

NIH and NCI Initiatives to Promote Workforce Diversity and Outreach



NCI EQUITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAM (EIP)

The EIP, which is overseen by the NCI Equity Council and five working groups, strives to:

- Increase the diversity of the cancer research workforce.
- Build a more equitable and inclusive NCI community.
- Address cancer disparities and advance health equity.

CONNECTING UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS TO CLINICAL TRIALS (CUSP2CT)

The CUSP2CT program implements and evaluates multilevel and culturally tailored outreach and education interventions with the primary goal of increasing referral and, ultimately, the accrual of underrepresented racial and ethnic minority populations to NCI-supported clinical trials. CUSP2CT will address cancer health disparities through a network of local multidisciplinary and integrated partners that includes community health educators, lay health advisors, community members, health care providers, and researchers working in coordination to educate and refer racial and ethnic minority populations to NCI-supported clinical trials and increase provider awareness about racial and ethnic minority participation in NCI clinical trials.

EARLY INVESTIGATOR ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM (EIAP)

With the support of its Equity Council, in December 2021, NCI launched EIAP to facilitate the advancement of scientists from diverse backgrounds to become independent investigators.

The cancer research enterprise needs a continuous flow of talent through the research career pipeline. One critical juncture is the transition from junior investigator to independent investigator. EIAP aims to enhance professional skills, guide preparation of an R01 grant application, provide access to a mentoring and peer network, and grow a community of emerging independent investigators from diverse backgrounds.

Each year, EIAP will support the professional and career development of a cohort of eligible and qualified early-stage investigators (ESIs) and new investigators from institutions across the country. Cohort members will provide peer support for each other, both during and beyond their participation in the program.

FACULTY INSTITUTIONAL RECRUITMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION (FIRST)

NIH launched the FIRST program with the goal of developing cultures of inclusive excellence—scientific environments that can cultivate and benefit from a full range of talents—at NIH-funded institutions. Inclusive excellence hinges on enhancing diversity and inclusion, as well as institutional culture change. Fostering inclusive environments that cultivate and benefit from a full range of talents is not only essential for the quality and impact of science, but it also improves stewardship of federal funds to ensure that the most talented researchers are recruited, supported, and advanced to become competitive research investigators.

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT SERIES (PAVES)

Launched during the pandemic, this seminar series hosted by the Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities (CRCHD) is held monthly and offers professional development for both intramural and extramural grantees and trainees. From networking to learning about cancer systems biology or transitioning to faculty positions, the experiences and information are fruitful.

TRAINING NAVIGATION

CRCHD uses a Training Navigation model to facilitate and increase the successful entry of underrepresented scholars into the **Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences (CURE)** training pipeline and to transition existing CURE scholars through the CURE pipeline to career independence. Training Navigation also aims to provide career development support for the advancement of early- to mid-career and tenured investigators to develop the skills necessary to obtain R-type funding and achieve career advancement.

The Training Navigation model has also been leveraged by the **Geographic Management of Cancer Health Disparities Program (GMaP)**. GMaP is a national program designed to enhance the recruitment and career/professional development of underrepresented investigators, trainees, and students; communication and dissemination; and evaluation, as part of building region-based “hubs” for the support and efficient management of cancer health disparities research, training, and outreach. GMaP-supported activities include addressing questions from potential applicants and GMaP Regional Coordinating Directors, performing NCI outreach activities, promoting new and existing funding opportunities, hosting/supporting webinars and workshops, connecting scholars with potential mentors and regional training opportunities, and identifying existing NIH career development/grantsmanship resources and available tools. Tracking investigators as they mature is important to monitor for career progression and growth.

YOUTH ENJOY SCIENCE (YES) RESEARCH EDUCATION PROGRAM

The NCI YES program facilitates the education of students from diverse backgrounds underrepresented in medical research who will become knowledgeable about cancer, and available to focus on cancer later in their careers. The program will support efforts to create and maintain institutional programs that engage grades 6-12 and/or undergraduate students from underrepresented populations in cutting-edge cancer research experiences. These efforts will enhance the pool of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds interested in pursuing a career in medical research via early intervention strategies. Proposed institutional programs may also provide research experiences for the grade 6-12 teachers and undergraduate faculty members who serve underrepresented student populations. The specific goals are to inspire interest in medical sciences, help envision research as a career path, and strengthen practical research and career skills. In alignment with these goals, institutions may develop unique programs that capitalize on their research strengths and are responsive to their target populations.