

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

This document represents the findings of a Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUSHC EP) taskforce to the events of the summer of 2020 surrounding our University's response to systemic racism, following the death of George Floyd on May 25th 2020. Mr. Floyd while handcuffed, was held down by a police officer, who placed his knee on Mr. Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes. The ensuing outrage across the country caused our own campus to undertake an open candid, and sometimes emotional discussion on systemic racism and healthcare. On June 11, 2020 a group of faculty, students, and staff met to brainstorm on ideas that could be implemented to address systemic racism on campus. The ensuing 21 point item list (Document #1) became the backbone for discussions amongst several student groups. On June 15th, the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Global Health (ODIGH) invited the TTUHSC El Paso community to join them on an 8 minute and 46 seconds moment of silence in support of equality for all. On June 25th, one month after Mr. Floyd's death, the campus held an evening vigil honoring Mr. Floyd, led by the Student Government Association (SGA). This vigil kicked off a series of meetings with students and senior administration at our university. On June 30th the students presented a second draft of potential action items for TTUHSC EP. Dr. Lange convened a taskforce to address the second document, with the first meeting on July 6th, 2020. (Document #2) The president appointed a taskforce consisting of Dr. José Manuel de la Rosa, Dr. Linda Ellis, Dr. Charmaine Martin and Dr. Paul Ogden to address this document.

The taskforce met on four occasions and discussed the student draft in detail. Whenever possible, the taskforce attempted to generalize recommendations to address larger issues involving diversity. The taskforce has two overarching recommendations that address many of the issues in the student draft. First, the taskforce recommends that we obtain an outside consultation from a trained diversity officer, who can meet with students, faculty and staff, do some training for faculty, and lend advice in addressing the issues in the student draft. Second, the taskforce feels that the institution would benefit from a chief

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

diversity officer (CDO), whose role would be to lead diversity efforts on campus including the Council on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI), be a point person for significant diversity events such as happened in June, and to be an advisor to the President and the Deans on diversity for the colleges.

The document is organized into four separate sections and is meant to address improving the racial climate on campus in all learning and work environments, and working to eliminate racism:

1. Implement required education
2. Increasing diversity and inclusion
3. Creating accountability
4. Engaging in and encouraging social activism

I. IMPLEMENT REQUIRED EDUCATION

The first suggested action item was to undertake a university wide curricular intervention in all existing and proposed schools to impart knowledge of the impact of race on health status. The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Global Health (ODIGH) formed a curriculum work committee in early July. The committee's primary task is to identify potential courses, topics, number of sessions, required readings to be included in the curriculum for all schools, as well as differentiating between required curricular sessions and optional learning activities (co-curricular activities). The curriculum work group established a target date of December 1, 2020 to present the recommendations to each school. Curriculum is school specific and must be approved by faculty through curriculum committees in order to be implemented.

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

Beginning July 1, 2020, co-curricular activities were launched to address important topics. ODIGH has a dedicated lecture series and initiated panel discussions on systemic racism. The School of Medicine initiated two lectures, one by Dr. Carolyn Mack on history of systemic racism and one by Dr. Maureen Francis in collaboration with ODIGH on Unconscious Bias. The School of Medicine is planning additional invited lectures concerning racism. The School of Medicine College Mentors, with appropriate faculty training and development, will be addressing these co-curricular activities throughout the 2020/2021 academic year. All schools will publicize and encourage students and faculty to attend the ODIGH Diversity Perspectives Lecture Series.

The taskforce discussed the importance of addressing graduate medical education, residents, and faculty. ODIGH will work directly with the GME office to ensure resident and faculty participation in the annual Cultural Competence Conference. Additional resources will be provided by ODIGH for GME Grand Rounds through its speaker's panel. ODIGH will continue to advertise webinars offered by different groups including the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the American Medical Association (AMA), and professional societies.

This first action item, implementing education, is specifically important for our campus, not only for the Black/African American Community but also as part of establishing a culture of inclusivity. Indeed, several discussions by the curricular taskforce involved expanding the mandatory curricula to include the concepts of social determinants of health, social justice, racism in America, as well as the Black experiences in American medicine. The taskforce supports this expansion within the standard curricula.

The next suggested action item was to require that all simulation exercises on campus have a diversity of ethnicities represented by the standardized patients, situations, and diseases. Dr. Scott Crawford, Director of TECHS (Simulation Centers) agreed to consciously work to diversify the group of standardized patients and situations, and to include scenarios focused on communication between

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

different cultures. Dr. Crawford will provide quarterly updates to the CDI outlining both progress and barriers to this goal.

