

University of Minnesota Department of Neurosurgery Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Charter

Background

The University of Minnesota Department of Neurosurgery recognizes diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) work as a constantly dynamic, iterative process that will continuously evolve in response to the current context and any emerging issues. In the wake of recent civil unrest happening in our own city with the killing of George Floyd and in the setting of an ongoing pandemic due to COVID-19, disparities have become painfully evident in our daily life and news feeds. Beyond this, major social and political changes over the past decades have led to a large number of organizations taking steps to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion. Furthermore, there has been a growing appreciation for the relevance of individuals and committees that dedicate efforts in this direction and therefore, the impulse from the Department of Neurosurgery to focus efforts on DEI initiatives began as a response to these circumstances.

We recognize that our mission and work environment are stronger when there is a diverse and inclusive community. Several studies have shown improved engagement, enhanced communication, increased productivity, and better workforce retention in such environments. Particularly for the case of health care, diversity improves patient care through more effective communication, increased patient adherence, improved patient satisfaction, and an overall better patient experience. From our curriculum to our recruitment strategies, access to leadership positions and daily work in clinical, administrative or research settings, there are several areas to examine what we do and commit to improving how we do it. The charter below will define priorities, report relationships and devise the steering actions that will guide our future efforts.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council

Principle and Purpose

- As a department, we reject any form of discrimination and pledge to establish a department-wide culture of equity and inclusion.
- We plan to accomplish this by recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, providing mentorship and leadership by example to our trainees and educating ourselves in bias and intercultural competence. We believe this to be essential in carrying out our duties of education, innovation and delivery of the highest quality of equitable, compassionate and socially aware healthcare to our patients and the surrounding community at large.
- The DEI council will directly engage and work collaboratively with several other departments within the Medical School, the University, and the clinical enterprise at large. Our efforts will closely align with those of the Medical School, M physicians and the M Health-Fairview HOPE commission.

Leadership, Membership and Reporting Lines

- DEI council will have a chair that will participate as a member of the Department of Neurosurgery Leadership Council
- The Diversity Officer is named by the Department of Neurosurgery Head and will serve in the position of DEI council chair
- The DEI council chair is responsible for meeting scheduling and preparation, meeting facilitation, follow up on action items, communication, and messaging, and liaising with partners among other duties

- Members will be selected by the chair from among individuals representing diverse roles/areas within the department who express interest in participation. In general, council membership should reflect a diverse mix of people, taking into consideration factors such as race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, etc. The council chair will strive for inclusivity by inviting and selecting members that represent faculty, trainees, clinical, research, and administrative staff
- The members will serve in the council for 3-year terms. All members will have the option of renewing their terms. Renewals will be agreed upon between individual council members and the council chair.

Council members as of May 2021

Terri Anderson, LPN

Marnie Davis, PA

David Darrow, Faculty

Rajiv Dharnipragada, MSII

Emily Fellows, MSII

Daniel Guillaume, Faculty

Nicole Niesen-Falk, Admin

Carolina Sandoval-Garcia, Faculty

Sally Sawyer, Admin

Birra Taha, Resident PGY2

Responsibilities

DEI Council is open to and encourages frank, honest, and respectful dialogue from any member of our department as we evolve and execute our action plan.

The chair and members are expected to attend council meetings and serve and represent their colleagues following standards of professional behavior defined by the code of conduct pertinent to their role.

The council responsibilities include:

- Establishing goals and priorities in DEI within the department and formulating action plans and recommendations based on identified issues and feedback from department members elicited via increased communication and engagement opportunities including the annual survey.
- Carrying out a self-assessment of council effectiveness describing accomplishments relative to developed goals and chartered responsibilities, challenges, and barriers encountered during the year, and recommendations for solutions.
- Generating and facilitating periodic updates and communications to outline council efforts and seek department-wide engagement.
- Maintaining and reviewing the charter periodically and enacting changes, if necessary, based on evolving needs and situation. Modifications to the Charter are to be discussed and proposed by the DEI chair or members. Department Chair approval is required before changes can go into effect other than task/action steps adjustments and additions.

