INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE ACTION PLAN

July 2021

Gillings School of Global Public Health

This Gillings School's Inclusive Excellence Action Plan is a living document and refreshed on an ongoing basis through collaboration between the Inclusive Excellence unit, the Inclusive Excellence Council (IEC), IEC subcommittee members, faculty, staff, and students. This work is conceptualized, executed, and evaluated through engagement with the broader Gillings School community. This work would not be possible without your insights, efforts, and commitment to fostering a more inclusive school. Thank you for all you do.

Inclusive Excellence
Gillings School of Global Public Health
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Executive Summary

The Inclusive Excellence Action Plan (IEAP) is a strategic plan, tied to the Gillings School's mission and values, to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive school. With roots dating back to 2010, the plan was re-envisioned in 2019 with input from Gillings faculty, staff, students, alumni, and various community partners and affiliates. The Inclusive Excellence Council (IEC), convened by the associate dean for inclusive excellence, guides implementation, evaluation, and refinements to the plan. The IEAP and work of the Council are organized around 6 focus areas:

Focus Area	Description	Overarching Goals
Training	Develop, implement, and evaluate trainings, including strong antiracist and equity-driven components, for faculty, staff, TAs, and other members of the Gillings community.	• Everyone in a position of power shares a common understanding of what constitutes an inclusive environment and acts on that understanding. • All instructors are able to facilitate inclusive, respectful discussions about sensitive topics such as racism and other forms of oppression. • All members of the Gillings community uphold values of inclusion and respect in interactions with each other.
Curriculum	Improve antiracist and equity components in student learning during orientation and across the curriculum.	• All students graduate with the ability to apply social justice in their public health work. • Racism, social justice and health equity are integrated throughout and across curricula. • Discussions are led by instructors capable of effectively facilitating dialogue on challenging topics of racism and oppression.
Communication	Develop and improve approaches to communicating about inclusion, equity, and antiracism efforts at Gillings.	• Effectively communicate about plans, actions, statements, events and successes regarding inclusive excellence to all our constituents. • Create a visual environment that communicates our commitments to equity, inclusion, antiracism, and social justice.
Advocacy	Advocate on behalf of students for living wages, fairness in hiring practices, and greater transparency regarding employment opportunities.	• Develop mechanisms to ensure that financial resources are equitably allocated to students across the school. • Collaborate with leaders across the University to provide students and employees with benefits that reflect the values of the Gillings School and public health. • Provide transparent communication, about and access to, training and employment opportunities for students.
Representation	Improve efforts surrounding recruitment and retention of Gillings faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds.	• Cultivate a student, staff, and faculty composition that reflects the demographic composition of the communities we serve. • Build pathways for meaningful representation and participation of members of historically marginalized groups in leadership positions throughout the school. • Foster a school culture that is welcoming and nurturing for members of minoritized groups.
Research	Dismantle racism and promote equity throughout the research enterprise.	• Develop a strong antiracist and health equity research portfolio within the Gillings School. • Establish a culture where all Gillings researchers regularly apply an equity lens to their research projects, with additional support systems in place for those who are using health equity and antiracism-centered tools. • Provide transparent communication about and access to training and employment opportunities for students.

Training

The goal of the TRAINING focus is to require inclusive excellence training, including a strong antiracist training component, for faculty, staff and TAs. Overarching goals are:

- Everyone in a position of power – e.g., those who make decisions about resource allocation – shares a common understanding of what an inclusive environment looks like (and does not look like) and acts on that understanding.
- All instructors are able to facilitate inclusive, respectful discussions about sensitive topics such as racism and other forms of oppression.
- All members of the Gillings community uphold values of inclusion and respect in interactions with each other.

Since the last iteration of the IEAP (2019), the Inclusive Excellence team has created a system to ensure that new and existing faculty and staff complete at least one antiracist training each year. The IE team identified trainings, assessed their education level, explored the feasibility of developing additional trainings designed by Gillings, and then designed and delivered key trainings. In Year 1, we tracked data via a survey. The IE team is now working with Gillings Human Resources (HR) and others to create an improved tracking system. The team continues to build an inclusive excellence training program for faculty and staff, track training completion and impact, and link training expectations to promotion, tenure, and annual review.

Curriculum

The goal of the CURRICULUM focus is to require social justice and racial equity training at orientation, as part of the curriculum, and in the classroom. Overarching goals are:

- All students graduate with the ability to apply social justice in their public health work.
- Racism, social justice and health equity are more seamlessly integrated throughout and across curricula.
- Discussions are led by instructors capable of effectively facilitating dialogue on challenging topics of racism and oppression.

Following creation of the IEAP, the COMPASS module on social justice and equity was refined to be appropriate for BSPH, master's, and doctoral students and is a requirement for all incoming students prior to orientation. Since fall 2020, Gillings has also required all incoming students to complete a foundation inclusive excellence training, including a synchronous small group discussion, as part of orientation. The 12-credit MPH Core course sequence was comprehensively evaluated and updated in both 2020 and 2021 to strengthen equity, social justice and antiracist content and methods, as was the 3-credit Foundational Learning Objectives (FLO) course, required for all non-MPH students. Additionally, a 3-credit elective course on the critical history of public health was developed for debut during the fall of 2021. Other academic programs and concentrations have also created new, and updated current, courses. We are beginning to track these improvements.

Communication

The goal of the COMMUNICATION focus is to significantly improve our approaches to communicating about our inclusion, equity and antiracism efforts. Overarching goals are:

- Effectively communicate about plans, actions, statements, events and successes regarding inclusive excellence to all our constituents.

- Create a visual environment that communicates our commitments to equity, inclusion, antiracism, and social justice.

Since the 2019 iteration, the Inclusive Excellence webpages have been revamped to increase usability and make resources such as the Action Plan more accessible. In addition, the IE team created an Inclusive Excellence lecture series and is working with the communications department to ensure that these lectures are effectively marketed and visible on the website. Future action items include adding a blog feature to the website and holding an open forum regarding Inclusive Excellence twice a year. The IE team held its first open forum in Fall 2021.

Advocacy

The goal of the ADVOCACY focus is to advocate on behalf of students for living wages, fairness in hiring practices, and greater transparency regarding employment opportunities. Overarching goals are:

- Develop mechanisms to ensure that financial resources are equitably allocated to students across the school.
- Collaborate with leaders across the University, and the UNC-System and beyond as needed and appropriate, to provide student employee benefits that reflect the values of the Gillings School and public health.
- Provide transparent communication about, and access to, training and employment opportunities for students.

Since the 2019 iteration of the IEAP, the Student Funding and Awards Coordinator position was created (2019); an application portal was created where all Gillings student job opportunities could be posted; a student experience survey was released (2021), and informational sessions on funding graduate school were held during Open House and Admitted Students Day (2019 to present). Next steps are to create a Gillings Commitment guide; develop an easily accessible and visible infographic on the financial realities of graduate school; and develop a system to ensure that all student job opportunities offered by Gillings people are, indeed, posted to the Gillings Student Jobs Portal.

