

# COMPREHENSIVE CLIMATE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Report prepared on October 20, 2020  
By Strategic Diversity Initiatives (SDI)

## OVERVIEW

The UMN School of Public Health (SPH) is committed to creating a welcoming, equitable, and inclusive environment for all members. As part of SPH’s ongoing work toward this goal, SPH leadership has engaged Strategic Diversity Initiatives (SDI) to provide objective, third-party support in assessing climate and identifying ways in which SPH can create a more inclusive environment.

SDI gathered information about the experiences of SPH staff, students, faculty, and alumni relative to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and the overall learning and workplace climate. In addition to focus group discussions and interviews, the primary method involved members sharing their experiences in an anonymous online survey.

This report summarizes the findings from the survey, focus groups, and interviews, as well as our recommendations for ways in which SPH can move forward to create and maintain a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive organization.

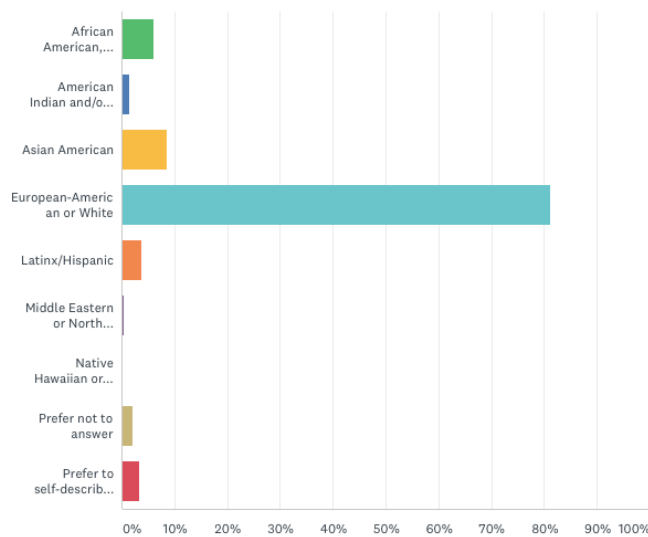
## SURVEY FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

399 people completed the 26-item survey. The demographic breakdown is as follows:

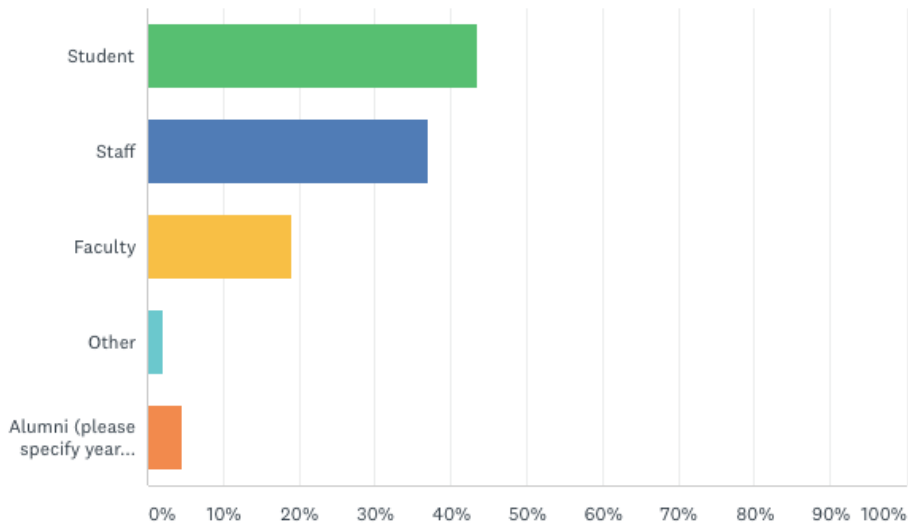
#### RACE/ETHNICITY (Q1):

The overwhelming majority of members identified as **White/European-American** (322, **81%**). The second highest group represented were Asian American (34, **8.5%**). The third highest was African/African American/Afro-Caribbean/Black (24, **6%**). 15 people identified as Hispanic/Latinx (**3.8%**), 6 people identified as American Indian and/or Alaska Native (**1.5%**), 2 people identified as Middle Eastern or North African (**.5%**), 8 people chose “Prefer not to answer” (2%), and 13 people chose “Prefer to self-describe” (3.3%). There were no responses for Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.



