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# **UNC Nutrition Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan**

**JANUARY 4, 2022**

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## INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee is to support the diversity and climate of inclusiveness of the Department of Nutrition and take steps in support of the Department's mission statement on inclusive excellence.

To accomplish all the actions needed to reach the committee's goal, the committee has developed a recommended action plan for the Department. The recommendations were contributed by five subcommittees: Climate and Advocacy, Communications, Curriculum, Diversity, and Training. Subcommittees met throughout Fall and Spring 2020. Draft recommendations were discussed at regular full committee meetings, and aligned with the work of the Gillings Inclusive Excellence Council. Statements from the NutriCollective and the Gillings Minority Student Caucus were instrumental in guiding this work. The plan has since been reviewed by the UNC-CH Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Leah Cox, and the interim Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence at Gillings, Dr. Jeffery Simms. This is a three-year plan. Priorities will be set by the DEI Committee at the beginning of each academic year. Workgroups will be formed around each priority. These workgroups will develop timelines and metrics and carry out this work in collaboration with the Department Chair, Dr. Beth Mayer-Davis, and associate deans, as needed, with departmental administrative support.

For each Action Item, key metrics will be identified, developed and tracked on the Nutrition DEI Action Tracker, to be developed.

### **Statement on Inclusive Excellence:**

The Department of Nutrition calls on each of its students, faculty and staff to commit to nurturing an environment of inclusion, equity and belonging. We actively value diversity of perspectives and background, support the success of all members of our community, and affirm that we are strongest when we embrace diversity in all of its forms, including race, ethnicity, spirituality, sexuality, gender identity, culture, physical ability, age, country of origin, political perspective and socioeconomic status. The department and its members must first acknowledge that we have contributed to the crises of racism, inequities and health disparities through our policies, hiring practices, clinical practices, education and research. We now commit to listening and learning to address these crises through thoughtful and intentional action within our department.

It is only through commitment to anti-racism and inclusivity that we can achieve our department's mission – to improve and protect the public's health through teaching, research and practices that foster optimal nutrition for all in our local communities and around the globe (located at <https://sph.unc.edu/nutr/unc-nutrition/>).

### **Overview for the 2021-2022 Academic Year**

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the DEI Committee developed 16 recommendations. During Fall 2021, the committee members voted on which of those 16 to prioritize. What resulted are three priority recommendations:

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1: *Promote opportunities for faculty, staff and students to be prepared to talk about race, racism and how to dismantle racist cultures and structures. Goal/Timeline: Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability (#1 below).*

2: *Establish a communication pipeline for all DEI related efforts (#7 below).*

3: *Lower financial barriers to applicants to the nutrition department degree programs (#13 below).*

All 16 recommendations are listed below with details.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Climate and Advocacy Related Recommendations

#### 1. **Promote opportunities for faculty, staff and students to be prepared to talk about race, racism and how to dismantle racist cultures and structures.**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to improve staff, student and faculty's ability to understand, talk about and teach about racism while creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

##### Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Faculty discussions
- Identify relevant literature to discuss with faculty during faculty meetings and all to discuss during monthly discussions on topics including but not limited to microaggressions, implicit bias, identity and tokenism, power and privilege, racism in nutrition research and practice, cultural sensitivity, etc.
- Plan discussions with faculty, students and staff based on recent anti-racism trainings and seminars.

Goal/Timeline: **Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.**

#### 2. **Set explicit norms around talking about race, racism and how to dismantle racist cultures and structures among students, faculty and staff.**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to enable everyone in the Department of Nutrition to have a common language and understanding.

##### Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- For faculty: develop recommendations that provide guidance on discussing race/discrimination in the classroom. This guidance can include advice on how to discuss discrimination on the first day, give warnings before difficult or triggering conversations, accepted vs offensive terminology, how to be responsive to student reaction to unexpected current events, etc. These recommendations can also be revisited during faculty meeting before the semester begins in case faculty want advice or have questions. **A document is started.**
- For everyone: Ensure everyone understands micro-aggressions. **1 training done for faculty**
- For faculty: Develop a list of offensive terminology and share with faculty, staff and students. **Not done**
- For students: include the equity statement and useful resources (including reporting microaggressions) into orientation materials and orientation presentations. **Unknown**

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- For staff: Include the equity statement, action plan and accomplishments and useful resources (including reporting microaggressions) into employee orientation and review materials and sessions. **Not done**

**Goal/Timeline:** **Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.**

### **3. Implement regular department-wide dialogue about race, racism and how to dismantle racist cultures and structures.**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to have respectful, thoughtful conversations about nutrition-related public health issues stemming from racism and other forms of oppression in a space where harm to BIPOC students, faculty, and staff is minimized.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Identify a list of qualified experts to lead the conversations (skilled facilitators who have received adequate training to manage these events).
- Develop guidelines for the conversations, informed by our skilled facilitators, that should be revisited before each event.
- Identify funding mechanism for guest speakers to the department.
- Organize a calendar of events based on speaker availability.
- Advertise seminar series for everyone in the department.

