

August 27, 2020

UW Medicine Community

Dear Colleagues,

I write to acknowledge anti-Black racism in our UW School of Medicine and to describe some actions that we are taking. I have been meeting with students, faculty, and staff over the last few weeks. I recognize the exhaustion and pain many of you are experiencing and am grateful for those who have shared your perspectives and time with me. I am humbled, in these historic and difficult times, by the outstanding leadership and excellent work of Black students, staff, faculty and alumni. You have worked ceaselessly to practice medicine, conduct research, and educate, and you are moving us towards our vision of racial justice and improved health for all people.

We have students, faculty and staff who have been hurt by their experiences and have not been supported by their school. We need better systems and approaches to address conflict, restore trust and provide support for our community members. In my administrative role, I am responsible for the learning environment within UW Medicine, and I am committed to tangible changes that are based on respect, compassion, and justice. I care deeply about all members of our community, and I take responsibility for moving us forward from here.

Systemic racism has been a part of higher education since its inception, and this is not different for the School of Medicine. We aspire to have a justice focused, inclusive learning environment in which students, faculty, staff and trainees can thrive, but there is much work to be done to create a learning environment that is truly safe and supportive for all. This work is vital for us to advance our mission to improve health for all people. Here are some of the immediate actions we are taking to make progress.

1. We are **engaging in restorative justice conversations** within our School of Medicine community. Professor Rachel Chapman (UW Department of Anthropology and adjunct faculty member in the Department of Global Health) is helping us with the initial difficult conversations. The restorative justice discussions are focused on listening and healing for the involved individuals, repairing the harm to individuals and the community, and providing an opportunity to work and act together to support a safe, effective learning environment. The UW Medicine leadership team is also engaged in multiple meetings with faculty, students and staff with a goal of establishing a restorative justice system to

Paul G. Ramsey, M.D.

CEO, UW Medicine
Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs and
Dean of the School of Medicine,
University of Washington

C-314 Health Sciences Center
University of Washington
Box 356350
Seattle, WA 98195-6350

OFFICE 206.543.7718
FAX 206.685.8767
EMAIL pramsey@uw.edu
WEB uwmedicine.org

enable us to work together as we advance our equity, diversity and inclusion goals and objectives.

2. We have expanded **required anti-racism training**. To reduce inequities in healthcare, it is important to have a shared knowledge base about systemic racism in medicine. Our specific actions must be informed by principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This required training began last week with more than 100 leaders from the medical school and our hospitals and clinics and will be required for all UW Medicine faculty and staff. Training is covering the history of race, racism, and medicine; social identities, privilege, and intersectionality; interrupting implicit bias and microaggressions; gender and sexual diversity; and social determinants of health and healthcare disparities.
3. We will **revise UW Medicine's Policy on Professional Conduct** with the goal of assuring that it fully reflects the principles of justice and anti-racism we espouse and to ensure that the language in the policy reflects our commitment to support students, trainees, faculty, and staff. Dr. Giana Davidson, assistant dean for professionalism, is now leading our Committee for Continuous Professionalism Improvement and will be working with students, trainees, staff, and faculty to improve our policy and develop helpful rubrics.
4. We will **implement a UW Medicine bias reporting tool** for reporting and responding to concerns of improper treatment involving bias and implement a process for investigating reported concerns. This work is being done in partnership with Faculty Affairs and our new Office of Healthcare Equity. As part of the work, we will strengthen our policies and processes to **assure protection from retaliation towards anyone making a report**.
5. We **launched a Learning Environment Steering Committee** under the leadership of Dr. Tim Dellit, our chief medical officer, to provide oversight and coordination to improve the learning environment across UW Medicine. Subcommittees will focus on the different clinical, classroom, and research learning environments for our trainees, students, faculty, and staff. These subcommittees will engage diverse perspectives and work synergistically with ongoing efforts with the School, departments, and healthcare organizations.
6. We will **create a student advisory council along with faculty advisory groups**. This will be done under the leadership of Dr. Paula Houston and the UW Medicine Office of Healthcare Equity. Active student engagement is essential for us to continue to improve the curriculum and our learning environment. A first step in this process will be student involvement in the re-imagining of the Themes in Medicine course. Faculty support work is being done in collaboration with Dr. Trish Kritek, associate dean for faculty affairs.
7. **All organizational units within UW Medicine must be engaged** with specific responsibilities to advance progress with our equity, diversity and inclusion goals and objectives. Our 31 academic departments, hospitals, clinics, and central offices within the

School of Medicine either have or are in the process of developing leadership roles and specific plans for this critical work. Our success will depend on our ability to work together as a large team with shared knowledge, goals and objectives.

The summary above is incomplete. It is intended to be the launch of more frequent and transparent communication. There is much more active work occurring across UW Medicine, and we will be communicating over the coming weeks and months regarding specific activities and new programs. Improved communication will be critical for us to listen actively to each other and to guide and coordinate the many specific actions that are needed.

The new UW Medicine Office of Healthcare Equity led by Dr. Paula Houston is playing a central role in many of the actions described above. Many other leaders, including Dr. Trish Kritek, Dr. Tim Dellit, department chairs, hospital leaders, and vice, associate, and assistant deans in the School of Medicine, are devoting their time and resources from their offices. All together, we have more than 100 senior leaders engaged.

As we strive to dismantle systemic racism in our organization, we will make mistakes. I have made mistakes along this path. Moving forward, we must be responsible for our actions, hold each other accountable for mistakes, repair harm, and work together to restore trust and community. In our clinical practices, a fundamental principle is to bring compassion and caring to our interactions with patients. We must bring the same compassion and caring to our interactions with each other to support the changes that we seek. I hope that we can work together to foster a community that treats all members with dignity and respect, a community that prioritizes caring, compassion and mutual understanding.

Thank you for your dedication to our mission to improve health for all people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul G. Ramsey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul G. Ramsey, M.D.
CEO, UW Medicine
Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs and
Dean of the School of Medicine,
University of Washington