



Winter 2023

Update from the DEI Committee (DEIC)

- The DEIC would like to wish everyone in our department a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2023 new year!
- The DEIC Newsletter will now be issued quarterly and will be available on the M&I website under Resources – Diversity and Inclusion Resources.
- We ended the year with DEIC meetings in November and December. Agenda items included reflections on past action items, challenges, and accomplishments, the SOM 2022 DEI Climate Survey Report, and a vision for future goals and actions.
- Our reflections on past action items, challenges, and accomplishments were reviewed and these included the M&I HBCU Summer Research Opportunity Program, department town halls, improved diversity of departmental seminar speakers, the M&I DEIC Newsletter, ways to improve diversity and inclusivity among the M&I postdocs, department-wide lunch series, mandatory and non-mandatory DEI trainings, and an anonymous link for reporting DEI concerns.
- We discussed the SOM 2022 DEI Climate Survey Report. We recognize the need for creating a community where everyone feels welcome and belongs, their voices are heard, the need for each of us to take an active role and demonstrate a commitment to DEI, and the need to break down barriers that hinder inclusivity.
- Our vision and goals for the upcoming year will be outlined in subsequent DEIC meetings. We aim to find shared values that can be integrated into our strategic plan. We envision a community that engenders feelings of belonging and creating a culture for all to thrive.
- The DEIC thanks Dr. Victoria Sepulveda, Dr. Nat Moorman, and Dr. Rita Tamayo for their dedication and time served as past DEIC members.
- Please use the link below to provide comments or bring attention to topics of concern, entries will be anonymous, unless you wish to disclose your information. We welcome all comments, topics and/or concerns that you may have related to DEI issues within our community.

https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3ezUO7uCAAtVgm1w

Meet the M&I DEI Committee Members

Danielle R. Williams



Where are you from? I was born and raised in San Diego, CA.

Where did you go to school? I went to San Diego State University for my B.S. in Cellular & Molecular Biology, then I did a two-year NIH PREP post-bac at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA.

How did you end up at UNC? After attending ABRCMS and SACNAS to speak with students about potential mentors, program support, and overall well-being in grad school the UNC students by far seemed the happiest. Plus, I really wanted to move to the southeast after being on the west coast my entire life. So, I applied and thankfully was accepted!

What is your role at UNC? I'm a third-year Ph.D. candidate in the Swanstrom lab. I study how HIV evolves to infect immune cells in the central nervous system.

What do you like to do in your free time? I enjoy powerlifting, going to the dog park with Stella, and catching up with friends. I also enjoy random art projects (painting, jewelry making, hair/nails), 500–1000-piece puzzles, and Wordle.

Is there something about you that others may not know? I am passionate about graduate student mental health. My post-bac experience shaped how I approach academia, so much so, that I wrote a book about it! It's a journal-style format that includes evidence-based methods to reduce stress and exercises/ reflection questions to help students understand what they want to gain from their doctoral experience. I have been invited to universities to host mindfulness workshops and teach students how to use the journal to make the most out of their Ph.D. I also create social media content promoting work-life balance and prioritizing overall wellness as a graduate student! You can check out the Journal here: infinitegratitude.com

M&I DEI Events

-M&I DEI Committee Meeting

-January 25, 2022, at 10 a.m.

-contact Jamie Arnold, jamie_arnold@med.unc.edu, with concerns, questions, or topics to include on the agenda

-SOM Meetings & Events

-The UNC University Office for Diversity and Inclusion has a listing of unique events for the month of January. We encourage you to visit their website as events are updated monthly.

<https://diversity.unc.edu/events/list/?tribe-bar-date=2023-01-01>

https://www.unc.edu/events/#events_calendar_2

Some things to think about...

-Strategies to increase equity in faculty hiring and promotion

<https://www.molbiolcell.org/doi/10.1091/mbc.E19-08-0476>

-How astrophysics helped me embrace my nonbinary gender identity—in all its complexity

<https://www.science.org/content/article/how-astrophysics-helped-me-embrace-my-nonbinary-gender-identity-in-all-its-complexity>

-Breaking news stream from The University Office of Diversity and Inclusion -

<https://diversity.unc.edu/category/breaking-news/>

Resources/Training

-DEI Trainings/DEI Certificate Program – The Office of Inclusive Excellence offers workshops and training courses to foster an inclusive workplace environment.