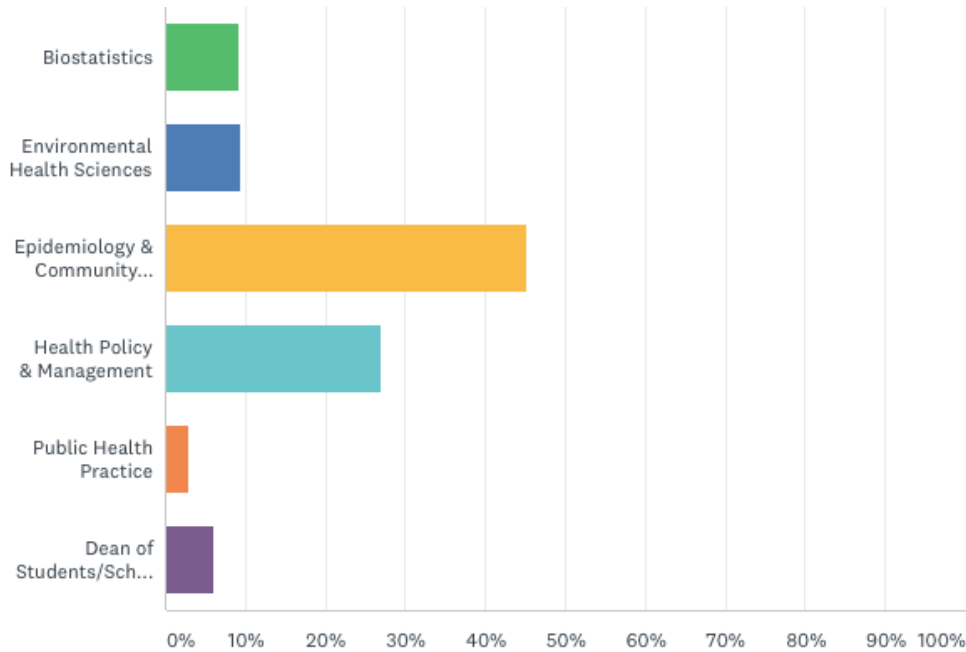
#### POSITION/ROLE (Q2):

The majority of the respondents were students (174, **44%**). Staff was a close second (148, **37%**). Faculty was the third highest (76, **19%**). 18 alumni responded (4.5%) and 8 people responded as “Other” (2%).



**DIVISION (Q3):**

389 of 399 respondents completed this question, with **45% (176) of respondents coming from Epidemiology and Community Health**. Health Policy and Management made up **27%** (105), and Biostatistics and Environmental Health Sciences both had about **9%** (36 and 37 respectively). Dean of Students/School-Wide Units made up **6%** (24), and Public Health Practice came in at about **3%** (11).



