

# Commitment to Action for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the Zuckerman Institute

Stimulated by recent tragedies of racial injustice including the shootings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Jacob Blake and the national responses to them, the Mortimer B. Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute convened discussions on structural racism and systemic inequities. Racial injustice weakens science and society broadly, with particularly damaging effects on some groups. The lack of diversity in science limits creativity, innovation, discovery and transformation of the world. Thus, diversity is critical to the success of science<sup>1</sup>.

Diversity with inclusion is one of the Zuckerman Institute's [goals](#). We do not tolerate racism, prejudice or bias. Inclusion requires dismantling the structural underpinnings that have sustained racism and discrimination, as well as building new equitable structures.

The Institute commits to building structures that create a more diverse and inclusive environment.

The Institute constituted a [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Board](#) to examine diversity, equity and inclusion issues at the Institute and beyond. The DEI Board advises leadership on ways to create a more just and inclusive Institute. Its first action was to advise on the Institute's Commitment to Action for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The Commitment outlines mission-critical goals designed to promote diversity and inclusion and combat systemic racism and inequality at the Institute and beyond. The goals are supported by specific actions. The example action items listed below capture ideas born from the Board and from Zuckerman Institute community members.

This is a living document; the actions listed below are currently being evaluated and prioritized for execution by a subset of Board members. Ultimately the advice and ideas of the Board will be translated into sustained action through dedicated workgroups composed of faculty, researchers and staff. Through this organization, the Institute moves from ideas to sustainable structures that will contribute to making a more inclusive and diverse place of scientific discovery.

The Institute commits to demonstrable progress toward all of these goals within the 2020–2021 academic year.

---

<sup>1</sup> Talia H Swartz, Ann-Gel S Palermo, Sandra K Masur, Judith A Aberg, The Science and Value of Diversity: Closing the Gaps in Our Understanding of Inclusion and Diversity, *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, Volume 220, Issue Supplement\_2, 15 September 2019, Pages S33–S41, <https://doi.org/10.1093/infdis/jiz174>

## Goal #1

### Create a sustainable structure to advance DEI at the Institute

We commit to creating a sustainable structure to advance diversity, equity and inclusion at the Institute. This structure will align every area of action at the Institute with DEI best practices and principles, and build allyships around Columbia and beyond. We will hire a senior administrative officer to lead a team dedicated to creating a more diverse, inclusive and equitable scientific organization. The work includes building and sustaining 1) a DEI-focused culture and 2) institutional structures that support diversity and inclusion. By embedding the work of DEI into the organizational structure, we ensure lasting follow through and impact.

## Goal #2

### Create a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion at the Institute

We commit to creating a Core Curriculum for DEI at the Institute with required and elective classes, workshops and training. The Core Curriculum will create a culture that embraces DEI and equips people with the knowledge and awareness needed to create anti-racism changes in self, science and society. Efforts will include accountability mechanisms specific to career path and stage. By supporting individuals in their growth and awareness of anti-Black issues and structures, the Institute will advance its own organizational efforts and efforts across our society.

Example topics include:

1. Anti-bias/anti-racism training\*
2. Allyship\*
3. Finding support in academia as BIPOC
4. Bystander/upstander training
5. Microaggression awareness
6. Power dynamics
7. History of racism in America
8. Intercultural competence and communication
9. Mentor training, including mentoring diverse mentees
10. Manager training, including managing diverse teams

*\* proposed as required elements of the Core Curriculum for DEI*

## Goal #3

### Build a diverse scientific pipeline across all levels

The Institute commits to creating or enhancing programs that target Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) across training and career stages, to generate a diverse community of future leaders and innovators. The Institute recognizes that diversity is not only a value that we all share but also a driver of creativity, innovation, discovery and transformation necessary to solve the complex problems facing society today and in the future.

Examples of action items:

1. Expand public engagement programs, in particular middle-school and high-school programs, including multi-year access to mentors.
2. Formalize an undergraduate research program targeted to underrepresented groups.
3. Create recruitment and support structures for technicians and those in postbaccalaureate programs from underrepresented groups.
4. Partner with graduate programs at the University to enhance the diversity of student population and support inclusive programming.
5. Create a postdoctoral program to support people from diverse backgrounds at different stages of their training; raise awareness of the program and the Institute among BIPOC postdocs.
6. Create a fellows program for creative individuals from underrepresented groups who want to move directly into a more independent position soon after grad school.
7. Hire BIPOC faculty across seniority levels.

