2020-21
Health Sciences
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Annual Report
“Promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and health justice is a top priority for the future of our health sciences schools. To lead our initiatives in these areas, I am delighted to announce Paula Davis will serve in the newly created position of associate vice chancellor for diversity, equity and inclusion.”

—Anantha Shekhar, MD, PhD

Message from the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences

At the University of Pittsburgh, we value the academic and social benefits that arise from a diverse campus and strive to create a community that represents and supports everyone. The Office of Health Sciences Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has worked tirelessly to recruit an outstanding cohort of underrepresented faculty and to promote discussion about creating a just community and delivering quality health care to everyone. The health sciences reaffirms its commitment to building diversity and equity in an inclusive environment, where all feel welcomed, valued and have access to all the resources necessary for success in education, research, teaching and clinical care.

Anantha Shekhar, MD, PhD
Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences, and
John and Gertrude Petersen Dean, School of Medicine

—Anantha Shekhar, MD, PhD
Dear Friends,

Well, we made it through 2020-21, which was a formidable adversary. Collectively, we wrestled with the continued impact of COVID-19, the fallout of racial reckoning following George Floyd’s murder and the overlap of these two cataclysmic events. Through it all, the Office of Health Sciences Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (note the addition of “equity” in our name by Senior Vice Chancellor Anantha Shekhar, who joined us in July 2020) made space for critical conversations, helped our health sciences community to understand its role in breaking down systems impeding the success of everyone in our schools and partnered with the University of Pittsburgh Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to extend its reach across campus. It was a heavy lift, but we supported each other and made it work.

You will find within this report an overview of our efforts in 2020-21. You will find that our staff has changed and grown, has been productive and has generated benefits for our many constituents, particularly Pitt’s six schools of the health sciences. Even given virtual engagement, we presented diversity awareness workshops, gave talks on implicit bias and cultural competence and facilitated dialogue on power, privilege and systemic racism. We also hosted or cohosted talks by impactful speakers, partnered to advance campus and community initiatives and recruited where possible (given virtual engagement). With the Office of the Provost, we kicked off the University’s cluster hire initiative with impressive results.

Areas where inequity resides continue to be recognized—in our community, housing, environment and vaccine equity, to name a few. In educational spaces, we continue to examine admission, promotion and other policies and processes to create the just and equitable environment to which we aspire.

Overall, we hope that we have provided added value to the students and trainees we serve, the faculty we support and the communities we inhabit. Thank you in advance for your time and attention, and we look forward to your feedback and future partnership.

Paula K. Davis, MA
Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Health Sciences
Our Mission
The Office of Health Sciences Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (HSDEI) exists to foster an inclusive environment for students, trainees and faculty within the health sciences. Our mission also includes increasing the number of well-trained professionals who reflect different cultures, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, abilities, genders, religious affiliations, gender identities and expressions and our Purpose
HSDEI was established in October 2007 to:
• assist departments within the health sciences to seek qualified, diverse candidates for academic opportunities;
• assess internal and external pathways to graduate and health professions education and build programming to bridge any existing gaps;
• connect individuals at all points of the pipeline to role models, mentors and opportunities;
• convene experts in the academy and community partnerships to foster environments and lend best practices for sustaining practices and processes of diversity, equity and inclusion, including student facing and professional development for staff, faculty and leadership;
• assist schools in securing campus and extramural funding for programs and initiatives advancing faculty and student diversity; and
• create and monitor systems of evaluation that measure success for diversity and inclusion, including overall faculty, resident, fellow and student success.

Cluster Hire
Building upon the Plan for Pitt, the University is committed to increasing the number of faculty to conduct research, educate students and engage in service designed to eliminate racial disparities and improve measures of equity and well-being in the Pittsburgh region, nationally and around the world. Furthering this commitment, the Race and Social Determinants of Equity, Health and Well-being Cluster Hire and Retention Committee (Paula Davis, MA, and John Wallace, PhD, campus cochairs) was formed to conduct a cluster hire, an emerging practice in higher education in which faculty are hired in groups rather than individually to help boost the goals of the institution. The health sciences cluster hire (including Davis, Macalus Hogan, MD, MBA, and Naudia Jonassaint, MD, MHS, as committee cochairs) has been extremely successful so far with half of a four-year hiring goal achieved in one year.

“If we remain persistent in equitable hiring, it’ll change the fabric of the health sciences and Pitt overall for decades.”
—Macalus Hogan, MD, MBA Associate Professor and Vice Chair of Orthopaedic Surgery, School of Medicine

*not pictured: Darlene Dubuisson, PhD
HSDEI brings influential speakers to campus and hosts numerous opportunities for students to present their research.

Office of Health Sciences Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 2020–21 By the Numbers

53
Trainings and workshops offered

7,000
People reached in town halls, workshops or special events

50+
Number of University units and offices benefiting from our programs

$23,375
Estimated cost savings and value of programs offered

Examples of training topics:
• Trauma-informed education
• Poverty simulation exercise
• Implicit bias and microaggressions
• Anti-Defamation League training
• Transformative intergroup dialogue
• Mental health and community well-being
• Workplace bullying
Partnerships of Impact

Stemming from COVID-19 pandemic data revealing stark health disparities in Black and Brown communities, the Black Equity Coalition (BEC) formed to intentionally ensure access to accurate and reliable information about COVID-19. The coalition addresses securing better health and economic outcomes for all, including the Black community, during the pandemic. In 2020-21, Noble A-W Maseru, PhD, MPH, introduced and recruited health sciences faculty members to become part of the BEC Community Engagement Committee. Maseru’s committee leadership led to his membership in the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s COVID-19 Health Equity Response Team.

