



NIH UNITE Initiative

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June 14, 2021

The NIH UNITE Initiative



- **Events of the past year have brought into sharp relief the ongoing reality of racial injustice in our country, and the responsibility of all of us to address this issue**
- **A series of intense Institute and Center Director meeting discussions were held to identify initial issues**
- **Two self-assembled affinity groups at NIH (8CRE, AA/B Scientists) and the Anti-Harassment SC met with NIH leadership for candid discussions that informed next steps**
- **We have arrived at a shared commitment to address structural racism: we must not allow this pivotal moment to pass**

The NIH UNITE Initiative



Initial Issues Identified:

- **We must ensure that biomedical research, and the administrative system that supports it, is devoid of hostility grounded in race, sex, and other federally protected characteristics**
- **In this new initiative, we are committed to delineate elements that may perpetuate structural racism in biomedical research both within NIH and the extramural community leading to a lack of personnel inclusiveness, equity, and diversity**

The NIH UNITE Initiative



Initial Issues Identified:

- **All ideas must be given an equal and fair review, without regard to current dogma, precedents, or who presents the ideas**
- **As COVID-19 has made painfully clear, health disparities and inequities continue to contribute to morbidity and mortality in our nation, making it essential to redress the fundamental causes of these disparities/inequities and identify research programs that could identify effective interventions**

The NIH UNITE Initiative



- U** Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning
- N** New research on health disparities/minority health/health equity
- I** Improving the NIH Culture and Structure for Equity, Inclusion, and Excellence
- T** Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders
- E** Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

Initial UNITE Recommendations

- **Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism**



Acknowledgement



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“To those individuals in the biomedical research enterprise who have endured disadvantages due to structural racism, I am truly sorry. NIH is committed to instituting new ways to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying and dismantling any policies and practices at our own agency that may harm our workforce and our science.”

— Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., NIH Director

”

<https://www.nih.gov/ending-structural-racism>

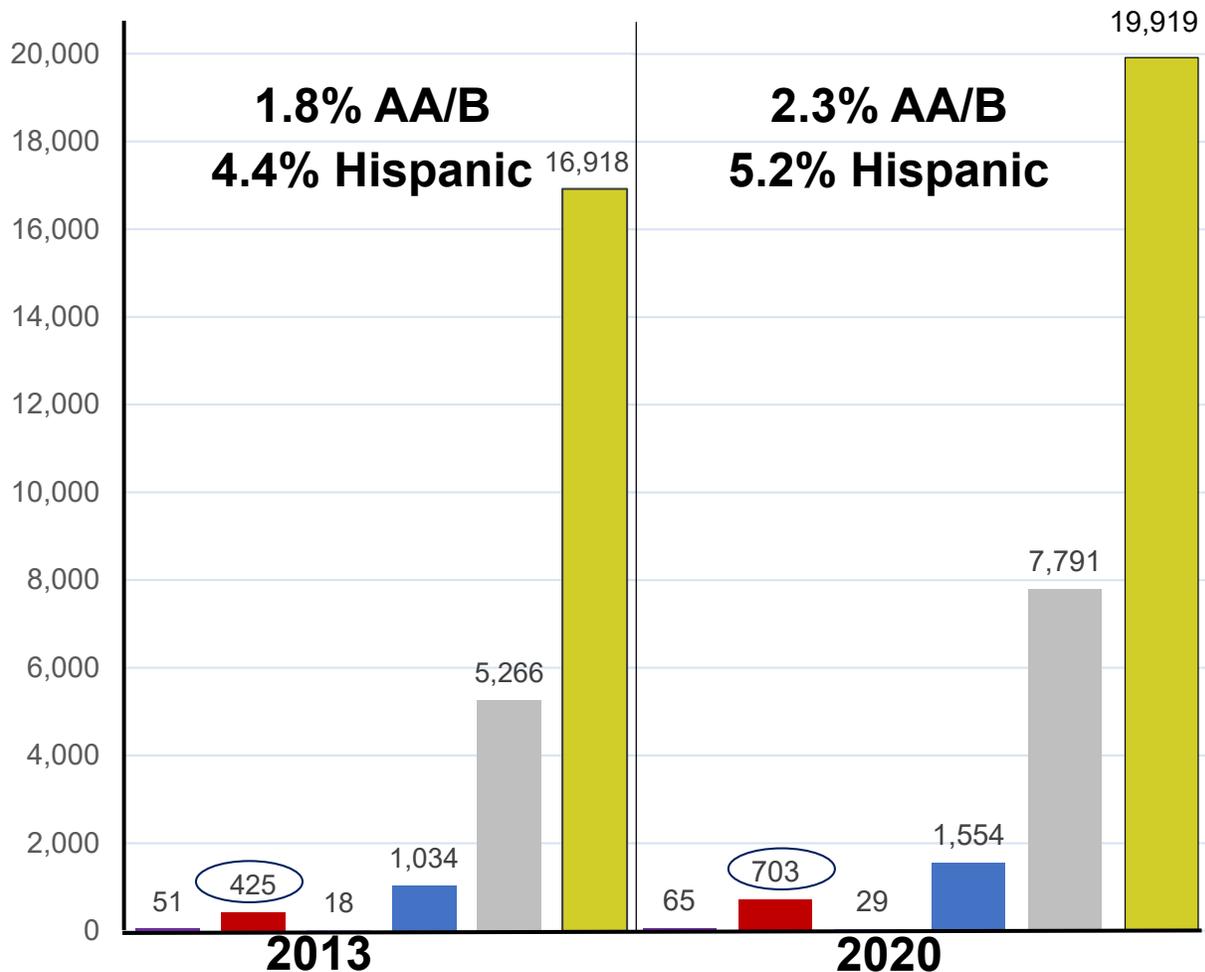
Initial UNITE Recommendations and Actions



