

The Past and Present of Equity at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health:

An analysis of the current Gillings Timeline and next steps

Joia Freeman, Molly McGirt, Dhara Patel, Nastacia Pereira, Khadijah Toumbou

In collaboration with the Health Behavior Equity Task Force

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Introduction

The Health Behavior Task Force is a newly formed group of faculty members that aim to promote anti-racism and equity within the Department of Health Behavior at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC) Gillings School of Global Public Health (Gillings School of Global Public Health, 2020). This task force was formed in spring of 2020 in response to the Equity's Collective's report which documented and examined marginalized students' experiences in the department (Gillings School of Global Public Health, 2020). Several students expressed feeling unsupported in the process of creating a more anti-racist and equitable environment at Gillings, which prompted six faculty to address these concerns by forming the Equity Task Force in attempts to develop a plan that will proactively address racism, inclusion, and equity (Gillings School of Global Public Health, 2020). There are currently further investigations to identify barriers to equity within the department and ways to improve the learning environment for students of color. One such investigation is to understand the historical context of the current state of equity at UNC Gillings to better inform future actions.

The purpose of this project is to examine UNC Gillings's timeline and history with systemic racism, faculty activism, and the battle for equity within the school to develop a future Master of Public Health course on the topic. This project traces the school's equity legacy by documenting how systemic racism has affected the school and ways the school has strived to overcome racism and provide an equitable learning environment for students of color.

In this White Paper we will be referring to UNC-Chapel Hill as "UNC," as well as using "minority" and its derivatives to mean the same as "marginalized". We acknowledge the term marginalized as a more widely-accepted nomenclature, and we are honoring the language used in

documents utilized. We will also refer to UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health as “UNC Gillings” or “Gillings.”

Review of Gillings Timeline

The Gillings timeline offers an important contextual review of the events that led to the formation of Gillings as it is known today and key events that occurred throughout the last 99 years of public health at UNC. According to the timeline, 1921 marks the beginning of public health at UNC-Chapel Hill with the first public health courses being taught within the School of Medicine. After various organizational changes, the School of Public Health was officially born as a separate entity in 1940 and the Department of Health Behavior soon followed in 1942. The timeline captures few events related to the school’s record on race, diversity, equity, or inclusion. Notably, the first Black doctoral graduates (1964), the student-led launch of the Black Student Caucus (1971), the Inaugural Minority Health Conference (1977), and the launch of the Minority Health Project (1994) are all highlighted, but missing from the inclusion of these events is any context surrounding their importance and why they were needed. Also noteworthy is the inclusion of the SPH2020 goals developed in 2010, of which Diversity and Inclusion are listed among the top eight priority areas for the school’s 2020 vision.

While the timeline celebrates various critical milestones and firsts, such as the appointment of deans and department chairs as well as broader historical events, such as the inauguration of JFK, there is no little to no mention of the first professors or masters students of color or broader historical events relevant to issues related to race and equity, such as the end of segregation or the APHA declaration of racism and police violence as public health issues. These substantial gaps in the school’s record on matters related to race, diversity, equity, and inclusion effectively renders

these issues invisible and reflects patterns of lip devotion to racial equity matters endemic to historically white institutions. To improve the experiences of students of color, ensure the adequate preparation of all public health graduates of the school, and advance racial and health equity, it is crucial to contextualize the school's 75-year history.

Data Collection

Diverse methods of data collection were utilized for this review of UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health's equity legacy. In-depth information pertaining to the history of Gillings and its intersection with equity was challenging to obtain through databases such as, Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), PubMed, and Global Health. The data used in this literature review primarily came from The Gillings School of Global Public Health public website, professional interviews, and discussions, files from the Dean of Public Health Records, Gillings School of Global Public Health records, and archives from the Social Sciences Library. Data from interviews and discussions were gained from Dr. Robert Korstad and Dr. Victor Schoenbach. Dr. Robert Korstad is a retired Emeritus Professor of Public Policy and History at Duke University. He received his B.A. and PhD from UNC-Chapel Hill and has produced several publications related to twentieth-century U. S. history, labor history, African American history, and contemporary social policy (Duke Sanford School of Public Policy, 2019). Dr. Victor Schoenbach is a retired Emeritus Associate professor who was a part of the Department of Epidemiology and Minority Health at Gillings School of Global Public Health with many publications related to major public health challenges, political science, and minority health equity (Epidemiolog, 2020).

