

2024-2025 Annual Report

Diversity, Equity, And Anti-Racism (DEAR) Council
Tufts University School of Medicine

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2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism (DEAR) Council

OVERVIEW

The Tufts University School of Medicine Graduate Programs DEAR Council continues to make strides in its mission to:

- Ensure compositional diversity among students, faculty, and staff by providing support.
- Foster a climate of inclusion for all and educate on cultural competency.
- Promote understanding of social determinants of health and health inequities within the curriculum.

LOGISTICS

Meeting Dates

Executive Leadership and the Full Council held 7 meetings this academic year, which was 1 less than last year. November meetings fell during the Thanksgiving holiday this year, so the meeting was skipped for that month.

Executive Leadership	August 22 nd , 2024; October 17 th , 2024; December 19 th , 2024; January 16 th , 2025; February 13 th , 2025; April 17 th , 2025; May 15 th , 2025
Full Council	September 12 th , 2024; October 24 th , 2024; January 23 rd , 2025; February 27 th , 2025; March 27 th , 2025; April 24 th , 2025; May 22 nd , 2025

Member Roster

This year, we saw an **increase in new membership from the 2023-2024 roster of 17 new members for a total of 21 new members in 2024-2025.**

2024-2025 Full Roster (27)	Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha (Chair), Alessa Rosa (Co-Chair), Colleen Hughes (Staff Assistant), Karen Yang (intern), Haili Dunbar, Erica Daniela Stark, Armani Johnson-Crews, Jennifer Y. Kim, Rosanne Washington, Aaron E. Embry, Josh Cooper, Chandi Edmonds, Allison Yantz, Natalie O'Neal, Vivian Stephens-Hicks, Max Quinn, Michelle Bersani, Ernestina Opoku Twumwaa, Angela Ting-Ting Lu, Alexsas Mwango Misoka, Leighla Dergham, Jade A. McIntyre, Sakina Khalid, Rida S. Saad, Kevin Park, Neil Sharma, Johnathan Nolan, Jordan Dunlap.
Returning (18)	Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha (Chair), Alessa Rosa (Co-Chair), Colleen Hughes (Staff Assistant), Karen Yang (intern), Haili Dunbar,

	Erica Daniela Stark, Chandi Edmonds, Armani Johnson-Crews, Jennifer Y. Kim, Rosanne Washington, Aaron E. Embry, Josh Cooper, Allison Yantz, Natalie O'Neal, Ernestina Opoku Twumwaa, Angela Ting-Ting Lu, Alexsas Mwango Misoka, Leighla Dergham, Johnathan Nolan.
New (9)	Vivian Stephens-Hicks, Max Quinn, Michelle Bersani, Sakina Khalid, Rida S. Saad, Kevin Park, Neil Sharma, Jade A. McIntyre, Jordan Dunlap.

ORGANIZATION OF SUBCOMMITTEES

1. Student Climate Subcommittee

- **Chair(s):** Alessa Rosa (Chair), Colleen Hughes (Staff Assistant), Karen Yang (Student Intern)
- **Members:** Michelle Bersani, Ernestina Opoku Twumwaa, Angela Ting-Ting Lu, Alexsas Mwango Misoka, Leighla Dergham, Jade A. McIntyre, Sakina Khalid, Rida S. Saad, Kevin Park, Neil Sharma, Johnathan Nolan, Jordan Dunlap.
- **Mission:** Promote a diverse and inclusive learning community where students are supported to explore issues of diversity personally and learn from other.
- **Vision:** A safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for every member of our community.
- **Responsibilities/Goals:**
 - 1) Develop partnerships with key stakeholders including the Associate Director for Diversity and Inclusion Education for the Tufts University Health Sciences Campuses as well as Student Senate leadership. Share survey data to assess campus climate and student experiences.
 - 2) If data on climate does not currently exist, generate an annual campus climate survey. In conjunction with the Tufts School of Medicine Graduate Programs Diversity Committee, address issues that surface in the campus climate survey and participate in the development of action plans in response.
 - 3) Consider trainings that could be beneficial to the faculty, staff and students of the department to promote cultural competence. Training requests will be communicated to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Justice & Equity in Practice utilizing the Inclusive Community Feedback and Meeting forms and working with the Associate Director for Diversity and Inclusion Education for the Tufts University Health Science Campuses.
 - 4) Make reports on committee progress to Tufts University School of Medicine Graduate Programs DEAR Council.