Representation

The goal of the REPRESENTATION focus is to improve recruitment and retention of Gillings faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds. Overarching goals are:

- Cultivate a student, staff, and faculty composition that reflects the demographic composition of the communities we serve.
- Build pathways for meaningful representation and participation of members of historically marginalized groups in leadership positions throughout the school.
- Foster a school culture that is welcoming and nurturing for members of minoritized groups as well as members of historically well-represented groups.

Since the 2019 iteration of the IEAP, the Inclusive Excellence Council was formed; the GRE requirement for all Gillings graduate programs was dropped; and Gillings School leaders now submit annual reports that specify recruitment and retention strategies and annual outcomes for the units they oversee. For the most updated Gillings student demographic data, see the Gillings School Facts and Figures webpage.

Research

The goal of the RESEARCH focus, which was added in 2020, is to actively dismantle racism and promote equity throughout our research enterprise. Overarching goals are:

- Develop a strong antiracist and health equity research portfolio within the Gillings School
- Establish a culture where all Gillings researchers regularly apply an equity lens to their research projects, with additional support systems in place for those who are using health equity and antiracism-centered tools.
- Provide transparent communication about and access to training and employment opportunities for students.

This recently added focus area will be used to establish baseline goals for inclusive excellence in Gillings research. Identified action items include prioritizing awarding research that employs antiracist frameworks; developing strategies to help principal investigators integrate antiracism into their research; collaborating with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); providing research opportunities to students of color; and supporting global collaborations among researchers at Gillings and international scholars.

Evaluation

A School-wide evaluation committee comprised of faculty, students, staff and other partners and guided by leaders from the Inclusive Excellence team are tasked with evaluating the IEAP. The Gillings evaluation plan contains eleven domains (students, curricula, research, practice, service, faculty, staff, operations, global health, innovation, inclusive excellence), each with co-leads and committee members. Within the inclusive excellence domain, each of the 6 focus areas contains measures that correspond with the overarching goals of the IEAP. Moreover, these measures integrate feedback received from faculty, staff, and student activist efforts in recent years. The evaluation committee uses data gathered, primarily, from surveys to monitor progress. Several Gillings units (i.e., Office of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Human Resources, Dean's Office, Strategic Analysis/Business Intelligence) collaborate to collect and evaluate the data.

Why was the inclusive excellence action plan (IEAP) created?

Living into our commitments
A key dimension of our mission at the Gillings School of Global Public Health is to eliminate health inequities across North Carolina and around the world. Our values, collectively reaffirmed in 2016 as part of our School's reaccreditation, include: a commitment to diversity and inclusion among our faculty, staff and students; a belief that public health is accountable and responsible to communities; and the recognition that we need to work collaboratively *with* communities to achieve equity. As such, a commitment to inclusion is imperative to us living into our values. To meet that commitment, as well as meet the increasingly diverse needs of North Carolina communities, we have, as a School, embraced the goal of ensuring that the climate within which we train public health professionals is an inclusive one – a learning environment that fosters participation of all its members and perpetuates sustained equity and inclusion.

In fostering a student-centered, inclusive school environment, we must look critically at the student, faculty and staff populations we recruit; to whom we direct resources; how we prioritize needs of diverse students, faculty and staff; and how we interact with each other in and out of the classroom. We aim to create an environment in which students from diverse backgrounds see themselves reflected in their instructors and mentors; and in which our curricula foster deep knowledge of, and a state-of-the-art toolkit for, understanding and dismantling systems of oppression that create inequity and poor health.

Inclusive excellence as a means of achieving health equity
Efforts to reconceptualize how health professional education might be delivered to reduce inequities in health outcomes have led to shifts in accreditation criteria of schools and programs of public health. In November 2016, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the U.S. Department of Education-authorized accrediting body for schools and programs of public health, released a new set of core competencies that identify structural racism, health disparities, and community engagement as central components of public health professional education. These guidelines require that students be able to discuss racism, structural bias, and health inequities at multiple levels of influence; describe the importance of cultural competence in public health; and apply an awareness of cultural values and practices to public health efforts.

As detailed in a dissertation by a recent Gillings graduate, adherence to these guidelines for all public health schools and programs requires *institutional commitments* to training faculty and instructor; an intensive, sustained effort to deliver inclusive curricula to students, more critical, reflexive, and inclusive climates throughout schools and programs of public health; and active recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and school leaders who contribute to diversity in the broadest sense, including specializing in social justice issues related to health (Merino, 2018). The Gillings School Inclusive Excellence Action plan, adopted in Summer 2019, aims to enact such institutional commitments.

Towards inclusive excellence at Gillings
Background. The Gillings School has a strong history of activism and research focused on reducing inequities and creating a more diverse and inclusive school. As recently as 2010, as part of the SPH2020 strategic planning process, over 60 faculty, students and staff from across the School came together to develop a plan for increasing diversity and inclusion at Gillings. Many of the 13 recommendations from the 2010 task force were implemented over an 8-year period. Yet we had not moved the needle significantly in terms of increasing the diversity of our students, faculty and staff; and we had work to do to strengthen our teaching, curricula and overall climate. In Spring 2018, we leapt forward by hiring Kauline Cipriani, PhD, assistant (and then associate) dean for inclusive excellence. Under her guidance, and with the participation and leadership of ~100 Gillings faculty, students, staff and alumni, we initiated a renewal of our commitment to inclusive excellence. We have developed an ambitious but actionable plan, one we have been enacting in a systematic way.

Developing the 2019 plan. The Inclusive Excellence Action Plan development process began with initial input from an open forum for the Gillings community (January 8, 2019). At that event, stakeholders identified ways to create a more diverse, inclusive and equitable School, leveraging the removal of a confederate statue on UNC's campus as a flash point to spur discussion. In real time, we voted on suggested strategies; later, we held brainstorming sessions with faculty/student/staff planning teams to help us ideate a fully developed set of action steps and ideas for evaluation. Draft plans were posted for a three-month open comment period and then discussed by groups across the school in student, faculty and staff open sessions. Draft plans were revised at each juncture to reflect community input. The plan was then approved by the Gillings School Dean's Council. Evolution of the plan continued after this approval. For example, we incorporated additional input from faculty, staff and students via feedback sessions and a survey and, in 2020, added an additional priority area: Research.

As we moved through the process, it became evident what was taking shape was a full, multi-year strategic inclusive excellence plan. Based on input from various stakeholders, we adjusted our pace to include time for thoughtful feedback from our community and, in Fall 2019, coordinated the launch of the new Inclusive Excellence Council, the group charged with guiding implementation for, and monitoring progress of, the plan. This Council is composed of faculty, staff and students from all departments and Gillings School units. We see the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan as a living document, to be revisited and updated regularly, in partnership with all stakeholders, towards a more inclusive Gillings.

2021-22 Gillings Inclusive Excellence Action Plan Priorities

Training
- Communicate more effectively about training opportunities and requirements for faculty, staff, and students.
- Clarify what it means to be an expert in equity and IE training; adjust team of experts and approval criteria for training sources accordingly.
- Redefine metrics for success in training; explain qualification criteria for different levels of training.