Literature Review

Upon analysis of the Gillings Timeline, our team and the Equity Task Force have identified some gaps in documenting the historical context of the state of equity today at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. The following is a literature review to address some of the gaps and to summarize available data. We recognize it is not an exhaustive compilation of sources, however, but rather serves to begin the process of expanding the current Gillings Timeline.

Early History of African Americans at UNC-Chapel Hill (UNC)

During the Reconstruction Era (1863- 1877), education for Black people living in America was illegal, preventing students from attending UNC. Black men were only allowed to be on college campuses if they served as servants, while the Black women worked for faculty families (The Carolina Story, 2020). Discussion of a separate campus for Black students occurred when Solomon Pool was UNC President from 1849-1853 but was continuously denied throughout his term (The Carolina Story, 2020). In 1867, Black students established the Howard School in Fayetteville to educate Black children and ten years later this institution was renamed the State Colored Normal School, which is now known as Fayetteville State University (The Carolina Story, 2020). Eventually, four historical Black campuses were created and now are part of the sixteen-campus University of North Carolina system. It was not until 1951 when the first Black undergraduate was admitted to UNC-Chapel Hill and the first Black professor joined the faculty in 1966 (The Carolina Story, 2020).

In the 1920s, Howard Odum began the modern study of race relations at UNC. He was a white man who founded UNC's Department of Sociology and was the first professor at UNC to examine topics related to African Americans (The Carolina Story, 2020). Much of Odum's work reflected on race, war, and prejudice which inspired students and other faculty to do the same (The Carolina Story, 2020). Arthur Raper, a Ph.D student of Odum's, published the Tragedy of

Lynching in 1933 which examined the 3,724 lynchings that took place from 1889-1930 (The Carolina Story, 2020). He exposed how the majority of these lynching victims were African Americans and how practically all the lynchers were white Southerners who were never castigated for their crimes (The Carolina Story, 2020).

The UNC Press was created in 1922 and specialized in books related to North Carolina (The Carolina Story, 2020). During the 1930s, the Press published several works on African American history and culture, many of which were written by African Americans (The Carolina Story, 2020). This is of particular note as segregation was in full-swing during this era and the UNC Press was one of few to publish Black authors (The Carolina Story, 2020).

In 1931 poet and activist, Langston Hughes spoke on campus about race relations and African American culture in a time of political radicalism (The Carolina Story, 2020). This produced many letters of protest to UNC's president Frank Graham, but he persistently defended the right of Hughes to speak on campus (The Carolina Story, 2020). The Southern Conference for Human Welfare brought together both Black and white activists in 1938, the first time this conference had integrated (The Carolina Story, 2020). The theme of this conference was "equal and exact justice for all," garnering considerable backlash from segregationists (The Carolina Story, 2020). In the 1930s, activists began working with the court system on integration of higher education. From 1945-1960 professors from UNC's School of Public Health taught courses on nutrition and disease prevention at the North Carolina College for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University) (The Carolina Story, 2020). The faculty from UNC also helped open the law school and the library at the North Carolina College for Negroes (The Carolina Story, 2020).

Vietnam War Era Activism

UNC activists pushed for free speech well after Langston Hughes's appearance in 1931 (UNC Libraries, 1966). Around 1966, student leaders voiced their support of a Marxist speaker's appearance on campus, which was only one instance of protest during this time (UNC Libraries, 1966). The 1960s are known as a time of civil disobedience in the United States with the Civil Rights Movement, Feminist Movement, LGBTQ+ Liberation Movement, and Anti-Vietnam War Protests that were booming (UNC Libraries, 1966). UNC was no exception, antiwar protests started around 1963 and were not widely supported in the beginning (UNC Libraries, n.d.). However, when the Kent State Massacre at the hands of the National Guardsmen and the U.S. invasion of Cambodia occurred in spring of 1970, the largest student protest in UNC's history was prompted at Polk Place to hear Student Body President Tommy Bello denounce the events (UNC Libraries, n.d.).

Prior to this large gathering, the student body had grown more confrontational in their protests. For example, in 1968, 15 protestors were arrested for blocking the entrance of Gardner Hall from a Dow Chemical recruiter, the company that made napalm used in the Vietnam War (UNC Libraries, n.d.). The following November, seven individuals including two faculty had been arrested for gathering on Franklin Street (UNC Libraries, n.d.). Antiwar activists had been surveilled by administrators, campus police, and even federal agents, with the Dean of Students keeping files on students who were active in protests (UNC Libraries, n.d.). There can be parallels drawn between the protests of the 1960s on UNC's campus and today's era in that while non-violent, these protestors were often the target of persecution in their fight for equity (UNC Libraries, n.d.).

