



Advancing Racial Equity Panel

Summary Report

April 29, 2022.

Executive Summary

Background

UIC's [Advancing Racial Equity \(ARE\) initiative](#) is a university effort to address the institutional and structural racism that impacts our campus and our neighboring communities. ARE has five goals: centering student equity and inclusion, advancing faculty and staff inclusive excellence, collaborating with community, reimagining public safety, and ensuring accountability. In June 2020, a Racial Equity Taskforce was created to review the state of our campus and prioritize key action items. The task force consisted of three working groups focusing on Student Life and Support, Community Engagement, and Staff Recruitment and Retention, and a newly established Public Safety board. Additionally, a group of external advisors was invited based on the recommendation of the Black faculty and asked to review our campus policies and practices and provide recommendations for improvements. A common recommendation from stakeholder groups was that accountability is central to creating a more equitable campus.

In this spirit, academic units were then instructed to develop a plan to Advance Racial Equity (ARE) based on a template. Each part of the template consists of several components: Priority; Relevant Factors & Assumptions; Long-term Goals; Short-term Goals; Strategies, Deliverables, & Metrics; Accountability; Student Perspective; Expanding Focus. Department heads submitted their plans to their Deans on December 15, 2021, and Deans had a deadline of submission to the larger university of March 15, 2022.

The Collaboratory for Health Justice (CHJ) hosted a 1.5-hour event called ***“Let’s Talk About Advancing Racial Equity at UIC”*** on Tuesday, February 22, 2022. The event was designed as an open panel discussion with small group breakouts for discussion. Division Directors were invited to discuss the ARE plans as a panel, and each division was represented. In addition, the SPH Office of Diversity and the Dean’s Office represented their broader SPH administration. The event was advertised on SPH news and on CHJ social media channels. We hoped to encourage students to attend however, the event was mostly attended by staff.

The Collaboratory for Health Justice

The mission of the CHJ is to support academic -community partnerships by:

- Facilitating the meaningful participation of broad stakeholders
- Attending to representation and presence and
- Providing training and technical assistance for integrating community engagement across research, teaching, and practice.

Our vision is health justice attained through active participation of broad stakeholders in the academy through research, teaching, and practice.

Location of event

The event was hosted virtually via Zoom.

Number of attendees at the event.

The event required registration and was limited to School of Public Health faculty, students, staff, and alumni. There was a total of 72 registrants with 40-43 attending (including 6 panelists and 4 CHJ members) 50% faculty, 37% staff, 13% students, with representation from communications/marketing, academic affairs, ODI, advancement, library, and the dean's office.

Opening session: an overview of the process and plans at SPH

A timeline and overview of the ARE plans

(Dr. Nadine Peacock)

- 2008: The UIC campus began its strategic planning process to enhance diversity.
- 2012- Present
 - Murders of people of color by police and vigilantes are brought into public attention.
 - The Black Lives Matter (BLM movement) takes off in response.
 - On campus, students urge UIC to look inward at the systemic racism and anti-Blackness perpetuated on our own campus. Students then and now lead the charge by demanding change & accountability within the university system.
- 2020
 - The Advancing Racial Equity Taskforce is formed. The areas of work include student life and support, community engagement, staff recruitment and retention, and creating a public safety board.
 - An External Advisory Board is formed to look at historical impacts of the university and to make recommendations to rectify the injustices perpetuated.
 - Listening sessions are held across campus to gather feedback that will inform future work.
- 2021
 - The UIC Office of Diversity put together a template to develop plans across UIC departments to align with the university's 5 strategic priorities.
 - Each department at SPH developed a plan and submitted it to Dean Wayne Giles.

The SPH Dean will compile a list of recommendations across the school. For these plans to be successful, the entire university leadership must be committed to ARE and there must be mechanisms for accountability.

The Process for developing the plans

(Dr. Lorraine Conroy)

Each division had different processes for preparing their plans, but commonalities included that they were all bottom up-approaches to get buy-in and all divisions had several rounds of editing and feedback.

The variety of methods used across divisions included:

- Working groups, with some including students
- Feedback at division and faculty meetings
- Invitations to submit comments in writing via surveys

A deep dive into one ARE plan: a close look at Health Policy and Administration and the priorities of the division

(Dr. Lisa Powell)

HPA's priorities in the areas articulated in the university template:

- Centering Student Equity & Inclusion: increasing BIPOC student enrollment, increasing recruitment from “minority-serving” institutions, connecting with SPH PMP, working with the Urban Health program, developing racially equitable curriculum, hosting APE opportunities in diverse settings, and enhancing belonging and comfort in the school.
- Advancing Faculty & Staff Excellence: increasing faculty and staff of color within the divisions, bridge to faculty initiative, strong mentoring plans, opportunities for engagement in faculty and staff training (including anti-racism and collecting metrics on participation).
- Increasing number of guest lecturers from the community (and guest lecturers of color) and providing TA (Technical Assistance) to CBOs (community-based organizations) in communities of color.
- Anti-racism education and training in faculty meetings; creating and disseminating mental health resources, online comment tool for anonymous feedback, fund for student needs, schoolwide climate survey.
- Transparency & accountability is a priority integrated throughout.