Curriculum
- Evaluate and improve the curriculum and training provided to students in the Health Equity, Social Justice, and Human Rights Concentration.
- Support faculty in the evaluation and improvement of public health research and practice methods and how they are taught.
- Develop summary of Gillings courses with equity focus; share widely.

Communication
- Arts Committee continues to guide decision-making re: refreshing photos, art and displays across the Gillings School and the School website.
- Adopt strategic IE guide for print, web and social media.
- Improve management processes for use of IE best practices in sharing IE content in newsletters, webpages, etc.

Advocacy
- Collect information about hiring/funding processes across units; create/disseminate a best practices list while also identifying and halting problematic practices.
- Communicate information on hiring/funding for all students on the Gillings application portal.
- Improve application portal processes to increase ease of use for faculty and staff who post positions there.
- Improve transparency about processes surrounding the use of the Student Feedback and Equity Concerns Form.
- Track/report data regarding demographics of students hired.

Representation
- Work with the IE team and Gillings departments to understand and communicate what IE efforts are underway across the school.
- Share successes/best practices across units.
- Ensure that faculty, staff, and students from all units are represented on IEC.
- Report Gillings demographics regularly/across multiple groups, along with innovations and CQI efforts that helped lead to improvements.

Research
- Identify what the health equity and antiracism-focused research portfolio looks like at Gillings, including a focus on diversifying our team of faculty, staff, and student researchers.
- Build schoolwide research partnerships with local HBCUs and MSIs.
- Clarify expectations for mentorship among research advisors/advisees.

1: Training

Focus Area #1: Require inclusive excellence training, including a strong antiracist training component, for faculty, staff and TAs

Why focus on training?

Evidence of ongoing need. Training continues to be one of the most requested services for improving capacity of faculty, staff and students to engage in co-constructing an inclusive environment at the Gillings School. Interest in trainings often result in wait lists for individual workshops, persistent unmet training needs and more requests for IE training than can currently be met through the IE team or through University resources.

Background. *Requiring antiracism training for all Gillings faculty and staff* was the top ranked recommendation of all received at the inception of the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan in January 2019 and is consistent with recommendations from Gillings School constituencies over nearly a decade., as recorded in end-of-course surveys and focus groups and meetings with faculty, staff and students. It is also a key mechanism for upholding CEPH accreditation requirements that we "provide a learning environment that prepares students with broad competencies regarding diversity and cultural competence, recognizing that graduates may be employed anywhere in the world and will work with diverse populations" (CEPH 2016, p. 44).

Overarching goals

- *Everyone in a position of power – e.g., those who make decisions about resource allocation (including resources for RA and TA positions), course structure and content – shares a common understanding of what an inclusive environment looks like (and does not look like) and acts on that understanding.*

- *All instructors are able to facilitate inclusive, respectful discussions about sensitive topics such as racism and other forms of oppression.*

- *All members of the Gillings community uphold values of inclusion and respect in interactions with each other.*

We recognize that there are many forms of oppression we need to address. We also recognize that improvements in *how* an organization combats structural racism has positive effects in combatting other, often less visible, forms of oppression (GARE, 2020). Given that every member of the Gillings community participates in fostering the climate, we expect that all faculty, staff, TAs and employees with instructional duties at Gillings participate in IE training, including a strong antiracist component.

The initial working group identified two foundational concerns underpinning its recommendations:

- To train a generation of public health leaders to grapple with challenges **resulting from systemic and institutional racism and other forms of oppression**, faculty must be equipped to teach students about origins and effects of systemic racism and other forms of oppression and guide productive, respectful discussions about them. Students should graduate with the ability to work and lead as effective, ethical public health practitioners and researchers in diverse settings, and they cannot do so without such a foundation.

- Across multiple venues, **students, staff, and faculty have highlighted concerns about climate at Gillings**, including incidents involving structural, institutional, and interpersonal racism. Faculty and staff are immersed in, and may have difficulty recognizing how they reproduce and uphold, a culture that perpetuates these forms of exclusion. Learning strategies to address and dismantle them are critical if we are going to fulfill the ethic we articulate in our School's inclusive excellence statement and our mission and values.

Creating a culture of inclusive excellence at Gillings requires students, faculty and staff who learn from each other, listen with humility, and speak with the intent of mutual growth. This requires an environment of trust and evidence that inclusiveness is prioritized by all members of the Gillings community. Our goals are that (a) everyone in a position of power – e.g., those who make decisions about resource allocation (including resources for RA and TA positions), course structure and content – shares a common understanding of what an inclusive environment looks like (and does not look like); (b) that all instructors be able to facilitate inclusive, respectful discussions about sensitive topics such as racism and other forms of oppression; and that (c) all members of the Gillings community have the knowledge, tools and approaches they need to uphold values of inclusion and respect in their interactions with each other. With this shared understanding, we can hold each other's words and actions accountable to promote inclusive excellence.

Who is leading this effort? Who else should be involved? Who should be consulted and why?

- **Lead:** Inclusive Excellence Council monitors and prioritizes; IE associate dean drives initiatives forward with the IE team; Human Resources, Academic Affairs and others contribute significantly to development, improvement and maintenance of initiatives.
- **Involved:** Faculty, staff, and students interested in this topic. Also consult with and include other faculty, staff and students to ensure we are designing for the needs of many.
- **Additional parties to consult:** Gillings alumni and the Alumni Inclusive Excellence Committee

What training action steps have we not taken yet, but are committed to prioritizing?

The following action steps were priorities for the 2019 IEAP.

1. **Build a stepwise inclusive excellence and antiracism training program for faculty and staff** that allows participants to start at the level most appropriate based on their previous exposure and training. Trainings should include different types of venues (small group, large group, in-person, online) with different lengths, approaches and foci. All faculty and staff members are expected to complete training hours proportionate to their hours worked at Gillings each year (at least 8 hours annually for full-time employees). All approved trainings are required to have a strong inclusive excellence component.

2. **Link training expectations to promotion and tenure (for TT faculty) and/or annual review** for all other employees. Expectations for professional and educational development should also be set for all students who serve as TAs, prior to starting the position.

3. **Investigate opportunities for student training** that include strong antiracism components to meet the growing demand for more rigorous, action-oriented, and equity and social justice-focused skills.

4. **Track training completion and impact across faculty and staff** and identify audiences and communication tools for disseminating data and outcomes across stakeholder groups (faculty, staff, students, alumni, and strategic partners).

What training action steps have we taken since the last iteration of the IEAP?

1. We have **identified multiple trainings** available within the University and UNC System and **assessed the education level** (i.e., introductory, intermediate or advanced) they help fulfill. This work is ongoing.

