

September 10, 2021

Dear Alumni, Faculty, Staff, Students, and Friends of the Department of Maternal and Child Health:

As we settle into the fall 2021 semester, I wanted to update the MCH community on our department's efforts around inclusive excellence (IE). As a school, Gillings is committed to being intentional about diversity, equity, and inclusion as it relates to student, staff, and faculty recruitment, curriculum, language, imagery, and climate. Our department shares this commitment; cultural humility must inform all we do.

As chair of the department, my commitment mirrors that of the school at large. We are all committed to inclusive excellence. As we embark on a new school year, I am excited to report on our activities over the past year or so, with the goal of informing and promoting conversations amongst all of us. I appreciate the deeply felt commitment shared by many of our alumni. They have raised their voices and shared their feelings, perspectives, and suggestions to make the MCH department a leader in inclusive excellence. I look forward to continuing the dialogue. There still is much work to be done.

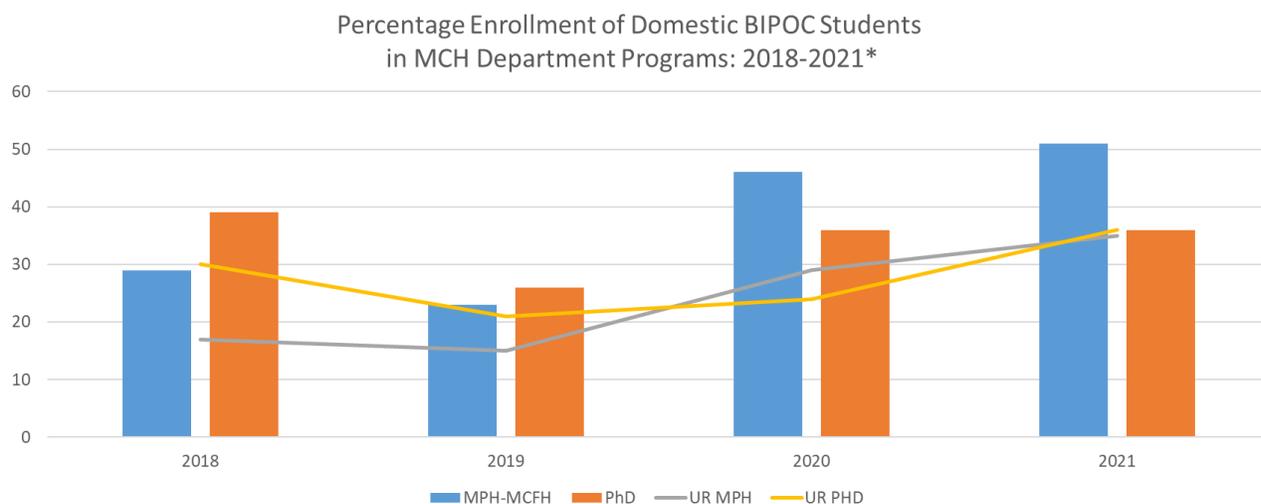
This work is challenging, and often stressful and uncomfortable. However, it is also absolutely necessary and, ultimately, rewarding. Speaking for myself, I have benefited from the many trainings I've attended over the past year and the conversations I've had. My perspective has expanded. I am more aware of and knowledgeable about racism, and its historical and continuing harm to people of color. I continue to work on improving my skills to recognize and address racism. We are all advocating for and working towards the same goals. We are stronger when we work together. Although we have made some progress in our department, we still have much work to do. I am committed to doing it together.

As many of you know, we created an IE working group in MCH in September 2020. Our working group consists of three committees, which align with elements of the school's IE plan: Diversity/Support, Curriculum, and Training. Each committee includes faculty, staff, current students, and alumni. These committees have met either monthly or bi-monthly to address committee charges, goals, and guidelines that are consistent with the school's IE plan. Co-leads for the committees also meet bi-monthly to discuss group progress and implementation of action items. In fall 2021, we hired two MCH students to provide administrative support for the IE work in the department.

