

Diversity Committee Newsletter

The University of Kansas Medical Center | Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science
Issue 6: Winter 2023

Our ability to reach unity in
diversity will be the beauty and the
test of our civilization.

Mahatma Gandhi

 VANTAGECIRCLE

Department of Psychiatry Diversity Committee

The Diversity Committee is, chaired by Dr. Elizabeth Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz. Since its beginning in May 2017, the committee has provided a space for discussing issues and concerns related to diversity, reviewing literature, case discussion and finding new ways to push our department to continue making diversity a priority. Its committee members have expanded from ten members to thirty-six, welcoming new members each year.

Mission: To nurture a safe, inclusive and diverse environment with openness, respect, collegiality and curiosity in both academic and clinical arenas. We aim to utilize this environment to encourage opportunities for meaningful contributions to the greater good in ways that make a difference in the world around us.

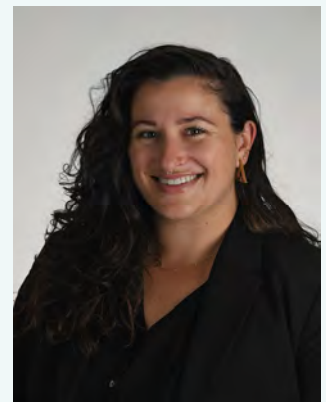
Trying to be aware of all aspects of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusiveness (DEI) can feel overwhelming. This newsletter intends to create an accessible platform to inform the Department of Psychiatry and Behavior Sciences of opportunities, events, and other happenings related to DEI, advocacy, activism, and community support to get our department more involved in our community. This brief newsletter by no means intends to be comprehensive, though we hope to provide resources and starting points for further exploration.

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Diversity Spotlight

This issue's Diversity Spotlight highlights the work of Dr. Kara Nishimuta and Abbie DeVoe. Read more on page 4 and 5.



The Diversity Committee Co-Chairs

Meet our Diversity Committee Co-Chairs

IDEAS



Meet Dr. Elizabeth Muenks, who has served as the co-chair since its start in 2017. Dr. Muenks is an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and a licensed psychologist in the state of Kansas. Dr. Muenks is the director of Onco-Psychology Services housed at our Cancer Center in Westwood, Kansas. Dr. Muenks has taken on many leadership roles in the past couple of years, recently becoming the Diversity Director of Psychiatry, marking such a milestone in her work in EDI.

Meet Dr. Hannah Katz, serving as the co-chair since 2020. Dr. Katz is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Kansas Medical Center and a licensed psychologist in the state of Kansas. Dr. Katz is also the associate training director for the onco-psychology postdoctoral fellowship track. Dr. Katz is especially passionate about quality-of-life, end-of-life, meaning-centered psychotherapy, preventing caregiver burnout, cancer rehabilitation, pain management, sleep disturbance and cancer survivorship.

She is a member of the APA and its Health Psychology and Rehabilitation Psychology Divisions. Dr. Katz also holds membership in the American Psychosocial Oncology Society (APOS). She has a strong interest in diversity, equity and inclusion. As a fellow, she received the committee's annual Diversity Award.

Dr. Muenks' research, teaching, and supervision experience is grounded not only in cancer psychology but in diversity/cultural competence as well. Dr. Muenks is engaged in training, teaching, supervision, and research as it pertains to health disparities and diversity-related issues. She also serves on the KUMC Diversity and Inclusion Committee.



I—Inclusion

Accepting everyone is the goal of inclusion, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, handicap, or other needs. It is about eliminating prejudice and intolerance (removing obstacles) and providing equal access and opportunities.

D—Diversity

Diversity is the presence of a wide range of individuals with different lifestyles, experiences, and interests, as well as different racial, ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds.

E—Equity

Fair treatment of all individuals is referred to as equity, and it guarantees that opportunities or results at work are not influenced by an individual's identity through established norms, practices, and rules.

