Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Common Language and Commitment Statement

Our Commitments

Our goal is to build a diverse and representative academic community that recognizes the importance of social, economic, health, and environmental justice. We strive to promote diversity and equity and to be a model of inclusive excellence.

As a tri-campus partnership, ColoradoSPH stands with academic, practice, and community partners nationwide to condemn racism, injustice, and inequity. Racism is a public health crisis, and we are committed to dismantling structural racism. Ableism, ageism, homophobia, misogyny, racism, transphobia, xenophobia, and all other forms of hatred or discrimination will not be tolerated. We are committed to recognizing and confronting our internalized racism and implicit biases and constantly striving to act in ways that affirm and support students, staff, faculty, leadership, alumni, and communities with whom we engage.

Our Call to Action

To ensure ColoradoSPH is a diverse and inclusive, tri-campus community dedicated to developing public health scholarship, learning, practice, and operations that advance equity, we commit to the following call to action:

- Pursue deliberate efforts to ensure that ColoradoSPH is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are valued and affirmed, and our school climate and culture foster a sense of belonging and respect.

- Offer frequent anti-racism and equity, diversity, and inclusion capacity-building sessions for all ColoradoSPH community members.

- Recruit, support, and retain a diverse faculty, staff, and student body that champion our EDI commitments.

- Recognize, address, and eradicate all forms of racism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression.

- Develop, implement, and continuously evaluate the quality and operation of policies, practices, and procedures to enhance equity, diversity and inclusion.

- Embed equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, and social justice throughout academics, practice, research, community outreach, organizational culture, and daily operations.

- Inform and advocate for policies that promote social justice, including health, economic, and environmental justice.

Common Terminology

As a community, we need a common vocabulary as we move forward on a trajectory of advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion. Below, these and other terms are defined to find common ground and ease in using these terms in our conversations.

Ableism—Denotes discrimination and oppression of disabled people; a societal belief that being able is "normal" and is preferred.

Anti-racist—Refers to a form of action against racial hatred, bias, systemic racism, and the oppression of historically marginalized groups that follow emotional and intellectual awareness of racism. Conscious efforts and deliberate actions can be taken to provide equitable opportunities for all people on both individual and systemic levels; it requires moving beyond the status quo of inaction. There is no such thing as not being racist; either racist or anti-racist (Kendi, 2019).

Diversity—Refers to the varied characteristics of members of the ColoradoSPH community. These characteristics include our backgrounds, lived experiences, talents, perspectives, educational attainment, and identity (e.g., race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion/spirituality, ability), and other aspects of our cultural/sociodemographic backgrounds.

Environmental justice—The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (U.S. EPA, 2020).

Equity—Involves creating needed opportunities, resources, and supports for historically underrepresented students, staff, faculty, leadership, alumni, and communities to ensure that they have fair access to participate in educational, research, employment, and professional development opportunities. Advancing equity involves allocating resources, programs, and opportunities for underrepresented staff, faculty, students, and community partners to rectify historical imbalances that are rooted in historical and contemporary systems of discrimination and oppression.

Health equity—Ensures that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. To achieve this, we must remove obstacles to health—such as poverty, discrimination, and deep power imbalance—and their consequences, including lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education, and housing, safe environments, and health care (Braveman et al., 2018; RWJF, 2017).

Inclusion—Denotes a state of being valued, engaged, heard, respected, and supported. It is about focusing on every individual's needs, respecting their feelings/opinions, and ensuring that resources and conditions are in place for everyone, regardless of background, to thrive and achieve their potential and to promote and sustain a sense of belonging among students, staff, faculty, leadership, alumni, and communities.

Inclusive excellence—Recognizes that the success of ColoradoSPH depends upon the inclusion of the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, leadership, alumni, and communities. It underscores the importance of allocating resources and programs to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion into the core aspects of the school in the following areas:

- Leadership priorities,
- Budgetary decisions,
- Organizational climate and culture,
- Quality improvement initiatives,
- Daily operations,
- Academic priorities, and
- Research.

Race—A social construct; a human-invented classification system used to define physical differences among people, often used as a tool for oppression.

Social justice—Refers to justice in terms of equitable distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. It is the fundamental value underlying public health.

Structural racism—A combination of systems, public policies, and institutional practices that denies rights and opportunities to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). It includes institutional norms that work in various—and often reinforcing—ways to perpetuate racial/ethnic group inequities. It reflects dimensions of our history and culture that preserve systemic social and economic disadvantages, marginalization, and denial of rights for BIPOC and have allowed these wrongs to adapt over time to endure and adapt over time (The Aspen Institute, 2016).

Note: The common terminology and commit statement was created with contributions from ColoradoSPH tri-campus community of students, staff, faculty, and leadership. Several drafts were made available to ColoradoSPH community for review and offer input.