History of Minority-Related Activities at Gillings

In 1970, The Health Professions Recruitment Center for Medically Deprived Communities program was created with the aim of increasing health professionals in “medically deprived communities” (UNC-Chapel Hill, 1971). This proposal was designed to increase minority representation in medical schools and other health professions (UNC-Chapel Hill, 1971). The overall goal of the proposal was to increase medical services for communities in need. This proposal was based on the idea that medical schools have a responsibility to collaborate in developing more doctors and establishing trust with marginalized communities (UNC-Chapel Hill, 1971). Aspects of this proposal were integrated into later initiatives and goals (UNC-Chapel Hill, 1971). For example, Black students at UNC School of Public Health (UNC SPH) wrote a letter in 1971 to the Dean concerning the situation of Black people in the United States especially in the South (UNC-Chapel Hill, 1971). The letter specified key goals: reaching 25% of Black American students and 10% of Black faculty by September 1975, Black Americans be employed at UNC for the recruitment of Black American students, using Black professionals as consultant resources, Black representatives be present in all projects geared towards Black communities, financial assistance that is given to foreign students be extended to Black American students, and finally, the curriculum includes courses that will allow students work in Black communities (UNC-Chapel Hill, 1971). This included the development of a Minority Affairs Coordinator and Office (UNC-Chapel Hill, 1971). The continued advocacy and fight from students of color on campus played a significant role in increasing UNC’s diversity. However, the historic narrative of UNC’s history over-glorifies the institution’s role in increasing diversity and minimizes the efforts and the contributions made by students of color, and minority-serving organizations.

The Minority Student Caucus was established in 1976, as an evolution of the Black Student Caucus to include all students of color. Their primary purpose is to advocate for minority students'

concerns to the school's administration and promote programs aimed at addressing public health issues that affect people of color (Minority Student Caucus, n.d.). Nineteen-hundred seventy-seven (1977) was the start of the Annual Minority Health Conference, which is founded and run by the caucus (Minority Student Caucus, n.d.). From its formation, the Minority Student Caucus has been a catalyst at UNC, not only fighting for students on campus but also for the advancement of marginalized professionals, and advocating for public health issues facing Communities of Color (Minority Student Caucus, n.d.). Student representatives from the Caucus serve as representatives on the Dean's Council, the School of Public Health (SPH) Alumni Association, and other committees throughout UNC SPH (Minority Student Caucus, n.d.).

UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health historically includes involvement of minorities through health research and education (Epidemiolog, 2020). The school assisted with the creation of North Carolina College for Negroes and outreached to the Black community during the Jim Crow era which most Southerners revolted against. From the 1960-1980s, more Black and Native American students had matriculated into UNC SPH and several later became faculty members (Epidemiolog, 2020). In the 1980s, the American Indian Recruiting Program was created by the School of Public Health and was able to successfully recruit many Native Americans from North Carolina and eventually broadened its reach to other tribes outside of North Carolina (Epidemiolog, 2020). The School of Public Health now has numerous Native American graduates, mostly from the Lumbee Nation (Epidemiolog, 2020).

In the 1980s, attention surrounding minority health and research was prominent within the School of Public Health (Epidemiolog, 2020). Several studies examining health disparities related to African Americans were produced through the school, leading to advancements to serve the minority communities at UNC (Epidemiolog, 2020). The Minority Cancer Control Research

program led to many major research projects that helped create programs focusing on minority health (Epidemiolog, 2020). In 1991 the Minority Health Research and Education Center (MHREC) was created to help fund minority health-related pilot studies (Epidemiolog, 2020). Unfortunately, funding was difficult to obtain and minority faculty was not growing which did not help expansion of the activities at the school for minority health (Epidemiolog, 2020). Towards the end of the 1990s, minority health-related projects became more prevalent which inspired the UNC SPH to launch its own center, the Minority Health Project (Epidemiolog, 2020). The Minority Health Project developed a successful video conference platform that annually hosts the National Health Equity Research Webcast, reaching health professionals and practitioners of a wide gamut of fields who are interested in eliminating health disparities (Epidemiolog, 2020). The Minority Health Project also broadcasts the annual Minority Health Conference annually, the largest and longest student-led health conference in the country (UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, 2020).