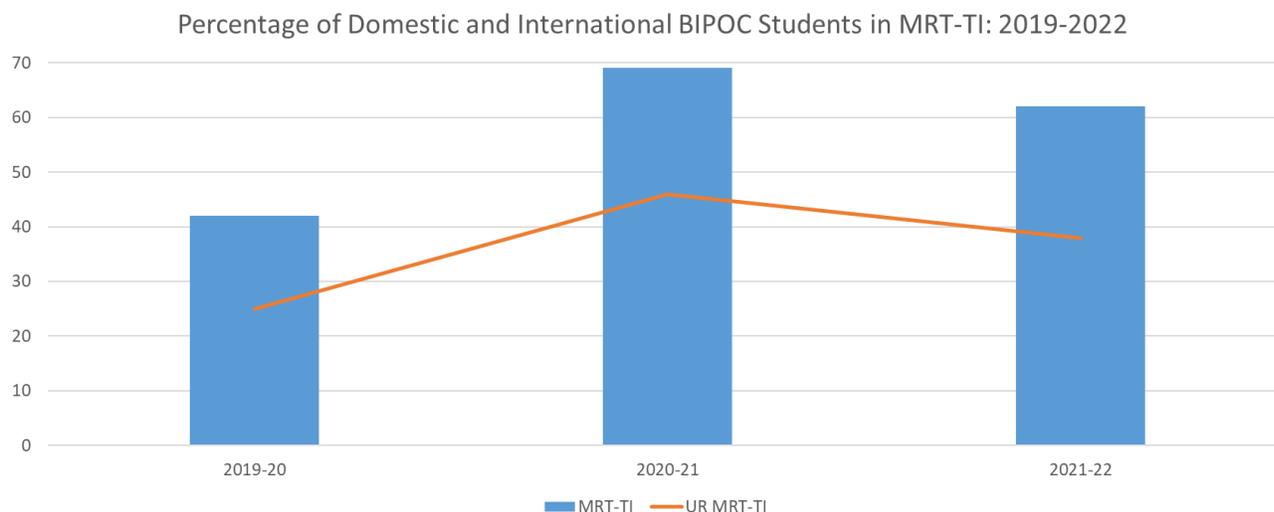
Listed below are department accomplishments across several domains and our next steps; we have communicated some of these items via earlier letters from the department in response to alumni concerns.

Student Diversity: Recruitment and Enrollment

- Current data on enrollment: We have increased the enrollment of BIPOC students in all our degree programs.
- Below are enrollment data for the Maternal, Child, and Family Health MPH concentration and the MCH doctoral program, and for the Mary Rose Tully Training Initiative (MRT-TI; lactation consultant training), which is housed in the department. We have not included data for the MPH Global Health Concentration in this mailing; however, MCH is one of four departments that support the Global Health concentration in terms of faculty time and monetary support.



*NOTE: Columns include Asians and persons identifying with 2+ races; Lines indicate only under-represented groups.



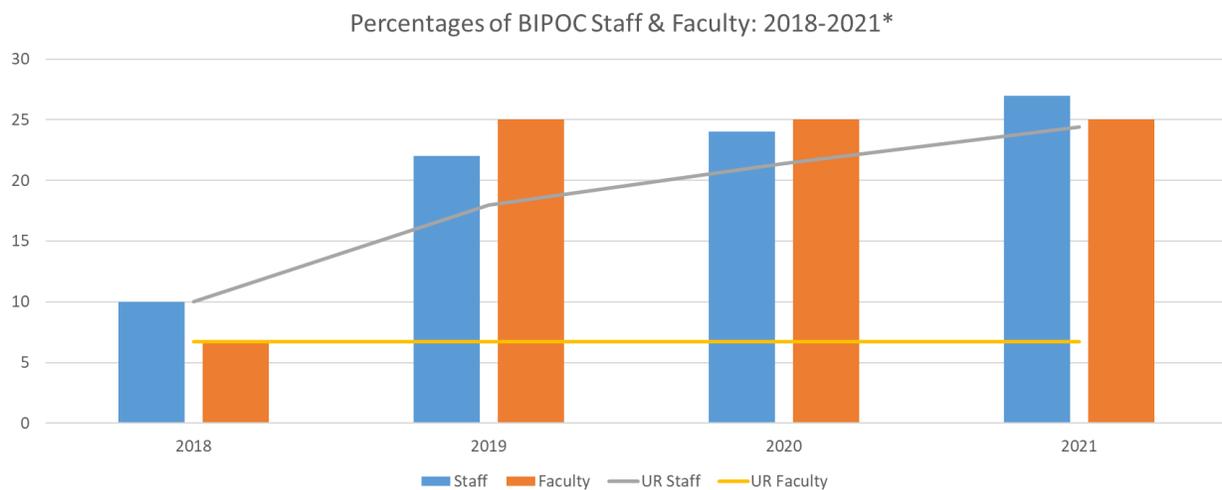
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Other diversity efforts:

- As chair, I reach out directly to all underrepresented applicants admitted into the MCFH concentration to talk about our programs and answer questions. We have not yet tracked impact, but some enrolled students have shared that this outreach made a difference in their decision.
- 100% of master’s and doctoral admissions committee members have been trained in Equity Advocacy in Admissions.
- SPH Admissions highlighted the MCH department as one of the first departments to have an Equity Advocate on their MCFH admissions team.
- Despite limited funds available for international students, the MCH department makes a strong effort to provide funding to international students. In 2019, 2020, and 2021, the department provided funding for more than half of our international students.
- MCH will continue recruitment of underrepresented students.

Staff and Faculty Diversity

- Current Data on Staff: We have increased the percentage of BIPOC staff in our department from 10% in 2018 to 27% in 2021.



*Columns include Asians and persons identifying with 2+ races; Lines indicate only under-represented groups

- In 2021, we hired 3 BIPOC Postdocs (all 3 are from under-represented groups), with strong potential to become faculty members in MCH once their post-doc positions are completed. Two of the three postdocs are supported by a new supplement to our Center of Excellence training grant; the supplement is intended to build a more diverse academic workforce for MCH. The third postdoc is supported by funds in CGBI.
- Data on Faculty: We acknowledge lack of progress in diversifying faculty and are committed to improve. Our new postdoctoral program will help us to move ahead on this. We currently have four BIPOC faculty members, but only one is from an under-represented group.

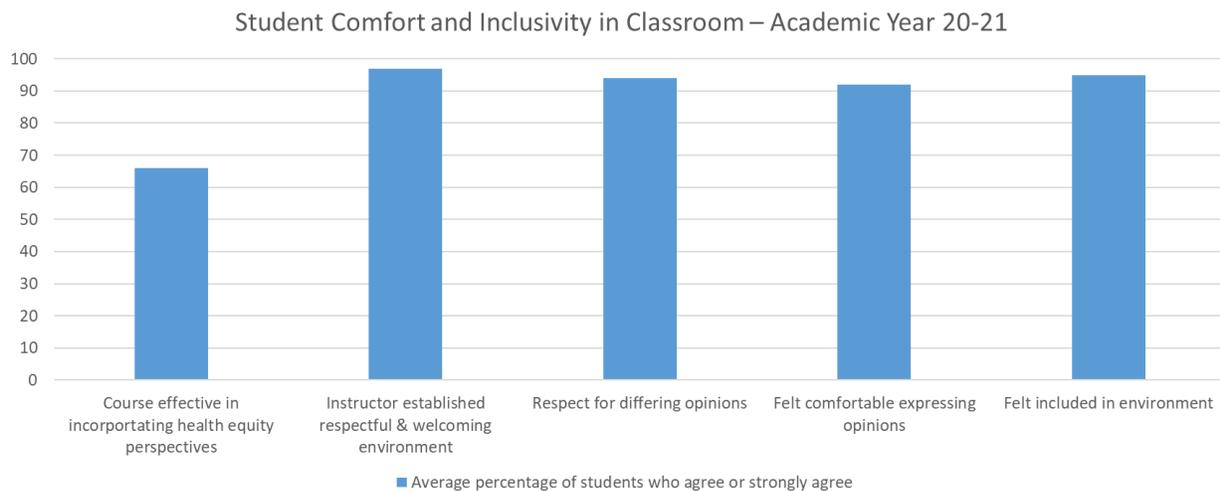
Curriculum and Inclusive Language

- All Gillings courses now must include the School's Land Acknowledgment statement (<https://sph.unc.edu/diversity/land-acknowledgement/>) in syllabi.
- MCH faculty held two retreats over summer 2021, specifically looking at IE content in our curriculum, and identifying training for faculty to handle sensitive conversations in the classroom.
- Changes and enhancements to curriculum to date:

Course # & Title	Required or Elective	Updates regarding IE content/approach
MHCH 701/702 – Foundations sequence	Required MCFH concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New instructors, 1 is BIPOC; • Revamped curriculum to include discussion on roots of health disparities; • Included more readings from Black scholars; • Increased discussion of MCH history to include US history, centering on experiences of Black, Indigenous, LatinX and other individuals of color; • Enhanced information on environmental factors on MCH populations, environmental justice.
MHCH 780 - Cultural Humility	Required Global Health concentration; Taught by MCH faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to provide students with the skills to work in culturally complex settings and to apply cultural humility when engaging in global health research and practice. • Instructor and students co-create community agreements on the first day of class, which establish rapport and expectations for engaging in difficult conversations about identity, power, and privilege. • Students learn about the intellectual history of international and indigenous scholars' perspectives on decolonization of global health; intersectionality and critical race theory; ethical engagement and community-centered approaches to global health.
MHCH 716 - International Family Planning	Elective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information included to encourage thinking about how demographic targets fail to honor and promote reproductive justice and social equity.
MHCH 722 – Global Maternal and Child Health	Elective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key factors of focus are poverty, education, gender equality and disparities within countries among people from different races or ethnicities. • Discuss the need for, but lack of, policies and programming for individuals who identify as LGBTQ and individuals with disabilities. • Throughout the course there is a discussion on innovative programs and policies designed by and implemented by low and middle income countries and on the roles of colonialism and neo-colonialism in health and well-being.
MHCH 785 - Decolonizing MCH: Theory and Qualitative Methods.	Elective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this new course, offered for the first time in fall 2021, MCH students examine both theoretical and methodological foundations of decolonized approaches to qualitative research.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The course emphasizes critical engagement with contemporary theories, data collection methods, and analytic techniques that inform sexual, reproductive, and family health-focused research approaches and advance research justice. • We will attend to issues related to knowledge production, positionality, reflexivity, place/space, evidence, ethics, power, translation, and experience. • Key theoretical foundations include: critical ethnography; critical race theory; disability justice; emancipatory research; embodiment; intersectionality; medicalization; narrative theory; obstetric racism; queer theory; and reproductive justice. • Related data collection and analytic methods covered include autoethnography; cognitive elicitation; community-based participatory research; ethnographic methods; indigenous methodologies; narrative methods; participatory action research; participatory mapping; visual methods. • Students will have the opportunity to try out different qualitative data analytic software platforms and digital tools that are used in qualitative research.
MHCH 765/766- Clinical Support of Breastfeeding I/II (MRT-TI)	Required for MRT-TI students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesigned course structure to include verbal and acknowledgment and shared community norms centering equity; • Readings from BIPOC scholars; • Increased the number of guest speakers representing BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities; • Included equity framing for the lactation landscape in orientation • Incorporated equity concepts into scoring rubrics for graded case studies; • Weekly discussions space for brave conversations about equity; • Reviewed and revised all standardized presentations and updated them with inclusive language where appropriate; • Offer one day of dedicated DEI training in the winter workshop (clinical preceptors are invited) and cover cost of enrolled students to attend the Minority Health Conference.
MHCH 685 - Topics in Human Sexuality; MHCH 732 - Gender Based Violence	Electives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include content related to gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and the structural features that underlie and contribute to well-documented health disparities. • Enhanced diversity of guest speakers.
MHCH 680 - Global Sexual and Reproductive Health	Elective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global course with diverse speakers; • Instructor is developing content ideas that will better address disparity issues (e.g., weathering hypothesis); • Includes a diverse set of speakers covering diverse topics.

- In 2021, as a part of the winter workshop for students enrolled in MHCH 766 (MRT-TI) the UNC LGBT Center provided a training on inclusive language, Inclusive Excellence Scholar, Chris Faison, provided a 3-hour lecture on The Persistence of Institutional Racism at UNC I & II. Dr. Palmquist gave a 4-hour workshop in Infant and Young Child Feeding in Humanitarian Crises. Students and program leaders from NCAT, JCSU and Momma’s Village in Fayetteville were invited guests. This is the 5th year that CGBI has hosted a day of IE training in their winter workshop.
- Student comfort and inclusivity in classrooms: Following are AY 20-21 average student evaluations across all taught MCH courses:



In general, students report high levels of comfort and feel included. However, we note that the average percentage of students who felt courses were effective in using health equity perspectives is low, and there is much more variability across courses on this item.