2. Faculty/Staff Subcommittee

- **Leads:** Alessa Rosa (Chair) and Colleen Hughes (Staff Assistant)
- **Members:** Alessa Rosa, Jennifer Y. Kim, Rosanne Washington, Aaron E. Embry, Josh Cooper, Chandi Edmonds, Allison Yantz, Natalie O'Neal, Vivian Stephens-Hicks.
- **Mission:** Create and institutionalize an environment and pedagogy designed to build capacity for faculty, staff, and all members of the TUSM Graduate Programs community to be explicit in identifying critical issues influencing equitable health outcomes, including racism, genderism, homophobia, political, economic, and social determinants of health, in all teaching and learning environments. We aim to assure that all members of the faculty and staff community will have the skills, knowledge, and competencies to create teaching and learning environments reflecting our shared core values of equity, justice, transparency, and anti-racism. Additionally, we strive to create an inclusive environment for faculty and staff, where they can find community and feel heard. We will provide resources and support to ensure that all faculty and staff are empowered to contribute to our mission. We intend to center the student perspective in all our work, as part of their academic experience, as we prepare them to be professionals.
- **Vision:** A sustainable, open, and reflective environment where faculty and staff are prepared to lead by example, confident in their ability to be transparent, fully engaged in the challenging process of addressing inequities brought about by historical legacy of oppression and marginalization across several domains including race/ethnicity, gender, and physical abilities; (students well prepared and equipped to interact and collaborate with a diversity of populations).
- **Responsibilities/Goals:**
 - 1) Gather data (e.g. qualitative and quantitative) from constituent TUSM Graduate Programs groups designed to identify specific areas for of professional development; build upon prior data gathered from the faculty self-assessment (FY 2018) on preparation to teach and interact with students on issues of critical importance (e.g. micro-aggressions, inclusive teaching practices) and available student data e.g. exit interviews. We will be intentional about including adjunct faculty within both online and on-campus environments.
 - 2) Annual review of issues emerging from course evaluations.
 - 3) Explore issues/concerns from Student Senate, Office of Student services, Faculty reviews.
 - 4) Collaborate with alumni association leadership to ascertain their perceived level of preparedness, post academics, to be effective professionals and leaders around these critical issues.

- 5) Explore expertise and resources both within (e.g. CELT, TUSM Associate Director for EDI, Other Affinity leadership groups) and outside of the university (e.g. Essential Partners).
- 6) Tailor training, specific content, and methodology in alignment with identified needs.
- 7) Identify areas for institutionalization of our core values and expectations of faculty regarding professional development.

KEY INITIATIVES & EVENTS

Hosting Events and Programming

This was an educational and edifying year of events across Tufts University School of Medicine, as we managed both virtual and in-person environments. DEAR Council was able to schedule and revive **three groups** of Project Connect and **seven events** for the hybrid-virtual Race & Racism event series, inviting several speakers and creators to share their unique knowledge, perspectives, and crafts. This year, DEAR Council was also able to provide Dialogue Practice events for faculty and staff. As well as a training session for students, hosted by the Office of the Vice Provost for Institutional Inclusive Excellence (IIE).

Dialogue Training with the IIE

The dialogue training from the IIE took place Tuesday, February 25, with the goal to introduce faculty, staff, and students to the importance of dialogue and dialogic practices that can be applied to studies, work, relationships, and teams. The training explored the types of dialogue and how to use them effectively, active listening skills, as well as structured practice for harnessing collective wisdom in the room.

Race and Racism Event Series

This year, DEAR Council held 7 Race and Racism Speaker Series events, with two of them being hybrid (with both in-person and remote options available to attendees). We incorporated lectures on topics like philosophy and Indigenous health, held film screenings, and also invited local organizations to speak about their cause. Moving forward, we have made an active effort to get a head-start on brainstorming and planning events for the upcoming academic semester/year through brainstorming more ways to engage with the community, fostering connections with other Tufts organizations, and maintaining positive relationships with speakers.