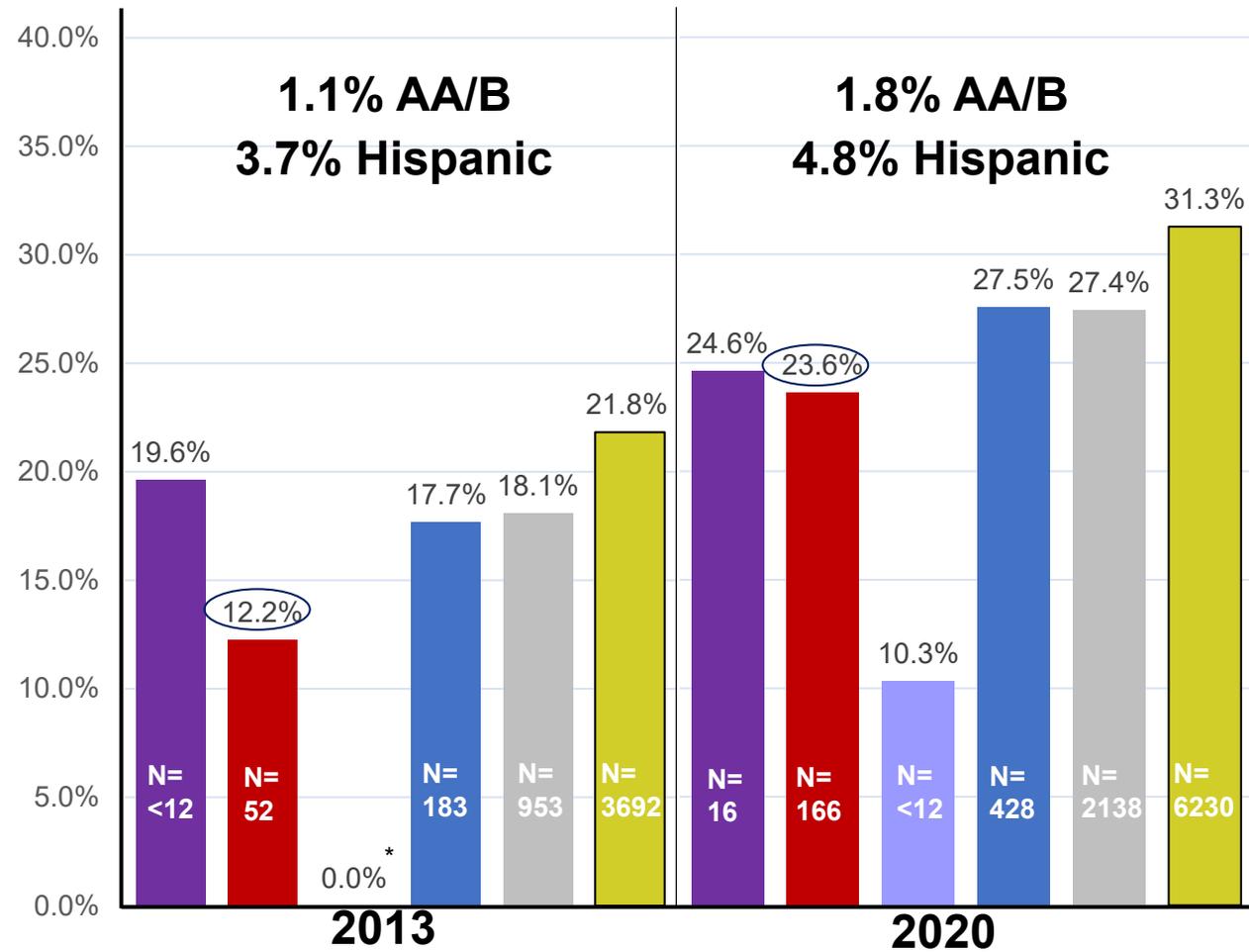
- Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism – *Published 3/1/21*
- Continue to aggressively implement approaches to address the “Ginther Gap” and enhance portfolio diversity

