

## Synopsis of the July, 2021 Town Hall: Dismantling Structural Racism & Advancing Inclusive Excellence

In an effort to update students, staff, and faculty on activities initiated following the release of [2020 Plan to Dismantle Structural Racism and Advancing Inclusive Excellence](#), the Colorado School of Public Health's Office of the Dean convened the Dismantling Structural Racism and Advancing Inclusive Excellence virtual town hall meeting on July 28, 2021. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions, provide input about the school's efforts, and offer recommendations for next steps. The following is a summary of the town hall meeting.

### **Part 1: Welcome**

Dean Jon Samet opened the event with an overview of events over the last year, including horrific murders at the hands of law enforcement that amplified and strengthened the school's urgency to take actions toward dismantling structural racism. He emphasized our responsibility as a tri-campus community to engage in honest conversations and actions; to be part of a systemic transformation that will only come through campus-wide accountability and commitment to change our policies, practices, and procedures. Dean Samet commended the work that has begun throughout the school while recognizing there is still more work to be done to fulfill our mission to advance equity and inclusive excellence.

### **Part 2: Action**

Dr. Cerise Hunt, Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, provided an overview of ColoradoSPH actions to advance change.

**Racial Equity Assessment** – Leadership review of policies, practices, and procedures in the following areas:

- Recruitment processes received a full audit to see what we were doing, how we were doing, and where we could improve
- We are assessing the admissions and application review process
- Addressing staff and faculty salary equity
- Creation of an Advisory Board member composition matrix
- Faculty annual performance evaluation revised to add EDI activities and accomplishments
- The campus community came together to create the [ColoradoSPH Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment Statement](#)

## Educating Ourselves:

- The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion launched the Inclusive Excellence Learning Series in April 2021, with the [Histories of Structural Racism in U.S. Public Health, Part I and II sessions](#). Dr. Daniel Goldberg facilitated the sessions that equipped learners with the tools to describe such histories and begin to unpack the implications for the present and future of public health. [Session recordings and downloadable resources are available on the Center for Public Health Practice's website.](#)
- The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion supported the following training sessions for faculty:
  - Managing Uncomfortable Moments in the Classroom, April 2021
  - Auditing Your Course for Equity and Inclusion – two sessions May – July 2021
- Book Clubs: Executive Leadership, Staff Council, and the Center for Public Health Practice are reading [Caste: The Origins of our Discontents](#) by Isabel Wilkerson. **Join us for the next school read, [The Sum of Us](#) by Heather Mcgee, in January 2021.**

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan Implementation** – Leadership and staff are working to implement the recommendations in Area 4 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) of the [ColoradoSPH Strategic Plan](#).

- **Goal 1:** Build and maintain a diverse group of faculty, students, and staff
  - New student scholarships are available
  - Updating data collection systems so as to better capture the diversity of faculty, staff, and students
  - Several departments have implemented a faculty mentorship program
- **Goal 2:** Provide programs that ensure an inclusive and equitable community dedicated to the development of public health scholarship and to practice that advances health equity
  - Dedicated faculty FTE at department and unit level to promote EDI
  - CSU has dedicated faculty and student EDI positions
  - Initiated curriculum mapping and course syllabus revisions
  - ColoradoSPH Inclusive Learning Environment Classroom Statement
  - Revising course evaluations
  - Departments created new educational competencies that incorporate EDI and promote health equity
  - Launched new courses:
    - Social Epidemiology (CSU)
    - SDoH: Systemic Determinants of Health
    - Developing a Practice of Leadership in Public Health (CSU)
    - Anti-oppressive Practice and Research in Public Health (PUHB 6625)
- **Goal 3:** Foster a diverse and inclusive environment through campus engagement activities and training that celebrates diversity to enhance cultural proficiency
  - Department and unit activities across ColoradoSPH Tri-campus community
  - 2021 Campus Climate Survey released in April

**Partnerships:** In an effort to expand our educational pipeline, we continued and accelerated networking to establish partnerships with institutions of higher education that have diverse student bodies.

- Enhancing the CU Denver/ColoradoSPH 4+1 BA/BS + MPH program
- The Center for Innovative Design and Analysis initiated research jobs for undergraduate students who qualify for the federal work-study program (CIDA)

**Expand Communication with Leadership:** Arrange regular town hall meetings facilitated by ColoradoSPH leadership open to students, staff, and faculty.

