

Inclusion Initiatives

BUILDING TOWARDS THE FUTURE TOGETHER THROUGH DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

By Laneika K. Musalini

Over the past two years the NCURA Presidential Task Force on Diversity & Inclusion worked to develop NCURA's Statement on Diversity & Inclusion. The statement was approved and placed on the NCURA website in 2018. The executive board and NCURA staff are very engaged with truly making diversity and inclusivity realized at every level of the organization.

It is extremely important to shift the culture of our professional organization and workplaces to recognize, accept, respect, value and celebrate the differences of others, because the faces, abilities and expertise of research administrators, researchers and sponsors are changing. Further, the realm of research is changing as well, which lends itself to a more accessible, diverse research population and richer outcomes.

Shifting the culture means recognizing and owning any personal biases, whether implicit, unconscious or intentional. Research conducted by psychologist Hailey Halvorson proved that we have loads of biases hard-wired into our brains: preferences for people who are similar to us or who are in our group; wariness of those who are different; and a tendency to save mental energy by using short-cuts like stereotypes to fill in the blanks about others (Halvorson, 2015). More so than not, our biases drive our perspectives of others.

As professionals, we cannot afford to be lackadaisical in our perception and decision making. When one recognizes their own biases they become self-aware. Becoming aware of these biases and actively working to create a more inclusive attitude towards people different than you is the correct path to travel. We all must work to build towards the future together by

engaging in dialogue; sharing experiences; and advocating for access, diversity, equity and inclusion.

As 2019 chair of the Task Force, my goal is to not only integrate diversity and inclusion into every area of NCURA but to also promote access and equity. The presidential charge for 2019 consist of rolling out the implementation plan for diversity and inclusion, benchmarking revised membership data, developing a volunteer matrix, developing new ways for NCURA to adopt diversity and inclusion strategies for the future, and identifying a Region VIII member to join the Task Force. I am pleased to report that the Task Force is already hard at work on these initiatives. Stay tuned for more exciting information moving forward.

As a final point, a tremendous thank you is in order for the members of the 2019 Task Force. They have jumped right in and hit the ground running on this year's initiatives. If you have interesting topics or ideas that you would like for the Task Force to consider, please feel free to reach out to any of the Task Force members.

2019 Task Force Members

Laneika K. Musalini, *chair*
Tolise Dailey, *John Hopkins University*
Rashonda Harris, *Emory University*
Derick Jones, *Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute*
Dr. Mario Medina, *East Carolina University*
Denise Moody, *Harvard University*
Jaime Petrasek, *Virginia Commonwealth University*
Deborah Price, *Baylor Scott and White Research Institute*
Ben Prince, *University of Massachusetts - Medical School*
Samantha Westcott, *California Institute of Technology*
Natasha Williams, *Kennesaw State University*

Reference:

Halvorson, H. G. (2015 March 4). How to recognize (and overcome) your unconscious biases in hiring. Retrieved from www.fastcompany.com/3043074/how-to-thwart-your-unconscious-biases-when-hiring-a-diverse-team



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