R01eq Applicants and Funding Rates Type 1 and Type 2: FY2013 and FY2020 (by Race/Ethnicity)

Number of Applicants



Funding Rates



■ AI/AN ■ AA/B ■ NH/PI ■ Hispanic ■ Asian ■ White

* No Awarded Applicants

Action – BRAIN FOA

First NIH FOA using Plans to Enhance Diversity Perspective as a consideration for scoring



Department of Health and Human Services

Part 1. Overview Information

Participating Organization(s)

National Institutes of Health ([NIH](#))

Components of Participating Organizations

National Institute of Mental Health ([NIMH](#))

National Eye Institute ([NEI](#))

National Institute on Aging ([NIA](#))

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([NIAAA](#))

National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering ([NIBIB](#))

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development ([NICHD](#))

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders ([NIDCD](#))

National Institute on Drug Abuse ([NIDA](#))

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke ([NINDS](#))

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health ([NCCIH](#))

Funding Opportunity Title

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rsa-files/RFA-MH-21-180.html>

BRAIN Initiative: Reagent Resources for Brain Cell Type-Specific Access and Manipulation to Broaden Distribution of Enabling Technologies for Neuroscience (U24 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Initial UNITE Recommendations and Actions



- Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism – *Published 3/1/21*
- Continue to aggressively implement approaches to address the “Ginther Gap” and enhance portfolio diversity - *Ongoing*
- Launch a multi-phased, -tiered, and -integrated Common Fund Initiative focused on transformative health disparities research initiatives to reduce health disparities/inequities

Action



NIH Common Fund Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity – Committed up to \$24M

Two FOAs released 3/26/21:

- 1) RFA-RM-21-021 Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity (U01 Clinical Trial Allowed) - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-21-021.html>
- 2) RFA-RM-21-022 Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity at Minority Serving Institutions (U01 Clinical Trial Allowed) - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-21-022.html>

Initial UNITE Recommendations and Actions



- Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism – *Published 3/1/21*
- Continue to aggressively implement approaches to address the “Ginther Gap” and enhance portfolio diversity - *Ongoing*
- Launch a multi-phased, -tiered, and -integrated Common Fund Initiative focused on transformative health disparities research initiatives to reduce health disparities/ inequities – *RFAs published 3/26/21*
- Ensure a robust NIH Enterprise-wide commitment to support the NIMHD FOA focused on the effects of structural racism and discrimination on health disparities/ inequities; encourage funding levels that are commensurate with overall IC resources

Action



Funding Opportunity Title	
Activity Code	
Announcement Type	
Related Notices	
Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) Number	
Companion Funding Opportunity	
Number of Applications	

Understanding and Addressing the Impact of Structural Racism and Discrimination on Minority Health and Health Disparities (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

R01 Research Project Grant

New

None

RFA-MD-21-004

None

See [Section III. 3. Additional Information on Eligibility](#).