A—Accessibility

Ensuring fair access for all individuals throughout the range of human capabilities and experiences is what is meant by accessibility. Accessibility relates to how organizations create room for the unique qualities that each individual offers, and it includes the wider definitions of compliance.

S—Social Justice

Encouraging all groups to fully and equally participate in a society that is mutually shaped to fulfill their needs is the aim of social justice. A vision of social justice comprises an equitable resource distribution and psychological and physical safety and security for all members of the community.

Committee Members

Below is the list of our current committee members, it is important to know that each committee member plays an important role on pushing the effort of EDI.

Abbie DeVoe: She/They

Alex Capiaghi: He/Him

Alexander Marlock: He/Him

Amanda Klass: She/Her/They/
Them

Ann Genovese: She/Her

Ashley Rhodes: She/Her

Brett Woods: He/Him

Danielle Johnson: She/Her

Darren (DJ) Garcia: He/Him

Edward Hunter: He/Him

Elizabeth Muenks: She/Her

Emily Coon: She/They

Emily Tyler: She/Her

Hannah Katz: She/Her

Heather Kruse: She/Her

Heather Noble: She/Her

Kara Nishimuta: They/She

Kelsey Sewell: She/Her

Lesley Leive: She/Her

Lindsey Jenkins: She/Her

Marcus Alt: He/Him

Malik Williams: He/Him

Mariana Rincón Caicedo: She/
Her

Megan Cleary: She/They

Megan Solberg: She/Her

Melissa Oliver:

Pilar Thangwaritorn: She/Her

Reem Hmaidan:

Rosemary Thompson:

Shedelle Davis: She/Her

Stacie Stoltz: She/Her

Teresa Long: She/Her

Tyler Staples: He/Him

William Gabrielli:

The Diversity Committee welcomes all individuals who would like to participate. This list is the current members who have on a regular basis joined and participated in meetings, and signed the Diversity Commitment Form.



We have included pronouns based on committee members that have stated how they would like to be addressed.

“Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another’s uniqueness.”

◆ **Ola Joseph** ◆



New members voicing their interest in joining the Diversity Committee

Emily Coon:

For me, the diversity committee isn't just about learning about different identities or representations but also about pioneering change. This group is in a unique position to discuss challenging topics in a free and supportive environment, which allows us to then bring what we've learned to the department overall in the way we interact with and react to others. I'm hopeful that membership on this committee will result in empathic lead-by-example behavior modeling that can help make our environment feel truly welcoming, knowledgeable, and cohesive for patients, employees, and all of our departmental partners.

Shedelle Davis:

I've been a part of several diversity organizations over the past 20 years. Through my experience, I have observed a lack of representation from marginalized demographics within these committees. I believe that those directly affected by inequality issues should have a prominent voice in shaping the conversation and driving initiatives towards a more equitable future. By being part of this committee, I aim to contribute to fostering a more inclusive and diverse environment within our department.

Diversity Spotlight



Kara Nishimuta, PhD

How do you contribute to DEI?

"I do my best to contribute to DEI initiatives in any space I can, but I really enjoy doing so through education and advocacy. Everyone has to start learning somewhere - I try to ensure that any space I am educating in is one where people feel comfortable asking questions that they may not have had the opportunity to ask before. Further, I recognize that I hold various identities of privilege/power, and I feel that it is important for me to use these to help amplify the voices of marginalized populations and advocate for progress that benefits all."

How would you advocate for diversity education and initiatives with individuals who don't see its value?

"Sometimes, part of advocacy work is simply appealing to others' humanity. I think that individuals who do not understand the value of DEI initiatives may not understand why these are so important to the people they will affect the most, as those with significant power/privilege might not experience the positive effects of these initiatives. This might mean that individuals need education on the importance and significance of such initiatives for those with marginalized identities and to gain an understanding of how they have been harmed over time by the existing status quo. I also think that some DEI initiatives may cause people who have traditionally held power/privilege to feel defensive, embarrassed, or hesitant to change, which could impact how they experience certain things. When this is the case, I try to acknowledge these feelings and help people understand how everyone benefits from these initiatives, not just marginalized folks."