- Improved student newsletter topics and language for disseminating OASA and school information
- CBH and EPI have conducted regular town halls
- Departments and Centers have formed EDI committees
- The school has an external Advisory Board that has intentionally broadened its membership to reflect the state
- The Public Health Practice committee is mapping the landscape of external stakeholders relevant to our efforts to dismantle racism and promote equity and social justice

### **Part 3: Panel Discussions**

**Panel Discussion 1** – The first panel discussion aimed to inform participants about ColoradoSPH department EDI committees and groups. The panel consisted of representatives from the following groups:

- Dr. Babette Greenwell—Anti-Racism and Equity ‘ARE’ Committee, Department of Community and Behavioral Health (CBH)
- Megan Hervey, MPH—Anti-Racism Student Action Group, ColoradoSPH at CSU
- June Homdayjanakul, DrPHc, MPH—Asian Pacific Islander ‘API’ Affinity Group at CU Anschutz
- Francesca Macaluso, MPH—Staff & PRA Council
- Dr. Wei Perng—Health Equity Council ‘HEC’, Department of Epidemiology (EPI)

**Question 1: Tells us about your group, focus areas, how can people become involved**

- Department of Community and Behavioral Health ARE Committee—Dr. Greenwell:
  - Membership: CBH faculty, staff, master/doctoral students
  - Goals: Focus is on key areas: teaching, research, practice, professional development, and self-awareness training, policies and procedures, and hiring, promotion & evaluation
  - Meetings: They meet twice a month on the first Thursday at 10 am and the third Monday at 1 pm. To get involved, please connect with [elizabeth.greenwell@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:elizabeth.greenwell@cuanschutz.edu)

- Anti-Racism SAG—Megan Hervey:
  - Membership: ColoradoSPH students and alumni from the CSU program
  - Goals: Development of trainings, materials, and a mini-course to promote equity and anti-oppressive practices. Advocating for EDI at the program and school levels.
  - Meetings: Once monthly meetings (changes based on the group’s availability each semester)—Follow [this link](#) if you are interested in joining
  
- API Affinity Group—June Homdayhanakul:
  - Membership: CU Anschutz faculty, staff, and students identifying as API
  - Goals: There is a need for a safe space for the API community to gather, so this group provides community support for API members at CU Anschutz.
  - Meetings: Meet regularly based on availability—Please reach out to June if you are interested in joining at [kamonthip.homdayjanakul@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:kamonthip.homdayjanakul@cuanschutz.edu)
  
- Staff & PRA Council—Francesca Macaluso:
  - Membership: ColoradoSPH staff and PRAs (don’t need to be an official member to attend meetings)
  - Goals: This council offers opportunities and functions as a platform for the non-faculty members of the school community. They work to uphold both acknowledgment and accountability related to EDI efforts. One thing they are doing is reading EDI related books as a group.
  - Meetings: Staff & PRA Council meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 2 pm
  
- Dept of EPI HEC—Dr. Perng:
  - Membership: EPI faculty, students, and post-docs
  - Goals: Integrating racial and health equity content into core coursework, working to implement guidance and best practice in this realm, and identifying sensitivities and biases in the department.
  - Meetings: The HEC meets regularly. To get involved, participate in town halls, provide speaker suggestions, and promote underrepresented persons in public health, contact [wei.perng@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:wei.perng@cuanschutz.edu)

**Question 2: What are your recommendations for moving forward, our next steps?**

- Continue educating ourselves with articles, books, podcasts, webinars, and conversations. Write down your thoughts and use these as tools to learn and grow. Put this into action in your daily life and work.
  
- A great next step will be developing a strong networking system so that people working across the school can collaborate and know about other efforts that are being made. Continue to include and value student feedback as done in the strategic planning

process. Finally, it would be important to see a health equity prompt in the application for prospective students to introduce this as a core value from the start.

- Get involved in the **ColoradoSPH Inclusive Excellence Committee**. This committee serves as the hub for all the EDI groups and committees across the school to come together. This space allows these groups to hear from each other to work on initiatives collaboratively and share resources. The committee meets on the fourth Monday of the month from 2–3:30 pm. Please reach out to [Raeven.Clockston@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:Raeven.Clockston@cuanschutz.edu) if you are interested in receiving email communications and attending meetings.
- The importance of supporting students, faculty, and staff now, not just planning for future cohorts. Creating space and being more intentional about allocating time to discuss things outside of the school environment (e.g., societal issues) within the school because these affect our students, faculty, and staff's lives. Not shying away from hard conversations.
- Create more explicit opportunities to engage non-faculty to hear those diverse perspectives from the wide range of staff and PRAs that are part of the school.
- Incorporating all aspects of our community will be important as a next step toward inclusivity. How can we involve more students? Staff?

