The kaleidoscope enables us to see a brighter, more dynamic future.

Friends,

I welcome you to another edition of our newsletter, which takes its name from the beautiful picture created when many disparate parts come together to create a magnificent whole, just as we do here daily at UAMS.

Late spring and early summer have certainly been challenging times for many of us as we’ve all dealt with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. On behalf of myself as well as all our diversity staff, I would like to offer my thanks to the clinical heroes who have been on the front lines of screening, testing and treating those who are battling this terrible virus.

Our national consciousness has also been rocked in recent months by protests, ongoing since late May. The recorded murder of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis has sparked a multitude of long overdue conversations in this country. Diversity, equity and inclusion are at the very center of these conversations, and we have not been idle, as you can see in this update.

That work includes not only listening and promoting healing within our community, but outreach beyond it. DDEI’s summer programs are underway, being conducted virtually for the first time. In that effort and its tapestry of participants, I see so many reasons to celebrate the future, despite the stress of this current moment.

As we look toward fall, I encourage you to keep an eye out for our annual report, which will offer a broad view of all we’ve accomplished in the last year, as well as the goals we’ve set out for the coming fiscal year. Similarly, I hope you will be able to attend the State of Diversity address in September, whether among the limited attendance in person or by streaming online. I appreciate your continued commitment to inclusive excellence at UAMS and wish you and yours the best.

Sincerely,

Brian Gittens, Ed.D.
Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
UAMS Students, Employees Stand Against Racism

Standing against systemic racism, hundreds of UAMS students, faculty and staff surrounded the Dolores Bruce Fountain in front of UAMS Medical Center at noon June 11.

The event, White Coats for Black Lives, was organized by Gloria Richard-Davis, M.D., MBA, executive director for the UAMS Division for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion collaboratively with the UAMS Edith Irby Jones Chapter of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA).

It was prompted by the May 25 incident in which a white Minneapolis police officer knelt on the neck of George Floyd, a black man in custody, for eight minutes and 46 seconds. Floyd died, and the officer has since been charged with manslaughter and second degree murder.

"In the midst of a pandemic, people are still moved by inhumanity. And one person can still make a difference," said Richard-Davis.

The nonprofit group White Coats for Black Lives was formed in response to the events of 2014, in which officers involved in the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner were acquitted. UAMS plans to start a chapter.

It has unequivocally supported the Black Lives Matter movement, which has again drawn national attention following the death of Floyd, the March 13 death of Breonna Taylor in Kentucky at police hands, and the Feb. 23 killing of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia after being chased while jogging by armed white men.

"We're still having that same conversation," Richard-Davis said, citing incidents of systemic racism even in health care, where minorities face greater risks for conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity due to disparities in care and insurance coverage. "We took an oath to do no harm. Racist practice, whether implicit or overt, is harmful. We must take intentional action to eliminate racism, because black lives do matter."

UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, took the podium and emphasized that racism and discrimination have no place at UAMS.

"I'm amazed to see so many of you here right now fighting for the principles and values that are the very foundation of our university and the entire health care industry. We are here to serve all people, regardless of color, religion, ethnicity, sexual identity or orientation," said Patterson. "We are here to serve all 3 million Arkansans."

"So much has been said about the 'new normal' that we have to adjust to because of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., UAMS provost, chief academic officer and chief strategy officer. "But on racism we have an opportunity, a responsibility, to be part of the solution, to work each day to create a better normal than what we had. A better normal for our learners, our patients, our communities and our state we serve, especially for communities of color and the most vulnerable populations. Together we can create a 'better normal.'"

Brian Gittens, Ed.D., vice chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, reiterated the need for people to be part of the solution, quoting the saying "whatever we do not change, we choose."

"Your presence today represents a choice," said Gittens. "A choice to reject systemic racism, a choice to demand justice, a choice to advocate for equity in access, a choice to no longer accept the status quo. We are way overdue."

Gittens encouraged all involved to continue to stay involved in action and advocacy beyond the current moment, calling the push for social justice, "a marathon, not a sprint."

