

Statement on Racial Equity and Social Justice

The Centerwide Committee on Faculty and Professional Staff of the SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University condemns the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and other Black and disenfranchised people.

As educators, health professionals, and scholars proudly serving the East Flatbush community, we have a responsibility and opportunity to help dismantle systemic racism and build racial equity inclusivity, and social justice. We believe that action must take place and are guided by the statements of the professional organizations (referenced below) that represent the constituents in our institution. Not doing so will perpetuate the harms that racism, bias, and inequity inflict on the health and well being of so many members of our campus and broader communities and of the students and patients we serve.

We recognize the following solutions to this matter:

As an institution, we should

- Make a concerted effort to working towards having faculty, professional staff (at all levels throughout the institution), and student body that reflects the multiple dimensions of diversity embodied in our community, including the basic science departments, our allied health fields, our nursing school, our student center and our student counseling department.
- Examine, identify, and remove obstacles to increasing diversity and eliminating individual and structural racism within the institution.
- Create a Zero tolerance policy for inequitable, non-inclusive, and unfair treatment of underrepresented, underserved, and disenfranchised people and communities for people of all identities and backgrounds.
- Create policies that support a safe and welcoming learning and living environment for all our students.
- Increase awareness among all community members of the resources and institutional mechanisms of recourse available to those who feel they have been the victim of intolerance or racism within the institution
- Create policies that support a safe and welcoming health environment for all our patients.
- Develop a cultural competency training program for all campus police.
- Require customer service/ cultural competency training for all SUNY Downstate employees.
- Advocate for the community and patients that we serve by actively playing a role in the elimination of racist and violent systems of policing and incarceration and encourage investment in public health, housing, health care, education, and community-led alternatives to policing.
- Increase opportunities and venues for dialogue on these and other issues with the wider community.

As faculty and professional staff, we should

- Be committed as faculty and professional staff to educate ourselves on systemic and institutionalized racism and evaluate our departments in order to restructure and eliminate potential contributions to these injustices within the services and education that we provide to our students

- As faculty we must make every effort to discuss systemic and institutionalized racism, health inequities and cultural bias and discrimination and solutions to resolve these issues in our classrooms regardless of subject matter. We also commit to revising our curriculum, learning materials and textbook recommendations where necessary to include these discussions so as to create a learning environment that is more inclusive and less biased. We will also make an effort to invite diverse colleagues within all of our fields as guest lecturers to add to the discussion.
- We must make a concerted effort to hire a more diverse faculty and professional staff at all levels throughout the institution. This is particularly needed in the basic science departments, our allied health fields, our nursing school, our student center, and our student counseling department.
- Embed a social and racial justice, health equity and cultural competency curriculum within the medical school and health sciences curricula.
- Regularly evaluate our programs with a specified timeline and commit to updating the curricula as necessary
- Create a Zero tolerance policy for inequitable, non-inclusive, and unfair treatment of underrepresented, underserved, and disenfranchised people and communities for people of all identities and backgrounds.
- Create policies that support a safe and welcoming learning and living environment for all our students.
- Create policies that support a safe and welcoming health environment for all our patients.
- Examine, identify, and remove obstacles to increasing diversity and eliminating individual, institutional, and structural racism within the institution.
- Develop a cultural competency training program for all campus police.
- Require customer service/ cultural competency training for all SUNY Downstate employees.
- Advocate for the community and patients that we serve by actively playing a role in the elimination of racist and violent systems of policing and incarceration and encourage investment in public health, housing, health care, education, and community-led alternatives to policing.
- **Be mindful of the vocabulary we use to describe each other:**
 - Eliminate the misapplication of the term “minority” when referring to diverse groups of people, particularly when people of color are implied. It is felt to be pejorative because it tacitly emphasizes "otherness," inequity in power, and less relevancy in society. Moreover, by its frequent use to refer to people of color, it artificially homogenizes diverse groups of individuals; it similarly implies White and whiteness are the homogenized normative standard and renders other dimensions of diversity within White and non-White groups, including those that would unify different individuals between groups, invisible and unimportant, such as religious affiliation, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation, and immigration status. It is numerically imprecise as it is contextual (for example, "minority-majority" institutions). The pejorative nature is captured in the neologism "minoritize." Examples of more acceptable terms that are more numerically precise and appropriate based on context, include: “diverse populations”, “underrepresented in the field/profession”, “people of _____ descent”, “underrepresented populations”, “underserved communities”, “people of diverse backgrounds.”

- In so doing, recognize that the Black community, like all communities, is not a homogenous group and that lumping all diverse groups into the category of “people of color” does not reflect the diverse needs of or within each population.
- Capitalize the letter “B” when referring to Black people in all written material. Using the lower case designates the color of an object and thus used in describing individuals minimizes an entire race of people and reduces them to objects.

We look forward to working together in order to make tangible and necessary changes that will positively impact our Downstate community and the community we serve. Here we have included the statements of professional organizations for your review:

Medicine:

https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/aamc-statement-police-brutality-and-racism-america-and-their-impacthealth?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pressrelease&utm_content=pressrelease

Nursing:

https://www.nursingworld.org/news/news-releases/2020/ana-calls-for-racial-justice-for-communities-of-color/?utm_source=hero&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=06-19-20-ana-pledge

Public Health:

<https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policydatabase/2014/07/11/14/16/impact-of-police-violence-on-public-health>

<https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policydatabase/2019/01/29/law-enforcement-violence>

Allied Health

<https://mailchi.mp/371a6ca16ca2/asahp-the-week-in-review-1621246>

ACGME

<https://www.acgme.org/Newsroom/Newsroom-Details/articleId/10299>

American Society of Molecular and Cellular Biology

<https://www.asbmb.org/asbmb-today/opinions/060120/we-will-not-be-silent>