Weill Cornell Medicine
Office of Student Diversity

Strategic Plan

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WEILL CORNELL MEDICINE | OFFICE OF STUDENT DIVERSITY

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Introduction

Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) has historically been a national leader in student diversity since the establishment of the Office of Minority Affairs and recruitment of the medical college's first Associate Dean of Minority Affairs in 1969. Many of the early programs designed to promote diversity among students have been exceptionally effective and consistent.

In 2019, the Travelers Summer Research Fellowship Program will celebrate 50 years of training pre-medical summer fellows in the field of medicine and research. Weill Cornell had admitted only eight African-American students in its history before the start of this program. As of the summer of 2015, 1,143 students from backgrounds underrepresented in medicine have participated in the program, with 82.7% matriculating into medical schools across the nation.

Similarly, the ACCESS and Gateways to the Laboratory summer research programs for undergraduate students serve as a pipeline into PhD and MD-PhD programs across the country. Among the 245 alumni of the Gateways Program for example, 74% completed or are pursuing MD, PhD or MD-PhD degrees, with 17% having completed or are pursuing combined MD-PhD degrees. These outcomes supersede some of the most popular national programs across the country.[i]

To date, over 4,000 students at the middle, high school and undergraduate level have been impacted by the Weill Cornell Medicine and Graduate School pipeline programs. Coupled with robust recruitment efforts, WCM has established a reputation among its peers as a leader in diversity pipeline efforts. This has led to an increase in enrollment in the medical school, graduate school, and MD-PhD program. In a 2010 study of the social mission of US medical schools, WCM ranked first among all private medical colleges, excluding historically black colleges, in the enrollment of minority medical students.[ii] In a second study, WCM ranked second nationally graduating African American physicians.[iii]

This strategic plan intends to expand upon this great trajectory with the rebranding and establishment of a new office focused on student diversity and inclusion for both medical students and graduate students and naturally extending to advanced trainees such as residents, fellows, and postdoctoral researchers.

Mission

The mission of the Office of Student Diversity (OSD) at Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) is to:

- Promote the **recruitment and retention** of a talented and **diverse** medical and graduate student body, particularly from populations underrepresented in science (URiS) and medicine (URiM)
- Ensure that all students inclusive of gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, cultural, political, and religious identity and background, have a **genuine sense of belonging** in the Weill Cornell Medicine community
- Help students achieve their **highest potential** for scholarly excellence and career advancement
- Engage and support **community service** and **outreach** both in medicine and science to underserved communities

Key Goals

Goal #1 - Increasing medical and graduate student diversity

Increasing the diversity of the student body is one of the top priorities for the OSD. This will require a strong recruitment plan with multiple offices, administrators, faculty, and current students committed to the goal. A **Recruitment Plan to Enhance Diversity** will be developed for both the Medical College and Graduate School. We expect overlapping goals and programming among graduate and medical recruitment, but also collaborative efforts with other offices and departments such as Admissions, the MD-PhD Office, the Tri-I Chemical Biology and Computational Biology in Medicine programs, the Alumni Office, and Financial Aid.

Students have also strongly identified the need to evaluate and promote financial incentives for students from backgrounds underrepresented in medicine (URiM). There is already a newly established a faculty committee to assess financial aid and other issues that face URiM students. We hope to expand this model to URiS students. We will also provide more support for student representation at conferences.

Goal #2 - Branding student diversity

The branding and marketing of diversity initiatives is an important and necessary part of both recruitment and ensuring student success. The development of the diversity website will be key to facilitating this goal. The platform can be found at diversity.weill.cornell.edu. This website will include a prominent section for the OSD and allow for sharing of news, events, and student resources for recruitment.

Additionally, the OSD plans to develop a video on student diversity, following the example of other medical schools such as Stanford, Northwestern, and others.

