Summary Report of Taskforce on Diversity, Culture, and Inclusion Recommendations

August 1, 2017
Introduction

This report provides a summary of recommendations made by the Taskforce on Diversity, Culture, and Inclusion (ODCI). The Taskforce was assembled by ODCI in 2016 to make progress on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the Mailman School of Public Health. Special thanks to the Taskforce’s three committees: *Diversity Competencies* (Liaison: Tejas Venkat-Ramani, MPH Candidate in the Department of Health Policy and Management), *Inclusive Classrooms* (Liaison: Keianna Dixon, Accelerated MPH Candidate in General Public Health), and *Mailman/Community Action* (Liaison: Cindy del Rosario, Interim Senior Director of Strategic Communications) for working diligently over the course of the school year, auditing materials in the curriculum, and surveying members of the Mailman and Washington Heights community. The three working committees presented their findings and recommendations to the Mailman Community at an open meeting on April 26, 2017. These recommendations will help ODCI to advance future policy, programming, and initiatives focused on creating a campus community that is committed to understanding and eliminating social inequalities and attendant disparities in health of the public. This report will summarize the committees’ presentations; each working committee spoke on the charge of the group, their method of action, and their findings and recommendations.
Community Action

The Community Action working committee explored and reported on the existing community partnerships and projects at Mailman (formal coursework, practicum requirements, and faculty work). They started their work by focusing on creating a shared understanding of the terms community, partnership, and engagement. These initial conversations were important to identifying groups and organizations appropriate for community engagement opportunities. Their robust conversation led to five broad recommendations for the School:

- Develop a centralized database of information on current community engagement opportunities.
- Develop stronger partnerships with communities in CUMC and Morningside Heights in order to share resources and promote two-way communication with all relevant stakeholders.
- Offer additional training for students interested in service learning, integrating such educational offerings into the curriculum.
- Develop a community engagement course to supplement the leadership class, practicum experience, and thesis/capstone projects. This course should culminate with a reflection activity.
- Communicate information about volunteer opportunities at orientation.

Inclusive Classroom

The Inclusive Classroom working committee examined the characteristics of an inclusive classroom. Several questions guided their inquiry: Who is in the room? What is in the course content? What is being talked about, intentionally and unintentionally? How are topics being discussed? Are students engaged in the conversation? What is a non-inclusive classroom? What is an inclusive classroom? How can classrooms become more inclusive? At the Taskforce Open Meeting, the working group presented six recommendations for the School:

- Develop department-wide inclusive training workshops for all faculty on a variety of topics: 4i’s of oppression, recognizing and reflecting on identity, microaggressions, and managing hot moments.
- Create explicit language to post on course syllabi instilling a pledge or promise of an inclusive classroom. This pledge will only be used by faculty who completed inclusivity training.
- Create resources and processes for when criteria for an inclusive classroom is not met by faculty.
- Include student representation on the curriculum committee.
- Integrate cultural competencies into students’ leadership development, focusing specifically on how to foster an inclusive environment, navigate differences, and manage tense conversations.
- Add a culminating reflection component to the CORE.
Diversity Competencies

The Diversity Competencies working committee reviewed the ASPPH (Association of School & Programs of Public Health) Diversity and Culture competencies in the MPH Core Competency Model for students in CEPH-accredited schools or programs of public health and audited Mailman curriculum to assess its current state and suggest areas in need of improvement. The working group’s recommendations for the School include:

- Incorporate more thinkers and authors from a broader range of marginalized backgrounds (e.g., ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, etc.) in the course material.
- Increase both academic research and curricular coverage of underrepresented health issues and cultural competency.
- Address the hidden curriculum, or the way that pedagogy and policy contribute to and maintain systemic inequality.
- Monitor diversity competencies in the curriculum.

Closing

The Office of Diversity, Culture, and Inclusion is pleased to share the Taskforce Recommendations Summary Report. This report is the result of nine months of surveying community members and reviewing campus structures, policies, and practices. The working committees’ recommendations affirm that inclusive communities cannot be created by one office alone, but require a commitment from the entire Mailman School of Public Health Community. The information in this report reminds us that we must be intentional and persistent as we create a more inclusive and equitable campus community dedicated to the development of public health practice and scholarship that reflects structural competency and cultural humility. Furthermore, these recommendations will inform future policy and programming.