2. We have **explored the feasibility of developing additional Gillings-designed trainings**, including conducting a landscape scan, estimating development costs, conducting a cost-benefit analysis, and assessing whether faculty and staff experts within Gillings and UNC have bandwidth to create trainings. We explored the possibility of working with local antiracist partner organizations (the Racial Equity Institute or we are, for example), and did partner with them throughout 2020, to develop content, including specific trainings on (a) how to apply anti-oppression and antiracist principles in one's everyday work, (b) facilitating constructive dialogue around oppression, including racism, xenophobia, homophobia and antisemitism, and strategies for dismantling laws, systems and norms that hold them in place. In 2020, the cost of REI programming increased dramatically. This led the Gillings team to develop major programming (a 3-day virtual symposium; orientation trainings for incoming students; and more).

3. We have **directed all new and continuing employees to participate** in the Inclusive Excellence Training Program. Training expectations are now included in all contracts and offer letters; and an annual training memo is delivered to all Gillings employees outlining expectations.

4. The IE team and HR unit heads partnered to determine how to **phase in this education system with current employees**. Approved activities include workshops, retreats, lectures, reading groups, courses or other types of engagement.

5. The IE team, HR, Strategic Analysis and Business Intelligence, and other key stakeholders partnered to **design a system to track employee trainings**.

Currently, this is handled through an annual survey. Going forward, employees will be able to log participation in real time.

6. **We develop and have begun to implement an evaluation plan** to assess training participation and outcomes. A survey administered in 2020 collected pilot data. Another survey will be administered in 20201, along with focus groups. Supervisors and chairs piloted discussion of people's participation in the IE training program during annual reviews in Spring 2021.

Current and anticipated training challenges:

- Reaching a wide range of faculty, staff, and students with training opportunities is challenging, due to "information overload" for those on the receiving end, and because opportunities come from many sources (not simply Gillings-sponsored events).

- Ensuring that employees are granted time needed to participate in the programming while overcoming potential opposition from those who do not understand or agree with these new expectations have been challenges.

- Developing accountability measures and specifying what happens when/if faculty, staff or TAs do not meet IE training requirements is an ongoing question.

- Short trainings don't provide deep enough nuance to for participants to fully understand the complexity of issues under discussion.

- Gillings and UNC have a limited number of "experts" in equity/antiracism to draw from for trainings and redevelopment of syllabi and curricula.

- IE is still a new profession and does not yet have fully developed measures for defining who qualifies as an expert and what qualifies as expertise in IE work.

- Increasing politicization of IE training may present policy-based barriers to training delivery in future. We continue to move forward, however.

To overcome these challenges, we suggest continuing to offer multiple different formats for antiracism and IE training (e.g., online, in-person, etc.) and using a stepwise education model that allows users to work up to the desired competency level over time. We also suggest implementing meaningful public recognition to reward members of the Gillings School who are leading for equity (such as the annual award now given for Gillings researchers), and then recognize such work through merit raises as well as tenure and promotion considerations.

2: Curriculum

Focus Area #2: Require social justice and racial equity training at orientation, as part of the curriculum and in the classroom

Why focus on the curriculum?

Evidence of ongoing need. Students continue to call for curricula that prepares them to center social justice and racial equity in their public health practice and research. This is coupled with the need to build capacity of instructors and TAs to effectively deliver this kind of content and facilitate meaningful discussions about racism and other forms of oppression. Once we have evaluation systems in place, we will provide a synopsis of findings here as further evidence of ongoing need.

Background. Building on previous work, APHA Policy explicitly named "racism as a fundamental cause of ethnic disparities in health" in 2017, paving the way for more efforts to advance a nuanced understanding of the ways structural and institutional racism underlie persistent health inequities. Public health professionals must be able to recognize these determinants and apply principles of social justice and racial equity in developing and implementing interventions to address these root causes. Building sufficient social justice and racial equity training into Gillings School curricula would help address this imperative and to uphold our mission to "eliminate health inequities in North Carolina and around the world." It would also be in alignment with the requirement of our accreditor, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), that public health curricula incorporate "diversity and cultural competency considerations into the curriculum" as well as ensure "development and/or implementation of policies that support a climate of equity and inclusion, free of harassment and discrimination." Significant improvement in this focus area has been strongly requested for years, affirmed through multiple town halls, student-led reports, alumni input, end-of-course evaluations, and other sources of information.

Overarching goals

- *All students graduate with the ability to apply principles of social justice and racial equity in their public health work, including in developing and implementing interventions aimed at addressing health inequities.*

- *Racism, social justice and health inequity are more seamlessly integrated throughout and across curricula.*

- *Discussions are led by faculty and TAs capable of effectively facilitating dialogue on challenging topics of racism and oppression.*

Who is leading this effort? Who else should be involved? Who should be consulted and why?

- **Lead:** Academic Affairs, department chairs, MPH Core leadership, program leads and Inclusive Excellence Council. Academic Affairs dean must prioritize for Gillings School; department chairs must prioritize for departments; program leads must scope out changes needed in required courses for each program; individual faculty must make the changes in their courses; and Inclusive Excellence team must partner with Academic Affairs dean, Dean's Office and SABI to evaluate.
- **Involved:** Instructional faculty, TAs and students interested in this topic.
- **Additional parties to consult:** non-instructional faculty, staff, and a broad range of students to ensure we are designing for the needs of many as well as Gillings alumni and the Alumni Inclusive Excellence Committee.

What curriculum action steps have we *not* taken yet, but are committed to prioritizing?

1. **Equip faculty with the tools to successfully audit and improve their courses to be more equity-driven.** Tools include: implementation of trainings (such as the two-day symposia offered by IE in both summer 2020 and 2021); dissemination of other appropriate trainings offered through UNC's Center for Faculty Excellence; piloting a racial equity-centered course planning guide, developed for Gillings in 2020 by Deanie Anyangwe, a member of the Health Behavior MPH and MCRP class of 2022, and then rolling out the guide further, supported by related trainings.

2. **Implement a series of facilitated meetups or "brave conversations"** twice a semester to allow students, staff, and faculty to build skills around having respectful, thoughtful conversations about public health issues stemming from racism and other forms of oppression. Facilitators should rotate from different departments each time, allowing different public health disciplines to bring their own perspectives to the conversation. Explore feasibility of requiring students to attend at least one conversation annually and write reflection pieces on them. *NOTE: These conversations should only be led by skilled facilitators (faculty, staff, students and/or community partners) who have received adequate training to manage these events (see Recommendation 1).*

   This action step is on hold until more Gillings faculty have developed advanced skill in leading such dialogue. Individual departments may decide to move ahead with this priority based on their priorities and resources. The IEC Curriculum team will inventory departments initiating such efforts and determine whether it makes sense to align and share resources. The IE Curriculum team continues to prioritize meaningful changes in credit-bearing courses and curricula.

What curriculum action steps have we taken since the last iteration of the IEAP?

1. **COMPASS module:** *Update COMPASS module to a more advanced level; require it for all incoming students; make it accessible to all Gillings students;* The COMPASS module on social justice and equity was retooled in spring 2021 to share more advanced materials with all incoming students in summer 2021. All incoming students (not just MPH students) are now required to complete the module prior to orientation; and all currently enrolled students also have access to the module.

