

UHN Research IDEA Committee

Summary of Activities 2020-Present

Establishing the Research IDEA Committee

The "*Empower research teams and collaboration*" priority within the UHN Strategic Research Plan 2019–23 speaks to our efforts to support and develop the world's top research teams, comprising diverse groups of scientists, clinicians, trainees, staff and other partners. We recognize that there are systemic barriers for many underrepresented groups and have been reminded of the need for us to tackle systemic racism and all forms of discrimination within our community. This includes a clear need to do more to implement concrete, measurable actions to increase inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA).

As part of this strategic priority, the IDEA Committee for Research at UHN was established by Dr. Bradly Wouters in July 2020 to synthesize knowledge and diverse experiences from across UHN and develop strategies on what UHN can do to promote IDEA in research. Scientists, staff and trainees at all levels were invited to join to help guide the committee's initiatives—including those with lived experience or an understanding, knowledge or interest in IDEA principles ([Appendix I](#)).

From the outset, the UHN Research IDEA Committee has organized initiatives to change policies, provide education, create opportunities and safer spaces for staff and researchers, and support the next generation of researchers through career and enrichment opportunities ([Appendix II](#)). Four subcommittees were established to work separately to develop and implement committee initiatives focusing on supporting **researchers, staff and trainees**, facilitating **data collection** and engaging **youth from underrepresented and underserved communities**. This document summarizes the achievements of the committee from July 2020 to present.



Researcher Support Sub-committee

The researcher support initiative has two main goals that centre on addressing the underrepresentation of structurally marginalized groups in research by supporting faculty with diverse perspectives, lived experiences, accomplishments and career paths. This initiative is also aimed at helping researchers address potential sources of

bias in research methodology and providing resources to support the integration of IDEA principles in research. The following activities were launched by members to support these goals:

- Developed targeted calls to address underrepresentation in UHN's Canada Research Chair (CRC) program. CRCs are held by faculty at the University of Toronto and researchers employed by the affiliated hospitals within the Toronto Academic Health Science Network (TAHSN). CRC positions are filled through a nomination selection process that is managed by the university or TAHSN hospital that owns the chair. The CRC has set equity and diversity targets to increase the representation of members of the four federally designated groups (FDGs; i.e., women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities) in its program. The committee took several actions to help UHN meet these targets:
 - Making recommendations to improve the fairness, transparency and equitable distribution of new CRCs.
 - Launching several special calls, in collaboration with the university and People & Culture, to increase the representation of researchers who identify with the FDGs.
 - Providing Strategic Research Initiative Development (StRIDE) grant editing support to CRC nominee applicants from equity-seeking groups.
 - Taking active steps to encourage underrepresented groups to apply to CRC vacancies.
- Supported the inaugural Black Excellence in Science Technology, Engineering, Medicine and Mathematics (BE-STEMM) Conference hosted by the Canadian Black Scientist Network.
- Launched the research IDEA seminar series (11 events to date) to create a forum where researchers, staff and trainees can learn about IDEA-related topics from peers and experts.
- Worked with the Research Support Services Analytics team to incorporate IDEA principles into the Annual Activity Report assessment for UHN principal investigators.
- Through an initiative led by Lisa Murphy from People and Culture, the EVP Science and Research and the research institutes, advocated for a process to provide institutional support for parental leaves.
- Developed *Recommendations for IDEA in Research* for the Research Council Executive and Research Institute Directors.
- Developed a job distribution list to support the recruitment of diverse candidates to research leadership positions.
- Provided implicit bias training for research institute directors and researchers. The training was facilitated in collaboration with The Toronto Initiative for Diversity & Excellence (TIDE)—a grassroots service group comprising University of Toronto faculty members from across disciplines that focuses on supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion. The workshop was led by Dr. Maydianne Andrade (Professor, Dept. Biological Sciences, University of Toronto, Scarborough; President, Canadian Black Scientists Network) and Dr. Bojana Stefanovic (Professor and Canada Research Chair in Functional Brain Neuroimaging; Director, Physical Sciences, Sunnybrook Health Sciences).
- Provided feedback for a Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Parenthood Survey that was aimed at increasing our understanding of how parenthood affects scientists and trainees.
- Drafted an SBAR for a potential mentorship program for researchers who belong to a structurally marginalized group. Mentorship is targeted explicitly to career sponsorship and career advocacy.
- In collaboration with UHNWomen, launched an *Institutional History of IDEA at UHN* research project to create a repository of artifacts and a report that will document UHN's equity journey.
- Launched the [Research Inclusion, Diversity, Equity Accessibility and Antiracism website](#) to share resources to support IDEA. A SharePoint site is being developed with additional resources for research teams, including guidelines and resource documents on how to address IDEA in research grant applications (launch in 2023).
- Developed *Integrating IDEA in Research Methodologies* module curriculum for translational research (launch in 2023). Two additional curricula are planned for basic and clinical researchers.

