

Columbia University Department of Psychology

Report on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Activities for 2020-21

The murder of George Floyd happened one year ago this week. His murder followed and was preceded by the murders of countless other black men and women at the hands of police. In the wake of this tragedy, members of the Columbia University Psychology Department (*Ochsner, Downey, Greenaway*) sent a letter asking, “what can we do now – as individuals, a department, a university, an academic discipline – to contribute to making Black Lives Matter in reality rather than simply in rhetoric.” To begin the conversation, they highlighted areas of focus for meaningful change, which we reference throughout this document.

A year later, we are taking an opportunity to look back at the steps that members of the Psychology Department have taken to *begin* to address these suggested areas of focus. While these steps are the David to the Goliath of structural racism and oppression, they represent our humble commitment to educate ourselves, to be better in the pursuit of interrupting and dismantling academic exclusionary practices, and to pursue social justice.

This document offers a sample of the ongoing efforts. The hard work is just beginning. In this report on activities from the past year, we especially highlight suggested focus areas from our departmental letter last year that we intend to work on in 2021-2022.

DEI Progress 2020-2021

1. Relevant to Undergraduate Education

Suggested Focus Areas

- *Commit to reviewing courses to ensure incorporation of social justice and anti-racism content*
- *Develop and implement a plan to make psychology an attractive major for underrepresented minority undergraduates. For example, what ways do introductory classes need to change? How can we support minority undergraduate involvement in research?*
- *Participate in an interdisciplinary course on Frontiers of Justice. This initiative of students connected with the Center for Justice will focus on contemporary justice issues.*

2020-2021 Activities

a. Revisions to Psychology Honors Program. We have begun the process of revising the structure of the Psychology Honors Program to be more inclusive of all talented and motivated students. The new 3-semester *Senior Thesis Research Intensive* program will include a seminar series providing training in coming up with research questions and designing studies, data collection and analysis, and science communication; as well as a new course (*The How-Tos of Research*) that will equip students with a research skills toolbox through a hands-on, flipped classroom approach. This new program draws on a cohort and near-peer mentorship model to establish a sense of community among undergraduates pursuing research. It will provide an intensive learning experience about every aspect of the scientific research process through formal classroom and research mentorship. *Davachi, Tottenham, Marvin, DiGiovanni, Vannucci*

b. New* Frontiers of Justice Course. This course was designed and taught for the first time in 2020-2021. Frontiers of Justice equips students with the skills to become active and effective [change agents](#) within their academic institutions and larger communities. Oriented by the question, *What does justice look like?*, this course aims to raise political and social awareness and engagement with the challenges facing New York City and strengthen ties between Columbia University, disadvantaged communities, and city government agencies and community organizations. Through sharing ideas about how to make structural and systemic change in ways that integrate science, law, politics, history, narrative and community engagement, the course is intended to support students in working to break down racial and ethnic barriers toward a more fair and just society. Three students who helped develop the course and were teaching assistants were selected as Columbia nominees for the [Truman Scholarship](#), the premier graduate scholarship for aspiring public service leaders in the United States. *Downey, Sorett, Dunlea, Jarrell Daniels, Mackenzi Turgeon, Kiana Taghavi, Nascimento Blair, Julia Udell, Martin Garcia, Ilina Logani, Camryn Lane, Tyler Campbell.*

c. Revisions to Introduction to Psychology Course. We have been working to develop this course to better serve the needs of our student body. Pilot versions of this course have been taught virtually during Spring 2021 and will continue to be taught Summer 2021 and throughout the 2021-2022 academic year and beyond. Goals include: a. inclusive and anti-racist content; b. active learning strategies c. opportunities for engaged scholarship; d. opportunities for graduate teaching; and e. an emphasis on creating pathways to STEM by directing students to research in laboratories in the Psychology Department. *Marvin, Thieu, Lindemann, Ochsner, trainee members of the DEI Committee*

d. New* In Service of Equity Course. This course is designed to examine emotional and cognitive development through the lens of existing financial, social, and educational policies. We examine the influence- on child development - of inequities in education, socioeconomic status and poverty, neighborhood socioeconomic status and poverty, parental incarceration, and other issues relevant to systemic racism. Throughout, we consider the role of science in both alleviating and perpetuating bias. *Amso*

e. Psychology Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship. P-SURF will launch in 2022 and is designed to formally support summer intensive research experiences for any deserving students. This project is a chance for students to explore their own research interests in laboratories, while formally supported by individual mentors, formal content and professional development workshops. There will be a “pilot P-SURF” this summer ([SIPPS](#); Summer Internship Program in Psychological Sciences, which is an expanded version of a program Ana DiGiovanni and Anna Vannucci ran in the summer of 2020). The main components of SIPPS include: workshops on coding skills in R (with the option of both a beginner and advanced track), general research skills, and alternating journal club and professional development sessions. *P-SURF is almost exclusively designed and run by graduate trainee members of the DEI Committee.*

2. Relevant to Increasing Diversity in Graduate Education

Suggested Focus Areas

- *Develop and implement a plan to make our department an attractive option for minority graduate students, including considering changes in how funding is provided.*

2020-2021 Activities

a. **2021 Incoming Graduate Class Recruitment.** Through a process of graduate recruitment that gave great consideration to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the Psychology Department extended seven offers to prospectives, all of which were accepted. Of the seven students, four are women and three of those four women come from underrepresented communities.