3. **Racial equity training:** *Incorporate racial equity training into orientation to build on the COMPASS module.* Allow adequate time for presentation of material, dialogue and reflection. Consider scheduling it prior to the Diversity Welcome so that incoming students can use the Diversity Welcome as a space to debrief, if needed and desired.
   - All matriculating students in Fall 2020 participated in a three-hour REI Groundwater training on Zoom as part of orientation. The training was supported by optional 90-minute small group discussion sessions on Zoom.
   - Costs for REI Groundwater training quadrupled since 2020, leading the Inclusive Excellence team to develop its own racial equity training module – and giving us the opportunity to infuse it with a public health perspective and content. All matriculating students in Fall 2021 were expected to participate in this three-hour training, which was supported by small-group discussion sessions. Evaluations of the sessions were quite positive. However, we later learned that not all students accessed the

materials. Going forward, we will develop accountability systems to ensure that all matriculating students review the materials.

4. **Public health history course.** *Develop a stand-alone course on public health history with an equity lens.* Yesenia Merino, PhD, Director for IE education and training, developed a 3-credit elective currently being piloted (Fall 2021). Longer term goal is to require completion of at least 1-credit of public health history with equity lens for all Gillings students.

5. **Social justice and equity lens throughout curricula.** *Incorporate a social justice and racial equity lens into core courses and encourage adoption of such a perspective throughout curriculum.*
   - The IE team/others have developed a course audit tool to provide guidance in applying a justice/equity lens for Gillings courses. Roll-out of the tool is in planning.
   - In both spring 2020 and spring 2021, the MPH Core instructor team thoroughly reviewed and evaluated all 12 credits of the Gillings MPH Core and deeply revised this curriculum to strengthen equity and antiracism content, pedagogy and inculcation of equity based public health practice. The 3-credit SPH Foundation Learning Objectives (FLO) course, which is required of all non-MPH students across Gillings curricula, was also deeply revised and strengthened with this aim.
   - In summer 2020, the entire health behavior department held a 2-day curriculum retreat to refresh all courses with an eye to equity and anti-racist content, activities, assignments and public health praxis. The epidemiology and maternal and child health departments also updated several courses and curricula to fulfil these aims.
   - Some other departments have initiated work of reviewing and updating their courses to address justice and equity competencies.
   - A goal for AY 2021-22 is to develop approaches to track these updates, access evaluation of these updates, share outcomes across courses and curricula, and to establish systems for CQI in this regard.

6. **Resources.** *Create a toolbox of additional trainings and resources for those interested in growing their knowledge base or developing their skills further on their own.*
   - Course audit tool created.
   - 2-day symposium offered (June 2020; June 2021).
   - Multiple resources developed/offered (see [webpage](#)).
   - IE team serves as clearinghouse for trainings offered at UNC and through other venues, regularly sharing opportunities (and whether they help fulfill the 8-hour training requirement) with the IE Council to share with their constituencies.

7. **Equip instructors and facilitators across the School with training in facilitating difficult discussions**, including those around racism, to sustain a class environment conducive to learning and growth for all students. Faculty participation in antiracism training (recommendation 1), plus participation in facilitated meetups (action step 3), will help overcome these barriers.

Current and anticipated curriculum challenges:

- Across departments and the MPH Core, curriculum updates happen course by course (i.e. we do not have the levers to compel these changes). The IE team/Curriculum Committee need to inspire chairs, program leads and instructors to make such changes, supporting them with just-in-time resources and helping to coordinate and report out on efforts.

- Recent increases in training fees have led to an increased sense of urgency around developing high quality programming so we will be able to create and provide professional development within the Gillings School. It is critical that we provide the optimal level of content so beginners' needs are met while those with sophisticated background in this area find material to be of value. Allocating sufficient protected time to develop this new program may present a challenge, but it is a top priority, and the initial phases of this work will be completed in time for the opening of the fall semester.

3: Communication

Focus Area #3: Significantly improve our approaches to communicating about our inclusion, equity and anti-racism efforts

Why focus on communication?

Since at least 2010, we have invested significant effort and resources into fulfilling a strategic goal to make the Gillings School more diverse and inclusive. Yet, the success of these efforts is contingent upon us communicating more effectively. Faculty, staff, students, prospective students, alumni and friends should more clearly see what we are doing to move forward on our strategic diversity and inclusion. goals; know how to provide input about ongoing efforts, hear periodic updates about the progress made toward achieving said goals, and feel invested in the efforts we are undertaking as a school. In short, communicating our inclusive excellence efforts well is a critical part of any plan to improve the climate at Gillings Communications must be concerted and ongoing in order to foster and maintain a trusting environment within the school.

Overarching goals
- *Effectively communicate plans, actions, statements, events and successes re. inclusive excellence to all our constituents.*

- *Create a visual environment that communicates our commitment to inclusion.*

Who is leading this effort? Who else should be involved? Who should be consulted and why?
- **Lead**: Inclusive Excellence, Communications, Gillings School Dean's Office, Inclusive Excellence Council, Office of Student Affairs
- **Involved**: Department chairs and interested faculty, staff and students.
- **Consult**: Users (community and broader faculty, staff, and students) to ensure we are communicating effectively across audiences.

What communications action steps have we taken since the last iteration of the IEAP?

1. To more clearly articulate our inclusion statements, stories and other efforts, we have begun and will continue the ongoing, comprehensive redesign of the Gillings School's inclusive excellence webpages. We are working to evaluate and improve the usability of our pages and ease of access to the resources these pages hold. The content in these pages is rich and deep, but users need to search to find critical content (e.g., our diversity and inclusion plan and where we are in that planning process).

2. Featured the Gillings inclusive excellence plan on the inclusive excellence landing page as well as on its own page titled "Inclusive Excellence Action Plan." We are in the process of identifying and creating materials for indicating where we are with our recommendations graphically and determining what data we can post publicly.

3. In addition to the School's overall calendar of events, we have begun tagging equity and inclusion events and posting them to the Inclusive Excellence page. This effort includes the ongoing maintenance of an archive of past inclusive excellence/anti- racism/social justice events so that information seekers can see, at a glance, the depth and breadth of

our programming over time. University events and events held by community and organizational partners are featured on the page as well.

4. We have begun an ongoing partnership with the Gilllings Communications Team to develop an overarching branding approach, using an easily recognized inclusive excellence logo for relevant events, lectures and workshops.

5. Created a glossary of inclusive excellence terms. This resource will be refined on an ongoing basis as new knowledge and resources become available.

6. We are currently working towards improving the visibility of lectures and visits by prominent people of color and those working in health equity social justice. One development of this effort has been the creation of an annual inclusive excellence lecture series. We seek to: sponsor at least two lectures a year; brand and assertively market the lectures to make them visible; make them eligible for credit within the inclusive excellence professional development requirements; webcast them, if feasible; and archive them prominently.

7. Empaneled an "inclusive excellence art team" to help guide decision-making re: refreshing the photographs, art and displays we have across the Gillings School (no more than 10% in any given year). Photographs used on the web will also be assessed. We should aim to retire all photographs of students that are 3+ years old.