The Race & Racism Series was recorded when possible, and documented on our website. These summaries along with recordings can be found at:

<https://sites.tufts.edu/dear/category/race-racism-speaker-series/>

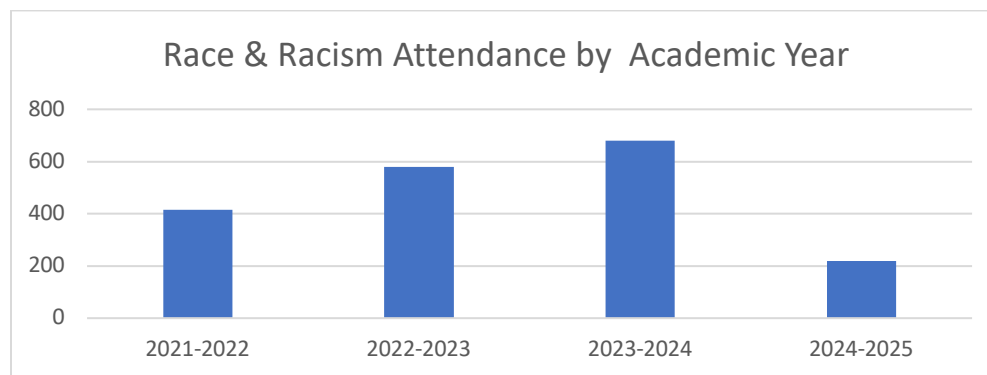
The following events were held remotely unless otherwise specified.

Date	Speaker(s)	Event Title/Topic	Attendee Count
09/26/2024	Dr. Jacob Joseph	"What does Aristotle Teach Us About Anti-Racism?"	15
10/28/2024	Jeff Lafata-Hernandez	"Empowering People for Inclusive Communities" EPIC Ableism Training	134
11/21/2024	SpeakOUT Boston	<i>Will and Harper</i> Film Screening (Hybrid) + SpeakOUT Boston	41 (23 in-person)
01/29/2025	Dr. Thomas Reed	"Indigenous Health: Past, Present, and Future"	13
02/25/2025	Naomi Boase, IIE	"Mastering Dialogue: Essential Skills for Professional Practice"	8
03/25/2025	Dr. Simon Howard	"Beyond Direct Experience: The Consequences of Vicarious Racism on Well-Being"	7
04/30/2025	Reclaim Roxbury	<i>Roxbury</i> Documentary Film Screening + Reclaim Roxbury	

Speaker Event Recap Highlights from 2024-2025:

The DEAR Council hosted seven events this calendar year.

The Race & Racism Series had its least attendees in the 4 years the DEAR Council has been hosting this series with **218 total attendees**. Year-over-year attendance at Race & Racism events is shown below:



As a continuation from the 2023-2024 school year, the DEAR Council posted recaps and recordings for events on the DEAR Council website for additional reflection and event information accessibility to audiences, post-event:

<https://sites.tufts.edu/dear/category/race-racism-speaker-series/>

Project Connect: Building connections through intimate, small-group meetings

The Student Climate Subcommittee highlighted the desire for more personal connection among online, hybrid, and in-person students. Meetings were held to realize and review materials necessary to successfully execute Project Connect. A training session was held for potential student facilitators, and two groups completed the four-week course.

Frequently Discussed/Promoted Topics and Initiatives at Council-wide Meetings:

- Anti-Racism Council Committee (ARC)
- Tufts Tables
- Office of the Vice Provost for Institutional Inclusive Excellence (OIIE)
- DEIJ retreats, external events, and news stories
- DEIJ (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice) Information at Tufts:
<https://medicine.tufts.edu/about/school-medicine/diversity-equity-inclusion>

MAJOR SUCCESSES: DEAR Council Academic Year 2024-2025

STUDENT SUBCOMITTEE	
<i>Project Connect</i>	<p>The primary purpose of Project Connect is to introduce deeper connection between students. The link between connection and mental health, physical health, and student success is well-documented. Through this 4-week session, students met in groups of three or four and discussed personal experiences, future goals, and individual perspectives. A broad range of topics were covered including, but not limited to, friendships, loneliness, personal goals, culture, self-disclosure, and familial relationships.</p> <p>Students departed from Project Connect feeling a deeper connection to those in their small group, a better social network at Tufts, and enhanced emotional self-reflection. Both groups decided to reconvene outside of scheduled Project Connect times following the end of the program.</p>
Objectives	To build friendship, connection and community though incremental small group conversations.
Student Facilitators	Karen Yang, Angela Lu, Michelle Bersani
Logistics	Four sessions for each group were held between October 2 nd – November 22 nd . All groups met virtually.
Student Participation	11 students

