



March 2, 2023

Road Map Bulletin: Inside Mount Sinai's Racism and Bias Initiative

As *Bulletin* readers know, our work to become an anti-racist institution began when 51 members of the Mount Sinai community convened in June of 2020 whose ongoing discussions led to the creation of Road Map for Action to Address Racism and the 11 strategies. But, prior to this, several leaders across our Health System, including **Leona Hess, PhD**, Senior Director of Strategy and Equity Education Programs, **Ann-Gel Palermo, DrPH, MPH**, Senior Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and **David Muller, MD**, Dean for Medical Education at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, were already working to uncover the role of racism and bias in medicine and medical education, and address inequities for historically marginalized students, staff, faculty, and patients.

In 2015, Mount Sinai launched the [Racism and Bias Initiative \(RBI\)](#) to center underrepresented voices and experiences, recognize the historical underpinnings of racism and bias in medicine, and explicitly address and undo racism and bias in all functional areas of the medical school. To do so, RBI leaders implemented a [multi-phased, people-focused change management process](#) to create change at both an institutional and individual level.



“RBI focuses on the people side of change, because institutions do not change, people do,” **Leona** told us. She added that failing to plan for and address the people side of change is often the root cause of failed change initiatives – an element that makes RBI both unique and effective.

Supported by a diverse **guiding coalition** made up of faculty, staff, leadership, and students from across the health system, RBI continuously examines how systems, people, and the culture of an institution can function as barriers to, or levers for, effective change toward a collective vision.



David explained that racism and bias in the learning and work environment of medical school can only be mitigated through an embrace of a change process that is lifelong, people-centered, incremental, and nonlinear. “It requires the courage to constantly course correct while never losing sight of the ultimate goal: health care and medical education that are free of racism and bias.”

Since the Initiative's launch, RBI's guiding coalition has enacted change in several areas, including Curricular Affairs, Student Affairs, Admissions, and Enrollment Services. RBI also developed and launched [Chats for Change](#), a series of weekly dialogues that present topics in racism and bias for reflection, discussion, and learning. Chats for Change participants include staff, faculty, and students from across the Health System. Earlier this year, RBI re-committed to achieving [25 structural, transformational, and relational change targets](#) to guide their work in 2023.

As we often mention, institutional change is extremely challenging, and work that requires careful examination of personal and organizational values, norms, behaviors, and perceptions related to racism and bias can, at times, be uncomfortable.

And that is what makes this work so valuable. Every step taken to challenge inequities in health, education, and medicine moves us closer to becoming Health System and health professions school that is free of racism and bias.

All the best,

Angela and Shawn

Join Us for an Upcoming Event

Chats for Change: Racism x Homelessness — Chats for Change is a production of the Icahn School of Medicine's Racism and Bias Initiative. In 2020, the homeless population in the United States was around 600,000. Isolated and ostracized by society, people experiencing homelessness suffer interpersonal and institutional violence, with a disproportionate number of people stemming from Black and brown communities. Join us on **March 7 from noon-1 pm** as we discuss the implications of homelessness from a public health and racial justice lens and re-imagine an equity-focused approach. [Register on Zoom](#).

[Road Map for Action](#)

[Past Bulletins](#)