Data Collection Sub-committee

The data collection group was created with two goals in mind. To advise on policies, procedures, infrastructure and logistics of diversity data collection/analysis/reporting and to generate evidence-informed consensus on priority diversity indicators/measures and related best practices. The data collection group undertook the following actions to advance these goals:

- Developed a charter for a literature review and environmental scan on best practices for promoting IDEA.
- Worked with the University of Toronto to develop a survey for collecting diversity data from eligible CRC holders. This survey provided the first insight into the diversity of our research faculty and informed the development of CRC-targeted calls.
- Conducted a scoping review of 1255 published articles plus an environmental scan of 141 websites and reports to identify unique strategies and measures for supporting IDEA in research.
- Collaborated with the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Antiracism (IDEAA) People and Culture team to coordinate efforts for collecting diversity data from TeamUHN.

Staff and Trainee Support Sub-committee

Research staff, postdoctoral researchers and trainees are invaluable contributors to the research enterprise. A major goal of the staff and trainee support group was creating spaces where community members could voice issues as well as identifying and addressing barriers that prevent equity-deserving staff from fully contributing to our research enterprise. To support this, the committee took the following actions:

- Guided the selection of speakers for IDEAS—a virtual seminar series to discuss IDEA topics, highlight health equity research programs and discuss ways to incorporate IDEA in research methodology.
- Provided feedback for the Office of Research Trainees Code of Conduct.
- Advocated for and received funding to create a multifaith room at the Princess Margaret Cancer Tower.
- Collaborated with the Office of Research Trainees and the Research Application Support Initiative (RASI) in the Community of Support program at the University of Toronto to support students from backgrounds historically underrepresented in science in obtaining summer research positions. The program provided subsidies for five summer students in the summer of 2022 and will support 10 additional students this year.
- Contributed to a working group that included the 2SLGTBQIA+ Committee, Bioethics, Synapse team members and other groups to guide the development of questions for EPIC that enable patients to self-identify their gender, sex, pronouns and sexual orientation.
- Collaborated with the 2SLGTBQIA+ Committee on a pronoun pin and sticker campaign to help normalize the sharing of pronouns. As part of the campaign, pronoun pins were made available at all sites across UHN. A [2+LGBTQIA website](#) was also created to support the campaign and the 2+LGBTQIA members of TeamUHN, patients and our community.
- Co-hosted an in-person event in collaboration with the Temerty Faculty of Medicine Office of Inclusion and Diversity to support members of the Iranian community. The event included speeches by Iranian women and opportunities to network and share experiences. Speakers included Dr. Gelareh Zadeh, Solmaz Barghi, Dr. Mojgan Hodaie, Solmaz Alizadeh, Mana Modares and the Research IDEA Chair, Dr. Azadeh Yadollahi.
- Collaborated with Bioethics and the Office of Research Trainees to develop assessment criteria for a needs-based scholarship for postdoctoral researchers. The scholarship will provide funding to researchers who face additional barriers due to factors such as race, religion, disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, nationality, ability or caregiver responsibilities (launch in 2023).

Youth Outreach Sub-committee

There is significant underrepresentation of certain groups in the STEM fields, including women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) individuals, people with disabilities and individuals from structurally marginalized

communities. To address this gap, the committee developed and implemented a program to encourage youth to discover the joy of STEM by creating spaces and opportunities where all youth, regardless of socioeconomic status, age, background or experience, can participate, feel included and have their voices heard. The following actions were taken to support the program:

- Performed an environmental scan of youth outreach programs at UHN to identify researchers and trainees who are involved in outreach.
- Worked with the Ontario Hospital Association Taskforce on Antiracism to host two Youth DiverSTEAM Symposia, in 2021 and 2022. The inaugural event was attended by 100 high school students and 200 researchers, trainees and volunteers.
- Connected with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) science teachers in collaboration with the Ontario Hospital Association, to discuss implicit bias among teachers and in the curriculum.
- Developed partnerships with Let's Talk Science, Visions of Science, Science Rendezvous, TDSB, Toronto Catholic School Board and the Science Teachers Association of Ontario.
- Secured financial support to create the UHN STEM Pathways program, with dedicated youth outreach coordinators. Since its launch in May 2022, the program has engaged 228 volunteers to host 114 events that were attended by 10,000+ youth. The team partners with various internal (e.g., Office of Research Trainees, Research Institute Directorates, Research Facilities, Research Safety) and external (TCSB, TDSB, Visions of Science, the MINA project and the Canada Association for Girls in Science) partners to host events. The program is fully embedded in the Research Support Services Research Strategy portfolio, which reports to the EVP, Science and Research.