With the commitment of up to \$30.8 M by 25 ICOs:

- **Letters of intent due 7/20/21**
- **Applications due 8/24/21**

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MD-21-004.html>

Initial UNITE Recommendations



- Publicly commit to identifying and correcting any NIH policies or practices that may have helped to perpetuate structural racism – *Published 3/1/21*
- Continue to aggressively implement approaches to address the “Ginther Gap” and enhance portfolio diversity - *Ongoing*
- Launch a multi-phased, -tiered, and -integrated Common Fund Initiative focused on transformative health disparities research initiatives to reduce health disparities/ inequities – *RFA published 3/26/21*
- Ensure a robust NIH Enterprise-wide commitment to support the NIMHD FOA focused on the effects of structural racism and discrimination on health disparities/ inequities; encourage funding levels that are commensurate with overall IC resources – *RFA published 3/23/21 with 25 ICOs*
- Develop a sustainable process to systematically gather and make public the demographics of our internal and external workforce

Action – NIH Data by Race/Ethnicity, Disability Status



REPORTS

[Home](#) > [Report Catalog](#) > Report Catalog Results

Search Results for Reports and Statistics

[NEW SEARCH](#)

Topic:
 Funding Mechanism:
 Fiscal Year:

Admin Institute/Center:
 Activity:

Portfolio:
 Variable:

2 records found.

Report Title	Topic	Variable	Start Year	End Year	Format
▶ Research Grant Investigators by Mechanism, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Disability Status, FY2016-FY2020	Investigators, Funded Investigators, Funding Rates Investigators, Gender Investigators, Race/Ethnicity	Disability Status FY Gender IC Mechanism Race/Ethnicity	2016	2020	VIEW REPORT

[https://report.nih.gov/sites/report/files/docs/NIH Principal Investigators by Gender Race Ethnicity and Disability 2016-2020 02 23 2021 PDF.pdf](https://report.nih.gov/sites/report/files/docs/NIH_Principal_Investigators_by_Gender_Race_Ethnicity_and_Disability_2016-2020_02_23_2021_PDF.pdf)

Action – NIH Internal Data FY 21, Q2

RACE / ETHNICITY



SCIENTIFIC OCCUPATIONS



INFRASTRUCTURE OCCUPATIONS



HEALTH & RESEARCH OCCUPATIONS

Race / Ethnicity	Scientific Occupations (%)	Scientific Occupations (Count)	Infrastructure Occupations (%)	Infrastructure Occupations (Count)	Health & Research Occupations (%)	Health & Research Occupations (Count)
White	60.5%	5,235	49.0%	3,766	48.5%	1,037
Black or African American	6.4%	550	33.7%	2,592	30.7%	656
Asian	28.6%	2,472	10.1%	772	16.0%	342
Hispanic or Latino	3.5%	300	4.6%	356	3.2%	68
Two or More Races	0.7%	59	1.5%	115	0.5%	11
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%	32	1.0%	77	1.0%	22
Native American or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	7	0.1%	6	0.1%	3

Employees classified in the five racial groups or Two or more races are all non-Hispanic or Latino. Employees classified as Hispanic or Latino may identify with any combination of the five racial categories.

<https://www.edi.nih.gov/people/resources/advancing-racial-equity/nih-workforce-profile-fy21q02>

Initial UNITE Recommendations

- **Implement policy changes that promote anti-racism and remove barriers to professional growth for staff from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups**



Action

Anti-Racism Steering Committee

ARSC Membership

- 470+ members from across NIH – all race/ethnicities, job categorizations, and pay levels

