Diversity, a driver of Progress.
Whether in the academy, laboratory, or clinic, diversity is a driver of progress. The United States stands a better chance of ameliorating health disparities and advancing health care delivery when individuals of varying backgrounds and perspectives work on these issues.

The University of Pittsburgh’s schools of the health sciences examined our efforts to diversify our faculty, student body, and pool of research fellows. While we realized that progress has been made, we acknowledged that there is still ground to cover in order to train a diverse cadre of clinicians and researchers to address our country’s health care needs.

Arthur S. Levine, MD
Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences
John and Gertrude Peterson Dean, School of Medicine

"I was pleased to form the Office of Health Sciences Diversity to provide leadership to our schools, divisions, and departments in the recruitment and retention of a diverse community of students, faculty, and trainees. We are committed to providing an environment where diversity of background, thought, and approach are acknowledged, valued, and honored."

~Arthur S. Levine, MD
Dear friends,

Welcome to the Office of Health Sciences Diversity fiscal year 2019 annual report. You will find within an overview of our efforts for that period. I hope you will find that our staff has been productive and has generated benefit for our many constituents, particularly the University of Pittsburgh’s six schools of the health sciences. During the year, we presented diversity awareness workshops, gave talks on implicit bias and cultural competence, and facilitated intergroup dialogue and difficult conversations. We also hosted or cohosted talks by impactful speakers, partnered to advance campus and community initiatives, and recruited broadly for all.

We live in a time where varied voices from across a spectrum of viewpoints compete for space, and our school community is the arena where they meet and sometimes clash. We work to provide our students, staff and faculty with tools, skills and vocabulary with which to engage. The goal is to make space for all voices and have the conversations necessary to come to an understanding of how all may be heard and included in a just and equitable environment.

We hope we have provided “value added” to the students we serve, the faculty we support, and the communities of which we are a part. Thank you in advance for your time and attention...and we look forward to your feedback and future partnership.

Paula K. Davis
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences Diversity, Health Sciences

“We live in a time where varied voices from across a spectrum of viewpoints compete for space and our school community is the arena where they meet... and sometimes clash.” — Paula K. Davis
Our Mission

The Office of Health Sciences Diversity exists to foster an inclusive environment for students, trainees, and faculty within the health professions schools. 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 sexual orientations.

Our Purpose

The Office of Health Sciences Diversity was established in October 2007 to:

• assist departments within the schools of 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 within the health sciences schools by partnering with existing organizations and programs or assisting in the planning and implementation of new programming;
• 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 within the University of Pittsburgh schools of the health sciences.

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“The University of Pittsburgh currently hosts 60 NIH training grants (T32) and supports 300+ trainees. Successful applications are highly dependent upon robust diversity plans. The Office of Health Sciences Diversity has been instrumental in helping our training grant community develop new and inclusive approaches to recruiting a diverse pool of doctoral and postdoctoral trainees.”

— Darlene Zellers, PhD
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Career Development, Health Sciences
and Director, Office of Academic Career Development, Health Sciences
Office of Health Sciences Diversity 2018-19
By the Numbers

44
Trainings and workshops offered

2,000
Participants in training sessions and workshops

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

$21,500
Estimated total cost savings and value of programs offered

Examples of training topics:
• Trauma-informed education (Woodland Hills School District)
• Poverty simulation exercise
• Implicit bias and microaggressions
• Anti-Defamation League training
• Transformative intergroup dialogue
• Mental health and community well-being
• Workplace bullying

Photo to the left: Oluwaferanmi Okanlami, MD, University of Michigan School of Medicine, speaks with medical student Vivianne Oyefusi and School of Medicine faculty member Alda Maria Gonzaga, MD, following his Diversity in Practice talk “Disabusing Disability: Striving for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Medicine.”
Partnerships of Impact

The UPMC Center for Engagement and Inclusion is a major external partner of the Office of Health Sciences Diversity. We also collaborate with organizations such as the University of Pittsburgh Premedical Organization for Minority Students, ReelAbilities, a Pittsburgh film festival that promotes awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of individuals with disabilities; the Fund for Advancement of Minorities through Education; and the Community Empowerment Association.