The Community Vaccine Collaborative (CVC) is an innovative community-academic partnership centered on mitigating the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Latinx communities, from increasing participation in vaccine trials to promoting vaccine uptake and improving the trustworthiness of research and health care among minoritized communities. CVC was co-developed with four community organizations in Allegheny County (Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the Neighborhood Resilience Project, UrbanKind Institute and Casa San Jose) and researchers from the University of Pittsburgh. HSDEI participates in CVC’s trustworthiness subcommittee and has introduced discussions about:

• the maldistribution, availability and access to COVID-19 vaccines in Allegheny County; and
• vaccine hesitancy, efficacy, outreach and dissemination of information specific to populations of concern.

HSDEI also addressed equity, disparity and racial exclusion in vaccine policy formulation.

• HSDEI helped present African American candidates for appointment to the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board (IRB), which resulted in the formation of a committee charged with reviewing the appointment process and making recommendations.

• CVC discussed the University of Pittsburgh IRB appointment process in the context of trustworthiness and policy impact on equity in population health.

“Our collaboration with HSDEI has enabled us to take a deeper look at the work that must be done and helped us design a path to reach our goals of incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion in the research ecosystem and the research workforce.”

—Denise Smalley
Core Administrator, Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI)
HSDEI Outreach

HSDEI’s mission includes preparing and educating a diverse health professions workforce. Hosting youth groups and mentoring undergraduates are just two ways of engaging with students on the pathway to health careers.
Making Pitt Work: 

Noble A-W Maseru, PhD, MPH

After Noble A-W Maseru retired from his position as health commissioner with the Cincinnati Health Department, he planned to return to Georgia, his home for almost three decades. But when he was contacted about serving as the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health (GSPH) associate dean for diversity and inclusion and director of the school’s Center for Health Equity, he put that plan on hold.

The change in plan made sense. Maseru has decades of experience in promoting public health and equity and shaping health policy, from directing school and public health systems to teaching professorships at several academic institutions. In those positions, he has focused on making primary and preventative health care equitable and accessible to everyone—doing so in the context of socioeconomic development as it relates to social determinants of health (SDiH) and the public sector’s role in achieving health in the population of a city. As such, Maseru was recruited on the recruitment and retention of faculty and increasing admissions and enrollment of students from historically vulnerable populations, thereby advancing health equity and social justice in both academic and applied settings.

Within the health sciences, Maseru helped to...
Town Halls and Lectures

Responding to current societal upheaval, HSDEI partnered with the University of Pittsburgh Office for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to promote a series of town hall discussions focused on diverse facets of the lives of individuals and communities affected by COVID-19 and social injustice. Like so many programs in 2020-21, the town hall series “This is Not Normal: Allyship and Advocacy in the Age of COVID-19” was virtual.

HSDEI introduced its YouTube video channel, a collection of recordings of programs focusing on the awareness of diverse populations and monthly celebrations. Highlighted programs include the History of Medicine in Africa, Pride Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and Jewish Heritage Month.

"HSDEI has been an integral partner in cocreating distinct and impactful programs like the ‘This Is Not Normal’ town hall series. Paula and her team are dynamic agents for change, and I’m thankful to have them as dedicated partners in the work!"
—Ron Idoko
Diversity and Multicultural Program Manager, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

"Thanks for running a great competition in a pandemic world."
—Amy C. Raslevich, Graduate Student, Graduate School of Public Health

Health Disparities and Social Justice Poster Competition

HSDEI hosted its 11th annual Health Disparities and Social Justice Poster Competition, albeit virtually, in March 2021. Posters were received from graduate, doctoral, postdoctoral and first professional students in biomedical and behavioral sciences, including psychology and social work. Submitted posters represented research and community initiatives addressing differences in health status among various populations. The winners of this year’s event were:

Master’s—Taylor Robinson, Department of Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, “Examining the Role of Environmental Pollution, Healthcare Access, and Social Vulnerability in Asthma Emergency Department Visits in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania”

Doctoral—Mary Schiff, Department of Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, “The Differential Impact on Residential Segregation on Gestational Hypertension Development Among Minority Women”

First Professional—Allen Hu, Department of Pediatrics, School of Medicine, “Efficacy of a Social Needs Screening and Home Visiting Program”
About HSDEI

Paula Davis, MA
Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Health Sciences

Noble A-W Maseru, PhD, MPH
Director of Social Justice, Racial Equity and Faculty Engagement

Bee Schindler, LMSW
Diversity and Inclusion Training Manager

Karla Perelstine, MEd
Communications Specialist

Mary Ann Merranko
Administrative Assistant

From left: Karla Perelstine, Mary Ann Merranko, Noble A-W Maseru, Paula Davis and Bee Schindler