Medical student Natasha Thompson, representing SNMA, and neurosurgery resident Jerry Walters II, M.D., also added their voices. Thompson reminded the crowd that SNMA was founded in 1964 because African American students were not permitted to join the American Medical Association.

"Although some things are different today, some things are still the same," she said. "Black people are still fighting for their freedom. Black people are still dying at the hands of police brutality. And in 2020, black people are still fighting for equality."

Walters recounted his own experience as a young man of color, being pulled over by police in college and doing all the things he was taught to do to ensure his safety: turn off the car, roll the window down, turn the dome lights on, keep both hands visible, make no sudden movements and speak in a calm, respectful tone at all times. He still had a gun pointed at him.

"This isn't to suggest that all police are racist," he said. "Only to suggest that I believe widespread change is necessary in law enforcement."

At the conclusion of the event, all present were asked to kneel, if possible, or stand respectfully for eight minutes and 46 seconds, in memory of George Floyd and the time during which he was pinned, unable to breathe.
DDEI Hosts Virtual Healing, Discussion Chats

In the wake of nationwide protests concerning systemic racism in American society, the UAMS Division for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion hosted a series of online safe spaces during the week of June 8 for students and employees to discuss current events.

“This period of extended protest has stimulated a long overdue conversation,” said Brian Gittens, Ed.D., vice chancellor for diversity, equity and inclusion. “Dialogue is essential. To confront systemic racism, we need to name it. We need to call it out wherever we see it. And we want to empower and encourage our community in that conversation.”

The sessions were designed as an open, online safe space for employees and students to discuss current events and to promote healing conversations about race and race relations moderated by DDEI staff. They were organized as part of the DDEI Academy for Inclusive Excellence, with the goal of building a culturally humble, proficient and responsive workforce at UAMS.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you. I so deeply appreciate you and the rest of DDEI for hosting and leading these sessions. There was a lot to be learned and a lot to be healed, and I am so grateful those of us on these calls represent UAMS,” said participant Olivia Tzeng, via email.

“Thank you very much for this opportunity. I think you created a very special and important place,” responded Dorothy Graves, Ph.D., associate director of administration with the UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute.

A series of five sessions were held over three days. Sessions were held at various times throughout the day to accommodate employees working outside of daytime office hours. Each session lasted about one and a half hours.

“We held similar listening sessions in recent years in response to people of color being killed by law enforcement,” said Amber Booth-McCoy, senior diversity specialist. “But the fact that I couldn’t tell you, off the top of my head, which incidents those were, whether Eric Garner, Michael Brown, or many, many others, should tell you all you need to know about why these conversations are so badly needed.”

Continuing Sessions

DDEI will continue to host weekly sessions through August. Registration is limited to one session per person for the first 100 people per session.

Additional information and registration:
ddei.uams.edu/initiatives/academy-for-inclusive-excellence/clearing-the-air-a-virtual-healing-space/
Juneteenth Online Chat, Website Provides for Shared Experiences

Juneteenth, the anniversary of the final 1865 emancipation of all enslaved Americans, was celebrated June 19 at UAMS hosted by the UAMS Division for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

“This year especially, we want people to ‘Celebrate, Educate and Connect,’ which has been our theme,” said Odette Woods, senior director of diversity at DDEI.

A special Juneteenth website — ddei.uams.edu/Juneteenth — was created by the Diversity and Inclusion Engagement Subcommittee and Kelly Gardner, web developer, with links to explore the culinary traditions of the celebration, videos and articles about its history, and links to spoken word and musical celebrations, including virtual celebrations locally and nationally.

Additionally, the subcommittee hosted an open, online chat for visitors to share their Juneteenth experiences and traditions with others.

The subcommittee was organized under the Chancellor’s Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and is composed of volunteers and leaders among faculty and staff throughout UAMS. It is charged with promoting an awareness of and an appreciation for the diversity of our campus community and in engaging campus community members by designing, planning and implementing DDEI campus-wide initiatives/events that further the mission of the DDEI.

The online discussion, which lasted for an hour and a half, averaged about 125 participants throughout. Many volunteered their own experiences, from family traditions on Juneteenth to encouraging everyone to create their own celebrations, even new celebrations for those who may not have been aware of the holiday.