Goal #3 - Building community and a sense of belonging

The OSD will first assess the diversity and inclusion climate among medical and graduate students using a well-validated climate survey. The results of the survey will inform programming and interventions for the future.
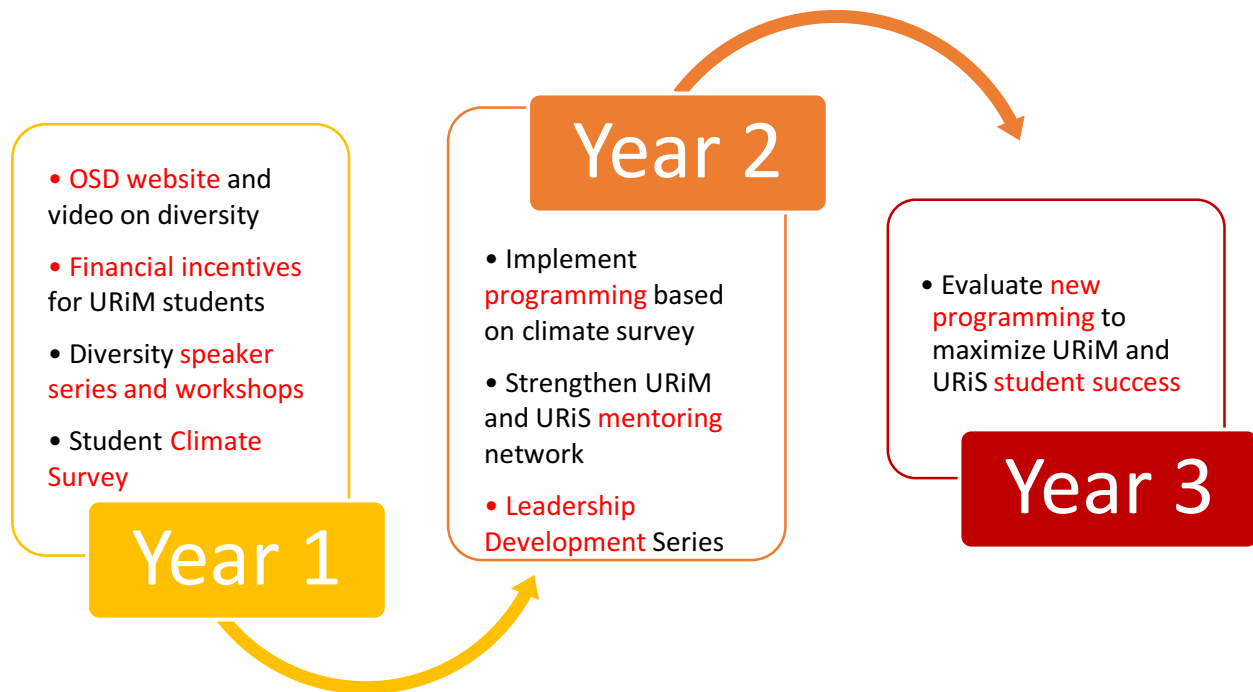
We will also begin weekly coffee hours and monthly dinners to build a community and network among students and their mentors.

Goal #4 - Developing a mentorship network

While mentoring has been shown to be pivotal in career development and success, there are still significant deficits in mentoring in academia, especially for underrepresented and female students, trainees, faculty and staff. A more formal mentoring program may serve as a powerful intervention, however there are few studies demonstrating proven successful models for such programs, especially for disadvantaged groups. Informal mentoring has also been shown to be important in professional development[iv], but this form of mentoring may also be less accessible to URiM and URiS students. Although students from these backgrounds do not require URiM or URiS faculty as mentors for success, access to URiM and URiS faculty is often requested.

We posit that a mentoring network where small teams of students, residents/postdocs/fellows, and mentors could meet at the beginning of each school year, and every 4-6 weeks throughout the year for dinner. As the transition to medical and graduate school is often one of the most difficult parts of the process, first year students will be a special focus of the program at the beginning of the academic year.

