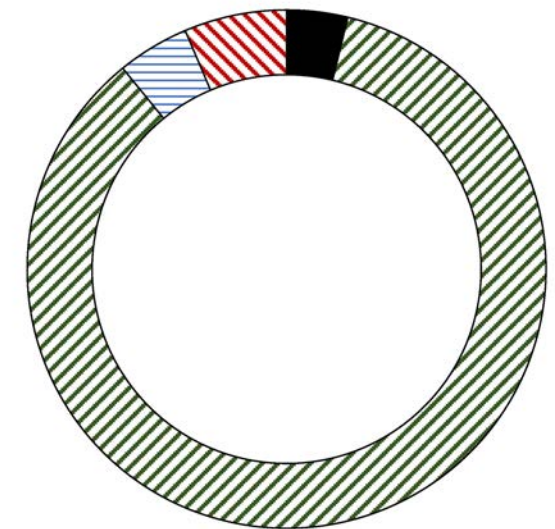
- Provide granular data on NIH workforce based on position and supervisory status. (Immediate: 2020 data will be analyzed Spring 2021 and shared publicly Summer 2021)

### NIH Workforce



### NIH Senior Leadership (n=157)

I/C Director, Deputy Dir, Scientific Dir, Clinical Dir, Executive Officer



**Scientific Workforce** leads or has oversight over research; e.g., investigator, staff scientist, health science administrator

**Health 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)

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

**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**

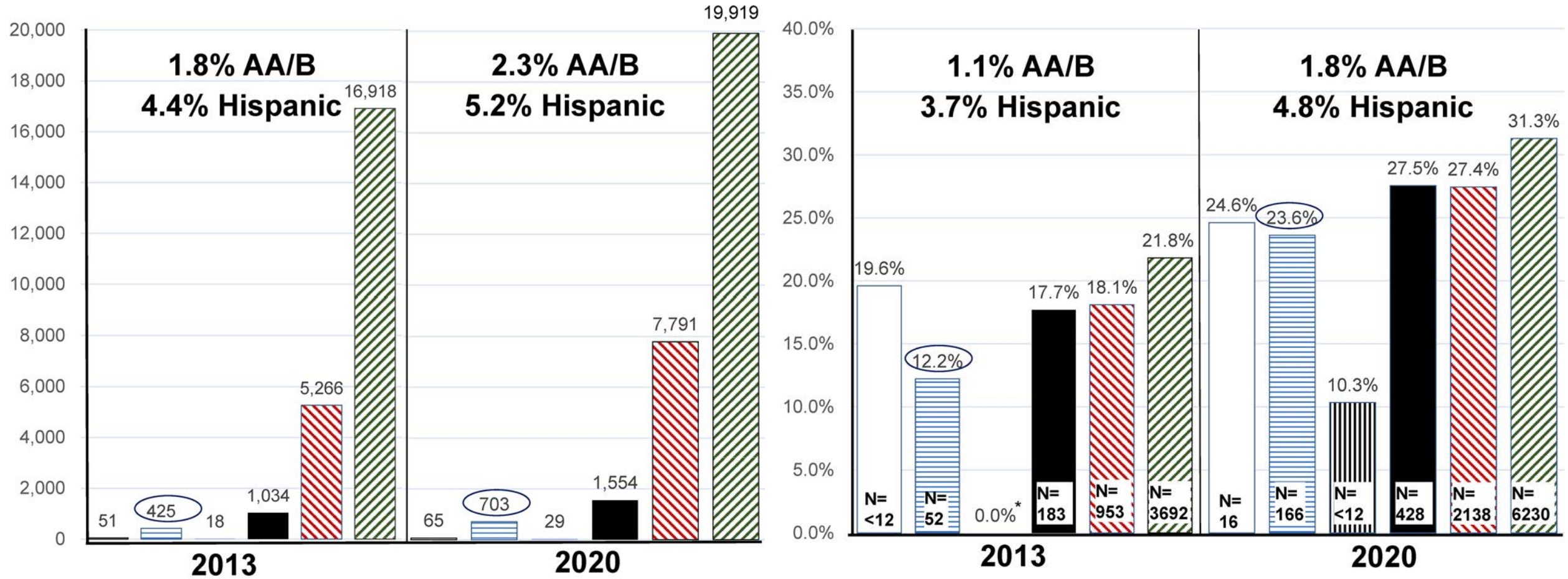
*Includes developing strategies to address funding disparities and increase applications that would support individuals from under-represented groups*

# R01eq Applicants and Funding Rates

## Type 1 and Type 2: FY2013 and FY2020 (by Race/Ethnicity)

### Number of Applicants

### Funding Rates



AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native
  AA/B = African American/Black
  NH/PI = Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  Hispanic
  Asian
  White

\* No Awarded Applicants



# 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

LIMITED  
RESOURCES/ CAPACITY  
AT HBCUs & MSIs

Evaluation &  
Stakeholder  
Engagement

Immediate Actions

Develop  
Short- & Long- Term  
Objectives

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

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

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

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

# 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

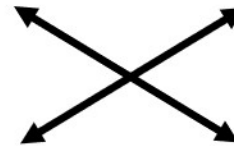
Of the **overall goals of the UNITE Initiative, data that inform those goals**, and efforts to attain those goals to internal and external stakeholders

### 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

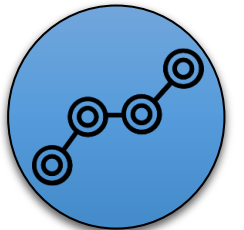
## Foundational Efforts



- **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

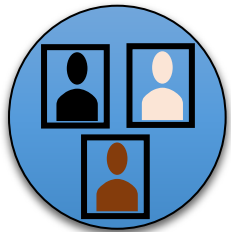
- **External Facing Awareness Campaign**

- 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**



# 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**



# 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

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Tara Schwetz (IMOD/OD)  
Shelli Avenevoli (NIMH)  
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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.**