Training Exercise:
The Diversity Shuffle

One hundred and fourteen first-year School of Pharmacy students examined their understandings of diversity and explored their feelings and assumptions about belonging to one group as opposed to another as part of a recent Office of Health Sciences Diversity workshop, one of more than 40 such training sessions offered every year. The Diversity Shuffle, led by Paula Davis, served as the springboard for a dialogue about how power differences can be addressed within our communities. This activity is based on two similar exercises, “It’s About Power” developed by Allan Creighton and Paul Kivel, and the “Power Shuffle” exercise by Harrison Simms.

Photos to the Left: Members of the Premedical Organization for Minority Students practice suturing. Health Sciences Diversity advises the group.
“UPMC has developed a meaningful partnership with University of Pittsburgh’s Office of Health Sciences Diversity in advancing strategic initiatives pertaining to workforce development and community engagement. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) serve as a key contributor to our organization by building infrastructure to further advance and align diversity goals and strategies. ERGs, like the Physician Inclusion Council at UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh, help us to achieve our mutual mission of enhancing the recruitment, retention, and development of underrepresented populations. Additionally, Junior Health Care Explorers is a STEM program developed for middle school students from vulnerable communities and launched in fall 2019. A partnership between UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh, this program exposes students to careers in the six fields of health sciences: medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, health and rehabilitation, and public health, and is taught by graduate students from these schools.”

—UPMC Center for Engagement and Inclusion

“The CTSI’s Community PARTners core has engaged with Mario Browne and Paula Davis on many occasions as a resource for thinking about how to best bring in resources to the workplace to give room for staff to think more deeply about identity and ownership of the biases that we all bring to the space. Paula and Mario provide an approach that eases folks into the learning through activities, video clips and by being really strong facilitators—allowing folks in the room to express vulnerability and build trust while also bringing expertise into the process.”

—Bee Schindler
Community Engagement Coordinator
Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI)
“In one sense I came full circle when I came back,” says Mario C. Browne, now in his second stint at the University. After spending 2002-09 at Pitt as project director and community health coordinator for the Center for Minority Health (now the Center for Health Equity), Browne returned in 2011 as the director of diversity for the schools of the health sciences.

Born and raised in the Hill District, Browne spent his first years at the University bringing Pitt programs and people closer to his old neighborhood and other city sites. At the Center for Health Equity, he helped to pioneer the idea of taking Pitt services to Black barbershops and salons, teaching their personnel how to give customers preventive advice about illnesses common in the African American community, such as diabetes. The center also brought in Pitt personnel to offer in-store blood pressure and other testing and eased the way for Pitt researchers to build trust and solicit community participation in current studies.

“A lot of the work we did, I think, laid the groundwork for what we’re doing with the Community Engagement Centers now [in Homewood and the Hill District],” Browne says.

Browne’s own wellness habits center on bicycling, and he was one of six founders of the Pittsburgh Major Taylor Cycling Club a dozen years ago, which promotes cycling to the inner city, taking young people on weekend bike rides to instill healthy habits and giving bicycles to kids.

After spending just a few years away from Pitt to run the Allegheny County Health Department’s chronic disease programs, Browne felt it was time to return: “I really missed the University—the stimulation here, the opportunities to learn from so many people.”

Having focused on bringing health programs to a more diverse group of city residents previously, Browne would now aim to bring diversity to the faculty and staff of Pitt’s schools of the health sciences. It’s no coincidence that, during his first Pitt job, his center had examined why there aren’t enough women and racial and other minorities in the health professions. Pitt’s administration studied this conundrum, and the result was a recommendation to create the very office Browne now heads.

“I really came back approaching the whole health disparity issue from a different perspective,” he says. Part of his job now is to make sure the schools are including cultural competency in the curriculum. His office conducts a lot of cultural competency training for health sciences faculty. “We really like to call it ‘cultural humility,’” he says, “because no one can be truly culturally competent in all cultures.”

Having five generations of people in the current workforce doesn’t make his job easier, he points out: “We’re all going to make mistakes. I think we need to have more open and honest dialogue. It’s not about debating about who is right or wrong. It’s about listening and understanding.

“We need to sit in a room and ask the real hard questions, instead of pretending they don’t exist,” he explains. “We have to have real conversations. We need to surface the tension in a controlled way. When we can work through the tension, maybe we can move forward.

“It’s not just about knowing each other, it’s about knowing yourself,” he adds, “the way that we serve our patients and clients, the way we deal with our students.”

