Fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion has been a core value of the Microbiology Department for years. However, recent events have raised our awareness of continued disparities that exist in biomedical research. To help address this problem, the Microbiology Department has organized a committee of faculty and staff that will centralize departmental efforts to promote recruitment and inclusion of under represented groups, with a specific emphasis on BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) communities at UT Southwestern Medical Center and within the larger microbiology community. The DEI Committee has constructed a plan to specifically address actionable steps to be taken by the department based on recommendations recently outlined by The Association of African American Scientists (TAAAS) and the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), with support of additional student organizations and faculty. Throughout this document, the specific Recommendations refer to that plan. Our overarching goal is to develop policies that produce a supportive and inclusive environment that leads to improvements in the recruitment and retention of underrepresented individuals.

The Department of Microbiology established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee on June 24, 2020 (Recommendation I.4, 3rd section of the TAAAS document). Current DEI Committee members are Neal Alto, Nick Conrad, Julie Pfeiffer, and Marina Staber. In addition, the DEI Committee will form an Advisory Council composed of students, postdocs, and staff who will provide feedback and participate in the implementation of the departmental action plan. Please notify Neal, Nick, Julie, or Marina if you would like to be considered for this role.
**Overall Goals and Action Plan**

On June 29th, the DEI Committee met to discuss ideas and to develop a list of goals and priorities. We agreed that the Committee should focus primarily on actionable steps that can be implemented by the faculty and members of the department. We also determined that while the action items we propose can be applied to all underrepresented groups, the primary focus of the DEI Committee will be on promoting BIPOC. We specifically identified recommendations that the Department of Microbiology DEI Committee could address directly in a timely manner.

- **Goal 1**: Generate ideas for enacting change at the departmental level (June-July 2020)
- **Goal 2**: Seek input and ideas from a diverse group of stakeholders* (July 2020)
- **Goal 3**: Generate a document containing our action plan and seek input (August 2020)
- **Goal 4**: Share our action plan on the Departmental website and by email to stakeholders* for broad transparency (September 2020)
- **Goal 5**: Implement action items (October 2020-ongoing)
- **Goal 6**: Assess effectiveness (Yearly, starting in October 2021)

*Stakeholders include the Department of Microbiology, UTSW Office of Diversity, TAAAS, SACNAS, oSTEM, Graduate Student Organization, Postdoctoral Association.

**Goal 1: Generate ideas for enacting change at the departmental level (June 2020).**

*Subject: Recruitment of Black students, postdocs, staff, and faculty.*

Action Items 1-4 are efforts to address Recommendation I, particularly I.1 (1st section) and I.1 (2nd section of the TAAAS document).

**Action Item 1**: The Microbiology Department hosts a weekly seminar series highlighting the best research science in the United States. While we regularly host faculty from diverse backgrounds, this seminar series could provide an opportunity for young scientists to promote their scientific careers. The DEI Committee will organize a section of the Molecular Microbiology Seminar Series to include postdocs from underrepresented minority groups, with a high priority on BIPOC scientists, from outside universities. These seminars will function to promote the work of scientists from underrepresented groups and enhance mentorship to our current postdocs and students by providing additional peer interactions. In addition, they will serve as recruiting tools for UT Southwestern faculty. Details of this action item will be included in the first annual DEI meeting.

**Action Item 2**: The DEI Committee will leverage existing faculty relationships to facilitate partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities aimed to synergistically benefit the HBCU students and enhance exposure of UTSW to potential future students. We can imagine many types of partnerships, but our first step will be to reach out to HBCUs to identify areas in which we can make an impact that is beneficial to the HBCU students. Details of this action item will be included in the first annual DEI meeting.
**Action Item 3:** The DEI Committee will encourage one or more faculty members to attend conferences including, but not limited to, the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS), Emerging Researchers National Conference in STEM (ERN-NSF), and the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) Conference. These activities will be coordinated with the ongoing actions of the Graduate School to also promote Molecular Microbiology trainee attendance. We will further seek to obtain financial support for these efforts from the Microbiology Department, training grants, and/or other sources.