**Goal/Timeline:** Two department-wide conversations per semester starting the 2021-2022 academic school year. **Not started**

### **4. Promote and monitor mechanisms for reporting micro-aggressions.**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to ensure everyone in the Department are aware and have access to the Gillings School of Public Health system for reporting micro-aggressions and that reported micro-aggressions are addressed.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Promote the use of the Gillings School mechanism for reporting micro-aggressions: <https://feedback.sph.unc.edu/> **Need to create a systemic plan**
- Share with the department how reported micro-aggressions are addressed within the Department and Gillings. **Done**
- Develop a mechanism to periodically review the number of micro-aggressions reported, if there are repeat perpetrators and how they have been addressed. **Done**
- Investigate and consider developing a mechanism specifically for students to report microaggressions/climate experience of their placements and determine how to address issues reported. **Not done**

**Goal/Timeline:**

### **5. Disseminate information about decompression sessions/opportunities/spaces for faculty, staff and students in BIPOC and other communities planned by Gillings or the University.**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to acknowledge the need for decompression sessions and to inform faculty, staff and students of opportunities for decompression sessions following classes (and events) with potentially triggering topics with mental health professionals who are not faculty or students in the department, or within BIPOC communities that may be triggered by topics or events.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Investigate the possibility of CAPS, Student Wellness and/or Student Affairs holding such sessions.
- Determine whether the Black Student Pod and International Student Pod are adequately serving this need and/or what more is needed.
- Locate other safe space options and share.
- Coordinate with and support School-level initiatives that have started to provide such opportunities.

**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

## Communications Related Recommendations

### 6. Increase departmental transparency

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to ensure that everyone in the department is aware of actions that impact the overall departmental climate.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Provide up-to-date demographic information on the Nutrition Department faculty, staff, and students as part of November State of the Department presentation and prior to each student admission season.
- Include data on the faculty, staff, and students who have left, dropped out, etc. Specifically, for students, demographics on those who dropped out of departmental programs.
- Include data on tenured and fixed-term faculty separately. Specifically, how many Black, Indigenous and People of Color in the department, the length of time before receiving tenure and/or promotion, teaching and service responsibilities, and who are given the opportunity to teach courses within the Department.
- Provide information regarding the selection process for faculty, staff, and students who are involved in Nutrition Department committees & related meetings.
- Provide information regarding the selection process for the TAs of Nutrition Department courses.
- Increase transparency regarding employment opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. This includes advanced notice of future job postings within the Department and student involvement in faculty and staff selection and hiring process.
- Post explicit information about the criteria and processes used to select who receives faculty and student awards.
- Implement meaningful public recognition to reward members of the department who are leading for equity, and provide meaningful recognition.

**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

### 7. Establish a communication pipeline for all DEI related efforts

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to ensure that everyone in the department is informed of all DEI related efforts being undertaken by the department and through affiliated efforts by staff, students and faculty.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Collect information from all subcommittees/groups and faculty that needs to be communicated with the greater Nutrition Department Community (this includes internal and external to the department DEI related efforts).
- Create feedback mechanism for the DEI committee.

- Maintain transparency on progress of the DEI committee on advancing the anti-racist goals of the department.
- Protocols may need to be developed to ensure the DEI communication pipeline is consistent. (i.e. develop templates for meeting agendas and meeting minutes; and create easily accessible anonymous forms for feedback.)

**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

## 8. Improve our approaches to communicating about inclusion, equity and anti-racism efforts

The overarching goal for this recommendation is improve the communication **throughout the department** related to **diversity, equity and inclusion**.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Communicate regularly on available anti-racist and equity focused trainings, programs and resources at UNC and the greater community.
  - Develop a monthly or semester newsletter for sharing information.
  - Disseminate links to training events lists compiled by the University and Gillings.
- Develop a policy for Department statements on events and review all communications from the Department focused on equity.
  - Set explicit norms around talking about race and racial violence.
  - Create a small group of review equity related statements prior to mass distribution.
  - Meaningfully incorporate theories and frameworks developed by Black, Indigenous and People of Color and other marginalized communities into Department communications.
- Promote and foster events related to diversity, inclusion, and equity.
  - Host two Departmental Town Hall Meetings with equity focused themes.
- Ensure that Department seminars include equity-focused topics.

**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

## Curriculum Related Recommendations

### 9. Develop and implement a course (Racism and Nutrition) that defines race (socially constructed, not biological but has health implications), presents the history and ongoing presence of racism in nutrition programs and nutrition research, and identifies and elevates the work (particularly of BIPOC scholars) that has addressed racism appropriately in the field of nutrition.

