



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force
FINAL REPORT

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Background

The summer of 2020 was a tumultuous time in the United States. As a result of racially motivated events occurring in the United States, including the murder of George Floyd, and the resulting nationwide social justice movement, APMA released the following statement:

[A Statement from APMA on Current Events – June 2, 2020](#)

In recent weeks, our country has been reminded that we have much work to do to overcome racism and hate. The American Podiatric Medical Association—its leaders, staff, and members—unequivocally condemns all acts of racism and violence.

As an organization committed to advocating for its members and their patients, we cannot overlook the devastating impact of racism in America.

Our members keep America walking. But some patients are afraid to walk in their own neighborhoods. Our members save limbs and lives. But some Americans are disproportionately affected by the complications of diabetes and other diseases. Our members are physicians and surgeons based on their advanced education, training, and experience. But some still face discrimination based on the color of their skin.

These inequities must not endure. APMA has a longstanding commitment to addressing health-care disparities through dedicated education and the work of its Public Health and Preventive Podiatric Medicine Committee. We stand with our members, staff, and patients of color, ready to work toward a better future.

After the statement was released, APMA heard from members and worked with the Public Health and Preventive Podiatric Medicine Committee (PHPPMC) to create a more detailed plan to track progress. APMA released the following statement that included specific action items:

[APMA Announces New Efforts to Address Racism and Disparities – June 29, 2020](#)

On June 2, the American Podiatric Medical Association issued a [statement](#) condemning racism and violence in the United States. Since that time, APMA has had many productive conversations with members and leaders within the organization regarding racism. We empathize with the pain, fear, and anxiety that so many of our Black members, leaders, and patients experience every day. While we will never understand the full extent of their experiences, we are committed to listening, educating ourselves, and doing the work to end inequality. APMA stands in solidarity with our Black members, leaders, and patients. We want them to know that Black lives do matter.

Our discussions have resulted in new ideas about how to advance APMA’s commitment to ending health-care disparities and how to promote inclusivity and diversity. Among these ideas are several that APMA plans to pursue in the coming months:

- Explore recruiting methods to attract prospective students who are in a socially disadvantageous position as well as students enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- Provide additional educational opportunities for members on topics such as racism, implicit bias, and health-care disparities.
- Extend previously conducted research on diversity within the podiatric medical profession including among our applicants, students, residents, fellows, and established members.
- Continue to extend invitations to a diverse group of speakers at our Annual Scientific Meeting.
- Investigate opportunities to collaborate with like-minded organizations to address racism and health-care disparities.

We unequivocally condemn all acts of racism, bigotry, and systemic inequality based on race, sexual orientation, or religion in America and in our health-care system. We appreciate the diversity of our communities—including Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ people.

We invite and encourage APMA members to continue to engage us with questions, concerns, and new ideas. We are listening. These are not easy conversations, but they are invaluable as we move forward together to create change.

In the fall of 2020, the PHPPMC invited component societies, educational affiliates, and related organizations to collaborate with APMA to provide additional educational opportunities for members on topics such as racism, implicit bias, and health-care disparities. PHPPMC continued to discuss the impact of 2020’s events on the nation and the association and put forth the suggestion that a task force be formed. The task force would focus on APMA practices, policies, and procedures to identify gaps that have resulted from historic inaction and silence. This task force would continue the path of exploration that APMA has been on to identify how to build the core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into all operations and to ensure that DEI is an ongoing journey.

Incoming APMA President Seth Rubenstein, DPM, acted and laid the groundwork for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force (Task Force). Dr. Rubenstein’s vision for the Task Force was announced at the 2021 APMA House of Delegates meeting and it was also announced that the Task Force would be chaired by APMA Trustee William Long, DPM.

DEI Task Force

Mission

To explore and identify potential diversity, equity, and inclusion gaps in APMA practices, policies, and procedures that have resulted from historic inaction and silence.

Purpose

To ensure diverse and inclusive perspectives within APMA staff and membership.

