Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion Report

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

June 4, 2020
I. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

For decades, Harvard Medical School (HMS) has worked to build a vibrant culture of diversity and inclusion. Advocacy efforts that began in the 1960s led to the 1995 establishment of the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity, which was renamed the Office for Diversity Inclusion and Community Partnership (DICP) in 2002. Over the years, HMS has collaborated with its affiliated institutions to shape a multitude of successes, as highlighted throughout this report.

Yet significant work lies ahead. Recognizing that HMS needed a robust community-wide effort to identify and reach even higher goals, in early 2017 newly appointed HMS Dean George Q. Daley, MD, PhD, convened the Harvard Medical School Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion (TFDI). HMS Dean for Diversity and Community Partnership Joan Y. Reede, MD, MPH, MS, MBA, was appointed chair of the 36-member TFDI, which was comprised of faculty, students, trainees, fellows, staff and administrators from across the HMS community.

Emerging from their efforts was a vision for success that includes increased representation of historically marginalized individuals—such as groups underrepresented in medicine (URM), women, those who identify as LGBTQ and individuals with disabilities—at all levels, particularly senior faculty and department administrator and leadership positions. They worked to envision and define an integrated ecosystem for HMS and its 15 affiliated hospitals and research institutions that attracts and retains top talent as a result of the School’s reputation for excellence in medicine and its culture of valuing, developing and advancing diversity.

The TFDI met 15 times from February 2017 to May 2019, culminating in this comprehensive report, which serves as a roadmap for achieving greater diversity and inclusion in the near term. It also serves as a springboard for the HMS Better Together plan, which articulates the School’s comprehensive, multi-year, coordinated efforts to be recognized as a leader in diversity and inclusion.
At outset, the TFDI was charged with the following goals:

1. Analyze the landscape of current diversity and inclusion resources and offerings at HMS, its affiliated hospitals and research institutions, and Harvard University;
2. Develop a diversity and inclusion vision and policy consistent with the School’s mission and values; foster excellence in teaching, research and service; support the multiple dimensions of diversity reflected in the HMS community; and be responsive to regulatory requirements;
3. Identify measures of accountability to assess the achievement of diversity and inclusion goals and expectations, including mechanisms for promoting evidence-based decision making; and
4. Identify and prioritize needs for deeper investigation, goal-setting and recommendations for action toward advancing diversity and inclusion.

To gain an understanding of the HMS landscape around diversity, inclusion and belonging, the TFDI’s first charge, the task force held meetings and invited testimony and presentations from representatives across faculty, students and administration. In addition, it reviewed HMS and national diversity and inclusion data, held several community-wide listening sessions, and established a website portal inviting input from students, faculty and staff. It distributed posters titled “What does diversity and inclusion at HMS mean to you?” throughout the HMS Quadrangle campus, located in the heart of the Longwood Medical Area in Boston.

During initial deliberations, the TFDI leveraged the expertise of its members together with the information gathered via presentations at committee meetings, community-wide listening sessions, surveys and literature review, to identify key areas that warranted a deeper dive. Stemming from that effort, the TFDI:

- Drafted a Diversity Statement;
- Identified target groups;
- Crafted a Diversity and Inclusion Policy; and
- Used the emerging framework as part of HMS’s self-study for accreditation by the Liaison Committee for Medical Education (LCME), as well as the development of a new strategic plan, with diversity as a cross-cutting element.
Following an iterative process, the HMS Diversity Statement developed by the TFDI was later adopted by HMS, fulfilling the second charge of the task force. In October 2017, the Diversity Statement was presented by Dean Daley and members of the TFDI in a Town Hall meeting, which was livestreamed to the full community. Since its adoption, the HMS Diversity Statement has been widely shared throughout HMS and its affiliates to communicate our commitment to diversity. In 2018, the HMS Faculty Council approved the Diversity and Inclusion Policy developed by the TFDI and stipulated the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee to continue the development of cross-institutional initiatives in diversity, inclusion and belonging.

