

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine

Strategic Plan of 2021 For Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

BACKGROUND

The Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Medicine's (SOM) long-standing mission is "to assist the people of central and southern Illinois in meeting their health care needs through education, patient care, research, and service to the community."¹ SIU's medical school was established for these purposes and is internationally known for its success in the region. It continues that focus to this day. The importance of this commitment to diversity and inclusion arises from its relevance to academic medicine and patient care. The American Council on Education suggests that diversity is important to fulfilling the primary educational mission of institutions of higher education.² The main institutional accreditation agency for medical education, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, states that "aspiring future physicians will be best prepared for medical practice in a diverse society if they learn in an environment characterized by, and supportive of, diversity and inclusion."³

The first objective of the 2013 Diversity plan was to define and publicize SIU School of Medicine's commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout the School, region, and medical profession.⁴ In 2014 the School of Medicine moved towards internalizing a commitment to the work of antiracism. Several faculty, staff, some students, and Leadership Teams attended training delivered by Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training. To date, over 80 School of Medicine personnel have attended. Following that, our Board of Trustees of the Southern Illinois University system were trained by Crossroads facilitators in July of 2017. In 2019, Dean Kruse publicly declared that the SIU SOM would become an antiracist institution. This fulfills our goals as well as the system's strategic plan of working toward becoming a national model of antiracism and anti-oppression that promotes diversity, inclusion, and equitable access and opportunity for all individuals.

In 2021, SIU hired its first Chief Diversity Officer for the SIU system. At that time, President Mahoney declared the SIU system will become an antiracist system. This commitment was preceded by the Chancellors of both campuses and their Cabinets, and the deans of the Medical School and the Law School to all participate in Crossroads facilitated workshops for alignment of the entire SIU system. This Equity, Diversity and Inclusion plan was created with consideration to the SIU System's diversity strategic plan and the SIU SOM strategic plan.

¹ SIU School of Medicine, *Strategic Plan (2020)*

² American Council on Education, *On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education*. (ACE, 2012).

³ Liaison Committee on Medical Education, *Functions and Structure of a Medical School – Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the M.D. Degree*. (LCME, 2013), Institutional Setting Standards IS-16.

⁴ SIU School of Medicine, *Diversity Policy Plan (2013)*

The ongoing commitment of the School of Medicine in becoming an antiracist institution is made possible by using common language from *Advancing Health Equity: Guide to Language, Narrative and Concepts*. The following are part of the lexicon promoted by the Office of EDI:

- **Anti-racism** - the active process of naming and confronting racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably
- **Equity** - the process of fairness and justice
- **Diversity** - the identities we carry including a multiplicity of things such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, country of origin, education, religion, geography, physical or cognitive abilities, or other characteristics
- **Inclusion** - how our defining identities are accepted in the circles that we navigate and is a process of creating a working culture and environment that recognizes, appreciates, and effectively utilizes the talents, skills, and perspectives of every employee⁵

Anti-racist language, strategies and policies are necessary for the continuing success of the SIU School of Medicine in meeting its mission.

POLICY STATEMENT

The SIU School of Medicine is committed to cultivating a diverse campus population for the well-being of its learners and workforce. Diversity coupled with inclusion brings about a nurturing educational environment ideal for learners at all levels, the faculty who teach, and the staff who support. To that end, the School will recruit, retain, and advance a student body, faculty, and staff reflective of the diversity of the region served by the medical school.

ACTION PLAN

This action plan advances SIU School of Medicine's commitment to antiracism, equity, diversity and inclusion as outlined in the above-noted policy. The plan includes the School's objectives for anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion, categories of diversity, and general strategies designed to achieve a more diverse and inclusive medical school. A synopsis of the action plan is provided as Appendix 1.

Objectives

SIU SOM's objectives for antiracism, equity, diversity and inclusion are the following:

1. Achieve diversity in the School's student population, faculty, and staff that reflects the diversity of the central and southern Illinois region.
2. Fostering an organizational culture of psychological safety that embraces antiracism, equity, diversity, and inclusion as a means of better serving the community and the medical profession.
3. Create policies and practices that enable sustainability to our commitment of becoming an anti-racist institution.