When you think of DEI, what does it look like?

"Diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations are inextricable from the way that I conceptualize education, training, patient care, policy, etc. I have said this many times before, but I do not think that DEI should be thought of as a separate "specialty," as this is simply one facet of considering the "whole person." These considerations should be ingrained in all we do as healthcare providers, as people cannot be separated into their individual identities. Rather, these identities all work as part of the dynamic picture of each patient and their needs. Similarly, dynamic identities and needs should be considered when we are thinking about the needs of trainees, colleagues, and the department as a whole. While this might feel like an overwhelming amount of knowledge is needed to enact this, we do not have to know it all to consider DEI factors consistently. Rather, a very important part of this work is being open to education and non-defensive when receiving feedback. When I think about ideals related to DEI, I think about this! Not only are we considering the interplay of identities and experiences regarding any given situation, but we are all open to learning and growing. It requires a lot of honesty and self-reflection, but ensuring that others feel comfortable, heard, and considered is worth the trade-off."

Diversity Spotlight



How do you contribute to DEI?

When I was in school a few years ago, most of my DEI contributions were academic (research, peer discussions, etc.) – shifting from that towards full-time admin work has really challenged me to be much more intentional about how I engage with and contribute to DEI. Nowadays, I find that I contribute to DEI much more in my daily life and interpersonal relationships. I actively strive to have people in my life that encourage critical discussions about current issues and our impact on them. When I'm around those who are not as open about this, such as my family, I make an appointment to bring up these topics, even if it is a hard conversation. Like many of us, I contribute in the concrete ways that I can, such as actively seeking out information about DEI issues, supporting minority-owned artists and businesses, and sharing the work of some of our amazing local grassroots groups. However, I find that being intentional about relationship-building is one of the best ways that I can contribute to DEI in some way. In talking with people about their daily lives, I'm able to actively listen to and learn about the lived experiences and needs of diverse groups and then advocate for those voices and stories to be centered in our world. In my role here at KU, I've also found that I've been able to advocate in small but meaningful ways – raising health equity questions during clinical trainings, working towards having more translated clinic documents, and seeking out mental health resources specifically for individuals with marginalized identities. I'd love to find more advocacy opportunities in my work and am excited to be part of a group of professionals that does so!

How would you advocate for diversity education and initiatives with individuals who don't see its value?

I will 100% admit that I still sometimes struggle when disagreeing with others on this topic – it can be difficult for me to regulate my emotions in these moments because I strongly believe in diversity initiatives. However, logically, I believe that in order to help someone understand and be open to my point of view, I have to try to understand where they're coming from on the opposite side of the issue. Therefore, in order to encourage someone to begin to see the value in diversity initiatives, it's important for me to get context on their thoughts by asking open-ended questions about their experiences and the root of their beliefs. Once experiences are validated, and some common ground is established, I feel that there's much more room for advocacy, challenging beliefs, and suggestion of action items. I do also believe, however, that there are definitely some cases where this conversation may not be productive or worth it, especially if safety comes into question. In a perfect world, all forms of advocacy could follow some sort of model like this, but we know that our world is full of gray areas. This is where I have to remind myself that change doesn't happen overnight and that if we simply gave up when advocacy was challenging, we wouldn't make any progress at all.

Abbie DeVoe



When you think of DEI, what does it look like?

Simply put, community. Communities support one another and act as networks of resources, but they also hold each other accountable and push one another to be better, for themselves, their community members, and the world as a whole. When it comes to DEI work, to me community means inviting someone in and asking, "Why do you think that way? How do your beliefs and actions impact those around you? How can you do better?" This is not done maliciously, but is more so done as an act of genuine care and love for one another. I believe that the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion best come together when the importance of working in community with one another is at the core of the work being done.

I also think it's important that those of us in DEI work frequently remind ourselves that DEI is not an acronym that just toss around mindlessly – it is imperative that we're intentional about our advocacy actually embodying diversity, equity, and inclusion. For me, this includes eliminating hierarchies in DEI spaces, acknowledging intersectional identities, understanding the connectedness of all forms of oppression, and more. Otherwise, as we've discussed in our committee meetings, there is the risk of the work being performative and/or doing more harm than good.

