OVPR DEI
Community Newsletter

Infusing DEI into Our Work

Guidance and strategies to reduce bias in peer review

UMOR DEI Committee & U-M Office of the Vice President for Research

During the planning of our Year 5 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategic plan, UMOR leadership and DEI committee began to develop plans and engage in first actions around research impacts and the broader U-M research enterprise. One of these actions included the addition of a new strategic objective: Ensure practices around reviewing funding decisions and award nominations and outcomes are aligned with recommended effective practices that reduce unconscious bias and address racial and gender diversity of grant/award nominations and awardees.

Peer review ("a process of subjecting an author's scholarly work, research or ideas to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the same field"[1]) in its many incarnations is essential to the functioning of the research enterprise yet it is not without weaknesses. Various forms of bias, for example, threaten the integrity and effectiveness of peer review at journals, funding agencies, and even for programs within institutions. Recent innovations and scholarly research on peer review can help program administrators, reviewers, and award committees improve practices and mitigate bias.

After a review of the current practices in place at U-M for award nominations and awards, and examination of whether those practices align with local and national recommended effective practices (including those based on scholarship in this field), The U-M Office of the Vice President for Research has prepared guidance on strategies to reduce bias in peer review, with a focus on internal award nominations and funding programs. The guidance includes strategies for bias mitigation through the entire process, from designing calls for proprosals or nominations to post-peer review. You will also find a number of additional resources, including suggestions for further scholarly reading.

The intention of the information is not to make peer review an unnecessarily onerous task for any one particular group, but to help educate the research community and ensure internal review practices are equitable and transparent.

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[1] Kelly, J., Sadeghieh, T., & Adeli, K. (2014). Peer Review in Scientific Publications: Benefits, Critiques, & A Survival Guide. EJIFCC, 25(3), 227–243.

Leadership Insights

Our Insights feature highlights the thoughts and ideas of different UMOR leaders related to DEI. We provide three (3) questions for each individual to reflect upon and ask that they share their thoughts with the OVPR community. This edition's Insights features **Nick Wigginton, Assistant Vice-President for Research.**

What have you learned related to DEI themes (racial justice, inclusion in the workplace, etc.) in 2020?

Last year was unrelenting. There were so many moments that on their own would have been once-in-a-generation, yet they all happened in the same year. The pace forced me and many others to regularly confront our biases, our prejudices, our ignorance, and our privilege. There was no option to push off DEI issues for another day, or think they weren't relevant to me, or hope someone else solved the problem. Above all, I think I learned that there is just so much more to learn. The broad issues that fall under the framing of DEI are deeply rooted in our society. Being able to act on them will require constant, lifelong learning.

What do you hope to see change in 2021?

I hope discussions of DEI themes become regular parts of conversations, meetings, and our work in general. And I see it happening. As an example, we recently issued guidance on mitigating bias during peer review, which I hope will serve as an example of how these ideas can and should inform our common research practices and policies. But integrating DEI principles into how we all do our jobs won't be a quick fix--and it certainly won't be done in 2021.

What do you want to contribute moving forward?

I'd like to be a better ally. Allyship is important for so many reasons, but it isn't something we can just do passively. We may all have good intentions or think we're good people, but it's clear that isn't enough. Sometimes we have to speak up, or stand back, or simply keep learning. The VPR leadership team took the Anti-Racism Primer course from Organizational Learning this fall, and one resource mentioned in that course that I've continued to find helpful is the weekly newsletter from Better Allies. It provides great real-life examples of allyship that are informative, and it helps keep these topics front of mind. It's honestly one of the only weekly emails I look forward to reading.

Ways to engage in DEI with a focus on anti-racism

As members of our community who are actively engaged in DEI work across the OVPR and university community, we understand that it can be difficult to try to organize the myriad of DEI resources available that are available. A result of the current global movement to eradicate systemic and institutional racism has been the visibility of the vast number of resources on the subject of anti-racism. A number of OVPR community members have increased expressed interest in the discussion and exploration of anti-racism and what it truly means to be an ally in the fight for racial equity.

Here are a number of ways that you can engage in DEI with a focus on anti-racism during the winter months of 2021:

If you have 10 or 15 minutes...

Read: How White Americans can Fight For Racial Justice - UpWorthy (article by Annie Reneau)

Watch: "Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable"- Luvvie Ajayi Jones (TED Talks)

If you have 30 minutes...