8. Reviewed and updated the school's inclusive excellence statement.

What communications action steps have we _not_ taken yet, but are committed to prioritizing?
1. **Explore feasibility and sustainability of adding a blog feature** to the inclusive excellence pages to feature ideas from the assistant dean for inclusive excellence and/or students, staff and faculty from across the Gillings School. If implemented, establish a review process for considering and approving submissions. Use social media to amplify messages.

2. **Assess and refresh the messages we convey visually across the Gillings School.** We may intend to celebrate our faculty, staff and students, promote equity and inclusion, and illustrate efforts to make an impact on the health of the public in our publicity throughout Gillings. Yet such efforts may not accurately represent the Gillings School or communicate other, negative or tokenizing messages. Given this potentiality, we should develop a guide to help us regularly assess our visual context with an inclusive and anti-racist/anti-oppression lens. At least one question in the [annual] inclusive excellence survey should address our visual installations across the School.

3. **Hold an open forum twice a year** for students, staff and faculty to offer inclusive excellence updates, share survey results, and to hear from our constituencies about inclusive excellence topics.

4. **Create a "breaking issues" corner of the Inclusive Excellence webpage** so information seekers can access information about Gillings School events, statements from Gillings leaders (including student leaders), and more. During "acute" stages of an issue or event, post a banner to the School's homepage directing information seekers to the portal. Include a direct link to the site in the homepage "sandwich." Continue using social media to amplify messages about breaking news/issues and feature new posts in the Gillings School's weekly newsletter. As appropriate, send messages to all constituents via email and consider whether to include in our outward-facing newsletter, Front Lines.

Current and anticipated communications challenges:

- In order to maintain organization and consistency, communications efforts and changes are channeled through the School-wide communications team. The heavy traffic of requests from units across the school may lead to delays in the execution of changes.

- The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increasing need for innovative virtual engagement strategies. With all communication functioning virtually for the foreseeable future, we will need more strategies for reaching a broad audience beyond those that are currently in our wheelhouse. This also includes improving strategies for learning about efforts across and outside of Gillings that align with the inclusive excellence mission.

4: Advocacy

Focus area #4: Advocate on behalf of students for living wages, fairness in hiring practices, and greater transparency regarding employment opportunities

Why focus on advocacy?

Economic inequities are health inequities. Financial issues are a major source of stress and anxiety for many of our students and limit the ability of students to access health resources and engage in healthy behaviors. As such, there are concrete steps we should take to reduce the prevalence of those economic inequities across the Gillings School. Students are also seeking greater clarity from administrators on a host of issues affecting the Gillings student experience, including stress levels and general health and well-being. As we have articulated elsewhere, a climate of inclusive excellence is one that supports individual success in a transparent manner that does not disproportionally advantage certain groups while simultaneously disadvantaging other groups. In our pursuit of such a climate, we must demonstrate institutional commitment to understanding, monitoring and addressing – where feasible – the sources of economic inequities among students.

Overarching goals
- *Financial resources are equitably allocated to students across the school.*

- *Benefits provided to student employees reflect the values of the Gillings School and public health.*

- *Provide transparent communication about and access to training and employment opportunities for students.*

Who is leading this effort? Who is involved? Who should be consulted and why?
Lead: Office of Student Affairs
Involved: Academic Affairs, Inclusive Excellence Council, Communications
Consulted: Student leaders, student employees, and other students with demonstrated interest

What advocacy steps have we taken since the last iteration of the IEAP?
- Gillings Student Affairs created a new position, the Student Funding and Awards Coordinator, and hired Ms. Jenna Keith into the inaugural role. Ms. Keith oversees a newly built online student jobsite portal, and ensures proper management, delivery, and reporting on all student awards. With this role, we are addressing the following action items toward meeting the overarching goals:
    - Understand, standardize, and improve communication about departmental processes for disbursing funding
    - Improve how we communicate with admitted students regarding their financial offers and costs of attendance
    - Require students to attend funding informational sessions
    - Create one internal job opportunity website/application mechanism, easily accessible to all Gillings students.

- The Office of Student Affairs developed and released a student experience survey to collect input that will be used as a part of the schoolwide evaluation plan.

- As part of a collaborative partnership between Inclusive Excellence, the Office of Student Affairs, and the Health Behavior Equity Task Force, the Gillings School developed a tool for collecting and addressing microaggressions and other student concerns. This [Student Feedback and Equity Concerns Tool](#) is managed by the Office of Student Affairs.

- Identified the authority at UNC or in the UNC-System that determines graduate student benefits with the aim of advocating for the addition of a dental benefit for graduate students.

- We now offer funding informational sessions at Open House and Admitted Student Day for students attending virtually and in person.

- **In the medium-term, explore the feasibility of offering part-time residential academic programs and evening and/or weekend classes**, for working adults. The option to pursue a graduate education part- time would ease financial stress for many of our students. This work is underway in the MPH@UNC curriculum and opportunities for residential programs are currently being explored.

  Currently, students can technically complete their degree requirements in a part-time basis, though it is not marketed as such. While designed as full-time program, there is nothing that prohibits a student from completing degree requirements on a part-time basis. The current schedule of classes is not conducive to students working a full-time job. As such, additional advocacy needs to be directed toward offering evening and weekend classes to complete degrees successfully based on their individual requirements. **Additionally, few scholarships and funding opportunities currently exist for part-time students. Most available funding requires full-time student status for eligibility.**

What advocacy steps have we *not* taken yet that we said we would?

The following are action steps that we committed to with the last IEAP that have not yet been taken. For instances where new information emerged that prevented us from acting (aside from limited bandwidth for example), the new information is also shared.

- **Create a Gillings Commitment guide (a type of "bill of rights and responsibilities")** to clarify students' and faculty members' rights and responsibilities. This guide would indicate what students can expect of faculty. Similarly, it would outline what faculty can expect from students. Part of these rights and responsibilities would be fairness in hiring practices (making job opportunities and pay scales fairer or, when pay scales vary, clarifying why this is so).

- **Develop, and make easily available on our website, an infographic on financial realities of graduate school at UNC-Chapel Hill.** Assess, and improve where necessary, the availability of financial aid information on the website. Consult competitor schools' websites in developing this information.

What advocacy action steps should be taken next?

In addition to prioritizing the items listed above, the emerging action steps needed for this focus area include:

- **Continue efforts to monitor student experiences in annual survey** that includes questions about financial stressors, mental health, work-life balance. If we do not currently track student debt, or student employment during their time at Gillings, we should include these as questions as well. Items related to inclusive excellence were integrated into the annual student satisfaction survey (to be administered by the Office of Student Affairs and managed by Strategic Analysis and Business Intelligence). At the time of this update, the survey was scheduled to be administered to students for the first time within weeks. For this inaugural data collection, we seek to establish a baseline understanding of key measures of student experience and inclusiveness of the environment at the school. Moving forward, we seek to use this information to target efforts related to inclusive excellence.