What resources are needed to accomplish the goals? How will progress be sustained?

(Dr. Ron Hershow)

All divisions struggled with resources. Divisions need resources to make the plans achievable as opposed to a wish list from divisions. Examples of resources needed: resources to recruit/hire faculty of color, increased scholarships to attract diverse student body, primary and secondary recruitment of students.

Progress can be sustained through key areas such as:

- Prioritizing the recruitment of people of color
 - Primary: high school and undergraduate recruitment, including students interested in medicine.
 - Secondary: enticing applicants by highlighting work that speaks to diversity and inclusion, focused attention at SPH admitted students' preview day, etc.
- Retaining diverse students
 - Attending to food insecurity, economic needs, and mental health burdens
 - Transition contact tracing workforce into wellness programs
 - Revitalizing efforts of active searching and garner list of applicants in our own networks for faculty positions
 - Climate survey: keeping track of how people are feeling supported, nurtured, and valued

- Further developing curriculum
 - Increasing courses with community voices and CE as part of the curriculum
 - Increasing APE opportunities with community engagement components

Plans to integrate student feedback

(Dr. Ben Shaw, Dr. Lorraine Conroy)

A limitation of the ARE planning was the short timeline for planning. This made it difficult to integrate student's input in the initial rounds of planning. However, all divisions have plans to integrate student feedback moving forward. Students' input is essential as they often have critical feedback for the administration.

	CHS	Epi-Bio	HPA	EOHS
Plan to integrate student feedback	CHS Student Taskforce for ARE Strategic Plan	Survey, discussions at orientation, promoting training and schoolwide professional development, classroom discussions	Creating DEI Anti-racism committee including faculty, staff, and students	Student representatives for action plans and data collection

Breakout room discussions: ideas and recommendations from attendees

Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms were assigned a topic in alignment with the priority areas identified in the plans.

1. Centering Student Equity and Inclusion
2. Collaborating with Community
3. Promoting Care and Concern
4. Faculty and Staff Inclusive and Excellence

Notetakers were assigned to each breakout room to capture feedback to be shared with the larger group. The room discussions were facilitated by the Division Directors. Each room was provided with the opportunity to share three summary points. Participants were randomly assigned.

Discussion Questions:

- Are there any short-term or long-term goals you think we should prioritize for this priority area?
- Do you have ideas for ways to achieve these goals?
- How would you like the division to get your perspective in the future?

1. Centering Student Equity and Inclusion

- **There were no students in this session. The school will need to employ further methods to get student feedback on the division and schoolwide plans.**
- Increase assistantships with tuition waivers so that students -particularly those with economic barriers-can be engaged without additional burdens.
- Lack of faculty capacity in being able to address racial equity in the classroom, so it does not necessarily happen or happen well. Need to prepare faculty without being overwhelming, they are already stretched thin.
- Use the term “historically excluded.”
- SWOT analysis around student equity and inclusion to understand the threats regarding affirmative action and their potential impact.
- Work through pipeline programs.
- Work on curriculum in school and division to build curriculum around anti-racist topics
- Consider redefining required courses vs. elective courses --> the school needs to understand racism as a public health issue/crisis and center that in our curriculum
- Eliminating GRE in admissions
- Remove barriers limiting access and achievement for Black students

- Amplify Minority Health Conference
- UIC Connected app to provide mentorship between alumni and current students using racial and ethnic identity to match.
- Small grants program directly to students to submit proposals for any ideas that can advance racial equity in the division.
- Student voices are especially important.
- Groups often work in silos (I.e., pre-matriculation programs) --> Why aren't we better pooling our resources?
- Create communications lines directly from students to leadership.
- Free tuition for CPS (Chicago Public Schools) students.
- Create a dashboard of racial and ethnic equity metrics in the division/school.
 - Data is out there but not readily available
 - Determine composition and graduation rates
 - Accessible data infrastructure

2. Collaborating with Community

- Making partnership more reciprocal, beyond MOUs, building capacity of orgs, technical assistance in general, and bridging pipelines to UIC.
- Environmental scan of partners
- Take advantage of what is nearby-like the high school near campus, do we have a relationship with them?
- Recognition for community relationship investment-like going to a 5k or event on a weekend with partners.
- Building capacity for grant writing and finding funding for organizations
 - Sharing copies of grant proposals
 - Financial Literacy
- Integrating opportunities in our classes for students to get connected to community organizations
 - Students are craving these experiences
 - Recognition that the Collaboratory is doing this.
- Stewardship of the relationship with the university and partners beyond an MOU
- What are ways that we can show value to the work that CBOs or residents are doing? -- not just in them lecturing in the classroom but removing financial barriers for them coming into the classroom.
- Providing services for people who are partners but not enrolled students.
- Collaborating with youth.
- Having professors reference opportunities outside the classroom, things happening in the community so that students can get involved. You see things on the listserv, but it is hard because of competing priorities of classwork, jobs, etc.

