

**Gangarosa Department of Environmental Health  
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee  
Annual Report 2022-2023**

**Executive Summary**

The GDEH DEI-SC was formed in August 2020, in line with the [RSPH Policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#). Our objectives are to intentionally foster and ‘build an academic community where all members can thrive, and to enhance our scholarly mission to eliminate health disparities and improve health outcomes in disadvantaged and vulnerable populations.’ The purview of the Departmental DEI Steering Committee is to establish DEI-related priorities, coordinate and document activities, and track progress towards key outcomes.

Feedback was provided anonymously by the department in Summer/Fall 2022, which was used to benchmark progress and identify areas for improvement for the 2022-23 academic year. Monthly DEI Steering Committee meetings continued throughout the school year, which were attended by faculty, staff (research and administrative), students (MPH and PhD), and alumni. Student Town halls for MPH and PhD students were held to provide a safe space for students to voice concerns regarding DEI in the department. This feedback will be used in the 2023-2024 academic year.

GDEH continued the ‘Our Voices Seminar’ series with speakers of color in Fall 2022. A ‘Disability and Neurodivergence Seminar’ was also held in Fall 2022 for the department. In Spring 2023, PhD students and faculty attended a seminar on ‘Decolonizing Methodologies.’

The MPH student curriculum was refined to include integration of an Environmental Justice (EJ) competency in required classes as well as offering separate courses in EJ and community-based participatory research. A PhD Bootcamp was also hosted by the department to remove barriers regarding the PhD application process.

Monthly junior faculty mentorship meetings continued to address challenges for junior faculty in the department. There was limited staff involvement in the DEI-SC, an issue we hope to remedy in the coming year.

The HERCULES Stakeholder Advisory Board drafted and approved an anti-racism commitment, which included strategies to intentionally promote anti-racism in the center. The DEI-SC successfully advocated for the removal of posters within RSPH deemed to promote stigma and bias.

We will continue the successful activities introduced last year into the 2023-2024 academic year, and will use input from students, staff, and faculty to adopt more key outcomes related to DEI.

<b>2022-2023 Co-Chairs</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Committee Role</b>	<b>End of Term</b>
Matthew Freeman	Faculty Co-Chair	Summer 2023
Natalie Olson	PhD Student Co-Chair	Spring 2023
Prachi Prasad	MPH Student Co-Chair	Spring 2023



## REPORT

### **Background and Formation**

In the aftermath of the killings of George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others at the hands of law enforcement, the GDEH affirms our commitment to Black Lives Matter. We hope to continue learning about our internal biases while working towards anti-racism in our daily actions. We reject all forms of racism, prejudice, and injustice, including the pervasive and systemic white nationalist, anti-Muslim, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-Latinx, anti-Chinese, xenophobic, and sexist discourse and policies.

To further our shared vision, the GDEH DEI-SC was formed in August 2020, in line with the [RSPH Policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#). Our objectives are to intentionally foster and 'build an academic community where all members can thrive, and to enhance our scholarly mission to eliminate health disparities and improve health outcomes in disadvantaged and vulnerable populations.' This is a shared mission that requires both institutional change and individual efforts. The purview of the DEI-SC is to set goals and measurable outcomes, along with departmental and individual activities related to departmental culture, academics and curriculum, recruitment and retention, research, and public health practice. The DEI Steering Committee is composed of GDEH stakeholders including faculty, staff (research and administrative), students (MPH and PhD), and alumni.

### **GDEH DEI-SC Mission and Vision**

Our **vision** is an academic community of excellence that fosters and sustains support for diversity, equity, and inclusivity rooted in anti-racism and combating anti-Blackness.

Our **mission** is to serve as a hub and support network for GDEH DEI-related initiatives, both within our department and in our work as public health researchers and practitioners, and specifically to:

1. Apply principles of anti-racism as a lens to address all forms of prejudice, oppression, and social injustice, including misogyny, nativism, sexism, and homophobia;
2. Engage the GDEH community to eliminate disparities and achieve environmental health justice and equity;
3. Empower the GDEH community with advocacy tools and practices that elevate DEI initiatives; and
4. Develop and implement clear DEI priorities that are tracked, monitored, and evaluated to ensure the achievement of the critical outcomes necessary to achieve our vision.

Working with faculty, staff, MPH and PhD students, we felt our mission and vision encompassed both RSPH and Emory principles and values. We worked with Capital City Justice Group, an external consulting group, to give us unbiased and professional help with our mission, vision, and goals.

**2022-23 Action planning.** In Spring of 2021, the GDEH Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee (DEI-SC) completed its initial strategic planning process with considerable input and feedback from the department. A link to the [vision, mission, values, and outcomes is here](#). While all outcomes are important, we circulated a survey to department members asking them to help prioritize outcomes for the upcoming academic year.



