DIVERSITY POLICY
2012
I. DEFINITION OF DIVERSITY

The School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (SMBS) has adopted a definition of diversity that embraces race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability and life experiences, record of service, employment and other talents and attributes that can bring added value to the scholarly and learning environment. The SMBS also uses the term “under-represented in medicine” and endorses the AAMC recommendation that medical schools shift from a national perspective to a regional or local perspective to define under-representation.

For research grants and other purposes, the U.S. Public Health Service defines underrepresented as “racial and ethnic populations who are underrepresented in the designated health profession discipline relative to the number of individuals who are members of the population involved”. For most biomedical and behavioral research disciplines, this definition would include Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native American or American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. In accordance with these guidelines, the SMBS defines “under-represented in medicine” to include African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native American or American Indians, along with citizens who were born and raised in rural or economically disadvantaged locales.

II. RATIONALE: WHY THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE SEEKS DIVERSITY

The arguments for diversity extend far beyond those that pertain to equality. Diversity programs encourage excellence and seek to enhance the learning environment for students, advance student and faculty achievement, strengthen the School’s ties to nearby communities and contribute in measurable ways to improving the health of the community.

A. Enhancing Medical Education

The 2010 AAMC Graduation Questionnaire data indicate that more than two-thirds of SMBS respondents reported that the diversity within their medical school classes enhanced their training and skills to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds. There is persuasive evidence that recruiting a diverse student body and faculty has strong, positive effects on the quality of medical education that is provided to learners. Among many important factors, the enhanced educational outcomes may include:

a) Helping students to break down stereotypes, racial biases and challenge assumptions.
b) Broaden students’ understanding of the effects of language and culture on medical care.

c) Teaching students how differences in race, ethnicity and other cultural experiences might adversely affect the interactions that occur between doctors and the patients and their families who seek their help.

d) Increasing students’ awareness of health and health care disparities in nearby populations.

e) Increasing students’ interest in service to underserved communities and overall civic commitment.

These "added educational values" strengthen medical education, improve student cultural competency and better prepare graduates to deliver health care services to an increasingly diverse population. These educational benefits accrue importantly to all members of the student body.

B. Reducing Health Disparities:

Achieving a student body and faculty that are representative of the diversity in society is indispensable for quality medical education. However, there are other compelling rationales. The landmark Institute of Medicine Report, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*, provided overwhelming evidence that broad disparities in health care quality and health outcomes exist. The most important is that in New York, and throughout the nation, there are growing disparities among racial, ethnic and socio-demographic groups in almost every measure of health status.

C. Informing the Research Agenda:

The SMBS will seek to attract a diverse investigator faculty, including basic and clinician scientists, in order to accelerate the pace of medical, scientific, public health and health services discoveries that bear directly on health disparities and other health concerns of under-served populations. We agree that much more research is needed to better explain the well-documented race-associated differences in health outcomes. We endorse the Sullivan Commission recommendation that public and private funding agencies increase funding for research not only about racial disparities in health status and health care, but also about culturally competent care, how to measure and eliminate racial bias and stereotyping and strategies for increasing positive health behaviors among racial and ethnic groups.

III. STUDENT DIVERSITY
The SMBS acknowledges that there are a number of obstacles to recruiting a diverse pool of applicants. In an effort to continue to provide promising under-represented in medicine candidates the necessary tools for success in medical school and beyond, the SMBS will continue its sponsorship of the Associated Medical Schools of New York-SUNY at Buffalo Post Baccalaureate Program. To address financial barriers, we will work to compile and distribute a directory of available scholarship opportunities for accepted students to the incoming medical school class. Faculty, staff and medical students will be available to provide mentorship and guidance to facilitate the application process.

**Admission Goals:**

The SMBS will seek to enroll a highly able and qualified student body, richly diverse across racial, ethnic, socio-demographic and geographic lines and reflecting a wide variety of experiences, personal interests and academic goals. Admission will remain highly competitive. Students will continue to be evaluated on the basis of academic and personal achievement, intellectual promise, industriousness, obstacles overcome, commitment to service, compassion, communication skills, potential for leadership and other personal characteristics. The SMBS will consider all of these factors, along with Medical College Admission Test scores and grades, in an individualized, holistic evaluation of each applicant. Admission will be offered to those applicants judged to have the most promise for success as medical professionals and leaders, who can contribute most to the learning environment and intellectual diversity of the school. The SMBS Admissions Committee has adopted a formal policy to guide the evaluation of medical school applicants and the selection of each incoming class.

**Appendix:** Admissions Policy Document June 29, 2011, approved by the Faculty Council and available on the SMBS website:

http://www.smbs.buffalo.edu/FACULTY/FacultyCouncil/docs/Med_School_Policies/Admission_s_Policy_2014.pdf

**IV. FACULTY AND STAFF DIVERSITY**

The SMBS is committed to creating a working environment dedicated to excellence, equity and mutual respect representative of the diverse community we serve. The commitment aims to ensure that all academic and support staff are treated fairly and equitably.

**Faculty and Staff Diversity Goals:**
Mirroring the goals for student diversity, the SMBS will seek to hire faculty and staff members from diverse racial, ethnic, socio-demographic and geographic backgrounds, with a variety of personal experiences, interests and academic goals.

The implementation plan for faculty diversity will include at least the following key practices:

a) Communicating the diversity rationale to the faculty at-large, faculty governance bodies, department chairs, program and center directors, administrators and search committee members.

b) Universal, mandatory training of search committee members and improved monitoring of faculty search activities.

c) Development of programs for retention, mentoring and advancement of faculty, with particular attention to under-represented in medicine faculty members.

d) Strengthening institutional accountability for achieving greater diversity among faculty and administrative leadership within the SMBS.

To meet the diversity goals of the SMBS, attention must be paid not only to recruitment, but also to retention. It is the responsibility of the SMBS to support and mentor faculty, especially early in their careers. Efforts will be made to guard against isolation of under-represented in medicine faculty within the institution by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where all have the same opportunities and everyone is expected to meet their responsibilities with pride and enthusiasm. The SMBS will ensure that resources are available to facilitate connections between under-represented in medicine faculty with successful role models and mentors. The SMBS will offer leadership training which is essential at intermediate stages of faculty development, will develop programs to ensure that under-represented in medicine faculty connect with their school, university and community. The SMBS must also guard against over committing under-represented in medicine faculty to task forces and committees that need “representation.”

The Office of Equity Diversity and Affirmative Action Administration (EDAAA) at UB serves as technical assistant and historian in the procedure to recruit, select, and hire faculty and professional/non-faculty staff. The EDAAA continually expands and updates its resources of directories and bibliographies that are consulted for names and addresses of publication and organizations that have the attention of under-represented populations and women. The EDAAA has assembled a variety of recruitment resources that are made available to the search committee at the initiation of a search. The goal of all affirmative action searches at UB is to increase the number of individuals of protected groups in
areas where they are *under-represented in medicine* and on the campus at large. These efforts supplement the traditional procedures of advertising through newspapers, professional journals, conferences, and form announcements. As a state institution, SMBS must comply with New York State civil service statutes and regulations and the relevant collective bargaining agreements in the recruitment and hiring of faculty and staff.

The Faculty Council will support the initiatives to increase diversity among students, faculty and staff through regular periodic reviews by the Ad Hoc Diversity Policy Committee.