- **Continue efforts to understand, standardize, and improve communication about departmental processes for disbursing funding**. Student leaders shared a perception that most funding (RAships, TAships, tuition remission, and scholarship) is disbursed based on merit rather than on need. We will continue to assess the feasibility of collecting data, and publishing aggregated dashboards on, how we disburse funding. Recognizing that data may not be available regarding financial need of graduate students, we are working towards a better understanding of student need and then allocating a greater portion of School Based Tuition and scholarships to students with need. While there likely will always be a gap between students with need and available funds, we should aim for the gap to be as small as possible.

- **Continue efforts to improve how we communicate with admitted students regarding their financial offers and costs of attendance**, ensuring there is "truth in advertising." To ensure that admitted students are able to make fully informed decisions regarding whether to enroll at Gillings, we recommend developing – and adopting across the Gillings School – a standardized, well-designed form, to be completed for each admitted student, that provides clear, complete and timely information regarding what is included in their funding packages, what is not included, and an honest estimate of the financial outlay a student will need to commit to. The form should include average costs of rental properties. This is becoming a matter of competitive necessity and the right thing for students. We should prepare these letters earlier so that students who want to attend Gillings are not forced by circumstances to accept the earlier offers they receive from competitor schools.

- **Develop, and make easily available on our website, an infographic on financial realities of graduate school at UNC-Chapel Hill.** Assess, and improve where necessary, the availability of financial aid information on the website. Consult competitor schools' websites in developing this information.

Current advocacy challenges

- There are major data gaps in understanding financial needs of graduate students

- Administrative hurdles associated with developing, and assuring adoption of, a system that standardizes funding disbursement practices across the school has led to progress delays.

- Diffusion of responsibility, lack of ownership, and cumbersome processes have made it difficult to make progress in this focus area.

- In order to address many of these advocacy concerns, additional FTE would be needed and committing to that additional FTE will take additional work navigating HR processes.

- Student employers provided feedback that the process to submit their positions to the portal was too cumbersome and time-consuming.

5: Representation

Recommendation 5: Improve recruitment and retention of Gillings faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds

Why focus on representation?

There has been a persistent lack of diversity in both the Gillings School and public health more broadly through their histories. Despite some increases in the demographic composition of some segments of the School, these increases are often sporadic, not sustained, and have not resulted in meaning representation in decision-making positions and spaces as we had hoped. Additionally, the prevalence of micro- and macro-aggressions throughout learning and working spaces make retention a continual challenge. Moreover, university-level decisions and state politics create often inhospitable environments for recruiting new students, staff, and faculty from historically marginalized backgrounds.

Overarching goals

- *Gillings School students, staff, and faculty composition that reflects the demographic composition of the communities we serve.*

- *Meaningful representation and participation of members of historically marginalized groups in leadership positions throughout the School.*

- *Foster a school culture that is welcoming and nurturing for members of minoritized groups as well as members of historically well-represented groups.*

Who is leading this effort? Who else should be involved? Who should be consulted and why?

- **Lead:** Inclusive Excellence Council, Human Resources, Student Affairs, department chairs, Academic Affairs
- **Involved:** Faculty, staff, and students interested in these topics (see also, focus areas 1, 2 and 4). Also consult with and include URM faculty, staff and students to ensure we are designing specifically for their needs.
- **Consultants / outside experts:** Provide guidance in working with different institutions and in evidence-based practices; offer an unbiased, fresh perspective; protect the time of Gillings School faculty and staff.

What representation steps have we taken?

- Formed the Inclusive Excellence Council and charge them with:
    a. helping to prioritize actions from across the IEAP that would help us recruit/retain diverse faculty, students and staff
    b. serving as ambassadors for diversity, inclusion, and equity in their units by facilitating communication between the IEC and other groups within the Gillings School

Student representation	Faculty/staff representation
• Dropped the GRE requirement for 8 graduate programs. • Increase transparency and fairness in student funding practices through the creation of a position dedicated to managing and distributing student funding opportunities (*see focus area #4 for more detail*). • Improve pedagogical practices to increase inclusivity and to improve students' experience and learning outcomes at Gillings by adding antiracist content to curricula, as well as creating tools and training to facilitate antiracist developments in Gillings courses. • Developed a Critical History of Public Health elective class for launch in Fall 2021.	• Began developing and enacting mentoring plans for junior faculty and staff. • Moved to ensure that all Gillings School leaders (Dean's Council members) submit annual inclusive excellence reports that specify recruitment and retention strategies (and outcomes) for the units they direct. Reports should include types of resources and efforts devoted to recruitment and/or retention. • Ensuring that all Gillings School leaders engage regularly with the Inclusive Excellence team as they develop, enact, evaluate and improve approaches to diversity, inclusion and equity within their units through the Inclusive Excellence Council and having the Inclusive Excellence team represented at leadership meetings across the School.

- Use data collected from climate surveys, exit surveys, and other feedback mechanisms to understand the institutional climate experienced by our URM and/or marginalized populations at Gillings, and design strategic initiatives meant to address these specific concerns and deficits.
- Track and share, via website, reports, leadership meetings, and town halls, and open IEC meetings, our progress in this area (see recommendation 3).
- Communicate more effectively and regularly with alumni about progress the Gillings School is making toward creating a more inclusive environment with the creation of the Alumni Inclusive Excellence Committee in the fall of 2020.
- Work with members on the Gillings Communications team to build a strategic plan to determine optimal mechanisms for publicly sharing our diversity and inclusion data regarding faculty, staff and students.

What representation steps should be taken next?

- **Recruitment and retention.** Devote additional resources, effort and staff to attracting and retaining students, faculty and staff from historically and currently underrepresented backgrounds. This includes (but is not limited to) the following:

Student recruitment and retention	Faculty/staff recruitment and retention

• Reassemble a schoolwide committee to assess and refresh our approaches to student recruitment and admissions.	• Ensure that all search committee chairs receive rigorous training (and refreshers) in nuances of leading searches so that all committee members actively participate in creation of a pool of diverse, qualified candidates and to ensure that the entire search process – from advertising, to screening, to in-person interviews, to job offers – employs a range of strategies to attract a broad, diverse candidate pool, ensure a fair process, and reduce (and ideally eliminate) bias. • Conduct regular salary reviews to ensure fairness in compensation. Unit leaders should discuss these salary reviews with the dean and/or vice dean at least once annually.

- Conduct post-search interviews with URM individuals who decline offers to understand why they chose not to come to Gillings, as well as exit interviews with URM faculty, staff and students who leave Gillings.

- Continue to work towards increased transparency and fairness in student funding practices (see focus area 4 for additional details).
    - Continue to improve health equity and social justice curricula so that students (and faculty) attain a more in-depth and sophisticated understanding of, and toolkit in, systems of oppression and how to dismantle them (see recommendation 2).
    - Train instructors to audit courses across departments to improve their equity and antiracism-centered content, policies, and instructor-student dynamics. This work was completed by Deanie Anyangwe, dual degree MPH and MCRP student, as part of her joint practicum with the Health Behavior Equity Task Force and Gillings Inclusive Excellence.
    - Improve the way members of the Inclusive Excellence Council engage with their constituencies to:
        - share information about schoolwide IE efforts
        - serve as sounding boards for IE ideas and issues
        - to help elevate concerns so that the IE team and the IEC can problem-solve, as needed.
    - Launch and analyze data from a climate survey. This data will help us better understand areas where we are doing well, and where we need to improve our efforts in maintaining a climate of inclusive excellence.