Goals

The goals of the task force were as follows:

1. Review internal APMA documents (to include):
 - a. Governance Documents
 - b. APMA Employee Manual
 - c. APMA Political Action Committee (APMAPAC) Documents
 - d. APMA Educational Foundation Documents
2. Set measurable goals and make progress on the above action items.

Example Areas of Focus

Age, culture, disability, race, religion, sex/gender, sexual orientation, gender identity

It was also during the 2021 House of Delegates meeting that a moving Town Hall session was held on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with presentations from Drs. Janet Simon, Karen Langone, Jondelle Jenkins, and William Long. The recording of this session can be viewed at www.apma.org/dei.

After the close of the 2021 House of Delegates, the task force began working diligently to accomplish the goals of the task force.

Meeting Dates

The task force met virtually six times during the year.

- April 20, 2021
- July 12, 2021
- August 10, 2021
- October 25, 2021
- December 8, 2021
- January 12, 2022

At the beginning of each meeting, Dr. Long reminded the group that we were creating a [Brave Space](#) (see [Appendix A](#)) for our discussions, acknowledging that we may not always get what we

say right, we may stumble with our words, and that if we said anything that could be interpreted as insensitive, it was not meant to be insensitive, hurtful, or disrespectful. Starting each meeting with a reminder of this acknowledgement was a way for those in the meeting to feel comfortable speaking without being judged for what they wished to express.

To accomplish the first goal of the task force, namely reviewing internal APMA documents, task force members volunteered to be part of several work groups.

Work Groups

The following work groups were tasked with reviewing APMA documents to look for potential diversity, equity, and inclusion gaps in APMA practices, policies, and procedures that have resulted from historic inaction and silence.

APMA Governance Documents

The APMA governance documents reviewed were the APMA Bylaws, APMA Code of Ethics, House of Delegates Operations Manual, Administrative Procedures, and Board Policies and Procedures.

The review of the APMA Code of Ethics was prioritized to allow for any changes to be considered by the Bylaws, Procedures, and Rules Committee for the current review cycle and suggested changes will be presented to the APMA House of Delegates in March 2022. The theme of suggested changes to the APMA governance documents were related to expanding the list of characteristics to not discriminate against, including but not limited to, race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender identification, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, political belief, socioeconomic status, or health status. There was also discussion of non-discrimination in membership and leadership positions and when possible, APMA will strive for diversity in the identification of candidates for open positions.

The remaining recommended changes to the documents will go before the APMA Bylaws, Procedures, and Rules Committee and/or the APMA Board of Trustees for review and comment before being considered by a subsequent House of Delegates.

APMA Employee Manual

The APMA Employee Manual currently makes regular reference to inclusivity and nondiscrimination. The work group identified a few areas where more robust statements could be made:

- Include a statement in the first section of the manual stating that APMA promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Include support for tolerance for other religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, etc.
- Acknowledge various major non-Christian religious holidays throughout the year.

- Make parental leave readily available to employees regardless of how long they've worked at the association.
- Acknowledge preferred pronouns in email signature lines.
- Shore up the dress code, grooming, and personal appearance section, as well as the discretion with which it may be applied. Currently, it could allow for unfair application to some individuals (e.g., people of color, women, etc.).

APMA Educational Foundation Documents

The APMA Educational Foundation work group discussed several parts of the foundation bylaws where language could be added to indicate that board appointments, committee appointments, grantmaking decisions, and scholarship policies should not be affected by race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender identification, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, political belief, socioeconomic status, or health status. Additionally, the foundation board may decide to make grants designed to promote the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, provided they still fulfill the objectives described in the bylaws, and the foundation may decide to offer scholarship awards to students who have been impacted by structural inequity or in a way that supports the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The work group also recommends that a gift acceptance policy be put in place to ensure that funding received by the foundation is obtained ethically and that the values of the donor are replicated in the funds that are received.