<https://www.med.unc.edu/inclusion/programs-initiatives/trainings/>

-M&I Diversity and Inclusion Resources – Collection of resources regarding diversity and inclusion, safe spaces, and additional support for members of the UNC community.

<https://www.med.unc.edu/microimm/resources/diversity-and-inclusion-resources/>

-Office of Inclusive Excellence Resources – Listing of DEI resources, organizations, and affinity groups. <https://www.med.unc.edu/inclusion/resources/>

Diversity Awareness Calendar

January 2023

All Month Poverty in America Awareness Month A month-long initiative to raise awareness and call attention to the growth of poverty in America. There are many manifestations of poverty, including hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, disabilities, and restricted access to participation in the democratic process. More than 40 million Americans live in poverty, but we can eradicate poverty. As Nelson Mandela said, "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the action of human beings."

January 1 New Year's Day The first day of the new year. It symbolizes motivation for many new beginnings and is a day to reflect on the past and be hopeful for the coming year. January (in Latin, Ianuarius) is named after Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and transitions, whose two faces allowed him to look back into the past and forward into the future.

January 1 Global Family Day The purpose of the day is to encourage all families to gather as one single society on the first day of every year to welcome the New Year. The day is commemorated to highlight the important affairs central to the welfare of families, such as health, education, gender equality, rights for children, and social inclusion among others.

January 2 Vaikunta Ekadasi The day is dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu, the preserver and protector of the universe. His role is to return to the earth in troubled times and restore the balance of good and evil. His presence is found in every object and force in creation, and some Hindus recognize him as the divine being from which all things come.

January 4 World Braille Day Celebrated since 2019, the day is observed to raise awareness of the importance of Braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and partially sighted people. Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille language, was born on January 4, 1809 in France.

January 6 The Feast of the Epiphany Christian holiday commemorating the first manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi, also known as the Three Wise Men or Three Kings.

January 7 Mahayana New Year Buddhist New Year. The new year starts on the first full moon day in January. It is a time to reflect on the past and cleanse oneself from the prior year's sins to make a fresh start.

January 15 Makar Sankranti It is celebrated in January every year and marks the termination of the Winter season and the beginning of a new harvest season. It is dedicated to Lord Sun. It also refers to a specific solar day in the Hindu calendar.

January 15 World Religion Day Held on the third Sunday in January every year, it is a day to promote inter-faith understanding and harmony.

January 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Federal holiday in the United States marking the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. It is observed on the third Monday of January each year. Born in 1929, King's actual birthday is January 15. MLK Day celebrates the life of Dr. King and recognizes his legacy of service for racial justice and equality, while inspiring us to serve in our own ways.

January 22 Lunar New Year One of the most sacred of all traditional Asian holidays, a time of family reunion and celebration.

January 24 International Day of Education The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming January 24 as International Day of Education. This year's theme is "to invest in people, prioritize education". Building on the global momentum generated by the UN Transforming Education Summit in September 2022, this year's Day will call for maintaining strong political mobilization around education and chart the way to translate commitments and global initiatives into action.

January 26 Vasant Panchami The Hindu festival that highlights the coming of spring. On this day, Hindus worship Saraswati Devi, the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, music, art, and culture.

January 27 International Holocaust Remembrance Day A day that commemorates the victims of the Holocaust, the genocide of European Jews by Nazi Germany between 1941 and 1945. The UN General Assembly adopted this date which marks the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The day is meant to honor the victims of the Holocaust and support programs to prevent further genocide.

& immunology

February 2023

All Month **Black History Month** Annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history.

February 1 **National Freedom Day** Celebrates the signing of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery in 1865.

February 2 **Groundhog Day** On Groundhog Day, the world looks to Punxsutawney Phil, a groundhog, to tell us if we're in for a long and dreadful remainder of winter or if we can expect spring-like weather to come sooner. If Phil sees his shadow, we can expect more cold, dreary weather, and if he doesn't, early spring is allegedly on the horizon.

February 5-6 **Tu b'shevat** Celebrates the "New Year for the Trees" and their importance in the Jewish Society. It is also called Rosh HaShanah La'Ilanot, literally 'New Year of the Trees'. In contemporary Israel, the day is celebrated as an ecological awareness day, and trees are planted in celebration.

February 14 **St. Valentine's Day** Western Christian feast day honoring one or two early saints named Valentinus. Typically associated with romantic love and celebrated by people expressing their love via gifts.