**Action Item 4:** Faculty visits to other universities and conferences provide an opportunity to recruit students, postdocs and faculty from underrepresented groups to UTSW. The DEI Committee will generate a series of suggestions for the faculty to aid in such efforts. For example, we will recommend that all faculty members proactively interact with and support Black and other trainees from underrepresented groups at conferences and during seminar trips, including email follow up.

Subject: Enhancing the training and mentorship of current students and postdocs.

Action Items 5-7 include efforts to address Recommendations II and V.3 of the TAAAS document.

**Action Item 5:** The NIH encourages recruitment of trainees from underrepresented groups to be supported by institutional T32 Training Grants. Not only does the DEI Committee support this goal, but Microbiology has put in place criteria aimed at assuring the individuals selected for the T32 training grants obtain quality mentorship. It is the Department of Microbiology’s policy that selection of trainees for training grant positions is partly informed by proof of quality mentoring which we expect to include bias training for faculty in the future (see Action Item 9 below). The mentor assessment includes factors such as average time to Ph.D. for their students, publication records for trainees, participation in career development panels, and other activities. Thus, we seek to simultaneously support the inclusion of trainees from underrepresented groups on NIH T32 grants and provide a commitment to high-quality mentoring of those trainees.

**Action Item 6:** The DEI Committee will seek information on training from the offices of postdoctoral and graduate student affairs, the institutional Faculty Diversity and Inclusion Collaborative, and other departments at UTSW. This information will be provided to all department members. The DEI Committee will increase efforts to disseminate knowledge of available diversity fellowships, conferences and programs and ensure that mentors and their trainees from underrepresented groups in all departments are provided with adequate information.

**Action Item 7:** The DEI Committee encourages the Department and Graduate Program to use seminar slots and/or journal clubs to address topics of race and discrimination particularly as they relate to science. Topics could include the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, the history of HeLa cells, and other medical studies performed on minority populations without consent or credit.

Subject: Outreach and Service

Action Item 8 addresses Recommendation II.3.
**Action Item 8:** The DEI Committee will inform faculty and trainees of outreach and service opportunities such as STARS, SURF, K-12 school events, science fairs, events at the Perot Museum, etc., with a particular emphasis on activities for DISD, inner city schools, and schools that lack resources to expose their students to STEM. We will also identify existing outreach programs to determine how Microbiology Department members can provide support to those who are front-line participants.

*Subject: Enhance faculty training and involvement*

Action Items 9-11 address Recommendations II.1a, II.1b, II.3 of the TAAAS document.

**Action Item 9:** The DEI Committee will encourage the continued nomination by the Department of faculty members to participate in the LEAD program which includes diversity and inclusion training. In addition, the DEI Committee will support the development and implementation of culturally aware mentorship programs that specifically address the PI-trainee relationships. We feel that development of such a program is best done at the university level, but the Committee regards this as a priority.

**Action Item 10:** The DEI Committee will request that faculty include a section on their CVs and Biosketches titled “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Activities”. This will hold each faculty member accountable for their activities, motivate further activities, and publicize these efforts to all who read these documents within UTSW and beyond.

*Subject: Assess effectiveness*

**Action Item 11:** The DEI Committee will meet each October to evaluate progress on departmental DEI initiatives. We will ask faculty to keep a record of DEI efforts on their CV (see action item 10) and report these items to the Committee to be included in an annual report. We will organize a yearly seminar luncheon “Addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Department of Microbiology” to discusses progress, updates, and next steps.
**Goal 2: Seek input and ideas from a diverse group of stakeholders* (July 2020)**
Received input and integrated recommendations from TAAAS members, SACNAS, Postdoctoral Association, Office of Institutional Equity & Access, and departmental members.

**Goal 3: Generate a document containing our action plan and seek input (August 2020)**
Completed.

**Goal 4: Share our action plan on the Departmental website and/or by email to stakeholders* for broad transparency (September 2020).**
Distributed via email 09/28/2020 to departmental members and secondary faculty.

**Goal 5: Implement action items (October 2020-ongoing).**
Ongoing

**Goal 6: Assess effectiveness.**
Upcoming; starting October 2021.