**Panel Discussion 2** – The second panel discussion aimed to share ColoradoSPH Leadership's efforts to promote and ideas for next steps. The panelists were:

- Dr. Dani Brittain, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs (OASA)
- Dr. Chrissy Chard, Faculty Senate Member; ColoradoSPH at CSU Administration
- Christine Gillen, Associate Dean for Administration and Finance

**Question 1: What efforts have you and your team made to build diversity in your specific area?**

- Academic and Student Affairs—Dr. Dani Brittain
  - OASA is looking at the diversity of the student body. We need to recruit diverse students and ensure there are supports in place and resources available so that they are successful and want to stay. To achieve this, they are working on support services and resources with central campus offices, including the office of disability access and inclusion, office of equity, office of student affairs, etc.
  - International students now have a STEM-designated DrPH, which is important for recruitment and employment after graduation.
- ColoradoSPH at CSU & Faculty Senate—Dr. Chrissy Chard

- Faculty Senate
  - The annual all-faculty meeting engages faculty in discussions around equity and inclusion, spanning faculty roles in research, teaching, and public health practice.
- Colorado State University
  - They have established the Social Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Team, which includes two paid student coordinators. This team focused on hearing the perspectives of Black, Indigenous, and other students of color through conducting BIPoC Focus Groups. They were conducted by and for BIPoC students in order to hear their perspectives and experiences and also to learn what ideas they have for initiatives and changes that the program and school might make
- Administration and Finance—Christine Gillen
  - In collaboration with the Chancellor’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council at the CU Anschutz campus, the Director of HR attended a training on best practices in recruitment and hiring
    - They started with benchmarking in each unit to understand where they were starting and where they want to go. Updating job description templates to speak to our values and mission as a school, including pre-screening questions in job applications, and ensuring all searches have diversity questions at each level of the process.
    - There are plans to increase training for search committee chairs and members. We are working to understand the time commitment it takes to conduct a thorough and inclusive search while rewarding members of the community who sit on these committees accordingly.
    - We are offering different interview modalities to increase inclusivity and casting a broad net for applicants.
  - ColoradoSPH underwent a thorough review of staff equity in accordance with the Colorado Equal Pay Act and will do this for the faculty in the fall. This type of review will continue on an annual basis.

**Question 2: What are your recommendations for moving forward, our next steps?**

- Incredibly important to have introspection, compassion, and collaboration. We have to build relationships and hear diverse perspectives.
- Specifically, the Office of Academics and Student Affairs is working to implement the following next steps:
  - Get final approval of additional EDI-focused course evaluation questions that will be implemented in the fall 2021 semester.
  - They are adding a Title IX statement to ColoradoSPH syllabi starting in the fall semester of 2021. This will help ensure students know where the Title IX offices

- are located on each campus and provide them information about where to report and receive consultation on discrimination or sexual misconduct issues.
  - They have been collecting and identifying best practices for conducting an evaluation of our curriculum for content.
  - Creation of the ColoradoSPH Reparations Scholarship and fundraising for the Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Scholarship.
  - Development and future implementation of an inclusive and educational environment module.
- Continue contributing to the funding of the [Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Scholarship](#) because it is not an endowed scholarship—there is a need for continued support.
- HR is working on continuous process improvement and learning. They learn from each hire they go through, so continuing to receive feedback on that process is critical. They are also collaborating with the other Associate Deans, the Strategic Plan Implementation Committee, Faculty Senate, the Inclusive Excellence Committee, and the Staff & PRA Council. HR will focus on retention efforts next for ColoradoSPH staff and faculty.
- Using the climate survey results and grounding our initiatives in the feedback and perspectives of students, especially those with minoritized identities. Ensuring that students have an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas for moving forward. How do we apply community engagement frameworks to the school, thinking about students as an integral part of the community that we engage with and serve? Can we have student and alumni representation on the advisory board? As a predominantly white institution, we have a responsibility to name how whiteness and white supremacy are showing up and then working to shift this. Including EDI efforts in the budget and compensating students for their time and expertise. Is there room to implement additional paid student coordinator positions?
- How can we tag our EDI efforts in procurement and purchasing? We need to find ways to track and show where our funds are going. We will continue to partner with other schools of public health and campuses to build our collective resources.
- There is a new director in the Office of Disability, Access, and Inclusion on the CU Anschutz Campus. The leadership in ColoradoSPH are currently working with leadership across CU Anschutz, CSU, and UNC to dismantle ableism. They are working to understand more about how to standardize our curriculum in relation to accommodations and what's needed for best practices, including lecture development.