APMA Political Action Committee (APMAPAC) Documents

The APMAPAC document work group identified a few areas for consideration. The document could:

- acknowledge various religious holidays;
- allow the general membership or the House of Delegates to elect a member-at-large for the APMAPAC Board of Directors to allow for more diversity and inclusion; and
- put in place accommodations for anyone to attend meetings, including those with differing abilities.

The APMAPAC document will go before the PAC Board of Directors for consideration, discussion, and approval.

Parking Lot

While the task force focused on the primary goals, many other topics came up during discussions. To maintain focus on the primary goals of the task force while realizing that other important items needed to be acknowledged, the task force instituted a "Parking Lot." The Parking Lot was a place for important items to land with the understanding that they would be re-visited later. This allowed for discussion to continue with the topic at hand but documenting other important items to be discussed later. The Parking Lot was kept on each meeting's

agenda and updated throughout. Near the end of the task force's work together, there was a call for proposals from the Parking Lot. Any member of the task force could write, in their own words, specifically what they would want APMA to do/focus on in the future related to any Parking Lot topic. Two Parking Lot proposals were submitted (see [Appendix B](#)):

1. [Family and Medical Leave](#)
2. [DEI Advisory Group](#)

Progress Towards Fulfilment of Action Items

Since making the statement on June 29, 2020, with the five action items listed below, APMA made considerable efforts to make progress in each area (updates in italics below each item).

- Explore recruiting methods to attract prospective students who are in a socially disadvantageous position as well as students enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
 - *The task force discussed several opportunities to reach prospective students who may be socially disadvantaged including, but not limited to, reaching out to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Black Student Unions at colleges, the Divine Nine sororities and fraternities, Asian American and Pacific Islander groups at colleges, underrepresented minority groups at colleges, Historically Hispanic Colleges, and Tribal Colleges. The task force also discussed continued encouragement of APMA members to connect with their alma maters or local schools and counselors to speak with pre-health students. While the student recruitment focus of the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine (AACPM) is at the undergraduate college level, a future APMA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee could discuss ideas with AACPM regarding specific recruitment methods for the groups mentioned above and explore external opportunities for grant funding for the colleges of podiatric medicine.*
 - *APMA supports student recruitment through career awareness. Based on recent market research, APMA's efforts target students earlier in their educational path (middle and high school). APMA features people with many diverse characteristics in social media posts, recruitment videos, the [Step Into Podiatry website](#), informational webinars, and other digital assets, and will continue to do so. Moving forward, APMA may need to do additional market research to understand how to reach and attract prospective students who fit specifically into these disadvantaged or historically underrepresented minority groups.*
 - *APMA's current recruitment efforts promote care being provided at clinics affiliated with some of the colleges of podiatric medicine, where the focus may be on care for local underserved communities. Some prospective students may even have personal experiences with these types of community clinics, either as*

patients themselves or assisting family members. As an example, one story reflected on how a non-English speaking patient brought a younger family member to the clinic to translate and offer cultural guidance to the care team. This experience and exposure to the podiatric profession at an early age can be instrumental in career awareness and eventual matriculation into a podiatric medical college.

- *Additionally, the APMA Educational Foundation supports students through scholarships which may be advantageous when it comes to attracting prospective students who may be in financially disadvantageous situations. APMA will continue to reference the financial/scholarship support of the APMA Educational Foundation in student recruitment through career awareness messaging, along with promotion of the overall supportive nature of the podiatric profession.*
- Provide additional educational opportunities for members on topics such as racism, implicit bias, and health-care disparities.
 - *APMA is committed to providing educational opportunities that discuss race-related topics, health disparities, and other situations/circumstances where biases may be present. Since the inception of the task force, and in conjunction with the PHPPMC, APMA has offered the following continuing education opportunities:*
 - *Public Health, Disparities, and Physician Wellness Track at The National in Denver, July 29, 2021*
 - *Bias and Cultural Awareness: Clinical Pointers*
 - *Janet Simon, DPM*
 - *Disparities and Limb Preservation*
 - *Neal R. Barshes, MD, MPH*
 - *Preventing Racial and Ethnic Disparities: How Non-Medical Factors Impact Your Patient Care*
 - *Brian Smedley, PhD's presentation was designed to raise awareness of social determinants of health and how they relate to diabetes and diabetic complications.*
 - *Understanding the Socioeconomic Impact of Care on Patients*
 - *Alton Johnson Jr., DPM, CWSP's presentation described the various factors and variables that impact the care of patients during the current economic conditions and identified solutions that can enhance patient experiences and care regardless of the impact of outside socioeconomic influences.*
 - *Addressing the Needs of LGBTQIA+ Older Adults: What All Health-Care Providers Should Know*

