

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force Update and Future Direction

Melissa B Schmidt and Otito Frances Iwuchukwu

As members of CSE, you've undoubtedly seen, in some capacity, our mission statement: "To serve editorial professionals in the sciences by creating a supportive network for career development, providing educational opportunities, and developing resources for identifying and implementing high-quality editorial practices." While there's no explicit mention of equitable representation and access in that single phrase—with respect to either the data published by the journals we represent or to our profession itself—there is an allusion to it in the supportive network verbiage that CSE leadership has taken great care to formalize in recent years. In 2017, CSE became one of 10 founding organizations of the Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC). The mission of C4DISC is to "work with organizations and individuals to build equity, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility in scholarly communications." In 2019, the CSE Board of Directors ratified a code of conduct affirming the organization's commitment to equal opportunities and treatment for all regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, religion, age, appearance, or political affiliation, as well as its commitment to maintaining an environment free of harassment, discrimination, and hostility. Further, consequent to the nationwide protests against systemic racism, the CSE Board agreed upon the need for further action within our organization and, on June 8, 2020, approved the formation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force.

With this inaugural column from the DEI Taskforce, we intend to create a regular open channel of communication between the Task Force and all CSE members, with whom

we hope to interact in a variety of ways. At the time of this writing, CSE leadership is in the process of finalizing a charter that will transition our group into an official Committee. We consider it necessary at the beginning to provide you with an overview of where the CSE DEI Task Force has been and where the new DEI Committee plans to go.

Upon its inception in the summer of 2020 and commencement of regular meetings in the fall of that year, the DEI Task Force members viewed as their purpose 3 key objectives: 1) to collect information about the programs being offered to current CSE members to increase their knowledge about DEI initiatives within the profession; 2) to assess knowledge gaps among current CSE members regarding DEI initiatives that pertain to either their individual positions or to best practices in editing and publication management; and 3) to envision ways to engage and support new members who have not traditionally seen science editing, scientific publishing, STEM publishing, and/or membership in CSE as inclusive. In a series of monthly meetings, the 11-member Task Force conducted a series of lively discussions centered primarily around how we might conduct—and specifically quantify both the results of and target metrics for—an "environmental scan" of what CSE currently offers its members. We considered whether this might take the form of an assessment of past webinars currently available as enduring material on the CSE site, and whether it would be useful to examine diversity among the faculty of those offerings and the content discussed within them. We had many nuanced discussions about whether this scan of past content was useful and, more importantly, whether it could be accurate. Without the self-reported demographic data of faculty, could we accurately calculate true inclusion? And further, what would this "calculation" of inclusion look like? Would we assign a certain number or percentage of demographic groups that should have been (and should be in the future) included for every educational panel as Key Performance Indicators? Ultimately, we decided as a group that the more meaningful endeavor would be to set guidelines for our future role in evaluating and approving the content

MELISSA B SCHMIDT, Med, CSE DEI Task Force Co-Chair; OTITO FRANCES IWUCHUKWU, RPh, PhD, MA, FCP, CSE DEI Task Force Co-Chair, Associate Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Fairleigh Dickinson University School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of their employers.

CONTINUED

and faculty participation of all future events against a set of both qualitative and quantitative metrics. This project will be the purview—and likely the first measurable project undertaken by—the CSE DEI Committee after it is officially convened.

Second, members of the Task Force participated in and supported several related projects, including the establishment and population of CSE's new DEI Scholarly Resources database,¹ a compilation of guidance documents from member organizations; a DEI Roundtable at the spring 2021 annual meeting; and a request from a member organization to develop a custom DEI training for their editors. This final aspect is among the most important to the members of the Task Force as we transition into a Committee. We feel strongly about the importance of detailed, practical training for our members and their organizations about how to fully incorporate an ethos of inclusion into their editorial boards and staff hiring practices, peer review, publication workflows, language editing, and more. We feel the Committee is in a unique position to develop these resources, additionally making clear our staunch belief that the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into future scholarly publishing is critically necessary. All of the above on behalf of CSE.

This is, ultimately, a commitment that we all share—ensuring that our organization reflects our best, most earnest, most equitable, and fair representation of both our profession and the work we publish in our scholarly communications.

As we move into this new phase of DEI work at CSE, the Committee will focus on expanding our internal and external “environmental scan” efforts to establish a picture of where the DEI “movement” stands in scholarly publishing, including current best practices and future areas requiring additional work. Those findings will be used to establish a 2-year strategic plan to guide the Committee's overall effort. This plan will identify clear, reasonable, measurable, and timely goals, objectives, activities, and metrics (outcomes), all of which will be publicly shared with you. We will establish a

specific set of guidelines that can be used by organizations to advance their work in areas related specifically to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will codify a procedure that identifies the points at which the DEI Committee should be involved or consulted during program planning and what information will be required for review to provide appropriate feedback. This may involve asking the Program Committee to invite an open statement from all authors/presenters about how diversity was considered in preparation for their sessions, a method that organizations like Cell Press already use. We will use surveys to hopefully establish the reasons some individuals have not sought CSE membership in the past and review available demographic data to assess how we might attract, recruit, and retain new members of our profession; part of this will involve determining the extent to which current members who are part of historically underrepresented groups are actively engaged on committees that operationalize the work of CSE. Finally, we will create a meaningful and detailed plan for conducting more qualitative, active listening opportunities, like the 2021 DEI Roundtable, as we believe that is the best path to rich discussion and deep learning. The formation of CSE's DEI committee represents another opportunity for interested CSE members to not only join but to play an active role. Such roles may include leading relevant task identification and then working collaboratively on these with other committee members. This is, ultimately, a commitment that we all share—ensuring that our organization reflects our best, most earnest, most equitable, and fair representation of both our profession and the work we publish in our scholarly communications.

Acknowledgement

Authors would like to thank Dr Leonard Jack Jr, Editor in Chief, *Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice and Policy*, for reviewing and providing comments on iterations of this paper.

Reference and Link

1. <https://www.councilscienceeditors.org/resource-library/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-resources/>