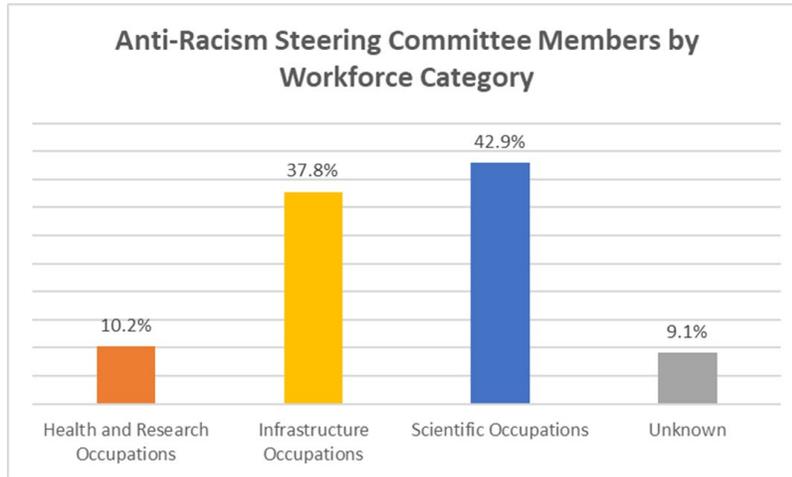
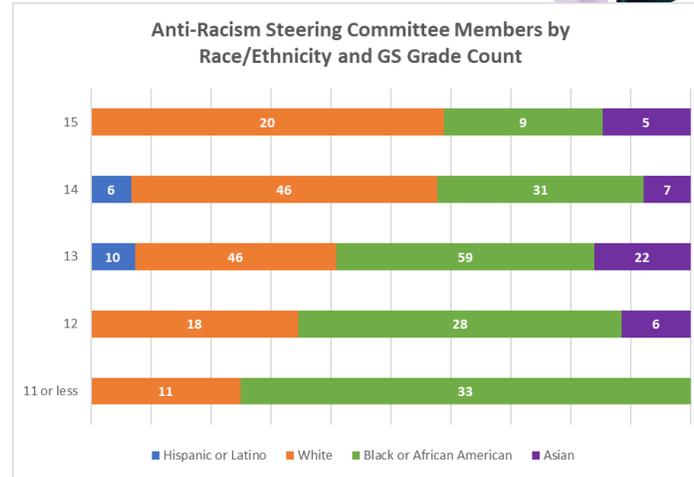
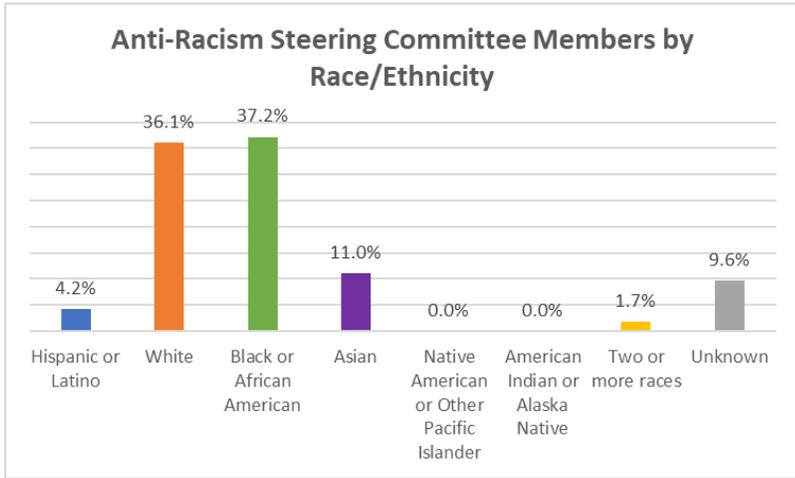
Goal

- To redress issues regarding policies and procedures that lead to wrongs
- Does not address individual cases

NIHANTIR-STEERINGCMTE@mail.nih.gov



ARSC Demographic Data from EDI



- 471 members of the NIH Racism Steering Committee.
- The pay plan breakout is as follows: GS = 370, GP = 7, AD = 1, CC = 3, ES = 4, RF = 21, RG = 22, 1 Unknown.
- Grade distribution is provided for the GS pay plan only.
- Demographics for all Fellows and Contractors (n=42) are unknown.
- Demographics for 3 FTEs is unknown (3 race, 1 disability and 1 sex).
- To maintain confidentiality and protect individual identification from deductive disclosure risk, some categories, are suppressed for reporting purposes

Initial UNITE Recommendations and Actions



- Implement policy changes that promote anti-racism and remove barriers to professional growth for staff from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups - *Initiated*
- *Develop a performance expectation for IC Directors to be accountable for equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts and actively participate in NIH-wide diversity efforts through a diversity, equity, and inclusion officer or other means appropriate for the IC, in coordination with SWD and EDI.*
- Expand the Distinguished Scholars Program to Senior Investigators hired with tenure and enhance recruitment of researchers from underrepresented groups as candidates for open IRP investigator positions - *Initiated*