⁵ AMA, *Advancing Health Equity: Guide to Language, Narrative and Concepts*, (2021)

Diversity Categories

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education's standard for diversity states that an accredited medical school should "articulate its expectations regarding diversity across its academic community in the context of local and national responsibilities, and regularly assess how well such expectations are being achieved ... (and that) the institution should establish focused, significant, and sustained programs to recruit and retain suitably diverse students, faculty members, (and) staff, ..." ⁶ The LCME also recommends that medical schools determine specific "categories of diversity" upon which to focus diversity efforts and advance diversity consistent with the medical school's local and national responsibilities (mission). ⁷ (See Appendix 2 for operational detail regarding these categories.)

Students

SIU School of Medicine's mission commits the medical school to educating a physician workforce particularly well suited to addressing the health needs of the citizens of central and southern Illinois. Integral to this commitment is the recruitment, retention, and advancement of a medical student body drawn from Illinois's rural areas and small towns, from among the broad range of economic and educational backgrounds present in it, and reflective of the region's ethnic and racial diversity. Students recruited from these diverse backgrounds will enhance the learning environment of all students, improve the students' understanding of and knowledge about the health needs of a diverse society, and encourage the students to help address problems of health access and equity once in practice.

The students' categories are designed for these purposes:

- Category 1: Students - Rural/Small Town Students. Medical students from areas designated by the U.S. Census Bureau as rural or from small towns of 25,000 or less in population.
- Category 2: Students - Economically/Educationally Disadvantaged Students. Medical students from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, including lower family income.
- Category 3: Students - Traditionally Underrepresented in Medicine Students. Medical students from one or more of the following ethnic or racial groups, traditionally underrepresented in medicine: African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinx, Native-Americans, Alaskan-Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

⁶ LCME Standard IS-16

⁷ Liaison Committee on Medical Education, LCME/CACME Medical Education Database 2014-2015 (2013).
Institutional Setting Standard IS-16

Faculty and Staff

As a national leader in medical education, the School also is committed to advancing diversity within the medical profession and within the patient care systems of the central and southern Illinois region. By training medical students in a diverse educational environment, SIU's physician graduates will be well prepared to care for patients from any background as well as to help address health inequities in society. A diverse faculty and staff is achieved through the employment of faculty and staff who reflect the rich diversity of the communities served by the medical school.

Faculty and staff categories are the following:

- Category 4: Faculty - Traditionally Underrepresented in Medicine Faculty and Females. Faculty members drawn from the ethnic and racial categories traditionally underrepresented in medicine (see above) and females.
- Category 5: Staff - Diverse Staff. Medical school staff from minoritized and international backgrounds. In this context, minoritized populations and international backgrounds include the traditionally underrepresented in medicine groups noted above as well as other non-white backgrounds.

Strategies

Achieving SIU School of Medicine's objectives for antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion will require the concerted, ongoing, and positive actions of the entire medical school community. Faculty, staff, students, and leadership of the medical school should seek opportunities to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in their normal activities seeking the goal of justice. As an institution, the medical school will pursue the following strategies:

Medical Students

1. *Scholarships for students from rural/small towns, economically/educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and traditionally underrepresented in medicine backgrounds*

The medical school currently offers needs-based scholarships and advises all medical students on the availability of other scholarships and loan programs. These efforts will continue. In addition, the medical school will explore additional scholarship resources for which members of the diversity category groups may qualify.⁸

⁸ Scholarships funded by the university may not be limited to the students in the diversity categories noted here; instead, they will be available to all students meeting the scholarships' qualification criteria

2. *Recruitment visits to downstate Illinois universities/colleges and Chicago-area and Metro East St. Louis-area universities/colleges*

The School will continue making recruitment visits to Illinois universities and colleges with relatively high numbers of undergraduate students in the diversity categories. When possible, the medical school's representatives will include individuals from similar backgrounds.

3. *Selection criteria preference for rural/small town residents, economically/educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and traditionally underrepresented in medicine backgrounds. Our committee utilizes a holistic review process*

The School will continue the selection criteria preferences in its admissions process for students from central and southern Illinois, those from rural, inner-city or disadvantaged backgrounds.⁹

4. *Hispanic/Latinx student recruitment plan developed/implemented*

The Student Affairs and Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will develop and implement a specific plan for increasing recruitment of students from Hispanic backgrounds. This plan will be reviewed and approved by the School's Dean and Provost, with input from the Executive Committee, before it is implemented.

5. *Intensive academic advising/remediation activities for students. Faculty uses programmatic assessment*

The faculty and staff of the medical school provide intensive academic advising and remediation for students needing help in progressing through the medical school's curriculum. These efforts will continue. Funding for additional personnel and resources to aid in these activities will be sought from the State of Illinois.