Upcoming Initiatives

- Environmental scan to reassess the needs of the research community and develop new a strategy to address those needs.
- Work with IDEAA to analyze survey data to assess IDEAA-related barriers and opportunities for research.

Appendix I. UHN Research IDEA Committee Members

The committee is chaired by Dr. Azadeh Yadollahi and currently comprises the following individuals:

- Amanda Veri (Coordinator, Office of Research Trainees)
- Anam Islam (Research Quality Associate, Research Quality Integration)
- Anastasia Tikhonova (Scientist, TGHRI)
- Anna Gagliardi (Senior Scientist, TGHRI)
- Azadeh Yadollahi (Chair; Scientist, KITE)
- Courtney Jones (Scientist, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre)
- Darlene Reid (Senior Scientist, KITE)
- Evan Foster (Trainee, KITE)
- Jennifer Campos (Scientist, KITE)
- Jackie Bender (Affiliate Scientist, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre)
- Karen Davis (Senior Scientist, Krembil)
- Moira Kapral (Scientist, TGHRI)
- Nikki Woods (Research Director, The Institute of Education Research [TIER])
- Patti Leake (Development Officer, TIER)

Former members

- Alya Heirali (Postdoctoral Fellow, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre)
- Anusha Ratneswaran (Postdoctoral Fellow, Krembil)
- Diana von Appen (Manager, Diversity Office - Research)
- Hodan Mohamud (Research Clerk, KITE)
- Kyle Francis (Scientific Associate, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre)
- Paul Chartrand (Project Manager, TGHRI)
- Rob Cairns (Scientific Associate, TGHRI)
- Rose Karithanam (Clinical Research Coordinator, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre)
- Rossanne Kagaoan (Research Administrative Assistant, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre)
- Treesa Joseph (Research Administrative Assistant, KITE)
- Lisa Murphy (Director, Human Resources – Research)
- Stephanie Susman (Research Impact Analyst, Research Strategy and Planning)

Research IDEA Committee working group members

- Margaret Kinyanjui (Manager, Research Strategy Development, Strategic Research Initiatives Development [StRIDE])
- Patti Leake (Research IDEA Educator)
- Anna Gordon (Director, People and Culture – Research)

Former Research IDEA Committee working group members

- Lisa Murphy (Director, People and Culture – Research)
- Diana von Appen (Diversity Manager – Research)

Appendix II. Research IDEA Committee Terms of Reference (ToR)

Purpose

The Research Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IDEA) Committee will provide advice and guidance on the Research IDEA Action Plan. The committee will also develop and implement a strategic plan to foster IDEA across UHN's research community.

Executive Sponsor

Bradly Wouters, Executive Vice President (EVP), Science and Research

Membership

- Appointments to the Committee will be made by the Chair of the IDEA Committee with advice from the Strategic Research Initiatives Development (StRIDE) team and People & Culture consultants.
- The committee will be composed of 15-20 members from across the research community and include staff, trainees and researchers at different stages of their research career.
- Members will be selected based on their lived experience, with the goal of including representation from the four federally designated groups (women, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples and people of color) and LGBTQ+ communities.
- A Chair will be appointed by the EVP to oversee committee activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Committee members will:
 - Develop a plan to promote and sustain IDEA principles within UHN's research community.
 - Oversee analysis of current policies, procedures and initiatives to identify challenges and opportunities for promoting IDEA.
 - Advise the EVP on the implementation of IDEA strategic initiatives.
 - Work with various internal and external partners to launch and implement IDEA initiatives.
 - Attend at least four IDEA Committee meetings per year.

Resources

The committee will be supported by staff from StRIDE, People & Culture and UHN's Diversity and Mediation Services.

Meeting and Quorum

- The IDEA Committee will meet at least four times per year.
- At least five members must be in attendance in order for quorum to be met at a meeting.
- Agendas and meeting minutes will be distributed to members prior to the meeting.

Deliverables

The IDEA Committee will provide reports to the EVP and the Research Council Executive, which will include updates on all IDEA-related activities.

Review

The ToR will be reviewed annually. The next review is expected to be in June 2023.