The overarching goal for this recommendation is for students to develop a basic understanding of what race is and is not, how nutrition has contributed to and perpetuated racism and develop a critical understanding of what to do now, given that much of our evidence base is built on racism. This course should identify and recognize contributions that have been made related to racism and nutrition, especially from BIPOC researchers and prepare students to engage critically with racism in their future courses and to move forward in addressing racism and practicing antiracism within their own research and practice. Provide a baseline understanding so that students do not continue perpetuating racism and can further think critically in their remaining courses, research and practice about racism and nutrition and how to move forward.

**Key considerations:** Consider existing requirements within each degree program, and how best to meet learning objectives; will this course be required or an elective?

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Identify course instructor/facilitator/organizer.
- Develop course topics.
  - General Topics: what race is, what race is not, interrogating unconscious bias, positionality, racism in health and nutrition, Paulo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed), problems with thrifty gene hypothesis, Tuskegee study, etc.
  - Nutrition Topics: weight stigma and racism, asthma and racism, chronic disease and racism, etc.
- Evaluate the feasibility of making this a required course either via accreditation requirements or department requirements.
  - CEPH and ACEND requirements for antiracism/equity are not sufficient.
  - Use mini courses and band with other departments at other schools as an advocacy effort to push back on those accrediting body requirements. (CEPH and ACEND)

**Goal/Timeline:** On hold, Gillings is piloting their own Fall 2021, may want to start with a speaker series or seminar.

### **10. Incorporate antiracism into all courses in nutrition via syllabus audit and changes made.**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to understand that dismantling racism cannot only be relegated to one course, the information needs to be coming from across the nutrition department: institutionalizing change (*language from Dr. Keon Gilbert*) to truly question racism in nutrition and move away from perpetuating racism as much as possible. All students graduate with the ability to apply principles of social justice and racial equity in their work.

#### Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Incorporate a social justice and racial equity lens into core courses and encourage adoption of such a perspective throughout the curriculum.
  - Charge a Curriculum Subcommittee to develop guidance for applying a social justice and racial equity lens in core course curricula. This guidance should then inform a department-wide course syllabus audit to determine which (and to what extent) courses currently incorporate a racial equity lens.
  - External consultants (at the Center for Faculty Excellence, for example) may be needed to help meet the needs of faculty through this change period.
- Work with the Teaching and Learning Center to identify a course audit tool
- Encourage all teaching faculty members to utilize the course audit tool.
- Audit should include resources for making changes to course Design; syllabus components; syllabus tone, perspectives, appeal, learning objectives, assessment variety, content perspectives, content voice, content accessibility; course content (examples include: interrogating positionality and bias, what counts as knowledge, readings, theories, frameworks from BIPOC authors and scholars, critiquing and challenging, decentering whiteness, personal accountability mechanisms, etc.)
- Evaluate success of audit tool in actual changes implemented in courses.
  - Improved student feedback mechanisms.
  - Faculty accountability for changes.
  - How will students be evaluated before engaging in research or practicums with marginalized communities?
- Track and evaluate progress towards racial equity in the classroom.

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- Periodic surveys of departmental climate and course evaluations (mid-term and end-of-course) can help determine whether new actions are having the desired effect.
  - The evaluation plan and progress metrics (including climate surveys) should be made be available online, accessible to Gillings and the public.

**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

## Diversity Related Recommendations

### 11. Engagement with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in a way that is sustainable and a true partnership

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to acknowledge that HBCUs and MSIs already excellently train diverse student populations and post-graduate professionals; who have unique and important perspectives inherent to that diversity. Establishing long-term and mutually beneficial collaborations with these institutions can provide a resource for recruiting future students, faculty and staff toward increasing our diversity, that will improve our work in a way that better reflects all the populations we seek to engage through projects of research scholarship or service.

#### Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Create an ad-hoc HBCU/MSI engagement task team to make recommendations on how to do this (example to build from: U24)
- Leverage existing HBCU/MSI partnerships.
- Create a list of programs and contacts within programs at HBCUs & MSIs.
- Obtain necessary commitment (e.g., faculty involvement), resources (staff time, funding) to support time and effort.
- Begin developing outreach to select HBCUs/MSIs following recommendations.

**Goal/Timeline:** Not done

### 12. Establish an active pipeline program to create funded opportunities for Underrepresented in Academia (URiA) students to gain exposure to research and our department

The overarching goal for this recommendation is acknowledge that the current lack of URiA student and faculty is a reflection of a larger pipeline problem. Barriers for URiA include financial constraints, lack of role-models or connections who can help open doors and implicit (or explicit) biases that prevent them from accessing opportunities.

#### Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Identify existing pipeline programs at UNC that Nutrition may be able to partner with.
- Explore possibility of department pipeline program (possibly in combination with HBCU/MSI engagement).
  - Create survey to faculty to gauge and assess capacity for summer research interns. Done
  - Create form for prospective students interested in summer internship (research) experiences Not done
- Obtain necessary commitment (e.g., faculty involvement), resources (staff time, funding) to support time and effort.
  - Work with Advancement for the financial support. Not done
- Begin carrying out pipeline program action items focused on maintaining sustainability and positive experiences for all involved.

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**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

### **13. Lower financial barriers to applicants to the nutrition department degree programs**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to establish a way to eliminate the financial burden of the application fee many applicants (or potential applicants) face (especially if they are applying to multiple places).

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Identify an approach, process and funding source to provide "fee scholarships" for students who self-identify as needing aid. Note – this may need to be different for PhD and MPH applicants as the MPH program is coordinated at the school level
- Work with Advancement to raise money to support this recommendation.

**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

### **14. Provide financial support to cover visiting day costs**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is recognize that some applicants may be unable to visit UNC when trying to decide whether to join our department. It becomes difficult to recruit URiAs in particular due to this.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Identify an estimated amount, approach and funding source to provide "visiting scholarships" for admitted students.
- May need to prioritize students of interest to URiA faculty or faculty doing health equity-related work who do not have available funds to cover student visitation costs.

**Goal/Timeline:** Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.

## **Training Related Recommendations**

### **15. Require inclusive excellence training, including a strong anti-racist training component, for faculty, staff, TAs and students in alignment with the Gillings School training requirements.**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to ensure that everyone in the department received the required 8 hours (minimum) of inclusive excellence training each year. These enrichment opportunities are in line with NutriCollective, Equity Collective, Minority Student Caucus, and Gillings Inclusive Excellence Action Plan recommendations and consistent with CEPH requirements. Having well-equipped faculty, staff, TA and students will improve classroom experiences and departmental climate for all.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Build a stepwise inclusive excellence and antiracism education program that allows participants to start at the level most appropriate based on previous exposure and training they have had.
  - All faculty and staff members should participate in at least eight hours (8) of training in per year in alignment with the Gillings School requirement.
  - At least one of those trainings should address racism; additional trainings should address diversity, equity, and/or inclusion.
  - At least half of the hours should include training with an evaluation component (e.g., quiz questions at end to evaluate knowledge and understanding of points made in training, similar to required Title IX Training).

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- All faculty, staff and students should participate in anti-racism training specifically related to nutrition and public health.
  - Indicate that training expectations will be reviewed as part of annual reviews (for faculty, staff, students) and all contracts and offer letters going forward.
    - Create a temporary departmental system to track employee trainings until the Gillings School system is launched.
  - Create a toolbox of additional trainings and resources for those that are interested in growing their knowledge base or developing their skills further on their own.

Goal/Timeline: **Ongoing/a plan needs to be put in place for sustainability.**

#### **16. Develop a stand-alone training module on the history of racism in nutrition**

The overarching goal for this recommendation is to develop a training module that is specific to nutrition that everyone (faculty, staff, students) in the department can take.

Action steps to fulfill this recommendation:

- Consider required training modules addressing topics such as how structural racism and inequity have negatively affected nutrition, and how to be anti-racist in nutrition research. Note: This is different from the course recommendation, since it will be designed for everyone in the department to take.
- Possible channels for delivery include Sakai or Qualtrics.

Goal/Timeline: **Not done**

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## Committee Members

### Academic Year 2021 – 2022:

Kim Truesdale (Chair)  
Molly DeMarco (Co-Chair)  
Delisha Stewart (Co-Chair)  
Seema Agrawal  
Alice Ammerman  
Ximena Bustamante-Marin  
Ian Carroll  
Shufa Du  
Jonathan Earnest

John French  
Derek Hales  
Amanda Holliday  
Anna Kahkoska  
Eric Klett  
Yuanyuan Li  
Stephanie Martin  
Brook Nezami  
Shuwen Ng  
Wimal Pathmasiri  
Blake Rushing

Shuwen Ng  
Rachel Thimke  
Isis Trujillo-Gonzalez  
Saroja Voruganti  
Dianne Ward  
Derek Hales  
Deb Tate  
Emma Tzioumis  
Eddie Serrano

### Academic Year 2020 – 2021:

Kim Truesdale (Chair)  
Dianne Ward (Co-Chair)  
Alice Ammerman  
Seema Agrawal  
Ximena Bustamante Marin  
Ian Carroll  
Molly DeMarco

Shufa Du  
Amanda Holliday  
Brooke Nezami  
Shuwen Ng  
Grace Shearrer  
Delisha Stewart  
Susan Sumner

Emma Tzoumis  
Carmina Valle  
Anne Belote  
Jonathan Earnest  
Eddie Serrano