**SPH TENURE (Q5):**

**The majority of respondents have been at SPH for less than 5 years (61%).** The rest of the breakdown are as follows:

5-10 years: 14%

16-20 years: 6%

11-15 years: 7%

20+ years: 12%

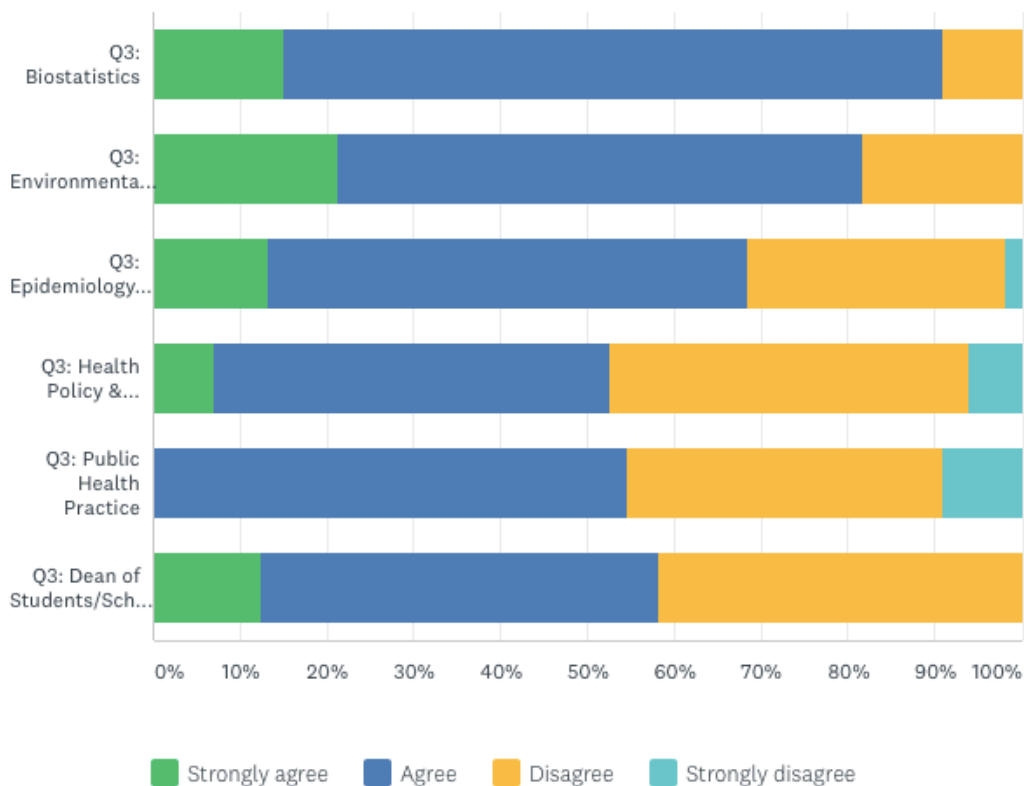
## CULTURE/CLIMATE INFORMATION

NOTE: Unless noted, there were no major differences regarding race/ethnicity (Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) vs. white), role/position (student/staff/faculty/alumni), or division.

1. **Sense of Inclusion (Q6):** 374 of 399 people responded to this question. **67% of respondents agreed (54.5%) or strongly agreed (12.3%)** with the statement “SPH is welcoming and inclusive for staff, faculty, students, and visitors who identify as BIPOC.” **33% of respondents disagreed (30%) or strongly disagreed with this statement (3%).** This breakdown is similar across all racial/ethnic groups; however, **for Asian Americans, this number was higher: 41% disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.**

That said, 103 people wrote comments. About half of the comments pointed out that they’re not sure (they think it’s welcoming but not sure because a) they’re not BIPOC or b) haven’t been here long enough to know for sure), while the other half pointed out the lack of diversity and inclusion, citing examples of microaggressions and racial disparities across all levels of the school.