Upcoming action steps:

- Led by the MCH IE Curriculum sub-committee, the Department will continue to create IE values and principles and map them back to all MCH courses. Goal is to have 100% of MCH courses reviewed by faculty, MCH Academic Leadership, and the curriculum IE committee. These groups will continue to review syllabi to make sure research/readings/speakers are reflective of IE principles.
- Instructors will continue to enhance health equity content and perspectives in courses.
- MCH has reached out to the UNC LGBT Center to provide a training on MCH gender-inclusive language, which would be required of all faculty, staff and students in MCH. The planning is still in process, but the goal is to have this training by spring 2022.

Training

- From generous funds from donors that prioritize equity issues, we were able to provide REI Groundwater and/or REI Phase 1 training to 37% of our faculty and 32% of staff.
- Department provided funding to 15 students for NCORE training (2), and for participation in the MCH IE working groups (13) in 2020-2021. With Gillings School

resources, new students in the 2020 cohort took REI Groundwater training during orientation.

- As required in the Gillings School Inclusive Excellence Action Plan, 100% of MCH faculty and 100% of MCH staff completed at least 8 hours of IE training (some up to 20 hours) for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- The Carolina Global Breastfeeding Initiative (CGBI), housed in the MCH department, sponsored a Whiteness at Work training. Five faculty, 18 staff, and 13 MRT-TI students participated.
- Comments from students regarding faculty performance are tracked (2018, 2019, and 2020). All student feedback was discussed in annual reviews with faculty. Where appropriate, shifts of instructors, required trainings, etc. were implemented. More information about students' perceptions of culture in the classroom appears in the previous section.
- Two faculty have completed the **equity in teaching** series, which includes components related to inclusive language.

Upcoming action steps:

- We will continue to monitor faculty completion of IE training each year; it is now part of the annual review of each faculty member and part of faculty mentoring.
- We are developing metrics to assess the application of IE principles in the classroom and in student/faculty mentoring.
- Our goal is to provide funding so that 100% of faculty and 100% of staff can complete REI Groundwater, and to support other training as requested.
- We will continue to provide funding for students participating in the IE working groups and for students hired for administrative support of IE work.
- We are seeking funding to provide the Whiteness at Work training for MCH faculty and staff.

Other

- All artwork on the 4th floor hallway of Rosenau has been removed. A committee, led by students, is creating a plan to update the department floor with artwork that meets school standards, which are to be added to the Gillings IE Action Plan.
- Every faculty meeting has time allotted to address IE related questions/concerns and provide a continuous opportunity for discussion. Student representatives from the Global Health and Maternal, Child and Family Health MPH concentrations, and MCH doctoral program attend faculty meetings.
- The Department has collaborated with both Kauline Cipriani, former Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence at Gillings, and Yesenia Merino, Director of Education and Training for IE, since fall 2020 on IE action items for MCH. We are currently working with Jeffrey Simms, Interim Assistant Dean for IE.
- The MCH IE committees discussed a shift to mirror the HB Equity Task Force, but all parties felt that a joint, collaborative effort with faculty, staff, students, and alumni – rather than a faculty only group - worked best for the MCH department.
- CGBI is a First Food Field Builder for the WK Kellogg Foundation and has assisted JCSU and NCAT with the creation of the first two accredited Pathway 2 Lactation Consultant Training Programs in HBCUs through their collaborative RISE Lactation Training Model Reclaiming, Improving, Sustaining Equity.
- The department holds an MCH Community Conversation twice each semester to provide updates. Attendees may anonymously submit questions in advance, as desired.

We invite everyone to check the department's IE webpage, found here: <https://sph.unc.edu/mch/dei-work-group/> for updates on our work. You may also be interested in our upcoming event: "Leading for Equity in MCH: Collaborations between Practice and Research to enhance the Health of MCH Populations." This panel discussion will take place October 5th, 3:00-4:15 ET, online via Zoom.

We are working across the Gillings School to address IE concerns. We acknowledge that there is much more work to be done, and we welcome conversation and specific suggestions from alumni and others interested in supporting our efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in our department and the Gillings School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn T Halpern", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Carolyn T Halpern, PhD
Professor and Chair