The results of the outcomes upvote were documented in our DEI Action Plan (numerated in the “summary of activities” section below) along with the activities that have been developed by the DEI-SC to meet these outcomes (bullets under activities).

The DEI-SC coordinates and supports DEI-related activities for the department, guided by the DEI Action Plan. The activities below were not all led by the DEI-SC, but in this report we aim to harmonize DEI-related accomplishments and activities within the entire department.

**Results of Department Upvote**

Overall, the department elevated outcomes 1c, 2c, 2e, 4b, and 4d for prioritization and activity and indicator development for the upcoming academic year. Respondents that identified as underrepresented minorities elevated similar outcomes. The drafted activities to meet these outcomes are below.

Prioritized Outcomes	Rank Overall	Rank URM Identified
1a. Department leadership sets a tone, culture, and expectations on the importance and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.		4th
1c. Department recruits, supports, and retains students, trainees, faculty, and staff from historically underrepresented populations	1st	1st
2c. Curricula amplify voices and perspectives from historically underrepresented populations	2nd	3rd
2e. Students are trained in core principles and methods of environmental justice and social determinants of health and are able to apply these to environmental health	4th	
3a. A scholarship of impact - where research is translated to policies and practice for addressing environmental health disparities - is prioritized along with the scholarship of discovery		4th
4b. Students are trained in community based participatory research and the racist and colonial history of public health, and specifically related to environmental health	3rd	
4d. Students, trainees, and early career investigators from historically underrepresented populations are supported with mentorship and training opportunities to meet their professional goals without disproportionately burdening faculty on the basis of their identity characteristics.	3rd	2nd



### **Summary of Activities and Accomplishments June 2022-May 2023**

Since Spring 2021, the DEI-SC has been working on developing activities (and measurable indicators) to meet the outcomes listed in the strategic plan, with specific priority to those outcomes elevated by the department in the upvote (above).

Our progress since May 2022 is listed below.

The list below is the drafted activities, followed by the specific actions for each relevant activity.

1. Strengthen department member retention and support through:
  - *Faculty-level initiatives* - Dr. Freeman continued a peer mentorship program for junior faculty that covers mentorship development, understanding service requirements, clarifying purchasing, discussing building a research group. The revised junior faculty mentorship plan was approved by the Department and implemented starting this year.
  - *Student level initiatives* - Financial support for URMs, mentoring program (first years paired with second years), provided resources to students, updated course enrollment practices
  - *Staff level initiatives* - Encouraged engagement through department-level staff council representatives. Have staff voices heard and represented at DEI-SC meetings and conversations. The staff council representative provided updates to the DEI committee regarding staff issues filtered through the council.
2. Built on improvements in the faculty hiring process through continued communication and feedback from the Search Committee.
  - In 2020, the DEI-SC provided extensive feedback on the search committee process. The faculty search committee made several changes in constitution and process. The department made offers to new faculty (all women, two women of color).
  - The DEI-SC continued to collaborate with the search committee to support a diverse faculty recruitment process. The DEI-SC provided feedback to the search committee on the use of DEI components for the application and interview process.
  - DEI-SC was invited to a search committee meeting to weigh in on a “diversity statement” related to applications. The DEI-SC, after internal discussion, suggested against such a requirement in favor of more holistic evaluation of applicants’ commitment to diversity to avoid undue burden on URM applicants. EHS PhD Application Process: Developed a program orientation and interview advice sheet for students that were offered an opportunity to interview with the EHS program. This was provided as a Zoom meeting with program administration and current PhD students, as well as through documents created by current PhD students. The focus and motivation for this information was based in demystifying the PhD interview process to reduce applicant stress and increase understanding of what to expect during the interview process.
3. Identified trainings that help faculty identify and utilize curricula developed by URM investigators.
  - The DEI-SC has identified a path forward to mainstream the school-level DEI curriculum self-assessment. Several faculty members piloted the tool to assess ease of use.
  - We hired a student - Prachi Prasad - to support faculty to complete the self-assessment and make relevant changes to the course curriculum and syllabus.
  - We liaised with the school curriculum committee to determine plans at school level.