Pittsburgh is not one of the most diverse American cities, “but there is a lot of diversity and perspectives [at Pitt],” Browne says. “Knowing that we have a lot of work to do yet, there is a feeling of movement toward seeing more women, more people of color, and more members of varied religious groups in the health care professions—from entry-level jobs on up. That will help to attract more students, staff and faculty from different backgrounds, Browne believes: “I know students who made decisions not to come because they don’t see themselves. We’ve got work to do.”

excerpted from a July 11, 2019 University Times article by Marty Levine

Our Services

Office of Health Sciences Diversity

- partnerships
- consulting
- recruitment
- training/education

School of Dental Medicine
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
School of Medicine
School of Nursing
School of Pharmacy
Graduate School of Public Health
Paula Davis, a certified diversity executive, is assistant vice chancellor for diversity for the University of Pittsburgh schools of the health sciences. Davis assumed her current position after serving the School of Medicine as assistant dean with responsibility for admissions, financial aid, and diversity programs. Davis’ career has centered on higher education administration including recruitment and admissions, financial aid, academic advising, alumni relations, and support services for diverse student populations. A two-time graduate of the University of Pittsburgh (BA, English; MA, communications) and recipient of the 2003 Chancellor’s Affirmative Action Award, Davis serves the community as vice president of the board of the FISA Foundation, an organization that funds initiatives supporting women, girls, and people with disabilities, and chairs the board of M-PowerHouse, a nonprofit founded to support students of color in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. The parent of a young adult on the autism spectrum, Davis is a staunch advocate for disability research and education. Davis is a doctoral candidate in the School of Education.

Mario Browne is director of the Office of Health Sciences Diversity at the University of Pittsburgh schools of the health sciences. He manages and monitors several diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency initiatives within the schools of the health sciences and across the University. He is an affiliate faculty member of the Center for Health Equity in the Graduate School of Public Health and a faculty fellow of the Center for Urban Education in the School of Education. Browne’s expertise is in community engagement with a primary interest in translating research and theory of the social determinants of equity into practice and building community capacity to eliminate disparities. He is a certified diversity practitioner and a certified health education specialist and is a doctoral candidate in higher education management in Pitt’s School of Education.
Over years of friendship and interaction with health sciences diversity, I have learned from, shared progress and challenges with, and ultimately developed a productive collaboration with Paula Davis and Mario Browne. They continue to serve as my go-to source for all things diversity and inclusion, including serving as guest speakers for the RCR (Responsible Conduct of Research) Center workshop program. Their sustained positive efforts for change have made a significant impact on us here at CTSI and for the investigators we serve.”

—Karen Schmidt, PhD
Research Facilitator, Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI)

Diversity in Practice Speaker Series

The Office of Health Sciences Diversity’s mini-grant program supports the Diversity in Practice speaker series. Faculty and staff from the six schools of the health sciences may apply for up to $1,000 for use during the 2019-20 fiscal year to fund such efforts as bringing expert speakers on diversity and inclusion issues in the health professions to campus; supporting initiatives related to diversity recruitment and/or retention; and showcasing efforts focused on novel or innovative ways of incorporating diversity and inclusion in teaching, research, policy, and curriculum.

In the 2018-19 fiscal year, mini grants supported the following activities:

- Funds supported the travel for School of Medicine student Casey Tompkins-Rhoades to present two talks at the meeting of the Society of Black Academic Surgeons.
- The School of Pharmacy used funds to bring in an advocacy speaker from the Easterseals.
- The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (Department of Occupational Therapy) brought Professor Roger Ideishi of Temple University’s College of Public Health to campus to present on the topic of creating community access and opportunity for children with diverse sensory and cognitive abilities.
- The School of Dental Medicine reimbursed prospective students for travel expenses for campus visits.

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In 2020, the Office of Health Sciences Diversity will host its tenth annual Health Disparities Poster Competition. Graduate, doctoral, postdoctoral, and first professional students in biomedical and behavioral sciences, including psychology and social work, are invited to submit abstracts of their research and community initiatives that address differences in health status in any studied population compared to the more commonly studied majority population. The event is an opportunity for young researchers to present their work and expand their professional skills.

Professor Sandra Murray is an advocate for diversity in scientific research and has been recognized for her distinguished contributions to the advancement of cell biology. She also is the first tenured African American faculty member in the School of Medicine.

The Health Sciences Diversity team: Paula Davis, Mario Browne and Mary Ann Merranko