The recruitment events, while virtual, included sessions primarily devoted to promoting open and free discussions around any topics desirable to the incoming students, including questions about diversity, inclusion and equity and overall atmosphere of the department. One successful event was a Diversi-tea Hour that was a one-hour virtual SAFE SPACE where prospective students could ask questions related to diversity, inclusivity and equity that they may feel less comfortable asking in the typical Q&A sessions. (safe space = no recording, pseudonyms instead of names, videos off, no registration, completely voluntary for both current and prospective grad students). *Davachi, Jayakumar, Vannucci, Edwards*

b. **Psychology Department Fellowship.** We have established a fellowship to be awarded to one prospective graduate recruit per year, in order to be competitive in attracting and recruiting an excellent and diverse graduate student body. This can and will be offered in addition to the University diversity fellowships. *Amsso and Davachi*

c. **Bridge to PhD Program in STEM.** The Bridge to the Ph.D. Program in STEM is designed to increase the participation of students from underrepresented groups in Ph.D. programs in STEM disciplines. The Bridge Program is an intensive research, academic, and mentoring experience for post-baccalaureates seeking to strengthen their graduate school applications and to prepare for the transition into Ph.D. programs. Psychology Department faculty supervise Bridge students (*Tottenham, Davachi, Ochsner*) and serve on the Bridge to PhD Advisory Council (*Shohamy*).

d. **Supporting And Recruiting BIPOC Graduate And Undergraduate Students In STEM.** The goal of this proposal, by the all STEM Department DEI Committee, is to build an academic networking infrastructure that provides organized activities supporting persistence of BIPOC students in STEM. *Amsso, Downey*

e. **Beyond Our Walls.** We recognize that the need to support access and opportunity for graduate education in STEM broadly and Psychology specifically goes beyond our walls.

1. **Podcast and YouTube Series: “The Psychology PhD”.** We are currently developing an inclusive content series targeted at prospective PhD students that will (a) demystify the graduate school application process and (b) explore a diverse group of students’ pre-PhD backgrounds and their experiences in graduate programs. Current plans include three seasons, each of which will contain six monthly episodes. Season 1 (tentative launch: July through December 2021) will make accessible the “hidden curriculum” of successfully applying to graduate programs in psychology, with episodes covering why a person might pursue graduate studies in psychology, the different types of graduate degrees in psychology, getting organized to apply, developing a CV, writing an effective statement of purpose, and preparing for interviews. *DEI Committee Trainee Group, spearheaded by Emily Nakkawita*

2. Developmental Discovery Days. Over the past year, we have been organizing Developmental Discovery Days, which will take place in August 2021. This two-day workshop will provide students from underrepresented groups with a behind-the-scenes view of graduate admissions in developmental psychology. The workshop will include panels on topics such as funding, creating a CV, writing a personal statement, and interviewing. Participants will also be paired with a current trainee who will serve as their mentor during the workshop itself and throughout the upcoming academic year, as they move through the application process. We received ~125 applications, and the event will include ~22 applicants. *Heiphetz, Amso, Tottenham with involvement of developmental psychology graduate students and lab members.*

3. Seminars, Colloquia, Events

Suggested Focus Areas

· *Be intentional about colloquium and Monday seminar meetings so that issues of community concern are included.*

2020-2021 Activities

a. Psychology Department Monday Seminar Panels (B. Silver, Stanoi) In 2020-21, this talk series featured a number of panels that targeted topics relevant to diversity, equity and inclusion.

1. *Inclusive Teaching*: Chris Chen and John Foo (Center for Teaching and Learning), and Felicia Mensah (Teachers College).

2. *Bias in Psychology Research and Methods*: Niall Bolger and Dima Amso (Psychology), and Kira Goldner (Computer Science).

3. *Community Engagement*: Geraldine Downey (Psychology Department), Kecia Hayes (Double Discovery Center), Courtney Cogburn (School of Social Work), Paula Croxson (Zuckerman)

4. *Department Alumni in DEI*: Vanessa Anderson, Lauren Aguilar, and Jan Kang

b. Psychology Department Colloquia, 2020-2021 (Aly, R. Silver) The series hosted 12 speakers, of whom 6 were women and 6 were people of color (4 were Black scholars: 2 men and 2 women). In terms of topics, 6 of the speakers (2 white, 4 people of color) covered timely and important issues related to racism, gender identity, and political attitudes.