February 15 **Nirvana Day** The commemoration of Buddha's death at the age of 80, when he reached the zenith of Nirvana.

February 18 **Maha Shivaratri** Hindu festival celebrated each year to honor Lord Shiva. It is celebrated just before the arrival of spring. It is also known as the Great Night of Shiva or Shivaratri and is one of the largest and most significant among the sacred festival nights of India.

February 20 **World Day of Social Justice** The United Nations General Assembly in 2007 created an international day recognizing the need to promote social justice, which includes efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion, gender equality, unemployment, human rights, and social protections.

February 20 **Presidents Day** A federally recognized celebration in the United States of George Washington's birthday, as well as every president proceeding Washington.

February 21 **Mardi Gras** The last day for Catholics to indulge before Ash Wednesday starts the sober weeks of fasting that accompany Lent. The term "Mardi Gras" is particularly associated with the carnival celebrations in New Orleans, Louisiana.

February 22 **Ash Wednesday** The first day of Lent on the Christian calendar. Its name is derived from the symbolic use of ashes to signify penitence. It takes place immediately after the excesses of the two days of Carnival that take place in Northern Europe and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

March 2023

All Month Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Established to increase awareness and understanding of issues affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

All Month Gender Equity Month Global initiative for gender equality and empowering women and girls. Gender equity is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favored.

All Month Greek-American Heritage Month Honors Greek Independence Day.

All Month Irish-American Heritage Month Celebrates the contribution and achievements of Irish immigrants and their descendants living in the United States.

All Month National Women's History Month Women's History Month recognizes all women for their valuable contributions to history and society.

March 6 Birthday of Harriet Tubman Day to remember and celebrate the life of Harriet Tubman, abolitionist and activist, best known for her role on the Underground Railroad.

March 6 Magha Puja Day (also known as Maka Bucha), a Buddhist holiday that marks an event early in the Buddha's teaching life when a group of 1,250 enlightened saints ordained by the Buddha gathered to pay their respect to him. It is celebrated on various dates in different countries.

March 6-7 Purim Jewish celebration that marks the time when the Jewish community living in Persia was saved from genocide. On Purim, Jewish people offer charity and share food with friends.

March 8 International Women's Day Global celebration honoring women's economic, political, and social achievements.

March 8 Holi (Hindu) Annual Hindu and Sikh spring religious festival observed in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, along with other countries with large Hindu and Sikh populations. Bonfires are lit the day before in the memory of the miraculous escape that young Prahlada accomplished when demoness Holika carried him into the fire.

March 11 World Day of Muslim Culture, Peace, Dialogue and Film Day to bring awareness to the Islamic faith. Through an artistic lens, different cultural manifestations of Islam are presented to the public, in hopes of starting a dialogue on what it means to be a Muslim.

March 13-April 15 Deaf History Month. This observance celebrates key events in deaf history, including the founding of Gallaudet University and the American School for the Deaf.

March 17 St. Patrick's Day Holiday started in Ireland to recognize St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland who brought Christianity to the country in the early days of the faith.

March 20-21 Naw-Ruz (Baha'i New Year) The Bahá'í New Year is a holiday celebrated on the vernal equinox. It is one of the nine Bahá'í holy days on which work is suspended.

March 23 – April 20 Ramadan Islamic holiday marked by fasting, praise, prayer, and devotion to Islam.

March 25 International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade United Nations international observation that offers the opportunity to honor and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system.

March 30 Ram Navami Day when Hindus worship and celebrate the seventh avatar of Vishnu (Lord Rama). Devotees typically wear red and place extravagant flowers on the shrine of the God.

March 31 International Transgender Day of Visibility Celebrated to bring awareness to transgender people and their identities as well as recognize those who helped fight for rights for transgender people.

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M&I DEI Mission The UNC School of Medicine and the Department of Microbiology & Immunology are committed to valuing all people throughout our organization. The Department of Microbiology & Immunology strongly believes that diversity is crucial to our pursuit of academic excellence and is deeply committed to creating a diverse and inclusive community. We support the University's policy not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. The mission of the M&I DEI Committee is to foster a diverse and inclusive environment in the department by: 1) increasing diversity in our faculty, staff, and trainee populations, 2) enhancing communication around issues related to DEI, 3) developing educational programming, and 4) providing access to training opportunities for all department members.