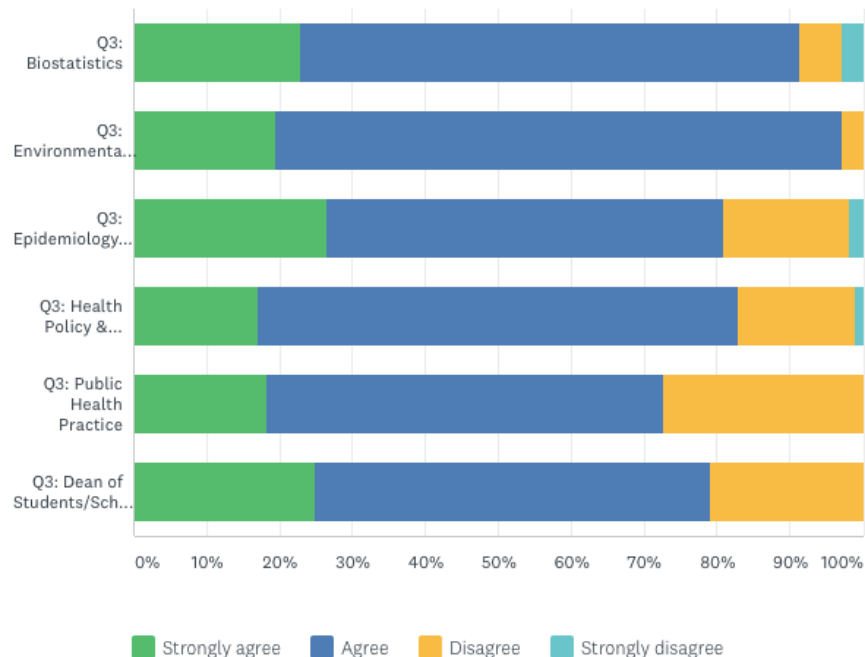
Here’s the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that the **overwhelming majority of respondents from Biostatistics (Biostats) agreed/strongly agreed with this statement (91%), while Health Policy & Management (HPM) and Public Health Practice (PHP) tie for the least number of members who agreed/strongly agreed with this statement (53-54%).**

2. **Sense of Belonging (Q7):** 386 of 399 people responded to this question. **84% of respondents agreed (61%) or strongly agreed (23%)** with the statement “I feel like I belong at SPH.” 16% of respondents disagreed (15%) or strongly disagreed with this statement (1%). However, among those who **identify as BIPOC, 67% agreed (51%) or strongly agreed (16%), while 33% disagreed (30%) and strongly disagreed (3%).** So **twice as many BIPOC disagreed with this statement than their white peers.**

Here's the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that the **overwhelming majority of respondents from Biostats and Environment Health Sciences (EHS) agreed/strongly agreed with this statement (91%, 97%), while PHP had the least number of members who agreed/strongly agreed with this statement (73%) – which is more comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents.**

The following comments are representative of the key themes that came from 28 comments:

- *In a majority white school and field of study I don't understand how I am meant to feel like I belong when everywhere I look it is mostly people who don't look like me or come from the same background.*
- *To be honest, it's just...really white. Especially the student population. It's just a lot of primarily white women who sing the praises of diversity but don't demonstrate that with their actions or boundaries*
- *I am a white woman. Public Health is dominated by white women, as is the SPH. I will say that as a woman (and even as a queer woman), I have seen far less sexism & homophobia at the SPH than I have seen or heard about at other branches of the University of Minnesota (e.g., neuroscience, computer science, physics, biology, and pre-med/medical education). However, from what I have seen & from what friends, classmates, and coworkers have told me, **the inclusivity of white women/white queers does not necessarily extend to intersectional BIPOC identities. I have heard from friends & classmates that feeling unwelcome can also extend to international students (especially BIPOC international students), first generation students, and students of lower social economic status.***

3. **Being Heard (Q8):** 386 of 399 people responded to this question. **67% of respondents agreed (54%) or strongly agreed (13%)** with the statement, "I can voice a contrary opinion without fear of negative consequences." **33% said they disagreed (28%) or strongly disagreed (5%). While 71% of white respondents feel like they can voice a contrary opinion** without retaliation of some sort, **only 55% BIPOC respondents agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.**

The following comments were indicative of the key themes from 44 comments:

- *I can voice my opinion and have no fear of consequences because I'm white, but I know this is NOT the case for my BIPOC peers.*
- *It is known that if you voice contrary positions, there could be retribution and there is a risk that you will be eliminated from discussions, your position will be marginalized, or your budget will be cut.*
- *This has not changed since I started here: **If you speak up (too much) or against a popular idea, you are considered "problematic."***