In 1997, UNC SPH brought in a series of nationally- recognized leaders in minority health research to lead a program called Ethnicity, Culture and Health Outcomes (ECHO) (APHA, 2005) . This program involves collaboration between the Schools of Medicine, Public Health, and the Sheps Center for Health Services Research. In recent days, Project ECHO has partnered with NC Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) to address health status and health outcome disparities in North Carolina (APHA, 2005). In 2004, The W.K. Kellogg Fellowship for Emerging Leaders in Public Health partnered with UNC SPH to launch to identify future leaders within Black, Latino, and Native American communities (APHA, 2005). This program developed emerging minority leaders' abilities to analyze crisis scenarios, effectively manage scarce financial and human resources and successfully lead a diverse workforce (Triangle Business Journal, 2005).

More Recent Developments Towards Equity

While the journey to equity is still being paved for UNC Gillings, there have been some recent key advancements that should not go unacknowledged. For example, the first cohort of the Health Equity, Social Justice, and Human Rights (EQUITY) concentration of the Master of Public Health Program (MPH) started during the Fall 2018 semester (Health Equity, Social Justice, and Human Rights Concentration, n.d.). This is the newest concentration at Gillings for the MPH, a two-year program that selects a cohort of students dedicated to advancing justice and equity (Health Equity, Social Justice, and Human Rights Concentration, n.d.). The Equity Task Force's formation on February 27th, 2020 is also of note, especially due to the student activism that occurred soon after (Equity Task Force Updates, 2020). Early spring 2020, a group of second-year Health Behavior MPH students, with the support of the EQUITY and Global Health concentrations, staged a call to action (Equity Task Force Updates, 2020). They organized a walkout on March 4th, 2020, as well as a large display of notes on the Dean's door demanding more anti-racism incorporated into Gillings, and naming faculty who they felt were antithetical to this mission (Department of Health Behavior, 2020). As a result, the Equity Task Force has been working diligently in collaboration with stakeholders to create an Equity Action and Accountability (EAA) Plan (Equity Task Force Updates, 2020). The EAA Plan is currently in the works, as the Equity Task Force seeks feedback and refinement from students, faculty, and staff (Equity Task Force Updates, 2020).

Conclusion & Reflections

This paper examines Gillings's timeline and history with systemic racism, faculty activism, and the battle for equity by tracing the school's legacy with racism, equity and inclusion. Ultimately, the goal is to assist with the creation of a more equitable learning environment for

BIPOC students, faculty and staff. Our research exposed a number of gaps in the current timeline as it pertains to Gilling's history with equity work and the BIPOC community. However, through collection of historical data, it is clear that there is a rich history of BIPOC contributions to Gillings and the University at large, as well as efforts to create an equitable learning environment and areas in which Gillings and the University have missed the mark. It is important to address gaps in the current timeline as leaving them unacknowledged renders issues of race, equity and inclusion invisible and reflects patterns of lip devotion to racial equity matters endemic to historically white institutions.

While Gillings boasts progress towards diversity and inclusion, it is important to also contextualize that progress and promote transparency about how progress is made and for whom. Lack of representation among faculty, as well as noted challenges in mentorship and equitable distribution of financial and experiential opportunities for students, begs the question of how well Gillings is able to serve the needs of students of color and fully prepare them for a career in public health. Addressing these historical gaps is a first step towards creating an inclusive culture and learning environment and developing adequate and effective anti-racist curriculum that fully prepares graduates to be effective public health practitioners.

In reflecting upon our project, overall, we wish we had more time to execute our research and deliverable. Given the time constraints, we did not have sufficient time to engage with our community partner or community members in the surrounding area. Having more time would have allowed us to establish a deeper relationship with our community partner to ensure we were creating a deliverable that is useful and meets their needs. Additionally, more time would have afforded us the opportunity to speak with community members in the Chapel Hill area, particularly those part of the BIPOC population, so that their voices could be included and elevated in our

research. Also, lesser time constraints would have allowed us to dive deeper into the collected data and add more information to this paper and timeline we created. However, our regrets can be channeled into future steps. Moving forward, we encourage the Equity Task Force to continue this research by engaging community members in the surrounding Chapel Hill area to obtain their thoughts about Gillings' history, particularly amongst the BIPOC population, regarding race, equity and inclusion. Additionally, students should be invited to work on this project in order to build interest and assist with future directions and the co-development of a course related to this project.

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Appendix

Below is a timeline graphic created in Canva Pro of the ten events our team has deemed to be most important to include in an expanded Gillings Timeline based on our research. We recognize that there are many more key events listed in our literature review that we would like to include, however, these are the ten we have chosen for a quick-to-share graphic.