2023 Diversity Recognition Award

As a reminder, this Diversity Award was first given at the 2018 graduation. It is presented annually to a psychology and psychiatry trainee in the department. Established in memory of Ravinder Goswami, M.D., a graduate of the general psychiatry program who passed away in 2018, the honor recognizes trainees who exhibit the committee's mission of promoting diversity and inclusion within the department and the community.

Nellie Moualeu, PhD

"The psychology department at KUMC is one that is filled with scholars and clinicians. And staff who don't just say that diversity and equity matter but whose daily activities directly reflect that value. So, to have been nominated and selected by this group of individuals was truly an honor. I have been privileged to learn alongside peers who have challenged my perceptions, and I have grown more compassionate for the various struggles the populations we serve face. This award is a great honor and serves as a reminder that the work is ongoing. Thank you!"

She has an infectious charisma and dynamic attitude that positively impacts patients and staff. She is able to gain rapport and trust quickly and naturally with our psychiatric patients. She embraces patients for who they are by acknowledging similarities while celebrating individual differences. As the psychiatric population is unique in diversity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and social class, she treats each of the patients with dignity, kindness, and respect.



Megan Cleary, DO

"I was humbled to be awarded this past June. Advocacy has always been my priority, and the recognition validated that my voice does and has made a difference for others. I am most passionate about working with underserved populations with a special affinity for perinatal, LGBTQIA+, and historically underserved communities."

Dr. Megan Cleary is known amongst our colleagues as a strong advocate for diversity, not just in the workplace but also in the community. She's an active advocate via social media and in practice settings for promoting diversity and inclusion, awareness of inequity, inequity, and the influences of social injustice on race, gender, and sexuality in our society and our patients. Her level of social awareness regarding these aspects of care and practice and the subsequent effect they have on our patient populations, as well as her ability to advocate for those who do not or cannot advocate for themselves, is inspiring. She remains unafraid to back down from tense discussions or speak out against injustice in society, making her a valuable colleague and friend and a much-needed presence in our field.



Dr. Mayorga (left) presents Diversity Award to Dr. Cleary

Upcoming DEI Holidays

December is HIV/AIDS Awareness Month & Universal Human Rights Month

December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 7: Hanukkah begins at sunset (Jewish)

December 8: Bodhi Day

December 9: International Genocide Prevention Day

December 10: International Human Rights Day

December 15: Hanukkah ends at sunset (Jewish)

December 16 to December 24: Las Posadas

December 21 to January 1: Yule

December 24: Christmas Eve

December 25: Christmas Day

December 26 to January 1: Kwanzaa

December 31: New Year's Eve

January is National Mentoring Month, Poverty in America Awareness Month, & Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month

January 1: New Year's Day

January 4: World Braille Day

January 7: Christmas (Eastern Orthodox)

January 13: Korean American Day

January 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 21: World Religion Day

January 25: Mahayana New Year (Buddhist)

January 26: International Customs Day

January 27: International Holocaust Remembrance Day



Upcoming DEI Events

December 6: [Introduction to Transgender Health and Medical Education](#)

December 6: [KUMC DEI Cabinet's, Diversity & Inclusion Committee](#)

December 20: Diversity Committee Meeting (CANCELLED)

December 20: [Addressing Implicit Bias and Inequity: Fostering Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility and Belonging in our Communities Training Session](#)

January 3: [KUMC DEI Cabinet's, Diversity & Inclusion Committee](#)

January 10: [KUMC DEI Cabinet's, Health Equity and Community Engagement Committee](#)

January 17: Diversity Committee Meeting (In-Person) - SON 4024 Varnes Center Conference Room

***Clicking on the underlined links
will take you to the event's information.***





Did You Know? Diversity Edition



Did you know that humans share 99.9% of their DNA with each other? So even though we come in different shapes, sizes, and colors, we're more alike than we are different! It's like we're all part of the same big family, but with a lot of quirky cousins.



