

Department of Epidemiology
DIB Committee AY 20-21 Annual Report

The series of unequivocal racial and social injustice events in 2020 sparked the Black Lives Matter movement across the globe, triggering all sorts of emotions and conversations within the Department of Epidemiology and beyond. Having noticed this reaction, Dr. Karestan Koenen (Professor of Epidemiology), Eric DiGiovanni (Assistant Director of Graduate Studies), and Jiyoung Won (Assistant Director of Administration) came together to host a virtual gathering for the department on June 24th. The goal of this gathering was to provide a safe space for people to share their thoughts over the recent killing of Mr. George Floyd. The meeting was attended by a handful of faculty, staff, researchers, and students in the department, who openly shared their thoughts about Mr. Floyd's death, black lives, racism, and policing. Some members shared their experiences organizing and attending local protests, while others shared what they've been doing to take care of themselves and recharge. There were also discussions about ways that the department can grow and better support each other. Some preliminary suggestions included incorporating mandatory DIB training in the department onboarding procedure for all new employees and integrating race-related training into our pedagogy.

In conjunction with the department gathering, we also set up an anonymous online survey form for department members to submit any topics, questions, and suggestions. The form received several responses addressing various issues, including hiring and retaining underrepresented minority faculty, mandatory training for all our teaching staff, and evaluating our curriculum and research to promote racial and social justice and equity. These initial conversations were very helpful in launching the idea of a DIB committee at the department level and developing an initial DIB action plan.

In the spring of 2021, Dr. Hofman formally introduced the Epi DIB Committee to the department. The committee comprises nine members across all areas of the department to ensure that it is serving the needs of our community in all roles and positions, including senior and junior faculty, research scientist, postdoctoral research fellow, student, and staff. The committee's goal is to engage many others in the department through its initiatives and to work collaboratively toward building a culture that supports DIB in all areas of the department, including admissions, recruitment, research, and teaching. The committee members are:

- Lorelei Mucci, *Professor of Epidemiology*
- Issa Dahabreh, *Associate Professor of Epidemiology*
- Archana Basu, *Research Scientist*
- Mary Bushman, *Postdoctoral Research Fellow*

- Seblewongel Yigletu, *Masters Student & Donald Hopkins Fellow*
- Tia Hira, *CCDD Program Coordinator*
- Coppelia Liebenthal, *Sr. Communications Coordinator & Executive Assistant to the Chair*
- Austin McCloud, *Grants Manager*
- Jiyoung Won, *Assistant Director of Administration*

Since its establishment, the Epi DIB Committee has been meeting regularly to examine various aspects of diversity, inclusion, and belonging in the department and identify how the committee can have the most impact. Most notably, the Epi DIB Committee launched the first DIB climate survey in a series of its kind in May 2021 with the goal of better understanding the department members' values, concerns, and priorities with regards to diversity, inclusion, and belonging. The first survey aimed to gain insights into what DIB means to each member of the community and why they matter, as well as identify key areas of the department of personal importance and most improvement needed. The survey had 66 participants, with a fairly even split amongst faculty (29%), researchers (23%), and staff (26%), and a bit lower for students at 17%. The committee members then analyzed the data collected from this survey. Some of our key findings from the survey are attached to this document. The committee has also added DIB updates as a standing agenda item at the department monthly faculty meeting where one of the members, Jiyoung Won, provides updates on the DIB Committee's ongoing work.

DIB has been an active topic of conversation and engagement in other ways as well. In April 2021, the Department of Epidemiology held its annual faculty retreat – the first-ever virtual session. One of the key topics discussed at the event was "Diversity and Anti-Racism," moderated by Drs. Karestan Koenen and Lorelei Mucci, where the group delved into various ways in which the department could focus its DIB efforts. The group addressed the importance of diverse and inclusive admission practices by ensuring that all admissions reviewers share a mutual understanding of what diversity and related concepts mean and require appropriate training, such as implicit bias. Teaching and mentoring were also discussed extensively, particularly the importance of integrating race, sex/gender, classism into our pedagogy and curriculum. There were also conversations around faculty recruitment and retention, where some faculty suggested better utilization of existing pipeline programs, such as the Yerby Fellowship, to recruit diverse faculty. Overall, the retreat successfully brought together our faculty to collectively discuss key DIB issues and brainstorm ideas.

As the academic year wrapped up, the department hosted two special academic events focused on this important topic: the 5th Cutter Symposium: Epidemiology and Racism and the 172nd Cutter Lecture on Preventive Medicine. The symposium featured three preeminent speakers: Dr. David Williams, who spoke on the unequal impact of the pandemic on stigmatized racial/ethnic populations in the U.S. and the U.K. in "Covid-19: A Tutorial on Racism"; Dr. Will Dobbie, who described recent work to close the racial disparities in pretrial bail decisions by providing decision-makers with the motivation, information, and tools necessary to reduce

unwarranted racial differences in their decisions in "Reducing Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System"; and Dr. Nancy Krieger who will analyze the myriad ways in which structural racism systemically generates health inequities in "Epidemiology, structural racism, and the two-edged sword of data: structural problems require structural solutions." Lastly, the Cutter Lecture, "To Race with the World: John Henryism and the Health of Black Americans," featured Dr. Sherman A. James, who took us on a journey using the legend of John Henry to describe the condition of Black Americans and how John Henryism theory can inform social and economic policies that include racial health equity among their objectives. The two enriching events attracted audiences from all over the world.

In late May 2021, the department became aware of the Public Health Pedagogy Award opportunity at HSPH and created a small group to develop a proposal for submission. The department hoped to receive funds to support a part-time pedagogy fellow to review our current curriculum and provide best practices for instructors creating new courses on how best to incorporate DIB into the classroom. Unfortunately, with the deadline approaching so soon and the desire to include collaboration across departments and schools, the group agreed that they would not be able to submit a robust proposal on time and decided to postpone it for the next submission cycle.

In the upcoming academic year, the DIB Committee would like to expand our climate assessment efforts by honing in on some of the key areas highlighted in the first survey, particularly *Recruitment & Hiring*. For this next step, we hope to work with an external consultant to collect as honest, unbiased feedback as possible, which can be used to implement meaningful changes for the department.