

Report on Research Compliance Volume 18, Number 4. March 23, 2021

To Combat Racism, NIH Advised to Require Annual Data, Issue Institutional 'Report Card'

By Theresa Defino

Following social injustice protests over police brutality against Black people and the health disparities accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, an advisory committee assisting NIH with diversity efforts has recommended^[1] that the agency require institutions to report acts of racial discrimination, details of their programs to promote faculty members who are Black and other related metrics. NIH should then annually issue “report cards for institutions and principal investigators that receive NIH funding.”

The recommendations are part of the *Racism in Science Report*^[2] that the NIH Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) adopted and forwarded to Francis Collins for action during a recent special meeting. Although there is some overlap, the report was written by the ACD’s Working Group on Diversity, composed of high-ranking university representatives, and is separate from a new initiative to combat structural racism NIH developed called UNITE, which was also unveiled at the meeting.^[3]

Typically the ACD meets twice a year—in June and December. The Feb. 26 meeting was devoted entirely to discussion of the report and UNITE, which NIH created to “identify and address structural racism within the NIH-supported and the greater scientific community.” NIH also issued a statement against racism,^[4] launched a new website,^[5] and issued a request for information (RFI).^[6]

UNITE also includes a five-year commitment of \$60 million from NIH’s Common Fund for 20 awards that will help “foster the development, testing, and dissemination of innovative interventions focused on elimination of health disparities broadly and in high priority areas” and increase investigator competitiveness and the research base dedicated to health disparities research at minority-serving institutions.^[7]

The initiative takes its name from five committees with “separate but coordinated objectives on tackling the problem of racism and discrimination in science, while developing methods to promote diversity and inclusion across the biomedical enterprise,” as follows:^[8]

Understanding stakeholder experiences through listening and learning

New research on health disparities, minority health, and health equity

Improving the NIH Culture and Structure for Equity, Inclusion, and Excellence

Transparency, communication, and accountability with our internal and external stakeholders

Extramural Research Ecosystem: Changing Policy, Culture, and Structure to Promote Workforce Diversity

This document is only available to subscribers. Please log in or purchase access.

[Purchase Login](#)