- *I think the culture is highly political. I ALWAYS think twice before voicing a contrary opinion, in particular around faculty and SPH leadership.*
- *I may voice them - but what's the use? No action is taken.*

4. **Opinion is Valued (Q9):** 383 of 399 people responded to this question. **76% of respondents agreed (63%) or strongly agreed (13%)** with the statement, "When I speak up, my opinion is valued." **Of this group, 86% were white, while 68% were BIPOC.** 24% said they disagreed (21%) or strongly disagreed (3%). Of this group, **21% were white respondents and 32% were BIPOC respondents.**

The comments below are indicative of what was shared among the 6 comments received for this question:

- *People are willing to listen, but **change is rare.***
- ***BIPOC students' ideas are often dismissed.** If a white person says something, it is given consideration immediately. When a BIPOC says the same thing even before a white person, it is immediately disregarded.*

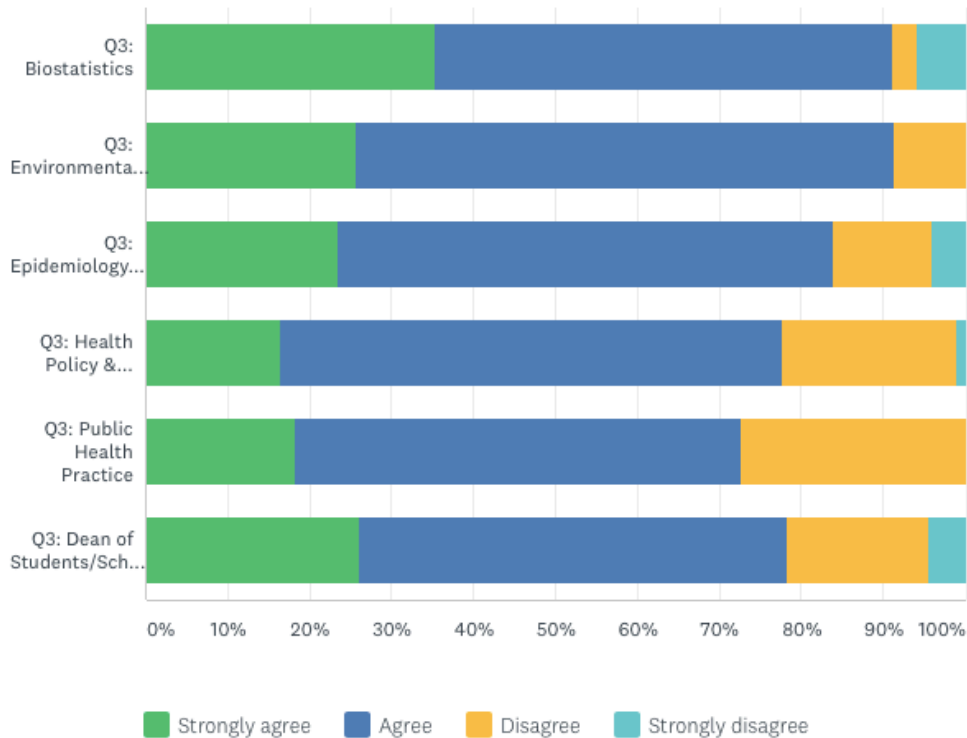
The breakdown by division reveals that there is some variation; however, **across all divisions, between 70-80% agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.**

5. **Sense of Support (Q10):** 389 of 399 people responded to this question. **83% of respondents agreed (60%) or strongly agreed (23%)** with the statement, "I feel that the people with whom I interact in the SPH support me and "have my back." 17% said they disagreed (14%) or strongly disagreed (3%). **Among the people who disagreed, only 14% of white respondents disagreed with this statement, while 25% of BIPOC respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.**

The following comments are representative of the 47 comments shared:

- *Depends on the context and depends on the person*
- *Both agree and disagree with this statement. I can name a handful of people who I definitely feel "have my back"*
- *My faculty advisor and a few mentors may "have my back" but **there are several highly problematic faculty and staff in SPH.** By problematic I mean **people that make you feel that you don't belong there, that are never accessible to you, and make your life harder***

Here's the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that the **overwhelming majority of respondents from Biostats and EHS feel the most supported at around 91%, while those in PHP feel the least supported (73%).**

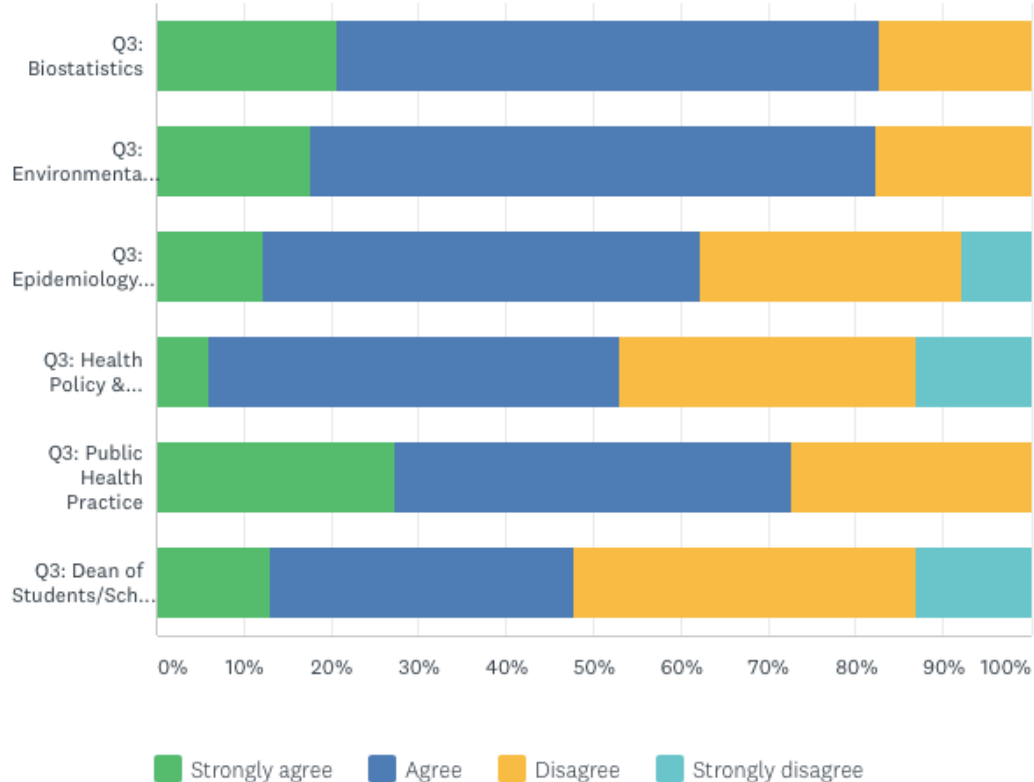
## IMPORTANCE OF DEI (DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION)

1. **DEI a Priority in Decision-Making (Q11):** 369 of 399 people responded to this question. **53% of respondents agreed (46%) or strongly agreed (8%)** with the statement, “SPH makes decisions that reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion,” **leaving 47% who either disagreed (39%) or strongly disagreed (8%).** These statistics mirror the breakdown around BIPOC respondents, while white respondents had a slightly higher percentage: 63% agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.