## Goal #4

### Promote, develop, and celebrate underrepresented colleagues

The Institute commits to promote and celebrate BIPOC and other underrepresented colleagues at the Institute and beyond. By celebrating these colleagues and giving visibility to their successes, the Institute actively promotes a culture of inclusion and supports individuals contributing to this culture.

Examples of action items:

1. Implement programs to develop and promote BIPOC colleagues and people belonging to other underrepresented groups.
2. Proactively nominate BIPOC colleagues for internal and external awards, committees, conferences and talks.

3. Make success of BIPOC colleagues visible in conferences, websites, press releases and social media. Discuss their work and cite it.
4. Create connections among BIPOC scientists and staff at different levels by providing support for BIPOC groups at the Institute. Provide funding for attending minority-serving conferences and encouraging engagement with minority-serving professional bodies.
5. Increase diversity in Institute committees, governance structures, scientific and administrative leadership, advisory groups and donors.

### **Goal #5**

## **Reshape organizational structures to support equity and drive inclusion**

The Institute commits to lasting structural changes in governance, policies and representation to enhance and drive individual- and community-level changes. Changes that permeate the organizational structure will ensure continued progress toward a more equitable organization.

Examples of action items:

1. Formalize the committees and communities that advise the Zuckerman leadership to ensure representation of the diverse constituents of the Institute.
2. Conduct all hires and promotions with best practices to diversify the candidate pool and reduce bias.
3. Increase transparency about Institute policies and governance structure.
4. Reinforce the Zuckerman Institute Code of Conduct.
5. Create reporting structures that are fair, equitable and transparent and that minimize risk of retaliation against those who report.
6. Recognize barriers to professional attainment that fall disproportionately on some populations and actively reduce those barriers. Barriers include: low or unfair pay policies, family care responsibilities, transportation access and housing access.
7. Examine policies and procedures across the Institute to identify bias; redesign these policies to be anti-discriminatory and transparent.
8. Give small grants or fellowships to Institute members or projects aiming to make the Institute more equitable and diverse.
9. Emphasize collaborative approaches and open science to promote equity and representation in science.

## Goal #6

### Partner with the local community

The Institute celebrates its location in Harlem by seeking public engagement and partnerships with local groups. By seeking diversity in all its forms, the Institute benefits from new ideas and influences that drive new discoveries in science and new impacts in society.

Examples of action items:

1. Enhance support for our Public Programs, particularly those that are located in the local community and/or are partnerships with community groups.
2. Expand investment in the Wellness Center and associated community-based health and wellness programming.
3. Make the public ground floor spaces of the Jerome L. Greene Science Center more welcoming.
4. Create interactions between Zuckerman public programming and the building's retail tenants.
5. Partner with community groups, especially those led by Black people and people of color, and join other Columbia programs and schools in their community-facing efforts.
6. Examine the representation of local BIPOC-owned restaurants and vendors for Institute contracts.

## Goal #7

### Share the Institute's progress toward making the organization more equitable and inclusive

The Institute seeks to create accountability toward DEI goals by transparently communicating the goals and the progress toward them. This accountability will drive faster and more-thorough adaptation of new anti-racist structures.

Examples of action items:

1. Commit to annual reporting on the state of DEI at the Institute.
2. Discuss progress with relevant leaders, stakeholders, and committees within the Institute.
3. Expand data collection regarding pertinent identity domains such as race, gender, class, sexuality and ability.
4. Gather data on racial climate and other factors to drive decision making
5. Conduct exit surveys and longitudinal outcomes tracking to assess longer-term impacts of the Institute culture.

## Goal #8

### Catalyze systemic change in the academy

The Institute will leverage its position within Columbia to promote anti-racist changes throughout academia and society. By recognizing the Institute's power and position within science—and its limitations—we aim to maximize the impact of our anti-racism efforts within our spaces and far beyond.

Examples of action items:

1. Promote a wide-lens approach to evaluation and success, including mentoring, teaching, service, science communication, public engagement, community service, DEI and open science.
2. Join national efforts to diversify the scientific workforce.
3. Share our efforts and encourage others to commit.
4. Broadly disseminate findings so others can learn from the experience at the Institute.

*Last revision: September 16, 2020*