

# Driving Change Institutional Self-Study Guide

9 April 2020

The goal of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Driving Change (DC) initiative is to drive genuine and lasting culture change on university campuses so undergraduate students from all backgrounds, particularly those who belong to historically excluded groups, will excel in STEM and graduate from college well prepared to pursue advanced degrees and eventually assume leadership roles in STEM. Universities will drive change by developing three interlocking components: (i) a student-centered program that achieves the outcomes of the UMBC Meyerhoff Scholars Program; (ii) an institution-centered program that creates a more inclusive STEM learning environment that affects all students, especially those students who are from groups historically excluded from STEM; and (iii) a community-centered program in which the Driving Change universities will come together as a learning community to share with one another their aspirations, experiences, and progress.

The institutional self-study is an important opportunity for the university to develop a deep understanding of the strengths and challenges of the institution. This understanding is foundational to the Driving Change initiative. The self-study discussions on each campus should convey **Where are we?** and **Where do we want to be?** in diversity and inclusion in STEM.

We invite you, your colleagues, and your university to design and implement a self-study process that allows you to peel away some of the layers and listen and learn, reflect and share, think and feel. Perhaps you will discover assumptions and beliefs that don't align well with reality. What is learned through self-reflection will certainly change as circumstances change. For example, confronting the new realities of the COVID crisis might be revealing misalignments that were not widely recognized only a few months ago.

To help guide your self-study, we offer the following questions. Please consider these as suggestions about what you might want to consider as you design your self-study.

---

## 21 August 2020 Update

In the past few months, the environment in which we find ourselves has shifted significantly. The traditional thinking on diversity, equity, and inclusion is largely made obsolete by the stark reminders that the streets of America and the classrooms of our universities are not safe because of systemic racism. This is a truth that we must acknowledge, embrace, and commit to deconstruct in new and different ways.

The events of the last couple of months have crystallized the breath-taking scale of the change needed and have helped us better understand what it will require of all of us to drive change. We encourage you to seize this moment and engage in a meaningful and broadened self-study that will enable your campus to know itself better, to examine old assumptions, and identify new demands. Our goal is to inspire new and deep reflection, especially in the context of the events of recent months that have elevated the national consciousness to the enduring impact of anti-Black racism. We provide below additional questions of focus aligned with the original questions for your consideration.

- 
- What history, traditions, practices, and values are key contributors to the institution's culture? How does the institution define itself, and how does this identity support or impede diversity and inclusion efforts?

Additional Question of Focus to Consider:

- **Past and Present Racism.** What is your institution's understanding of its historical legacy of race and racism? How would you describe the current racial climate on campus? What are ways in which your institution addresses the enduring presence and impact of racism and bias on campus?
- What is the institution's assessment of its current STEM learning environment with respect to inclusion, and what are the principal determiners of the environment?

- What aspects of the current campus environment contribute to disparities between students from different backgrounds, especially students from groups historically excluded from the sciences?

Additional Question of Focus to Consider:

- **Experience of Black Lives.** What are the efforts to advance diversity and inclusion that specifically focus on anti-Black racism? How does your institution gather, acknowledge, and address the lived experiences, viewpoints and perspectives of black students, faculty, staff, and administrators?
- If well-prepared students are leaving STEM, why?

Additional Question of Focus to Consider:

- **Experience of Black Students.** Are black students leaving STEM at a rate higher than other students? Has that rate of attrition persisted over time? Why?
- What are the institution's current efforts aimed at increasing diversity, what is the institution's assessment of the effectiveness of these efforts, and what has the institution learned from these efforts?

Additional Question of Focus to Consider:

- **Institutional Leadership.** How does university leadership engage in efforts specifically aimed at better understanding racism and how often? How does your university leadership listen to and learn from the voices of your undergraduate students, particularly those who belong to historically excluded racial groups?
- What is the current faculty perception of, and active engagement in, efforts to advance diversity and inclusion?
- How will the DC program build upon what the campus is already doing so that greater progress toward inclusion can be achieved?