The taskforce discussed mandatory training on the impact of unconscious race bias for all faculty administration, students, and staff similar to that currently required for sexual-harassment. While recognizing the importance of training on unconscious bias, the taskforce felt that this training should be initially focused to include the students and full-time faculty. The Task Force recommends that all members of admissions and search committee members, as well as teaching faculty, students, and residents receive this training during the 2020/2021 academic year, and that the training be scheduled regularly thereafter. Currently, ODIGH offers training on unconscious bias to all who request it as well as to all first year medical students during the Society and Individual Course (SCI).

The request to correct the notation of black to Black when referring to persons of African American descent has been noted and the appropriate grammatical changes will be utilized in all university publications.

The taskforce noted that the change from “College Masters” to College Mentors has been implemented and already noted in the Student Handbook and website systems (February, 2020). A systematic review of all publications to note this change will be carried out as part of preparation for SACSCOC accreditation. It is encouraged that the President note the change during a town hall meeting and explain why the change was launched.

II. **INCREASE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.**

The taskforce agrees that it is important for TTUHSC El Paso to increase Black African-American Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Mentors as well as overall diversity appropriate for the region. Improving overall diversity provides a sense of community for Black/African American students, and helps provide stable mentorship for all students. The taskforce recommends that the Chief Diversity Officer

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

(CDO) and the Council on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) work with Human Resources and Faculty Affairs to develop strategies that will result in a larger and more diverse pool of applicants for faculty and staff positions.

Both students and taskforce note that this year's Paul L. Foster School of Medicine's class is the most diverse class in terms of ethnic minorities. While commendable, this progress requires ongoing monitoring to ensure that it is not an isolated finding. The taskforce recommends broadening the Diversity Mentorship Program to include more Black/African American community faculty as student mentors. The Diversity Mentorship Program as sponsored by ODIGH is an ideal venue to involve the community faculty.

The Paul L. Foster College of Admissions, led by Dr. Cynthia Perry, has been and continues to actively recruit African American applicants across the state of Texas. Since Dr. Perry was named Dean of Admissions in 2018, she has continued the recruiting trips to historically Black colleges in Texas, most notably, Prairie View A & M, the African American Student Association at UT Houston and the University of Houston, as well as UT Austin and Texas A & M.

The issue of Black/African American visibility on our campus was addressed by the taskforce and it should be noted that our communications and marketing officers have been instructed to develop and expand upon Black/African American presence on our websites and publications. Further, Dr. Cynthia Perry has agreed to increase Black/African American student involvement in admissions interviews at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine, and will be contacting students directly to volunteer.

The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso was established in 2013, and fully accredited as a separate University in 2018. Standard policies are still a work in progress. In the past, Student Organizations were largely funded by the colleges, or wherever students could find funding on a first come, first serve basis. The taskforce recommends that the new Assistant Vice President for Student Services be tasked with developing a policy for allocation of funding to student organizations. This will

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

help alleviate the necessity for each individual student group to seek independent funding. It should also facilitate student organizations achieving equal visibility and comparable funding.

The taskforce supports assigning the Black/African-American medical students evenly across all four Paul L. Foster School Medicine (PLFSOM) colleges. The taskforce suggests that the colleges be as diverse as possible to improve interactions and learning for all students. This item has been addressed and monitoring has been assigned to Dr. Carolyn Mack. This should be monitored on an annual basis.

The final suggested action item for increasing diversity and inclusion is to recruit Black/African-American mental health providers, to be included in the list of practitioners offering mental health interventions to our students. The current mental health providers are vetted through a State contracting process, which requires fair and equitable contracting practices. The State encourages the use of historically underutilized businesses (HUB) for contracts in TTUHSC El Paso's student wellness and mental health program. Black/African-American providers will be encouraged to apply during the annual contracting process.

III. CREATING ACCOUNTABILITY

The taskforce discussed issues related to reporting and resolution of race-based student incidents involving Black/African American students. Students did not feel that TTUHSC El Paso and PLFSOM had a clear reporting system and the incidents were inconsistently handled. There is a perception from Black/African American students and from faculty, that persons who use racist language or have been involved in occurrences or incidents with Black/African American students are not held accountable, and the claims are sometimes minimized. The taskforce feels the process can be improved for reporting, investigating, and handling of all incidents involving students. The taskforce recommends that the University reemphasize to all students and faculty the formal process and

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

procedures that are to be followed in the event a student feels that they have been the subject of discrimination or harassment as a result of their race. A CDO would play a major role in helping students during these incidents.