- *Mark Simone, MD, AGSF, presented on why understanding a patient's social history is imperative to providing the best care, how society has changed regarding the LGBTQIA+ community over the course of time, why it is important to provide a safe and comfortable environment for patients, and additional considerations when caring for LGBTQIA+ older adults.*
 - *Impacting Change in the Health-Care Environment: Equipping for the War Against Human Trafficking*
 - *Jennifer Jefferson, LCSW-S, and Michelle Lemmon, LCDC's presentation demonstrated that trafficking of humans could be happening right before our eyes. The presenters shared information about sex and labor trafficking, the common signs health-care providers might witness, and how to handle a situation in which a provider thinks their patient may be a victim of trafficking.*
 - *Recognizing and Responding to Elder Abuse*
 - *Michele Mathes, JD, and Diane Menio's presentation highlighted that older patients may be experiencing abuse. The presenters shared how common elder abuse is, how infrequently it is reported, and information about the many forms of abuse and exploitation. Spotting signs of elder abuse may be challenging, but after this course, providers may recognize these signs more frequently than ever before.*
 - *Sexual Harassment*
 - *Tracy Clarke, MBA, PHR, SHRM-CP*
 - *Additional details to follow.*
- *The task force also discussed developing a presentation for state components to provide at their local/state/regional meetings. APMA prepared a presentation on Health-Care Disparities in the past for this purpose and is unclear on how/whether that presentation was used for its intended purpose. There was also discussion of short video messages to be shared broadly.*
 - *Including materials for other medical and surgical specialties to review.*
- *Task force member Janet Simon, DPM, wrote "[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) in Podiatric Medicine](#)" for the May/June 2021 issue of the APMA News magazine, stating that "[t]he path forward must include podiatrists identifying signs of racism, harassment, and cultural insensitivity in our daily lives, our workplaces, and health-care systems."*
- *APMA Immediate Past President Seth Rubenstein, DPM, penned an article describing the work of the task force that will be published in the March/April 2022 issue of APMA News.*

- *The task force also encouraged engagement and/or providing an activity within the local community where educational meetings are held.*
- Extend previously conducted research on diversity within the podiatric medical profession including among our applicants, students, residents, fellows, and established members.
 - *The task force reviewed prior research and discussed asking members for additional information so the association can know and understand more about the members we serve.*
- Continue to extend invitations to a diverse group of speakers at our Annual Scientific Meeting.
 - *APMA has and continues to invite speakers/instructors for the APMA Annual Scientific Meeting (The National) based on the educational needs of our members. When reviewing members' educational needs, we recognize the need for our speakers and instructions to have diverse perspectives including, but not limited to, gender, race/ethnicity, years in practice, practice type/setting, etc.*
- Investigate opportunities to collaborate with like-minded organizations to address racism and health-care disparities.
 - *The task force has identified several like-minded organizations to collaborate with in the future, including, but not limited to, APMA's clinical educational affiliates and related organizations, the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine, American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons, American Podiatric Medical Students' Association, Council on Podiatric Medical Education, Student National Podiatric Medical Association, National Medical Association (specifically the Podiatric Medicine and Surgery Section), Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, American Medical Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, and other non-profits such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and National Urban League.*

DEI Task Force Webpage

The task force's webpage is public-facing and can be found at www.apma.org/dei. It includes information about the task force, the statements made by APMA in the summer of 2020, a recording of the Town Hall session from the 2021 House of Delegates meeting, minutes from each meeting of the task force, a list of members of the task force and additional resources.