To assess diversity, inclusion and belonging at HMS, the third charge of the TFDI, a metrics-focused TFDI subgroup met initially in spring 2017 to better understand data availability and identify measures of accountability. During that time, the subgroup identified a schema for data identification. It developed and honed the targeted groups and a list of metrics. It also made initial recommendations to the TFDI regarding targeted populations for the HMS Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Later, the subgroup was formalized to become the Metrics Subcommittee.

To satisfy its fourth and final charge, the TFDI selected six areas for deeper investigation:

- Career Development and Retention of Diverse Faculty
- Diversity Pipeline and Community Engagement
- Diversity in Residency Training
- Diversity in Scientific Pathways
- Culture, Climate and Communication
- Metrics

Additionally, medical student finances relating to diversity and inclusion were identified as an important area of focus. This review process was undertaken by the Program in Medical Education (PME) under the direction of Dean for Medical Education Edward M. Hundert, MD, who gave an update on these efforts at a TFDI meeting in December 2018.

The proceedings of the TFDI and its six deep-dive subcommittees are summarized in four cross-cutting themes:
1. Develop People and Infrastructure
2. Build Community and Belonging
3. Address Culture and Communication
4. Hold Accountable and Generate Knowledge

Within each theme, this report details:

1. What Is Currently Working
2. Areas for Improvement
3. Recommendations

The TFDI thoroughly assessed the HMS ecosystem while identifying opportunities for improvement. HMS includes many offices, programs, initiatives and individuals dedicated to the development and advancement of diversity and inclusion. This report highlights these strengths. For some initiatives, it recommends continued support; for others, scaled resources to broaden impact. The report also proposes new initiatives.

Recommendations for improvement include:

- Creating a stronger sense of belonging and connectedness among students, faculty and staff across the HMS community;
- Enhancing programmatic infrastructure to support retention and advancement of individuals from groups historically underrepresented in medicine (URM); and
- Strengthening the communication of resources, events and opportunities that advance a culture of diversity and inclusion at HMS.

In addition to recommending better support for existing programs and identifying our strengths, this report recommends the provision of new resources and infrastructure to facilitate the development and advancement of URM individuals and women. It proposes building robust collaboration across institutions to ensure a community-wide commitment to establishing HMS as a destination for diverse individuals. Implementation of recommendations should consider and plan for sustainability, measures of accountability through the development of specific, measurable, accurate, reliable and timely (SMART) metrics, and embracing practices of continuous quality improvement (CQI).
Complementing the task force at HMS, in fall 2016, then Harvard President Drew G. Faust, PhD, established the Harvard University Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging (TFIB). The TFIB included faculty, students and staff from across the university and was created to address an integrated set of questions considered salient to placing and advancing Harvard University on the path to achieving optimal diversity inclusion and belonging. Dean Reede was one of two HMS representatives on the university’s task force. This role, combined with her role as chair of the TFDI at HMS, helped ensure that the deliberations and recommendations of the medical school and university task forces, the HMS strategic plan, and the HMS Diversity and Inclusion Policy were consistent.

The work of the TFDI was also integrated with the concurrent LCME self-study process, which concluded with the LCME site visit in March 2019. Representatives from the TFDI sat on each of the LCME self-study subcommittees. Preliminary recommendations from the TFDI were shared with the subcommittees and steering committee, and the self-study committees shared recommendations with the TFDI.

