Executive Summary
Organizational Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Assessment: Department of Biostatistics , Chan School of Public Health, Harvard University

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Context: The Department of Biostatistics at the Chan School sought to continue and enhance its efforts around diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) by conducting a qualitative assessment. The assessment, conducted by VISIONS, Inc., explored how students, faculty, post-doctoral fellows, researchers, and staff across its array of programs experienced the Department from a DEIB perspective. VISIONS Inc is a people of color and women-led diversity and equity consultancy with 40 years of experience academic, other non-profit, and for-profit settings. The consultants met with the DEIB working group (including students, researchers, faculty and staff) to finalize the sampling approach and instrument, and later to explore findings and their implications.

Approach: Qualitative group and individual interviews were conducted with 49 people who are representative of all roles and demographic groups in the Department (all faculty and research levels, post-docs, staff, students and race/ethnicity, gender, class backgrounds, US vs international, family responsibilities, length of time within the Department). Data were analyzed using the VISIONS Levels of Oppression and Change® framework.

Key Findings: Across individual and focus group interviews, there was remarkable consistency of responses around some of the major strengths and pressing challenges with respect to DEIB facing the Department. Most white, male, US-born respondents spoke to the DEIB challenges in abstract ways and as the problems they had heard about from others. They emphasized their desire to address perceived barriers to increasing the "representation" of US-born African American, Latinx and Indigenous persons among successful faculty, researchers, and students. Most US-born persons of color, most from outside the US, and many women spoke to these same challenges in detail, gave multiple examples, and described the personal and professional costs of these challenges. While largely appreciative of relationships with colleagues and gratified by student supervision and research, most of these respondents noted the need for more transparent and inclusive decision-making and resource allocation within the Department and underscored the importance of greater diversity within the setting.

Recommendations: Based on these findings, suggested next steps offered by participants and best practices in DEIB in academic settings, VISIONS, Inc. made the following high-level recommendations, accompanied by notes and suggestions for implementing these recommendations. 1) Establish a leadership role in assessing how white supremacy and male hegemony values have shaped the field of biostatistics and quantitative health science career trajectories and contributions to addressing race and gender inequities in health. 2) Continue to address the shortage of US-born African American, Latinx and Indigenous persons in faculty, student, and researcher roles. 3) Continue engagement with students concerning program requirements, mentoring, maintaining work-life balance, and issues of financial and food security. Continue to work with international students to address concerns around documentation, living costs, and emergent anti-Asian prejudice. 4) Continue to increase the transparency in decision-making through broader engagement and more complete communications regarding "resource" allocation. 5) Increase faculty, researcher, staff, and student awareness, knowledge, skills and practice around racism and sexism, including enhancing teaching, mentoring, being welcoming across differences, creating practices around accountability, and building shared capacity for offering and receiving feedback non-defensively.