DEI Task Force Recommendations

The task force submits the following final recommendations to the APMA Board of Trustees:

1. Create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to continue the work of the task force.
 - a. The committee will consider the following:
 - i. address future questions from the APMA Bylaws, Procedures, and Rules Committee regarding suggested changes to APMA's governance documents;
 - ii. provide support and ensure appropriate changes are made and implemented in APMA's internal documents that were reviewed by the task force;
 - iii. consider further action related to the Parking Lot proposals;
 - iv. discuss opportunities and ideas for undergraduate student recruitment with AACPM;
 - v. plan future continuing education opportunities;
 - vi. provide content for APMA publications;
 - vii. identify opportunities and feasibility of a philanthropic activity within the local community where The National is held;
 - viii. explore opportunities for additional demographic data to be added to the APMA membership database;
 - ix. work with stakeholders to conduct research on diversity within the profession, including among applicants, students, residents, fellows, and established members;
 - x. evaluate diversity of speakers at the APMA Annual Scientific Meeting; and
 - xi. work with identified organizations on specific, mutually beneficial opportunities to progress in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2. Include a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position on staff at APMA.
3. APMA senior leadership, both board and staff, to receive formal/facilitated DEI training.
4. APMA Board of Trustees reports annually to the membership on the status of DEI within the association.

Appendix A – An Invitation to Brave Space

AN INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE

Together we will create *brave space*.
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”
— We exist in the real world.
We all carry scars and we have all caused
wounds. In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside
world, We amplify voices that fight to be heard
elsewhere, We call each other to more truth and love.
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to
grow. We have the responsibility to examine what we think
we know. We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be.
But
It will be *our brave space together*,
and
We will work on it side by side.

by Micky ScottBey Jones

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Appendix B – Parking Lot Proposals

Family and Medical Leave

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force recommends that APMA encourage certifying boards and other organizations with time-limited processes or time-based dues structures to consider how familial circumstances may impact clinical practice. Time requirements, such as the seven-year requirement to complete surgical cases for board certification by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ABFAS), and the advancement of dues payments from first-year associate to associate etc., as exists in many component dues structures, penalizes those who take time off from practice. These requirements have, as an example, hindered women who have had children during these time-limited, or time-based, parts of their career. Most pregnant women stop performing surgery prior to their due date because of the lack of ability to provide post-op care, lack of time in the office due to maternity care, etc. Being away from the operating room due to maternity care could easily represent six months of no surgical cases for those attempting to obtain the required cases for board certification or zero to minimal income for those whose dues increase yearly. Currently family or medical leave is a policy extended to many. The task force recommends that APMA encourage the certifying boards and other dues-collecting organizations to allow for extensions for those utilizing family or medical leave for child care, illness, and elder care. The task force would like this process to be more accountable, simplified, and less onerous on the provider. Modifications may include a qualifying event check box with example conditions or circumstances rather than asking for a long answer. There need to be appeals protocols in place for providers who are denied extensions. The task force also notes that there may need to be a separate process for certifying boards versus membership organizations based on the mission of each organization.

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DEI Advisory Group

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force recommends APMA develop an advisory resource for podiatric medical students and residents focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns. Initial steps in this development process would be to: 1) Assess whether similar resources exist for medical students/residents in allopathic, osteopathic, and other specialties; and if so, 2) Replicate these resources for podiatric medical students/residents. Including other experts within the DEI field is also suggested. The podiatric advisory group is envisioned to begin as a collaboration between APMA, the American Podiatric Medical Students' Association (APMSA), and other related organizations but would need to function as an independent entity. The podiatric advisory group is not intended to be a legal referral service, but the legal perspective should be included as part of the advisory group's mission.

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