Student Feedback	<p>Overall, students reported a highly positive experience with the training. They enjoyed the intimacy of the small group, and felt it conducive to sharing experiences.</p> <p>One of the groups continued meeting past scheduled end-time in informal capacities.</p>
Student Member Involvement: <i>Student Representatives from all programs</i>	<p>The DEAR Council recruited eight Student Representatives with at least one coming from each of the four active, non-dual-degree Graduate Degree programs: Master of Biomedical Sciences, Master of Public Health, Physician Assistant, and Doctor of Physical Therapy.</p> <p>But only five were active throughout the year.</p> <p>Their responsibilities included: promotion of DEAR events & initiatives, facilitation of Project Connect, summarizing Race & Racism Series events, and active guidance of the DEAR Council. The following students from their respective programs were chosen or elected (PA program) as Student Representatives from an application process to take on this leadership responsibility in DEAR Council:</p> <p>Johnathan Nolan (MBS), Sakina Khalid (MBS), Michelle Bersani (DPT-Boston), Kevin Park (DPT-Boston), Leighla Dergham (PA), Ernestina Opoku Twumwaa (PA), Huzyfa Fazili (MD/MPH), Angela Lu (MPH), Rida S Saad (MBS), Joey Dunlap (DPT-SEA)</p>
Mastering Dialogue: Essential Skills for Professional Practice	<p>This one-hour training session, hosted by the OIIE, focused on building essential dialogue skills for both professional and personal settings. Designed to support students and professionals in health-related fields, the training emphasized the importance of dialogue as a tool for effective communication, collaboration, and understanding.</p> <p>Participants explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of dialogue across various healthcare and academic contexts • Different types of dialogue and when to apply them • Skills for active listening and deeper understanding • Structured exercises to practice collaborative communication

	The session included both discussion and hands-on practice, providing attendees with practical tools to enhance their communication within teams, relationships, and work environments.
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FACULTY/STAFF SUBCOMITTEE	
<i>Strengthening Support Systems for Students</i>	<p>This year, the subcommittee focused on enhancing academic support for students.</p> <p>The subcommittee developed a detailed guide outlining academic and student support services available across programs, which is house in the Canvas orientation course for TUSM grad students. This resource helps more effectively direct students to the help they need.</p>
<i>Fostering Collaboration and Dialogue on Identity</i>	<p>To promote inclusive learning and working environments, the subcommittee organized a series of intentional discussions on identity and perception. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three workshops or facilitated discussions that explored how identity and perception influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The learning experience within the curriculum ○ Teaching or working at Tufts ○ Interpersonal relationships across the university community <p>These sessions provided valuable opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and cross-departmental collaboration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 1: Identity in the Curriculum Friday, February 21, 12–1PM • Session 2: Identity in Teaching and Working at Tufts Wednesday, March 19, 11AM–12PM • Session 3: Identity in Interpersonal Relationships Date: Tuesday, April 29, 12:30–1:30PM
<i>Specific Trainings</i>	<p>As part of the subcommittee's efforts to foster dialogue around identity and perception, Co-Chair Alessa Rosa facilitated an interactive presentation during the academic year for the DPT-Seattle DPT 0503 course. The session began with Alessa sharing her personal story to illustrate the complexities of identity and the importance of looking beyond surface-level</p>