Across the findings of the TFDI’s deliberations, four key themes emerged:

**THEME 1: DEVELOP PEOPLE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

a. Recruit, develop, advance and retain diverse individuals across the full spectrum of faculty, trainees, students and staff
b. Recruit, identify, nurture and educate diverse leaders who champion HMS community values
c. Sponsor pipeline programming that addresses identified needs and clearly defines expectations
d. Support efforts that enable addressing health disparities and social justice
e. Provide resources for infrastructure that supports diversity and inclusion

The TFDI recommends providing mechanisms and concerted efforts to recruit, develop and retain individuals from groups identified in the Diversity and Inclusion Policy. HMS should foster existing programs that have demonstrated success while simultaneously exploring areas of strategic improvement such as increased collaboration across organizational units and institutions—both within
HMS and across HMS affiliated hospitals and research institutions—and creating more resources for professional development and career support.

Additionally, HMS should reinforce infrastructures within the institution that support diversity and inclusion efforts as a whole. This includes protected time for diversity-related work, financial support for programs that directly address diversity, inclusion and belonging strategic priorities, and official groups and committees focused on monitoring diversity efforts HMS-wide.

**THEME 2: BUILD COMMUNITY AND BELONGING**

a. Improve well-being and decrease burnout of HMS faculty, trainees, students and staff
b. Promote a climate of collaboration and cooperation
c. Provide time, space and organization for building communities within community
d. Enhance outreach and in-reach with our local, national and global communities
e. Decrease access boundaries to HMS and HMS-affiliate programming

In addition to creating a culture of belonging and developing people within the HMS community, the TFDI, through community input and committee deliberations, identified the need for community-building efforts as a cornerstone of its recommendations. Community feedback reinforced the resounding importance of mentorship and space for networking to create a sense of belonging and enabling individuals to achieve success. These opportunities for building “community within community” can serve to decrease burnout, foster collaboration, enable HMS to serve the school and surrounding community, and address health disparities with vision and purpose.

Aligned with recommendations of the Harvard TFIB for pursuing excellence on a foundation of inclusion, HMS should strive to prioritize diversity and inclusion through continuously creating space, holding conversations and elevating voices to perpetuate a community that is connected, collaborative and inclusive.

**THEME 3: ADDRESS CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION**

a. Counter bias and microaggressions
b. Create space for safe, respectful dialogue
c. Ensure images are reflective of the community
d. Develop searchable shared resources that build and reinforce connections
e. Provide accessible, inclusive, useful websites
f. Embed diversity, inclusion and belonging messaging in all communications

The TFDI recommends that HMS prioritize efforts to build inclusive communities, counter biases and create a sense of belonging across the complex and diverse HMS ecosystem. HMS can advance its mission to nurture a diverse inclusive community by addressing bias and microaggressions, providing bystander training, creating safe space for dialogue, establishing an inclusive physical environment through images and accessibility, and developing resources to build and reinforce connections. To achieve these goals and create a culture of belonging, the TFDI recommends formal concerted efforts to address bias and microaggressions through policy, trainings and programming, while also embedding the Harvard-wide framework for diversity and inclusive excellence within communications across all platforms.

THEME 4: HOLD ACCOUNTABLE AND GENERATE KNOWLEDGE

a. Monitor and track outcomes
b. Endorse continuous quality improvement principles for diversity and inclusion programming
c. Incorporate evidence-based decision making that leads to tangible change
d. Promote transparency
e. Generate new knowledge that informs workforce and leadership efforts and has local and national impact

To create a model of sustainable, continuously improving diversity, inclusion and belonging initiatives, the TFDI recommends HMS-wide accountability through leveraging existing data and gathering new information. Through monitoring and tracking outcomes of programs and efforts aimed at increasing and supporting diversity, leadership is better able to know what is effective and should be further supported, areas that require additional development and those that should be phased out. Departments should be held accountable for incorporating principles
of inclusive excellence throughout their functions, from recruitment to retention. The TFDI recommends mechanisms for the regular reporting and measuring of diversity-related metrics across departments. HMS should prioritize the generation of internal data and knowledge that will serve as key resources for leadership to inform strategic planning, new programming and decision making. To promote transparency and enable internal benchmarking, the TFDI recommends the development of a data dashboard that depicts HMS initiatives in diversity, inclusion and belonging.