Did you know that there's a country where the official language has no vowels? The language of Nenets, spoken in Northern Russia, is known for its distinctive lack of vowel sounds. So if you want to speak like a Nenets, you'll have to get creative with your consonants!



Did you know that there are more possible combinations of a standard deck of cards than there are people on Earth? That means that even though we all look different, there's a greater variety of ways to shuffle a deck of cards than there are humans on the planet. Diversity really is amazing!



Did you know that in South Africa, the concept of Ubuntu emphasizes the interconnectedness and mutual responsibility of all people? Ubuntu is a powerful example of how diversity and inclusion are central to African culture and philosophy.

Committee Meeting

Year In-Review

2023

January : Multicultural Approaches to Supervision (Presented by Dr. Ashley Rhodes)

February: Consulting community members and stakeholders to adapt mindfulness for economically marginalized populations. (Presented by Dr. Darren (DJ) Garcia & Dr. Katie Lenger)

March: The Female Athlete Program: Empowering Female Athletes (Presented by Dr. Brett Woods)

April: Missouri Legislation for Gender-Affirming Care (Presented by Kara Nishimuta)

May: Disability Diversity (Presented by Dr. Lora Black)

June: An introduction / Review to CLAS Standards (Presented by Dr. Nellie Moualeu)

July: Crimp Camp Movie (Presented by Dr. Monica Kurylo & Dr. Lindsey Jenkins)

August: Crimp Camp Movie (Presented by Dr. Monica Kurylo & Dr. Lindsey Jenkins)

September: Performative Allyship (Presented by Dr. Kara Nishimuta & Dr. Liz Muenks)

October: Recent Events in Israel and Gaza (Open Committee Discussion)

November: Performative Allyship Pt. 2 (Presented by Dr. Hannah Katz, Dr. Kara Nishimuta & Dr. Liz Muenks)

DEIB Resources

- ⇒ **Diverse KC** - <https://www.visitkc.com/visitors/discover/diverse-kc>
- ⇒ **GLAAD** - Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation—<https://glaad.org/>
- ⇒ **PFLAG** - Organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ+ people and their families.—<https://pflag.org/>
- ⇒ **LGBTQIA+ Resources (KUMC)** - <https://www.kumc.edu/diversity/training/lgbtqia-resources.html>
- ⇒ **LGBTQ+ Workgroup** - Third Thursdays, 3:00-4:00 p.m., call 913-588-3319
- ⇒ **Pride Resource Group:** - The University of Kansas Health System, call 913-588-3046
- ⇒ **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** - <https://naacp.org/>
- ⇒ **DEI Trainings (KUMC)** - <https://www.kumc.edu/diversity/resources/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-toolkit/trainings.html>
- ⇒ **AJC: American Jewish Committee** - <https://www.ajc.org/>
- ⇒ **Suicide Prevention Resources** - <https://intranet.kansashealthsystem.org/life-career/wellness/mental-emotional/suicide-prevention-resources>
- ⇒ **The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices.

If you are thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the lifeline network is available 24/7 across the United States.

Want to join the Diversity Committee?

Hello Everyone,

As many of you know, the Psychiatry Department Diversity Committee meets monthly on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at noon, some in-person and some virtual. There have been several people that have expressed interest in joining the committee, and so we are sending out the call for those of you who are interested in joining us. We have had such a wonderfully devoted and engaged group, and we know we will continue our work focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion for those we serve, those we train/teach, and each other.

Please email Malik Williams if you are interested in joining the committee. Malik will send out further instructions for those who express interest.

Thank you all!

Liz and Hannah (Diversity Committee Co-Chairs) and Malik (Admin)



Check out our Diversity Committee

Website at:

<https://www.kumc.edu/school-of-medicine/academics/departments/psychiatry-and-behavioral-sciences/faculty/diversity-committee.html>

Diversity Committee

Contact Information

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