“The online discussion was a welcoming – and right now I think a very healing – space in which we were able to share and grow together, celebrating and promoting diversity and inclusion,” said Woods, who serves as the DDEI staff liaison to the subcommittee.

“I think what brought us together here today was a perfect storm of pandemic, racism and our reaction to it and the influence of social media. But I think that’s really allowed us to elevate the conversation we’re having,” said Gloria Richard-Davis, M.D., MBA, executive director for diversity, equity and inclusion, during the online event. “This is just one example of how we’re using virtual platforms to facilitate everyday routines, but I think this event is an example of the innovation we’ve shown, meeting here in a way that we just would not have done previously.”

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic limiting celebratory gatherings of large crowds, this year’s anniversary has largely been focused on education, especially given circumstances that have prompted nationwide protests over systemic racism still prevalent throughout the United States.

“This holiday marks the end of an ugly chapter in American history, but I encourage everyone to own the moment, to reframe it. Think of it as a reflection and the start of something new,” said Brian Gittens, Ed.D., vice chancellor for diversity, equity and inclusion, at the beginning of the online event.

Gittens encouraged all participants to open a dialogue with those around them, especially those with differences, and to “ask questions without fear or feeling of being judged.”

“I want us to take this time to reflect on a new way of interacting and a new way of being. I want you all to look at things differently, to identify those things that hinder your sense of belonging and to knock those things down.”
As part of its commitment to fostering a more diverse and inclusive atmosphere on campus and throughout the institution, the Division for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has created the Academy of Inclusive Excellence to offer training and professional development for our institutional community.

The Academy offers single-setting courses that will help faculty, staff, and students better understand the role diversity plays in fostering excellence on campus, as well as in-depth programs and workshops within the space of diversity, equity and inclusion.

If your department would be interested in any programs offered by the Academy, please contact Amber Booth-McCoy at ANBooth@uams.edu or 501-686-8675.

– Brian Gittens, Ed.D.
Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
Great Minds DON’T Think Alike... A Case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

This 2.5-hour interactive course states a well-crafted and interesting case advocating for the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It provides a data-driven and humanistic approach to the often-obscure subject of inclusion. This course assists learners with understanding and appreciating differences in backgrounds, cultures, and personality types. Using the philosophy of cultural humility as its framework, this course includes tips and guidance on how individual employees can promote diversity, support inclusion, and advocate for equity.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Are you hiring for diversity but celebrating conformity? This session moves past the numbers game of diverse representation to focus on leaning into and leveraging the unique abilities, perspectives, styles, and ideas of each person. This course explores stereotypes, implicit bias, cognitive diversity, and tools for creating an inclusive workplace. Three practices lay out a personalized path for identifying, engaging with, and advocating for individuals whose voices must and should be heard.

Age & Technology in the Workplace

Today’s workforce encompasses the most generationally diverse workforce in U.S. history. This interactive course explores best practices for inclusivity amid the fast-paced advances in technology and team communication. Additionally, the course offers tips and tools for bridging communication and/or technological competency gaps in team dynamics.

Implicit Bias and its Everyday Impact

This is a 2.5-hour interactive course designed to increase awareness of implicit bias and reduce its impact at the University. This course reinforces the UAMS values in context to diversity, equity, and inclusion that enable the University to attract and retain a diverse students, faculty, staff, and trainees, create inclusive communities, and leverage inclusive excellence. Additionally, the course introduces the effects of implicit bias on our social systems: education, health care, and community.

Everyday Bias for Healthcare Professionals

Bias is the inclination to judge without question. It is an automatic response from our brain that happens without our awareness, intention, or control. This training will provide participants with the knowledge and tools to recognize bias in themselves, their behaviors, and their workplace. Participants are then equipped to disrupt the impact of bias on their decision-making.

