

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL SOCIAL SCIENCES

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACISM

The Department of Medical Social Sciences (MSS) is committed to combating the systemic inequalities within academia by engaging in anti-racist and inclusive work. We recognize that many of us have unknowingly perpetuated systemic inequalities. However, we hope taking this firm stance within our own sphere of influence will ultimately help change that narrative moving forward. This includes the promotion of activities to foster personal reflection to uncover and unlearn individual-level biases, as well as system-level change in policies, practices, and culture to promote a more equitable work environment, healthcare system, and society. We acknowledge that this work will be difficult and will ultimately require a university-wide effort to be the most effective. As we in MSS embark upon this journey, we are excited to have a coalition of department leadership, faculty, staff and researchers working in unison to promote an anti-racist, diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “An individual has not started living until [they] can rise above the narrow confines of [their] individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” We in MSS strive to improve people’s Quality of Life through our research, and now we have the opportunity to take it a step further through our activism. Building on Northwestern University (NU) policies focused on these aims, along with our department’s ongoing health equity research, MSS is taking our own actions to lead the charge within FSM.

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE SO FAR IN 2020:

Created Inclusion, Diversity, Engagement, and Action (IDEA) Committee with sub-committees focused on short and long-term goals for: (a) hiring and recruitment, (b) mentorship and professional development, and (c) departmental culture. These committees are composed of staff, faculty, and postdoctoral fellows.	Initiated a series of departmental town halls, with initial sessions led by the Vice Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, to deepen our shared understanding of racism in the workplace, recognize how our institutions perpetuate white supremacy culture, and advance MSS as a leader in promoting equity and inclusion
Allocated departmental funds to initiatives identified by IDEA committees.	Dedicated a minimum of 20% of our monthly seminars on departmental Works-in-Progress to discussions organized by IDEA committees
Dedicated time for IDEA-related updates and discussions at every staff (bi-monthly), faculty (monthly), and department (quarterly) meeting.	Engaged in active sharing of anti-racism resources and promotion of initiatives occurring at department, university, and community levels – for example, through creation of a department-wide shared repository and biweekly newsletters.

WHAT WE ARE WORKING ON NOW:

The IDEA committee, in partnership with MSS Leadership, is developing procedures to sustain our engagement in antiracist work and identifying metrics to hold ourselves accountable, measure progress, and shed light on areas where continued work is especially needed. ⁱ	In addition to NU procedures to mitigate the impact of systemic racism in hiring, we are creating supplemental procedures for hiring MSS faculty and staff with an aim of reducing bias in hiring and expanding recruitment efforts for under-represented minority groups. ⁱⁱ
We will identify opportunities to improve the impact of mentorship, including a) increasing faculty and supervisors' skills in mentoring diverse trainees and staff, and b) expanding mentees' access to a broader pool of mentors.	We will advocate for inclusive actions to address systemic racism within Northwestern University and Feinberg School of Medicine in particular. ⁱⁱⁱ
We will expand our celebration of the abundance of diverse cultures and experiences.	We will hold ourselves accountable by posting annual updates on progress on anti-racism activities and goals.

ⁱ We are collecting and will publish data on staff and faculty diversity by gender identity, race and ethnicity, including breakdowns by tenure vs. non-tenure faculty and exempt vs. non-exempt staff. We are developing expectations for faculty and staff re: anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion training and activities with accountability built around those.

ⁱⁱ We are developing methods to further operationalize and more effectively implement the equity monitor role for our MSS faculty search committees. To this end, we are creating a yearly equity monitor role within the department. By having a single MSS faculty member serve in this capacity for all search committees for one year's

time, we aim to provide some depth and continuity across searches as we enhance the utility and impact of this role. In addition, the IDEA faculty hiring/recruitment subcommittee is working with Dr. Laurie Wakschlag, MSS Vice Chair for Scientific & Faculty Development, to fully operationalize this role and to integrate toolkit materials being developed by this sub-committee.

ⁱⁱⁱFor example, several MSS faculty members served on the Feinberg School of Medicine 2020 Advisory Groups on institutional racism and social justice: Ronald Ackermann, Brian Mustanski, Melissa Simon, Darius Tandon, Clyde Yancy, and Betina Yanez.