6. *Course/clerkship content addressing health topics associated with diverse cultures/belief systems, cultural biases, and health disparities among population groups.*

The undergraduate medical education program includes numerous opportunities for educating the medical students regarding health topics associated with diverse populations and communities. These are integrated in existing courses and clerkships, and are continuously reviewed by the Anti-bias Curriculum Committee for improvement as part of the School's ongoing curriculum review activities.

7. *Continue leadership offices (Student Affairs, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion)*

⁹ SIU School of Medicine, *Catalog 2011-2013* (2011)

The medical school has established the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to lead diversity and inclusion efforts. These offices have faculty and staff well trained and experienced in student support, particularly as it relates to the needs of a diverse student body. The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion employs a medical doctor who specialized in trauma and trauma mitigation. These offices will continue in their work.

8. *Continue MEDPREP and P⁴ program*

The School has two main educational pipeline programs which reflect the medical school's diversity policy and objectives. The Medical/Dental Education Preparatory Program (MEDPREP) was established in 1972 to assist students from economically/ educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom are also from traditionally underrepresented in medicine backgrounds, to prepare for success in medical professions schools. The P⁴ program is a relatively new educational pipeline program. Implemented in 2009 in collaboration with the Springfield Public School district, the Physician Pipeline Preparatory Program (P⁴) encourages Springfield high school students to train to be physicians; many P⁴ students are from minoritized backgrounds. These programs will be continued.

Faculty

1. *Minoritized Faculty Recruitment and Retention Plan implemented**

The Minority Faculty Recruitment and Retention Plan developed in 2007 will be updated according to current best practices such as Plus One and Cluster hiring. Also this plan will highlight the hiring policies outlined by the Chief Diversity Officer for the SIU system to ensure diverse candidates are considered. All members of search committees will be required to have completed Implicit Bias Training. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative metrics will be tracked to assess effectiveness of recruiting, retaining and promoting diverse faculty.

2. *Mentorship program formalized/developed.*

Mentorship activities for faculty are informal and vary significantly among the School's academic departments. The Equity Ambassador Program is offered to all faculty members, including those from traditionally underrepresented in medicine backgrounds. We also ensure faculty are aware of the formal junior faculty development program BOOST offered through the Center for Human and Organizational Potential (CHOP). Additionally, the Association of Women in Medicine and Science offers coaching for faculty who are mid to late career.

3. *Educational programs celebrating diversity.*

The medical school will continue educational programs for faculty, staff, and community members addressing diversity topics. Departmental Grand Rounds are now tracking the number of URM and female presenters as well as the number of presentations that include equity, diversity, and inclusion topics. The Office of EDI presents focused Equity Grand Rounds monthly.

Staff

1. Minoritized Staff Recruitment Plan developed/ implemented

A *Minoritized Staff Recruitment Plan* similar in concept to that used for faculty will be developed and implemented. This plan will include concerted outreach efforts to the local minoritized communities and exploration of ways to more fully open employment opportunities to minoritized applicants, utilizing strategies such as Plus One and Cluster Hiring.

2. Recruitment visits in diverse and minoritized communities (Springfield, Metro East St. Louis)

The medical school will continue recruitment visits (e.g., fairs) to area communities with a high percentage of minoritized citizens and other individuals from diverse backgrounds. This will be part of the concerted outreach efforts to the local minoritized communities noted above. Also consider performing these recruitment visits in conjunction with SIU's other health professions programs, including those in dental medicine, nursing, and pharmacy.

3. Mentorship program formalized/developed

As with faculty, mentorship activities for staff are informal and vary significantly among departments and units of the medical school. The Equity Ambassador program is offered to all staff, including those from minoritized, diverse backgrounds. We also recommend that staff commit to CHOP's leadership program called Xcelerate for leadership development.

4. Educational programs celebrating diversity

The medical school will continue educational programs for faculty, staff, and community members addressing diversity topics.

5. Tuition reimbursement program

The School has an employee tuition reimbursement program which provides funding for approved college coursework for employees. As possible, funding for this program will be increased. The program will be marketed during recruitment visits to minoritized communities.

See Appendix 1 for a summary of this action plan, including performance measures and benchmarks. Appendix 3 displays these strategies according to the LCME IS-16 standards reporting categories.

This plan was reviewed Jan 2022
Next review is Jan 2025