Current representation challenges

- Regarding faculty recruitment, many of the research and practice areas Gillings has identified as growth areas currently have little diversity in their faculty and student pools. To counteract this situation, we need to be intentional about targeted recruitment **and** admissions strategies, as well as recruitment **and** hiring/promotion strategies.

- There is insufficient support for the "grow our own" approach, in which we create in-house graduate student-to-postdoc-to-faculty pathways for specific individuals who can add to departments in terms of diverse cultural backgrounds as well as research interests.

- Increasing faculty and staff diversity at a time when we are doing very little hiring

6: Research

Focus Area 6: Actively work to dismantle racism and promote equity throughout our research enterprise.

Why focus on research?

As we began working through the July 2019 IEAP, issues related to the conduct of research increasingly rose to the surface as needing dedication attention and effort to foster an inclusive environment at the Gillings School. There is no shortage of evidence that demonstrates the racial/ethnic disparities in access to participation in health research, researcher training opportunities, funding for equity-centered research, and scholarly citation in public health (Delgado, 1984; Grumbach & Mendoza, 2008; Troppe et al. 2019; Carnethon, Kershaw, & Kandula, 2020). Moreover, students at the Gillings School have repeatedly called for more transparency and equity in the structures that surround student-researcher training, funding, and access to opportunities as well as increased diversity in tenure-track and instructional faculty, inclusion of more diverse scholarship throughout the curriculum, and more nuanced approaches to studying health inequities than Black/white disparities. There has been considerable evidence that suggests gender and race/ethnic diversity creates more innovation, discovery, and higher quality science (Hofstra et al. 2020; Campbell et al. 2013; Freeman and Huang 2014; Matsui et al. 2020; Nielsen et al. 2018). Additionally, focusing on research will allow us to better meet the mission of our school "to improve public health, promote individual well-being and **eliminate health inequities** across North Carolina and around the world."

Overarching goals
- *Develop a strong antiracist and health equity research portfolio within the Gillings School.*

- *All researchers at Gillings regularly apply an equity lens to their research projects, with additional support systems in place for antiracist and health equity scholars.*

- *Provide transparent communication about and access to training and employment opportunities for students.*

What research steps do we need to take?

In considering action steps to be taking, we considered the entire research enterprise – from conceptualization through dissemination, to include:
- Research agendas and ideas that are encouraged or seen as worthwhile of resources
- Community engagement throughout the life of a research project
- Team selection, including who has access to research opportunities
- Grant writing and other mechanisms of funding allocation
- Theoretical and methodological development
- Implementation of research projects in all settings (e.g., laboratory, clinical, community)
- Data collection and analysis
- Dissemination and disengagement

Given the myriad activities that comprise the research enterprise, including crosscutting and iterative components of any given research agenda, we have identified three general categories around which to organize this focus area, including corresponding initial action steps.

Research action steps by category

Category	Substance	Climate	Composition
Definition	research projects that center antiracism and health equity	how research is conducted at the Gillings School and beyond	scholars who comprise Research Teams at the School

Initial action steps	• Define, further develop, and communicate about the Gillings antiracist research portfolio.
	
	• For Gillings funding mechanisms, prioritize awarding research proposals that have explicitly antiracist frameworks (GILS).
	
	• Develop strategies for helping Principal Investigators (PIs) integrate antiracism approaches into their research.
		• Foster faculty effectiveness, when serving on study sections for peer review of grants, to interrupt racism and actively support antiracist research, faculty of color and diverse teams; also support strategies for Gillings peer reviewers to deepen other committee members' understanding of/support for proposals that use antiracist frameworks.
		
		• Foster school-wide collaborations with researchers from Historically Minority Serving Institutions (HMSIs), including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
		
		• Provide PIs with the skills to create and maintain an inclusive climate in their labs, including in the conceptualization, conduct, and dissemination of your research:
		  o Have informed discussions about equity and antiracism.
		
		• Address microaggressions and structural racism immediately and consistently.
			• PIs should
			  o Intentionally seek out underrepresented researchers with whom to collaborate, including publishing papers and writing grants.
			  o Support underrepresented researchers in their efforts to build community, to hold the scientific community accountable.
			  o Effectively recruit, mentor, and sponsor lab members from underrepresented backgrounds
			  o Champion and advocate for researchers from underrepresented backgrounds in spaces where they are few or absent.
			
			• Provide research opportunities to students of color both within Gillings (e.g., NIH Diversity Supplements) and from MSIs (e.g., Project IMHOTEP and other partnerships).
			
			• Support global collaborations between researchers at the Gillings School and international scholars.

What research steps should we take first and why?

Given limited resources, we must begin with action steps that are either foundational to future actions in this area or that will have the largest return on initial investment. As such, we will be endeavoring on the following initial steps.

Substance	Climate	Composition
Defining health equity and antiracist research at the Gillings School. This is an important step that will allow us to determine what is the baseline of research currently being conducted in these areas within the School. Once we have this information, we will be better prepared to develop resources and strategies to increase this important work in Gillings.	**Identifying existing relationships and building school-wide partnerships with neighboring HBCUs/HMSIs.** There are several individual researchers and units within Gillings that have established good working research partnerships with neighboring HBCUs/HMSIs. By identifying these relationships, we can determine what is working well for both the UNC researchers and the HBCU/HMSI partners. We can then determine how to leverage these existing relationships across the school. **Developing school-wide guidelines for expectations of the research training environment.** Some departments are already beginning to work on these types of guidelines. It is important to have consistent expectations across the Gillings school to benefit all of our trainees and mentors.	**Developing resources for trainees, faculty mentors, and research administration staff about NIH Diversity Supplement.** We know that it is important to create space for, celebrate, and train trainees and fellows from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups to better tackle health inequities in our communities. This program provides supplemental funding to support trainees from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the biomedical sciences. **Create a Student Advisory Board** to guide the Research group from Research, Innovation and Global Solutions (RIGS) on integrating students more meaningfully into the research enterprise.

Who is leading this effort? Who else should be involved? Who should be consulted and why?
- **Lead:** Research group from RIGS. Inclusive Excellence Council
- **Involved:** Communications, SABI, Student Advisory Board, Research Council
- **Consultants/outside experts:** Departments, Centers (such as the Center for Environmental Health Susceptibility, etc.), TEAM ADVANCE and Center for Faculty Excellence, Center for Health Equity Research

Potential research challenges

Given that this is the newest focus area of the IEAP, we can only speak at this time to the potential challenges of acting in this area. Those anticipated challenges may include:

- There are many disjointed or nonexistent research systems within the School and university. For example, ensuring equity among postdoctoral scholars requires creating a central system of identifying current postdocs at the Gillings School.
- There is not currently a clear or consistent definition of health equity research and antiracist research used throughout the School.
- Time and resources to pursue this big but important undertaking.