4. Continued the Our Voices Seminar Series to increase awareness and profile of faculty of color within environmental public health and mainstream it within the regular GDEH department seminar series
  - Although we set out to continue this speaker series, we were unable to schedule speakers this spring mostly due to calendar conflicts.
  - We allocated funds to provide honoraria for URM speakers.
5. Offered training on current environmental justice topics and decolonizing public health methodology
  - Course evaluations continue to include reviews on instructor's ability to integrate environmental justice topics and/or create an inclusive classroom environment. The DEI-SC will work to use these measures to benchmark departmental progress.
  - Disability & neurodivergence seminar facilitated by PhD student Natalie Olson and MPH student Erika Canda attended by approximately 40 RSPH students.
  - “Confronting research perspectives” seminar was facilitated by EHS PhD candidate (now alum) April Ballard in Spring 2023.
  - Competency related to EJ for MPH curriculum
    - EH501 integrated and mainstreamed EJ into curriculum
    - Students can now use competency for APE
    - Other courses will include competency for 23-24 academic year
  - EJ Course: 13 students enrolled, shared classroom power, learning assessments involved multiple platforms of delivery to accommodate all students
6. Offered a course on community-based participatory research (CBPR) for masters and doctoral students
  - The DEI-SC worked with Dr. Melanie Pearson and the department to bring this offering to all students in the department as a two-credit course in the Spring 2023 with 5 students across different departments. Highlight of topics covered:
    - benefits and challenges of community-engaged research
    - partnership development
    - Returning research results to participants & communities
    - moving from research to tangible community benefits
    - how racism and other forms of injustice can manifest in these partnerships (including guest lecture on decolonizing research)
    - how these partnerships can address racism and other injustices
7. Continued the PhD Application Bootcamp in collaboration with Dr. Mike Caudle (a series of workshops to mentor students through the PhD application process with the aim of increasing diversity in PhD programs by reducing barriers to higher education access)
  - During the 2022-2023 course series we had 10-15 students participate in the workshops. Most students were from Emory (multiple RSPH departments and GDBBS), with participation from Morehouse, Spellman and GSU students, as well as career professionals.
  - Students who participated and completed the workshops received offers for admission to PhD programs from Emory (EH & Epi), UMass Amherst, Brown University, UT Health Sciences Houston, Ohio State University, University of Florida, University of California at San Diego, Columbia University, & University of Georgia
8. Curriculum assessment tools and in-class pedagogy



- In Fall 2022, 100% of classes taught by primary faculty submitted the school-level curriculum assessment tool. In Spring 2023, only 3 faculty completed it for their classes
  - The faculty discussed individually considering their positionality and, if they chose, using those to discuss bias and positionality in their classes. There was considerable debate among faculty about the merits and risks of disclosing certain aspects of their identity to students but was seen as an important personal exercise regardless of any public disclosures in classrooms.
9. Developed a plan for collecting biannual data across the strategic plan areas. These data will support planning and benchmarking for progress
- The DEI-SC developed and released a 2022 climate survey. The report of that climate survey was released in the Summer of 2022. The action items and planning for the 2022-23 academic year were based in part on these findings.
  - There was an overall expressed need for increased representation among GDEH faculty, as well as additional conversation and support around DEI culture. A plurality of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the department has clear and fair policies and reporting procedures to ensure accountability towards discriminatory actions or harassment. Several respondents noted a lack of racial representation among GDEH faculty. Staff members and PhD candidates highlighted the need for improved engagement and support by GDEH.
  - We will use additional central data from course evaluations, enrollment, and other administrative data to track over time.
10. HERCULES Anti-racism Activities: In July 2020, the HERCULES Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) voted to address racism as it manifests in the center, our work, and our partnerships. We began by conducting a survey of SAB members and HERCULES leadership (i.e., PIs and Core leads). Based on this survey, a workgroup was established to develop strategies based on survey results. An [anti-racism commitment](#) was drafted and approved for the SAB and is now being adopted and modified center wide. Resources were gathered to serve as pre-work for dialogue groups consisting of both HERCULES leadership and SAB members that were conducted over the summer of 2021 (topics: History of enslavement and racism; Anti-racism and racial equity; Environmental Justice; Health Equity; Academia, Research, & Racism; Organizations). A qualitative analysis resulted in themes from across these discussions, from which additional small group discussions (Fall 2021) developed and recommended concrete actions. Based on SAB prioritization of these actions, a new SAB anti-racism workgroup is developing a HERCULES communication policy, a MOU template for HERCULES community-engaged research, and developing strategies to intentional promote anti-racism & exposome research in the center.