Goals, Objectives, Tasks and Action Steps

GOAL 1

State principles and values

Objective: it's critical to clearly state the department's values around diversity and inclusion. It is also important to share those values with our community and clearly state / expand the department's mission statement to describe our philosophy on equity and diversity while taking steps to affirm that community members are aware and that this effectively impacts departmental policies and activities.

Tasks: we will consider expanding the department's mission statement, creating a standalone diversity statement and developing mechanisms to share this in our website and departmental communications.

Action steps: determine departmental DEI statement and dissemination mechanisms.

GOAL 2

Define and measure current status of diversity, equity and inclusion within our department and track progress and evolution.

Objective: collect objective data from departmental sources and climate surveys applied to different groups and examine change over time to identify emerging issues and be able to compare our progress with others. Delineate mechanisms to track progress which fosters accountability and transparency around diversity issues.

Tasks: determine instruments, frequency and method of assessing department status and climate/perceptions.

Action steps:

- Selected climate survey to be applied yearly
- Recommend actions on diversity concerns brought forth in the yearly survey or other applied instruments and gain department's support to enact action plans. This includes, periodically review of objectives, and progress toward achieving them to ensure alignment with strategic department objectives
- Attend and inquire regarding medical school-wide initiatives to survey and maintain dashboards with information and metrics across departments.

GOAL 3

Disseminate and share information related to DEI initiatives and ensure availability of complaint systems and ways to raise awareness of concerns in our department.

Objective: develop consistent and widely disseminated strategies to share webpages, podcasts, book clubs and other resources with information related to DEI efforts that can be accessible to all members of our department as well as offering accessible and confidential ways to report issues.

Tasks: resource repository compilation and incident/concern reporting mechanism.

Action steps:

- Identify a list of resources and content

- Create email for survey dissemination and communications purposes
- Discuss the best way to disseminate and update the information. Determine the frequency and channels to further discuss diversity issues with the department members
- Develop a website / tab within the department webpage and generate content
- Determine if we want to create a separate mechanism allowing people to submit anonymous ideas and concerns or adopt the existing Bias Response and Referral Network already existing in the university. Email was created for survey purposes.

GOAL 4

Curricular interventions and learning opportunities

Objective: proactively educate ourselves about discriminatory practices and historical context, and seek to recognize and understand the cultural nuances and differences that may impact our daily practice and the department's ability to achieve its mission.

Tasks: create and organize curricular offerings and learning opportunities with varied topics and encourage participation of all members of the department to deepen and develop personal understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity topics at an individual and organizational level.

Action steps:

- Identify and propose speakers
- Consider representationally diverse faculty members from outside the institution to give
- Grand Rounds on a regular basis - make sure there are at least 2 grand rounds a year
- relevant to DEI topics
- Securing people and resources to support development of innovative, impactful learning sessions and initiatives
- Discuss needs for faculty and residents implicit bias training.

GOAL 5

Outreach and mentoring

Objective: development of community outreach and mentorship programs.

Tasks: collaborate with other departments and ongoing efforts in the medical school to develop summer programs, interest groups or scholarships for local high school students from diverse backgrounds and partner with local high schools to foster interest in and support of underrepresented in medicine students to consider our field.

Action Steps:

- Identify opportunities for our department to engage with its broader community to promote equity, social justice, and inclusion (i.e., community volunteer activities)
- Identify partner institutions and establish initial contact for interest groups
- Assist in organizing a 4th year minority and/or disadvantaged student visiting clinical clerkship
- Evaluate options to extend provider outreach into rural areas
- Establish and work towards securing global health efforts and collaborations.

GOAL 6

Health Disparities Research

Objective: to review and publish original research within the broader subject of health disparities with the aim of identifying topics relevant to neurosurgery as well as strategies to combat them.

Tasks: study literature in health disparity topics in healthcare relevant to neurosurgery and promote dissemination and discussion efforts into carrying out research by interested parties.

Action steps:

- Identify research topics and foster collaboration between interested parties
- Guarantee periodic presentation of relevant papers during journal club.