Examples of such talks include:

1. *Developmental science through the lens of the events of 2020* – Dima Amso

2. *Medical Apartheid – Harriet Washington, a discussion with Carl Hart*

3. *Past, present, and future of American psychology's role in changing the current structures that support racial injustice* – Edmund Gordon & Malik Boykin

4. *Gender/Sex Diversity: From Lived Experiences to the Biosciences* – Sari van Anders

5. *Childhood Cross-ethnic Exposure Predicts Political Behavior Seven Decades Later: Evidence from Linked Administrative Data* – Ryan Enos

c. Center for Justice Panels (Downey, Coppola, Dunlea)

1. *How Can Injustices Within the Criminal Legal Context Be Attenuated?*- Kayla Burd (University of Wyoming), Federica Coppola (Max Planck Institute for the Study of

Crime, Security, & Law), Jarrell Daniels (Columbia University), Juan Del Toro (University of Pittsburgh)

2. *Why Do Injustices Within the Criminal Legal System Arise?*-Julian Rucker (UNC Chapel Hill), Heather Schoenfeld (Boston University), Pastor Isaac Scott (Columbia University), Danielle Slakoff (California State University, Sacramento)

3. *Changing Lenses: Justice in the Eyes of Science and the People Impacted*. Presidential Scholar in Society and Neuroscience Symposium.

d. Panels and Programs in Scientific Community

1. *Society for Research in Child Development*. Dr. Tottenham was Co-Chair of the 2021 meeting. Efforts in planning the 2021 Biennial included a strong focus on DEI initiatives and diversity in voices, content, and speakers. (e.g., 52% of invited speakers from ethnic/racial minority, marginalized, and/or underrepresented groups; ~45% of invited sessions include themes related to diversity). *Tottenham*

2. *Doing better - a panel discussion on how best to improve scientific practices with respect to inclusivity and equality*. International Society for Developmental Psychobiology. Co-Chair *Amso*

4. Psychology Department - University Partnerships

Suggested Focus Areas

- *Seek partners to make psychology more integral to the social justice and anti-racism work being done on campus and in the community.*
- *Continue our department's commitment to the Justice-in-Education (JIE) initiative to provide educational opportunities to people in prison and when they come home from prison.*

2020-2021 Activities

a. Center for Justice Programs and Events 2020-2021. Members of the department are participating in programs organized through the Center for Justice, including the Prison Education Program, Justice Through Code, Beyond the Bars. *Downey*

1. *Justice in Education Initiative*- The Prison Education Program (PEP) brings Columbia courses to students who are currently incarcerated in local prisons and jails as part of the effort to increase access to higher education for justice-involved individuals. At present, PEP operates in seven correctional facilities: Rikers, Queensboro CF, Edgecombe, Metropolitan Detention Center, Taconic, Sing Sing, Bedford Hills.

2. *Justice in Education Fellows*. Provides educational opportunities on campus for people returning from incarceration.

3. *Justice Through Code* - This is a free semester-long coding course founded by Psychology major, Aedan McDonald, that provides opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals to begin to grow and develop into the technology leaders of tomorrow. It is jointly offered by Columbia University's Center for Justice, and the Tamer Center for Social Enterprise at Columbia Business School and provides teaching opportunities for Psychology students (e.g., *Paul Bloom*).

4. *Justice Ambassadors*. Brings young New Yorkers together with city agency leaders in a psychology-based seminar to co-develop policy proposals to improve the lives of

New York's most vulnerable youth. Program is supported by undergraduates, several of whom are psychology/neuroscience majors.

b. Community Alliance for Youth Development through STEM The largest losses of talented, engaged students from STEM pathways occur between high school and college, and between college entrance and a STEM major. This project (submitted to NSF for funding, PI Newton) involves multiple STEM Departments and is a high school STEM mentorship program. Alliance partners will include schools and community organizations, to provide wrap-around support for young learners. We will offer layered mentorship opportunities, supported by world-class scientific infrastructure, and “wrap-around” support. *Amso and Marvin*

c. The Zuckerman Institute's Brain Research Apprenticeships in New York at Columbia (BRAINYAC) program. BRAINYAC prepares today's youth to become tomorrow's scientists. It emphasizes opportunities for youth from underserved communities to connect with real scientists, learn key skills required to work in a research environment, and to become part of the Columbia University community. The program is supported by an NIH grant (PI, *Shohamy*).

d. Service on University DEI-Relevant Committees

1. Zuckerman Institute DEI Committee, *Shohamy*
2. All STEM Department DEI Committee, *Amso, Downey*
- 3..Chair of the Zuckerman Institute Hiring Priorities Committee, *Shohamy*
4. Provost Junior Faculty who Contribute to Diversity Goals Grants Review, *Tottenham*
5. CU Target of Opportunity Faculty Hiring Committee, *Tottenham*
6. Efforts to enhance experience of Neuroscience GS undergraduates. *R. Silver, Marvin, Shohamy, Lindemann*

**The DEI committee trainee group welcomes all departmental trainees (undergraduate students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, lab managers, and research assistants) to join our weekly meetings, provide feedback on our various initiatives and help out if you would like to. Please reach out to dei-psych-admins@columbia.edu if you'd like to get in touch with us and be added to our listserv, or check [this calendar](#) for our meeting schedule.*