3. Promoting Care and Concern

- The parking / extended hours / flexibility are small kindnesses that can promote an atmosphere of care and concern
- Emphasize the importance and limitation of the cohort model. It has been helpful in developing support amongst students but having more dedicated in-person spaces for each division could be helpful. A Cohort Model has been helpful in developing support amongst students but having more dedicated in-person spaces for each division could be helpful. The cohort model could be elevated to solving a problem as a team (DrPH) while simultaneously working on their dissertation. One DrPH student emphasized the importance of the cohort model, and those who have defended their dissertation already still support current PhD Candidates. With the cohort model, a concern is that those who do not get close may feel left out. It is subjective, we need to focus on individuals who may fall through the cracks.
- Faculty extending themselves to have consulting hours. It was mentioned that there is a hostile environment.
- This idea of safe spaces, where the entire learning community could support one another and develop sustainable relationships.
- From a staff perspective, need to have more top-down communication. There is not always a cohesive message from the SPH.

4. Faculty and Staff Inclusive Excellence

- Creating opportunities for existing faculty to engage in this work: Using SPH Retreat time to engage in training around curriculum improvement and practice engaging in difficult conversations that may come up in the classroom.
- Accountability: faculty evaluations, curriculum reviews, CEQs, non-competitive pathways for promotion, providing feedback about experience with supervisors and faculty. Acknowledge and provide opportunities to assist faculty talking about these topics. SPH-wide special interest group or research-focused working groups.
- From faculty perspective: existing faculty need training and guidance as well as improving diversity amongst faculty; bringing College of Ed in to teaching concrete steps to an inclusive and affirming classroom; diversifying curriculum and readings; teach faculty what language is appropriate for talking about disparities and injustices
- Examining curriculum for anti-racist curriculum and providing additional training and support to faculty to ensure they are having an inclusive classroom (managing uncomfortable questions, ensuring everyone is heard, having difficult conversations).
- Using bridges to faculty, working with Collaboratory to bring more community members into the classroom, more strategically/deliberately garnering resources towards those efforts
 - Funds to pay co-instructors from the community: Center for Healthy Work, P3RC, Collaboratory all working on this

- Looking at hiring practices: salaries, benefits, less than or full-time work (ie, are most people in less than full time positions?).
- More inclusive and less tiered employment practices, increase scholarship around health equity and environment.
- Increase faculty and staff diversity with particular focus on faculty and tenure system faculty because that is the least diverse. Emphasis on scholarship amongst those candidates that have focus on EJ (Environmental Justice).
- Used to do a better job of ensuring inclusivity at the school. A sense of belonging was measured by a climate survey and there were more pathways to promotion and tenure (now competitive). Even in AP positions there is not a non-competitive pathway
- Offer Professional Development funds (on an application basis) for people to share how they have already been working towards improving racial equity in the school. Also, provide incentives for more people to become involved in these efforts.

Event Survey

A survey was provided to gather feedback from the participants. Participants could complete the survey via a link or QR code that was provided in the chat and as part of the closing presentation.

Survey Results

Q1 - After attending today's panel do you feel more INFORMED about the Advancing Racial Equity plans?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	31.58%	6
2	Agree	57.89%	11
3	Disagree	10.53%	2
4	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	19

Q2 - After attending today's panel do you feel more INCLUDED in the Advancing Racial Equity plans?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	44.44%	8
2	Agree	50.00%	9
3	Disagree	5.56%	1
4	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	18

Q3 - How likely are you to get more engaged with Advancing Racial Equity planning?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Very likely	63.16%	12
2	Not likely	0.00%	0
3	Somewhat likely	21.05%	4
4	Likely	15.79%	3
	Total	100%	19

Q4 - Which of the strategies do you feel you can contribute to?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Centering Student Equity & Inclusion	0.00%	0
2	Advancing Faculty & Staff Inclusive Excellence	33.33%	1
3	Promoting Atmosphere of Care & Concern	0.00%	0
4	Collaborating with Community	66.67%	2
	Total	100%	3

Q7 - What if any, are your major concerns about the success of this initiative? (i.e., resources, authenticity, continuity)

What, if any, are your major concerns about the success of this initiative? (i.e., resources, authenticity, continuity)
Community Involvement
Division directors seem very uncomfortable talking about this work - they need more training and education to lead this work confidently and competently
That changes implemented will be on at an individual level rather than structural. I fear the things that would truly encourage diversity (free tuition for CPS students, non-competitive advancement and tenure structure, accountability for ARE in faculty evaluations, etc.) will be dismissed as impossible when, in fact, they are most worthy the work it takes to get there if we are truly committed to advancing racial equity.
Resources, continuity
Resources and accountability - making sure that this is not just done to be said to be done, but it gets done and implemented, imbedded, ongoing
inadequate resources: one more thing to do and everyone is already stretched thin

Q8 - Please indicate your division.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Community Health Sciences	50.00%	5
2	Health Policy and Administration	30.00%	3
3	Environmental and Occupational Health Services	10.00%	1
4	Epidemiology and Biostatistics	10.00%	1
	Total	100%	10

Q9 - Please indicate your affiliation

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Student	29.41%	5
2	Faculty	11.76%	2
3	Staff	41.18%	7
4	Alumni	11.76%	2
5	Other	5.88%	1
	Total	100%	17