The taskforce agrees that TTUHSC El Paso should encourage faculty, students, and staff to take an active interest in educating themselves on discrimination and systemic racism. This student action item recommends establishment of a system of co-curricular activities available to the campus. These include non-mandatory allyship training for students, faculty, and staff as well as a book club devoted to readings on systemic racism, mental health days, and informal discussions involving various topics such as inappropriate behaviors known as micro-aggressions. The recommended activities should also include an invited speaker series. Most of these co-curricular activities are currently offered through ODIGH; however, the students, faculty, and staff are often unaware of these activities. It was noted that awareness of these activities have decreased significantly because of campus closure due to COVID-19 along with cancellation of planned events. ODIGH is continuing to offer these programs via a virtual platform and recommends that leadership and faculty attend these programs as often as they can. The taskforce recommends working with the students to increase awareness of these activities and the taskforce suggests student participation in the planning of future events.

The taskforce discussed utilizing an institutional reporting instrument such as the Report Card from the organization White Coats for Black Lives. Utilization of a Report Card is an important tool for the accountability process and should be delegated to the CDI/CDO. The taskforce recommends that CDI/CDO use this report card, and present the status during regular meetings with the President.

IV. ENGAGING IN AND ENCOURAGING SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Our student community is eager to engage in community service, political advocacy, and community organization. Discussion by the taskforce centered on identifying Black communities to broaden opportunities for our students in El Paso, and as part of the anticipated institutional Day of Service to be held in the spring of 2021. Specific alignment with the McCall Community Center as well as the Black Chamber of Commerce is encouraged by the task force.

The students expressed a desire that TTUHSC EP address major social issues with an immediate response.

Recommendation #1 was to communicate to the campus the establishment of the CDI/CDO with emphasis on their role with maintaining and reporting to the President on university accountability for these areas. The taskforce supports this recommendation.

Recommendation #2 was the establishment and expanded communication about the student wellness and mental health programs and providing resources to the student wellness and mental health programs to support the mental health of minority groups during stressful times in our society. Recently, TTUHSC El Paso expanded the number of free mental health sessions for all students. Due to the closure of the campus because of COVID-19, many individuals were not aware of the expanded services. The taskforce supports this recommendation.

Recommendation #3 to generate a faculty development program for all faculty that would address the facilitation of discussion of hot topics, specifically when breaking up into small discussion groups. Training in civil discourse, de-escalation of aggressive conversations and facilitation of meaningful discussion should be provided for all faculty. Faculty should be trained in facilitating these topics. The goal is to train 50% all employed teaching faculty by fall 2021 and 100% of employed teaching faculty by fall of 2022. The taskforce supports this recommendation, and targeted training is already underway. Discussion of ground

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND
TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

rules for civil discourse should be introduced to all students during yearly orientation and reinforced throughout the school year.

Recommendation #4 Identifying people to provide context to discussions on African-American studies.

The taskforce supports bringing in an outside consultant to meet with students, faculty and staff, do some training for faculty, and lend advice in addressing the issues in the student draft.

The hiring of a CDO was extensively discussed and supported. A CDO would not only lead these types of discussions on campus but would also:

- Coach leadership around diversity and inclusion issues
- Hold cultural competency trainings for organizational members
- Facilitate EEO & compliance efforts
- Infuse diversity into the academic and clinical experience of students
- Integrate diversity and inclusion efforts with patient care, quality, and safety
- Make the case for diversity for internal and external constituents
- Recruit and outreach to diverse communities of potential students, faculty, and staff
- Form strategic partnerships with community organizations, higher education, government, and others

The taskforce also discussed timing for the hiring of a CDO. Seating the CDI should proceed during the implementation of hiring a CDO. This will allow the CDI to initiate programming while a search and deliberations on the qualifications for a CDO take place, these could last up to a year.

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO RESPONSE TO STUDENT SUGGESTIONS AND TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SYSTEMIC RACISM AND HEALTH CARE

Finally, there was discussion of bringing in a “multi-cultural” therapist. This is a specific branch of psychology which would aid with programming on the campus. The taskforce encouraged senior administration to explore this through the faculty wellness program or through the CDI.

Overall, the action items presented by the students are based on a perception of lack of attention to a Black/African American students and faculty on the campus. The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso desires to provide a diverse, inclusive campus for all students, and to work diligently to combat systemic racism on our campus. We anticipate that by implementing these initiatives Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso will be successful in recruiting a more diverse population of students, faculty, and employees to our campus.

**Subsequent to this report, the students continue to provide and refine their requests. This report is based on document #2 dated June 30th, 2020. During the month of July there were two further meetings in which two additional iterations were produced.*