Specific Objectives by Year

Year 1
- OSD website and video on diversity
- Financial incentives for URiM students
- Diversity speaker series and workshops
- Student Climate Survey

Year 2
- Implement programming based on climate survey
- Strengthen URiM and URiS mentoring network
- Leadership Development Series

Year 3
- Evaluate new programming to maximize URiM and URiS student success

Year 1
- New section on diversity website and new video on student diversity.
- Work with Financial Aid and Development to increase financial incentives for URiM students. Provide more support for student representation at conferences.
- Strengthen URiM and URiS alumni network. Diversity coordinator to work on regular communication with Alumni Relations.
- Student climate survey to better assess student feelings on diversity and inclusion across medical and graduate school.
- Weekly coffee hours and monthly dinners to build community and openness.
- New diversity speaker series and workshops organized by diversity coordinator. Will evolve into leadership development series.

Year 2
- Implement programming based on climate survey (i.e. unconscious bias workshops/trainings, diversity retreat).
- Establish and strengthen URiM and URiS mentoring network (see Goal #4).
- Establish leadership development series with focus on diversity, career and professional development workshops. To be organized by diversity coordinator.

Year 3
- Evaluate and modify programming to maximize URiM and URiS student success. Evaluation is important to determining what is most effective.

Specific Areas of Focus

Recruitment
- Collaborate with the admissions office (both Grad and Med) to establish a travel and recruitment plan
- Establish and utilize relationship management tools (CRM) and new recruitment materials (both print and electronic)
- Collaborate with faculty committee on URiM recruitment and development and establish committee for URiS recruitment and development
- Encourage more student involvement in recruitment efforts at conferences both locally and nationally

Pipeline and Outreach programs
- Transition to electronic applications
- Assess and improve funding mechanisms
- Continue to track outcomes and increase effectiveness of programs
- Enable student participation in outreach and community service
- Plan and execute 50th anniversary ceremony for the Travelers Summer Research Fellowship Program

Diversity programming/workshops/speakers
- Conduct student climate survey assessment for diversity and inclusion
- Develop mentoring network with regular meetings
- Invite URiM and URiS faculty and speakers to meet with students
- Invite speakers to address topics of leadership development and diversity
- Continue SPARC/SPARC Jr. conferences and other annual diversity initiatives

Tracking outcomes and effectiveness
- Measure the effectiveness of diversity initiatives via outcomes and surveys
- Establish central repository for all student diversity programs
- Track progress and success of URIM and URiS students with Registrar and Alumni Relations offices
- Strengthen URiM and URiS alumni network

Branding and Communication
- Establish better lines of communicating to URiM and URiS students, trainees, and faculty
- Develop website and newsletter in collaboration with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
- Coordinate efforts and communication between diversity student groups
- Develop projects for branding student diversity such as video and photo-timeline

Research in diversity and student development

- Improve research and scholarship in area of diversity to inform best practices to programming
- Follow current diversity literature and national conversations
- Test and model interventions for increasing diversity and inclusion

Grants and external funding

- Seek grants from NIH, NSF, and other external sources for academic, professional development, outreach and community building
- Center for Excellence and U54 proposals submitted

[i] Gotian, Ruth MS; Raymore, Jemella C. MD; Rhooms, Shauna-Kay; Liberman, Laura MD; Andersen, Olaf S. MD. Gateways to the Laboratory: How an MDPhD Program Increased the Number of Minority Physician Scientists. Academic Medicine 2017; 92(5): 628–634

[ii] Mullan F, Chen C, Petterson S, Kolsky G, Spagnola M. The social mission of medical education: ranking the schools. Ann Intern Med 2010;152:804-11

[iii] The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, April 13, 2013. http://www.jbhe.com/2013/04/the-medical-schools-with-the-highest-percentage-of-graduates-who-are-black/

[iv] Rose GL, Rukstalis MR, Schuckit MA. Informal mentoring between faculty and medical students. Acad Med. 2005 Apr;80(4):344-8.