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Title:

“Integrating Consistent Reflection for Needed Changes in a Student Diversity Council and its Interprofessional Partnerships”

Background:

The Student Diversity Council (SDC) at the University of Michigan Medical School (UMMS) focuses on advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and justice (DEIAJ) through education, outreach, and activism in partnership with students and the medical school’s administration and faculty. The SDC was first redesigned in 2020 due to the lack of sustainable, student-driven DEIAJ efforts that became acutely visible after the murder of George Floyd. Following a year of this structure, issues regarding efficacy and student wellbeing were identified, which led to additional restructuring for the 2021 and 2022 cohorts.

Actions, Methods, or Interventions:

Overall, from 2020 to 2022, the SDC’s executive leadership has shifted from two co-chairs to one, three vice chairs to two, and six representatives to four. In addition, greater cross collaboration and connection has occurred with current internal systems of influence at UMMS and other health professional organizations. Some examples are the Student Council at UMMS, the Office of Medical Student Education, M-Home, the Office of Admissions, the Michigan Medicine Alumni Society, the Office of Health Equity and Inclusion (OHEI), Central Student Government, and the Nutritional Sciences Student Association.

In 2020, leadership consisted of the following: 2 co-chairs, 3 vice chairs, 1 secretary of records/finance, 1 survey and research coordinator, and 6 representatives - DEI lecture overview, educational series, community engagement, mental health and wellness, Anti-Racism Oversight Committee (AROC), and Student Council. In addition, there was a general body of representatives consisting of student members of various identities and interest groups and two advisors from UMMS faculty and staff.

In 2021, leadership consisted of the following: 1 chair, 3 vice chairs, and 6 representatives - curricular education, co-curricular education, mental health and wellness, mentorship and pipeline programs, community engagement, and medical student advocacy. There continued to be a general body of representatives and the same two advisors.

In 2022, leadership will consist of the following: 1 chair, 2 vice chairs, and 4 representatives - DEIAJ education, social justice activism, community engagement and programming, and mental health and wellness. There will continue to be a general body, two advisors, and a Director of Medical Student Programs for additional assistance within OHEI.

Results:

To avoid the duplication of efforts of other groups at UMMS, the SDC has reduced its numbers but expanded its influence. All committees have representation in UMMS administrative and faculty spaces (e.g., curriculum and dean's meetings, medical student mental health oversight network, etc.). Since obtaining official sponsorship by OHEI, monthly meetings now occur with the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education and the Associate Vice President and Associate Dean for Health Equity and Inclusion.

Lessons Learned:

By enhancing the ongoing partnership between the SDC and UMMS, the SDC has been able to further solidarity between students and the university in ensuring accountability for the continued progress of DEIAJ initiatives and the amplification of marginalized voices at UMMS. However, with each leadership cohort, an intentional effort must be made to solicit feedback from students, faculty, and administration on how the SDC can better support a culturally humble and accepting environment for all students to respond to acts of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism. Without continued reflection, the SDC's vision for increasing the breadth and depth of solidarity amongst all professions at UMMS will stagnate as a new student executive board is selected each year.

Future Applications and Next Steps:

With each iteration of the SDC's executive board, the SDC improves its ability to support a safe and inclusive space for all students. Student turnover is expected and essential for creativity and the consistent evaluation of the SDC's proximity to and sharing of power. The SDC hopes to model for other communities how to address concerns in student-led councils aiming for greater DEIAJ.