**Open Forum Q/A with all of the panelists** – Town hall participants were given an opportunity to ask panelist questions.

- **Question:** Where can we access the inclusive learning environment statement?

Answer: You can access the [ColoradoSPH Inclusive Learning Environments \(Classroom\) Statement here](#).

- **Question:** Many of these impacts seem to be focused on future students and a pipeline; what will be done to support current students?

Answer: We are working on a virtual module opportunity that is for all students, and some of the efforts, including the Title IX statement on syllabi, are for current students. The Office of Academics and Student Affairs is also working on engagement activities beyond the course and module, looking at all the things that we do in our responsibilities for current students, whether it's our communications, events, or working to establish additional student groups.

- **Question:** It seems like faculty are often overwhelmed, possibly limiting their ability to consider inclusivity and offer anti-racism support. What is being done to support faculty to not be overburdened so they have better opportunity to provide support to students and classrooms?

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Answer: Finding avenues for support for faculty in different areas, including mentoring, development, and time management, is critical.

- **Question** (for Megan Hervey): Can you please share more about the training and resources available to students regarding anti-bias practices when working in community?

Answer: These resources are still in development, and we are currently researching the best way to deliver this information in a training format. We are happy to share more once the training is complete and are open to ideas and conversation in the meantime.

- **Question** (for Christine Gillen): Can you speak more to some of the new recruitment efforts?

Answer: Our recruitment efforts have come to be much more thoughtful and intentional over the past six years. We are developing comprehensive guides, how-to documents, and templates to support the search and hiring processes. It is okay to take more time filling vacant positions now than was previously done.

- **Question:** How will these resources and efforts be accessible to students on all three campuses?

Answer: Everything in the Office of Academic and Student Affairs will be accessible to, and inclusive of, students on all three campuses. For example, the peer mentoring program includes students who are interested in being involved from across all campuses and programs. Additionally, the online course that is in development will involve students from all the campuses. We are open to conversation about how we can improve in this area.



- **Question:** If the overall goal is shifting the culture of inclusion at ColoradoSPH, how are you working to engage faculty, students, and staff in EDI efforts who are not independently motivated to change?

Answer: We're tracking to see who is engaging and who is not engaged. We're ensuring that we make these spaces for training and engagement available to everyone, and true engagement is holding accountability to these actions. One aspect is utilizing course evaluations for faculty that assess how they create inclusive classroom environments—this is one of the ways we are holding folks accountable to these actions. Another component is job performance and evaluation, where faculty and staff are asked to explain their efforts. These are ways that we are trying to ensure there is no opt-out options in EDI activities that people can select to be part of these various efforts. We're working to change our structures, and by being more intentional about EDI in our recruitment efforts, we can ensure that our search committees are inclusive, and equity is prioritized. Changing the way that we operate ensures that EDI is prioritized, it will the way we do business. The whole campus community, including faculty, staff, and students will get the opportunity to engage and learn; then the expectation is that they apply it, and our structures will ultimately hold people accountable. We also created a new Anti-Oppressive Public Health Practice and Research course launching this fall for students.

- **Question:** It seems like many of the new courses, for example social epi, or anti-oppressive research, are being offered through the CSU campus. Will these courses be offered online going forward even after the COVID closures end so that all students can continue to access them?

Answer: The Foundations of Anti-Oppressive Public Health Practice and Research course is offered through CU Anschutz so that a course is available to all students across our campuses because it is a remote course. We will reassess interest in Social Epi moving forward.

- **Question:** How are we doing with promoting the adoption of EDI practices among external employers that are hiring our graduates?

Answer: The Public Health Practice Committee is currently assessing our partnerships and who we're engaging with to determine who our EDI-focused partners are. Regarding the work we are doing internally, our next step is to ask the question, "Are we aligning with organizations that uphold these equity, diversity, and inclusion values that we embrace?" As we move forward, we will be collaborating with organizations that have these values. Additionally, it can go the other way where employers let us know what skillsets students and graduates should have so that this furthers our efforts to advance these in our school. For instance, in Fort Collins, we've had community partners tell us that it's helpful to have students come to their organizations having really developed their EDI lens, and this helps reinforce the work we're doing.

Resources:

The Histories of Structural Racism in U.S. Public Health Session Recordings

<https://registrations.publichealthpractice.org/Training/Detail/729>