Implicit Bias for Leaders: Impact on Decision-Making

This 2.5-hour course is an introduction to the concept of implicit bias and focuses on its impact on organizational decision-making. It combines fundamental psychological approaches like stereotyping threat, unintentional blindness, and selective attention along with more traditional diversity approaches that emphasize micro-advantages and micro-inequities. Participants are challenged to review organizational systems and identify opportunities to mitigate bias and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.
It’s the Little Things: Introduction to Micro-Inequities and Micro-aggressions
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Micro-Inequities in the Workplace
Micro-aggressions and micro-inequities are little things that make a huge difference regarding employee engagement and team productivity. This is a 1.5-hour interactive course designed to explore the impact micro-aggressions and micro-inequities, in the workplace, specifically their impact on mental health and wellness. The course provides tools for the mitigating impact of micro-aggressions and inequities. In addition, it offers tips for developing healthy coping skills when faced with frequent micro-aggressions/micro-inequities.

Reassessing a Cultural Experience (R.A.C.E.): Introduction to Race/Ethnicity and its Impact on Social Systems
This is a 2.5-hour interactive course exploring the social construct of race. The module provides an understanding of race, its origin, purpose, and effects on social systems such as education, health care, and community.

How Can I Best Support You?: Developing an Inclusive & Affirming Environment for Diverse Student Populations
This is an interactive course designed to provide professional school faculty and staff with tools for supporting a diverse student body. Using the philosophy of cultural humility as its framework, this course includes tips and guidance on how individuals and organizations can mitigate implicit bias and micro-inequities and move toward intentional inclusivity.

Mental Illness and the Workplace: Exploring the Importance of Being Inclusive in the Workplace
This 1-hour interactive workshop is designed to address the importance of inclusive workplace conversations regarding mental health and associated stigmas. This course equips managers/university change agents with tools for changing the narrative and creating an affirming culture in regards to mental illness.

LGBTQ Key Concepts for Care
This course provides a foundation for understanding key terms, health disparities, and necessary concepts for providing LBGTQ+ care. Additionally, the course offers a framework and tools for best practices for health care providers in relation to the LBGTQ+ population.

Gender-Affirming Patient Care
In this module, participants will learn ways to provide affirming and inclusive health care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) patients.

Developing Allyship and Advocacy
Allies—people who are not LGBTQ themselves—have done an enormous amount to advance the cause of LGBTQ equality. An ally can show support for LGBTQ friends, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, co-congregants, family members and others in a wide variety of ways. This course provides tips and tools for becoming and ally and advocate for the LBGTQ+ community.

Access Isn’t Just Accessibility: Creating Inclusive Environments for People Differently-abled
This 1.5-hour course is an introduction to the concept of cultural competency of disability in the professional and health care environment. Participants will explore their biases related to various types of disabilities and work toward an intentionally inclusive environment.
Calendar

Columbia Opera (at right) shows off her home science experiment for the DDEI Junior STEM Academy. All DDEI summer programs were moved to virtual instruction this summer in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

DDEI Summer Outreach Programs
Junior STEM Academy 1 (K-2): June 8-12, 2020
Junior STEM Academy 2 (3-5): June 15-19, 2020
Senior STEM Academy (6-8): July 13-17, 2020
Academy of Pre-Health Scholars (9-12): June 8-July 17, 2020
Pre-Medical Summer Scholars (undergraduate): June 15–July 24, 2020

Upcoming events

STATE OF DIVERSITY ADDRESS
This year’s State of Diversity address will be delivered in a hybrid format, with limited capacity in-person seating as well as online streaming. This event provides an opportunity for the chancellor to look back over diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives over the previous year and to set forth his vision for diversity, equity and inclusion as we move forward. The event will also feature the presentation of the Dr. Edith Irby Jones Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award and awards for the UAMS Serves program.

When: Sept. 9, 2020, 12 p.m.-1 p.m.
Where: Online via Zoom, limited seating in Jackson T. Stephens Spine and Neurosciences Institute
12th floor Auditorium

SICKLE CELL DISEASE AWARENESS

When: Sept. 15, 2020
Where: Virtual and in-person event (Jackson T. Stephens Auditorium)
Time: TBA

INTERNATIONAL FEST

When: Sept. 25, 2020
Where: Virtual event via Zoom
Time: TBA

Winners of the 2019 Dr. Edith Irby Jones Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Awards for faculty, student and staff, respectively. Gregory Robinson, Ph.D., Danviona King and April Hughes.

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Meet the DDEI Team

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