

DMH Update
July 7, 2020

Hello everyone,

I hope that you each found some joy and relaxation over the long weekend. A friend of mine quoted her dad this weekend: “In our independence we discover how much we actually depend on each other. For our health, for justice, for safety. We are at our most independent when we appreciate our interdependence.” – Gen (R) Martin Demsey. I love his sentiment and find it so appropriate at this moment.

Unfortunately, this week has begun with events that counter this concept of appreciation for our interdependence across race, culture, and continent.

Many of us were once again struck by disgusting news of racism, this time reflected in the discovery of a noose, a symbol of hatred and cruelty, found on a JHU-affiliated site. As I mentioned in my last update, our department has formed a working group on diversity, equity and inclusion to set an agenda for the department, to provide opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to engage in anti-racism activities, and to collaborate with the School’s office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. Aspects of this group’s efforts will be modeled off of the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism, and Science group (IDEAS) in the department of Epidemiology, with an emphasis on collective participation and input from faculty, staff, and students. I want to thank Renee Johnson for helping to lead this effort, and to thank Rebecca Fix, Judy Bass, Sabriya Linton, Tamar Mendelson, Laura Clary and Sarah Murray for their input so far. We are eager to get more of you involved, and particularly to engage students and staff in this effort. Early ideas for activities and goals include:

- Promote equity, inclusion, and diversity within the department across education, research, practice and advocacy domains
- Develop and facilitate discussions and training for faculty, staff and students on DEI topics such as anti-racism, unconscious bias, microaggressions, and health disparities.
- Review our curriculum and develop content focused on equity, inclusion, and diversity
- Collect and communicate opportunities for research focused on equity and diversity in public mental health
- Assist the department in aligning its goals, practices, policies, and procedures with principles of DEI and anti-racism, particularly through strategies to hold the department accountable and to development a process for seeking and responding to equity and diversity-related concerns of students, staff, and faculty

These are starter ideas. Please join in this effort to set an agenda and create opportunities for engagement. You can contact Renee Johnson to get involved. We will also discuss this further at our faculty meeting next week and through small group discussions, “town-hall” style meetings, and other activities through the summer and beyond.

This week has also brought new immigration challenges, with [ICE](#) indicating that FI and MI students attending colleges and universities operating entirely online will not be allowed to remain in residence in the United States. This is a huge blow for students at universities

planning responsible public health measures that include remaining virtual through the fall. For those in our DMH community concerned about this, I want you know we share your anxiety and frustration. Our training and our science are strong because of the diverse perspectives, skills, and origins of our faculty staff and students, many of whom are international, studying or working on visas. The School, University, and higher education professional organizations are working nonstop right now to address this, and I hope to give you updates very soon about strategies to be taken.

Lastly, the President's announced intention to depart the WHO has become a formal withdrawal. This is tragic, and the opposite of recognizing our interdependence. Many of you have worked hard on behalf of our global society, including directly with WHO, and I know you feel this acutely. I have every confidence that our collective efforts to work across borders to better the world's health will continue, despite this setback. The long-standing and deep-seeded relationships we have all built, and the importance of international collaborations on behalf of the world's health have not lessened, and our School will continue to make a difference in this regard.

I write this email to express our solidarity for each other in these challenging times and to hopefully remind you all that we are in this together and that we have a platform to make a difference. If you are having a tough time, please don't forget about resources like [mySupport](#) and [JHSAP](#). You can also reach out to me, to your advisor, your mentor, or a colleague or friend. I am eager to help.

There is much to be grateful for, even in this challenging moment, and one of the things I am most grateful for is the hard work, skill, and kindness in each of you. I get to be a part of a group of people who have the voice and the expertise to manifest change and to address inequities in health, particularly mental health, here in Baltimore, in the US, and across the globe. Thank you for all you are doing.

Warmly,

Dani