GOAL 7

Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Objective: review policies, procedures and informal practices across the department that affect recruitment and retention.

Tasks: recommending ways to strengthen retention by ensuring that needs and concerns of faculty, trainees and other department members are understood and met.

Action Steps:

- Improve hiring practices by requiring diversity statements for job postings, anonymizing the review of research statements, promotion cases, etc. Equity Lens" review of departmental policies/procedures
- Ensuring a diversity representative participates in all hiring committees and tracking and monitoring of hires/search committees
- Make use of "best practices" and interviewing best practices (including job description writing) on Office of Faculty Affairs webpage
- Ensure review and discussion of available metrics and dashboards provided by the university or clinical enterprise related to equity (compensation, access, promotion, treatment, etc.)
- Operationalize mentoring groups for minority and/or disadvantaged trainees or other department members.

TIMELINE - WORK ON DEI IN THE NEUROSURGERY DEPARTMENT TO DATE

June 2020

- Initial steps taken by Dr. Clark Chen, Department of Neurosurgery Chair, to create a Diversity Officer position in the department as an essential member of our Leadership Council who will influence key Departmental initiatives dedicated to above-stated objectives. The Officer will work closely with the University Office of Equity and Diversity to foster collaborative endeavors. Each year, we will dedicate time to discuss and review the state of diversity and equity in our department, as well as opportunities for improvement. Finally, discussions of individual contributions to equity and diversity will be a standing part of future annual evaluations.

July 2020

- Dr. Carolina Sandoval-Garcia appointed as the department's Diversity director
- Scheduled presentations by Dr. Sandoval to the department's vice-chair council, faculty and department at large regarding vision and role as well as discussion of initial concrete strategies to work on including a call for nominations from within the department to serve in the DEI council.

August 2020

- Advisory meetings by Dr. Sandoval with Dean Amanda Termuhlen – Office of Faculty Affairs (pending arrival of the inaugural Vice Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the Medical School, Dr. Ana Nunez) and Dr. David Rothenberger former Chair of the Department of Surgery (DOS) and current lead of the DOS-wide DEI Council
- Ongoing outreach to potential members interested in serving in the council from different domains within the department.

September 2020

- Social justice and equity issues and particularly the defacement of the George Floyd memorial led to the DO listening session September 1 at the all-provider department meeting.
- Inaugural meeting of DOs from all departments of the medical school with Dr. AnaNunez – new Vice Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – Medical School
- First meeting of Neurosurgery DEI council.

October 2020

- Initial draft proposal for council charter generated
- DEI Council final composition established, inaugural report and charter initiated for comments and revisions.

November 2020

- Decision on climate survey allowing department members to weigh in on the current status of DEI in the department and guide initial goals and plans set in the charter
- Inaugural Grand Rounds Session with Kee Her Yang on “Hmong beliefs on illness, medicine and surgery.”

December 2020 - January 2021

- Creation and application of survey instrument. Result analysis in council sessions. Generation of charter, revisions and adjustments based on results.

February 2021

- Neurosurgery Town Hall session to share survey results, guest speaker Dr. Shailey Prasad, MD MPH.

March - April 2021

- Development / drafting of charter and strategic planning.

Charter and DEI work developed in consultation with:
Department of Neurosurgery chairman and Vice-Dean leadership council.

Dean Ana Núñez

Dean Amanda Tehrmuhlen

Dr. David Rothenberger

Dr. Shailey Prasad

Relevant deans and other leaders of the Medical School and MHealth Fairview enterprise.

RESOURCES

1. Acosta D. Achieving excellence through equity, diversity, and inclusion.
<https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/achieving-excellence-through-equity-diversity-and-inclusion>
2. Gomez LE, Bernet P. Diversity improves performance and outcomes. J Natl Med Assoc. 2019;111(4):383-392.
3. AAMC Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Planning Toolkit
<https://www.aamc.org/services/member-capacity-building/diversity-and-inclusionstrategic-planning-toolkit#gettingstarted>
4. Med School D and E plan
5. MPhysicians DEI plan
6. HOPE commission at M Health Fairview plan