Read/Watch: "What is Systemic Racism?" - Race Forward (video series)

Learn: Driving Change and Anti-Racism - LinkedIn Learning

Listen: Who is Karen and Why Does She Keep Calling the Police on Black Men? - On The Media podcast

If you have an hour (or more)...

Watch: "Anti-Racism, Allyship and Authenticity" - U-M Ross Center for Positive Organizations

Read: Talking About Race: Whiteness - National Museum of African American History & Culture (includes multiple videos)

Listen: Unlocking Us: How to Be an Antiracist - Brené Brown and Ibram X. Kendi

DEI RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING:
Heritage Month video series

Organizational Learning released a series of videos in 2019 to help celebrate the diversity of our community. Created by diversity trainer Dr. Steve Robbins, the Heritage Month video series channel showcases a set of videos to spotlight "hidden figures" during recognized history months. The first video provides insights into the history of the month. There are also seven spotlight videos fearing individual history-makers.

Each month, a new set of videos will be available for viewing and the past month's videos will also remain available. These videos can be watched individually, or in groups to promote dialogue and understanding of the differences within our community.

U-M faculty and staff members can sign up to receive notification of new videos available each month by email.

Heritage Month Video Schedule:

- February: Black History Month

- March: Women's History Month

- April: Diversity Education Month

- May: Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

- June: LGBTQ+ Pride Month

- September: Hispanic Heritage Month

- October: National Disability Employment Awareness Month

- November: Native American Heritage Month

DEI Events at U-M

February 24-28 - Virtual Event	February 25 - 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm EST	March 3 - 11:30 am - 1:30 pm EST
Free Digital Screening of SOME OLD BLACK MAN	RUMBA con ZUMBA: Dance/Movement as Activism and Radical Self-care	Fleming DEI Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct Keynote & Panel
March 12 - 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm EST	March 19 - 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm EST	March 25 - 12:00 pm - 1 pm EST
Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire	Gendered Consequences of Systems Involvement	Remaking a Life: How Women Living with HIV/AIDS Confront Inequality

UMOR Unit Spotlight
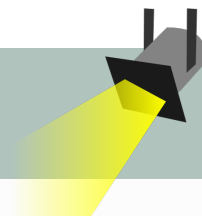
Michigan Institute for Data Science (MIDAS)

The power and peril that data science brings to the society has been stimulating heated debate among scientists and the community. Just last month, at a seminar organized by the Michigan Institute for Data Science (MIDAS), over 1000 people listened to "Computer Vision: Who is Helped and Who is Harmed", given by Timnit Gebru, Computer Scientist, former Co-Lead Ethical AI Research Team, Google Brain, and Founder of Black in AI (watch video). Timnit spoke about the persistent racial bias as computer vision systems are rapidly integrated into all aspects of society including law enforcement, employment, and healthcare diagnostics. The record-breaking attendance of the seminar and the active participation of the audience inspired us to organize a community forum on Racial Justice in the Age of Data and AI.

As the central unit for data science on campus, MIDAS places DEI at the center of our research and training programs. Examples of continuous DEI efforts within MIDAS include:

- Hosting of an annual Consortium for Data Scientists in Training since 2017

- Organization of annual Women+ Data Science Symposia since 2017, along with a monthly Women+ Data Science research talk and meetup series
- Organization of the Diversity in Data Science camp for rising 11th and 12th graders since 2016
- Partnerships with campuses across the state to deliver the NxtGen Summer Academy for incoming freshman at U-M, MSU, Western Michigan and Wayne State University.

MIDAS also promotes research that puts DEI in the center. The Director of MIDAS, H.V. Jagadish, one of the leading scientists on data science ethics, runs a multi-university Institute Framework for Integrative Data Equity Systems, that promotes equity as a design principle in software systems development and develops technical solutions for doing so . He stated "having access to information comes with a great deal of responsibility, so our first priority is to ensure data science is not misused to disproportionately harm underrepresented groups."

The DEI effort is more impactful on campus when we work together. MIDAS is eager to collaborate with other units on campus and with faculty to build synergy. Please email us at midas-contact@umich.edu.

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To share your ideas or feedback please contact the OVPR DEI Committee – UMORDEICOMMITTEE@umich.edu