	<p>traits and stereotypes. Her openness helped establish a tone of vulnerability and trust, encouraging participants to engage thoughtfully.</p> <p>Following the introduction, Alessa led a facilitated discussion activity. Recognizing that participants may not be familiar with one another, the activity was intentionally structured to support open dialogue while creating a safe and inclusive environment.</p>
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SPECIFIC & INDIVIDUAL RECOGNITION	
Individual Accomplishments	<p>Dr. Ndidiamaka Amutah-Onukagha (Chair) continued her success in the Center for Black Maternal Health & Reproductive Justice. For more information, visit the center's website. Dr. Amutah-Onukagha is the recipient of the 2023 Franklin Delano Roosevelt Humanitarian Award from the March of Dimes.</p> <p>Alessa Rosa (Co-Chair) oversaw the student intern and helped with the execution of our Race & Racism Speaker Series alongside Karen Yang. Alessa also continued monitoring DEAR's email mailbox (DEAR@tufts.edu), presented at orientations and maintained DEAR's website (sites.tufts.edu/dear) up to date.</p> <p>Colleen Hughes (Staff Assistant) played an integral role on the executive team by managing budget, scheduling meetings, and assisting with event planning.</p> <p>Karen Yang (Intern) engaged and oversaw Student Representative members from various graduate programs. Karen also took the lead in identifying, scheduling, and organizing all of our speaker events for our series.</p>
General Highlights	<p>This year, we observed a decrease in DEAR membership engagement, in both our faculty/staff and student population. This decline has primarily been attributed to shifts in nationwide administration changes, Tufts organizational structures, and the overall instability within our Public Health programs. However, even with these tumultuous times, DEAR remained steadfast in its mission and objectives. Throughout the year, we continued to provide space for students, faculty, and staff to deliberate on projects, track campus climate, and offer concrete opportunities for engagement and learning. Despite the challenges, we remained committed to fostering an inclusive environment for all members of our community.</p>

Identification of Funding for Special Activities	Funding for the Race & Racism events came from the following sources/groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tufts University School of Medicine Public Health Program • Student Activity Fund (x1)
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NEXT STEPS: Academic Year 2025-2026

General Goals and Strategic Priorities

1. Event Participation

- Collaborate with academic programs to integrate DEAR events and trainings into required components for student cohorts.
- Prioritize events with mandatory attendance, as shown by the high turnout from the MBS program this year.
- Focus on improving actual attendance by addressing the gap between registration and participation.
- Implement clearer communication, reminders, and incentives to encourage follow-through.

2. Program Integration and Partnerships

- Strengthen collaboration with academic program directors across all schools.
- Incorporate DEAR themes into curricular components such as the APE and ILE.
- Identify dedicated DEAR liaisons within each academic program to support coordination and promotion.
- Expand partnerships with local community organizations to enhance programming and student engagement.

3. Event Strategy and Visibility

- Prioritize in-person events while offering hybrid options when feasible.
- Align event scheduling with academic calendars and exam periods to avoid conflicts.
- Improve outreach methods beyond email, including peer promotion, social media, class announcements, and posters.

4. Evaluation and Adaptation

- Collect and analyze participant feedback after each event to inform future planning.
- Adapt programming to respond to internal challenges (e.g., staffing transitions) and external pressures (e.g., national DEI trends).

Student Subcommittee Goals

The Student Subcommittee will focus on advancing DEAR's mission through increased student engagement, relevant programming, and community involvement.

1. Engagement and Communication

- Develop creative, non-email-based outreach strategies to effectively reach students.
- Collaborate with student leaders across all programs to support event planning and promotion.
- Expand the DEAR student ambassador network to promote visibility and peer engagement.

2. Dialogue and Programming

- Offer student-centered dialogue training opportunities.
 - Pilot intergroup dialogues focused on topics such as race, identity, allyship, and whiteness.
 - Use a 4-session format with the first session serving as an educational introduction.
- Relaunch Project Connect with options for both shorter and extended session models based on past feedback.

3. Thematic Focus Areas

- Develop programming around the following key topics:
 - Immigrant and migrant health
 - Health policy and insurance access
 - Indigenous health and wellness
- Connect DEAR topics to students' clinical and academic experiences to enhance relevance.

4. Community Involvement

- Organize DEAR-sponsored community service opportunities that align with student interests and DEAR learning goals.
- Offer a variety of volunteer options to accommodate diverse schedules and interests.

Faculty & Staff Subcommittee Goals

The Faculty & Staff Subcommittee will support a more inclusive and engaged campus environment through professional development and strategic collaboration.

1. Engagement and Leadership

- Schedule regular planning sessions with academic program directors to align on DEAR priorities, event timing, and topic relevance.

- Encourage faculty and staff to integrate DEAR events into academic or programmatic expectations.

2. Professional Development

- Offer expanded and recurring dialogue training sessions tailored to faculty and staff.
- Provide specialized DEI workshops and community-based trainings (e.g., EPIC) that support personal growth and inclusive teaching practices.
- Pilot a faculty and staff version of Project Connect to foster dialogue and reflection within professional cohorts.