Summary of Accomplishments					
Activity	Date or Time Frame	Related Outcome	Qualitative <i>and</i> Quantitative Impact(s)	Purpose/Goal	Target Audience
PhD Bootcamp	Fall 2022-Spring 2023	4d	Approximately 10-15 students and career professionals participated. At least	Remove some of the barriers associated with navigating the	Students



			10 of these students received and accepted PhD offers.	PhD application process.	
Our Voices Seminar Series	Fall 2022	4b,4d	Approximately 30 faculty, students, and staff attended each seminar in the fall.	Increase awareness and profile of faculty of color in EH	Dept
Integration of GDEH Learning Objectives	Fall 2022	2e	Creation of 2 Learning Objective metrics: - EJCM: # of courses that offer Environmental Justice or Social Determinants of Health methods and/or content times the number of GDEH students that take courses with these competencies - EJSM: # of GDEH-sponsored events dedicated to promoting Environmental Justice and environmental health disparity (seminars, guest speakers, lunch and learns) times the number of GDEH students attending these events	Enhanced training in core principles and methods of environmental justice and social determinants of health and are able to apply these to environmental health	Students
Revised and ran EJ course	Spring 2023	2c, 2e	13 students enrolled, shared classroom power, learning assessments involved multiple platforms of delivery to accommodate all students	Increase training on EJ	Students
Ran EH590R: community-based participatory research	Spring 2023	2c, 2e	5 students enrolled	Increase training on CBPR	Students
EH501 alignment with EJ	Spring 2023	2c, 2e	Further refine and integrate EJ material	Increase training on EJ	MPH Students
Integration of EJ MPH	Fall 2022	2c, 2e, 1d	Developed competency related to EJ for MPH	Mainstream EJ into GDEH	MPH students



competency			curriculum.	courses	
Junior faculty mentorship	2022-23	1a, 1b, 1c, 4d	Monthly junior faculty meetings to increase peer-support and address key questions and challenges for new and junior faculty	Increase support and community for junior faculty, who are predominantly women	Faculty
GDEH Climate Survey	Summer/ Fall 2022	1a, 1e	Implemented climate survey to benchmark GDEH stakeholder perspectives and to set upcoming priorities	Receive feedback, benchmark progress and identify areas for improvement	Dept
Decolonizing Methodologies seminar	Spring 2023	4b	Students across Emory were trained in how colonizing/racist/othering forces impact their research, and how to design and conduct theory-driven transformative research		PhD Students, Faculty
Disability & Neurodivergence Seminar	Fall 2022	2e	Approximately 40 RSPH students learned and discussed disability and neurodivergence accessibility and justice issues relevant to our community	Increase awareness and visibility of disability and neurodivergence among department members	Dept
DEI Curriculum Assessment Tool	Fall 2022 /Spring 2023	2c	100% of faculty instructors applied the school-level tool in Fall 2022. The DEI-SC hired a student to support faculty self-assessment with the goal of all courses being evaluated	Improve our curricula in line with DEI best practices	Faculty
Conflict Resolution	Spring 2023	1c,4d	Investigated, discussed and shared best practices and resources for conflict resolution within the department	To create a science training community that encourages and supports students, especially those that identify as URM.	Dept





PhD Biostatistics Course Selection		1c	Investigated, discussed, and adjusted processes for incoming PhD students to select appropriate biostatistics courses	Identify and address barriers to success among URM PhD students	PhD
Student Town Halls		1a	Hosted peer-only DEI town hall sessions among MPH and PhD students	Provide safe/brave spaces for students to voice concerns regarding DEI in the department	Students
Free99Fridge Event	Fall 2022		Collected, prepared, and distributed food to community fridge & pantry in Decatur	Increase opportunities for community engagement among department members	Dept

**2022-2023 Committee Members**

Name	Committee Role	Dept Affiliation
Matthew Freeman	Faculty Co-Chair	Faculty
Natalie Olson	PhD Student Co-Chair	PhD Student
Prachi Prasad	MPH Student Co-Chair	MPH Student
Dana Barr	Member	Faculty
Mike Caudle	Member	Faculty
Melanie Pearson	Member	Staff
Rachel Usher	Member	Staff and Alum
Kaitlin Taibl	Member	PhD Student
Jhanel Chew	Member	PhD Student
Brooke Lappe	Member	PhD Student
Sydney Hubbard	Member	PhD Student
Courtney Victor	Member	PhD Student
Stephen Mugal	Member	PhD Student
Hemali Oza	Member	PhD Student
April Ballard	Member	PhD Student
Emilie Saksvig	Member	MPH Student
Danielle Clarkson-Townsend	Member	Alum
Ericka Thomas	Member	Alum



EMORY

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Erika Canda	Member	MPH Student
Alina Merceron	Member	MPH Student

<b>2023-2024 Incoming Co-Chairs</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Committee Role</b>	<b>Term Ending</b>
Dana Barr	Faculty Co-Chair	Spring 2025
Jhanel Chew	PhD Student Co-Chair	Spring 2025
Erika Canda	MPH Student Co-Chair	Spring 2024