UNITE Recommendations and Actions Going Forward

E Committee Charge



To perform a broad systematic evaluation of NIH extramural policies and processes to identify and change practices and structures that perpetuate a lack of inclusivity and diversity within the extramural research ecosystem

Includes developing strategies to address funding disparities and increase applications that would support individuals from under-represented groups

E Committee: Priorities



Build and Sustain Research Capacity to Enable Fuller Participation in Modern Research Enterprise

- **Progress, Accomplishments**
 - Actively engaging with internal/external stakeholders to understand issues impacting MSIs
- **Next Steps (Summer 2021- Early 2022)**
 - Develop more comprehensive communications/outreach strategies (e.g., toolkits, webinars, workshops, “SPAD/SuRE-like” academies, institutional/leadership “think tanks”, etc.)
 - Strategize initiatives/funding models addressing construction, infrastructure, endowment needs, small business/contracting opportunities and non-traditional partnerships
- **Metric(s) of Success**
 - Sustained increases in #s of applications and awards to HBCUs, TCUs, other MSIs; more engaged communication between NIH and MSIs

E Committee: Priorities



Identify NIH Processes and Policies Contributing to Inequities in Extramural Funding

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

- Meeting with subject matter experts in NIH peer review, extramural funding opportunity/concept development, and extramural staff training

- **Next Steps (Summer/Fall 2021)**

- Listening sessions w/ NIH POs/SROs & review UNITE RFI responses
- Generate proposal of new programs and policy recommendations

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Successful implementation of evidence-based interventions and programs to address inequities and biases in NIH processes and policies
- Centralized repository containing themes from listening sessions available to all UNITE members

E Committee: Priorities



Extramural Institutional Culture: Develop and Launch Programs to Spur Institutional Culture Change in Support of Inclusivity and Equity

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

Developing proposals for new programs to assist extramural institutions to:

- Conduct institutional climate surveys and self studies using validated instruments
- Test innovative interventions to improve institutional culture

- **Next Steps (Summer 2021)**

- Draft outline of programs and receive internal feedback
- Identify sources of funding

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- BUILD Hallmarks of Institutional Culture Change

E Committee: Priorities



Increasing Career Opportunities for URGs

- **Progress, Accomplishments**

Exploring strategies to:

- Scale up existing NIH programs that increase and foster career opportunities for URGs
- Increase awareness of funding opportunities for URGs

- **Next Steps (Summer/Fall 2021)**

- Garner IC support to expand Science Education Partnership Awards (SEPA) participation/funding
- Encourage inclusion of data science focus within SEPA
- Assess strategies to target communications to URGs

- **Metric(s) of Success**

- Sustained increased number of SEPA awards, URG-supported research experiences, and training and career development awards

UNITE Actions/Priorities Going Forward – Next 6 Months



- To facilitate HD/MH/HE research, the President's budget has proposed increased funding for NIMHD, NINR, NHLBI, and FIC
- Continue to listen and learn from a wide variety of stakeholders, including those who are not frequently engaged
- Develop actionable data dashboards that track and provide visualizations of intramural workforce and NIH HD/MH/HE research investments with key performance indicators and metrics
- Additional FOAs that focus on IC-specific disease/topic areas related to HD/MH/HE
- Develop programs to spur institutional culture change in support of inclusivity and equity

UNITE Actions/Priorities Going Forward – Next 6 Months



- **Increase URG career opportunities, starting with increasing IC participation in Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) – targeting K – 12 STEM education**
- **Examine NIH staff (e.g., PO, SRO) interactions with applicants (e.g., URG applicants) to address bias or inequities that may impact funding opportunities**
- **Develop programs to expand NIH interactions with and support of HBCUs, TCUs and other MSIs**
- **Change physical and virtual representations at NIH to more accurately reflect the diversity of our society**
- **Publish revised NIH internal guidance for reporting racial discrimination**



*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice
everywhere*

Martin Luther King, Jr



Cell

Leading Edge

 CellPress

Commentary

Affirming NIH's commitment to addressing structural racism in the biomedical research enterprise

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[DOI: 10.1016/j.cell.2021.05.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2021.05.014) (2021).

The NIH UNITE Initiative

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