The comments below are representative of the 15 comments shared:

- *Have not seen any strong commitment to DEI prior to George Floyd. There seems to be some movement now but **time will tell if the recent DEI declarations will materialize into action.***
- *Frankly, **there's been a lot of glamorized talk but no teeth to enact any of their said principals/values.***
- ***If the SPH was committed to that, then why is this school predominately full of white people?***
- *SPH announces agendas and makes statements that reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion but has been **slow to invest in infrastructure, staff, and a system that supports diversity.** Additionally, **SPH is not transparent and inclusive about including all stakeholders in decisions** (ex. extensively including students and community members on school-wide decisions, not just surveys of opinion). In general, members and leadership in SPH agree that DEI is important, but they have not had a cohesive, inclusive, and creative response to upholding these values.*

Here's the breakdown by division:

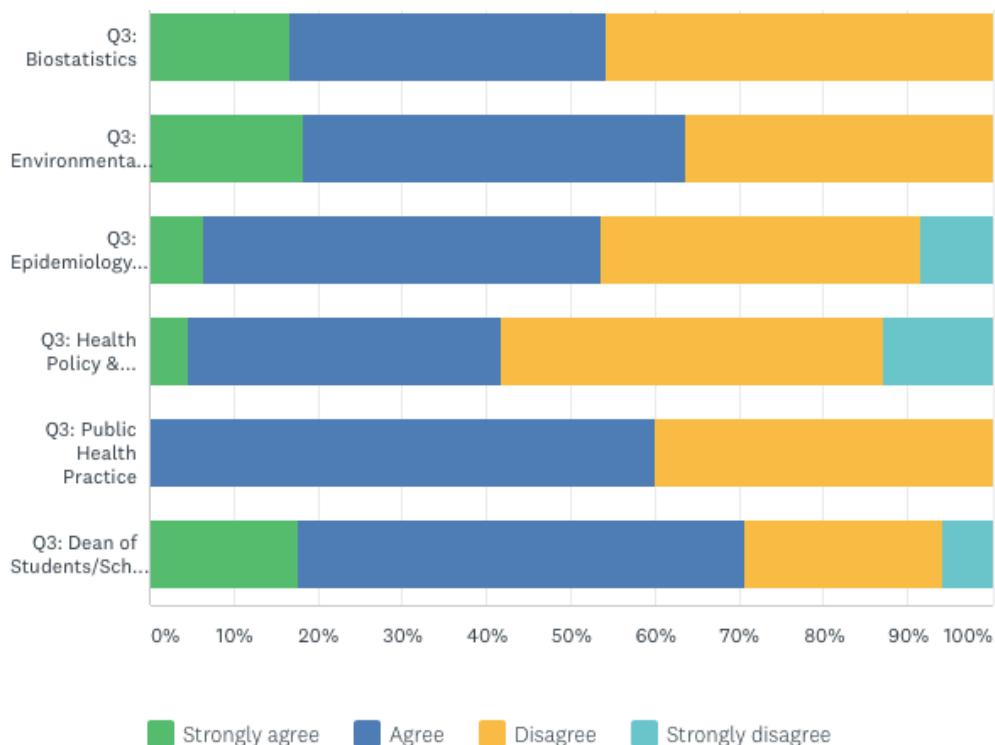


The chart above reveals that the **overwhelming majority of respondents from Biostats and EHS agreed/strongly agreed with this statement (83%), while those in Dean of Student/School-Wide Units (DS/SWU) mostly disagreed/strongly disagreed (52%).**

2. **DEI a Priority in Admissions (Q12):** 305 of 399 people responded to this question. **53% of respondents agreed (45%) or strongly agreed (8%)** with the statement, “SPH prioritizes members from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities in graduate program admissions,” while 47% disagreed (39%) or strongly disagreed (8%). While the majority of white respondents agreed/strongly agreed (55%) with this statement, **57% of BIPOC respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.** Of the 117 comments, the overwhelming majority was “I don’t know”; however, the following themes emerged:

- *This is only very recent but hoping it keeps ramping up*
- *I don’t think they should get priority*
- *I think there is definitely a priority in recruiting international POC into SPH but not so much American POC. I also do not think there is a priority in recruiting marginalized minority communities such as Black and/or Latinx/Hispanic students as well as Indigenous people. The SPH is also predominantly white and not just by a few percentage points.*

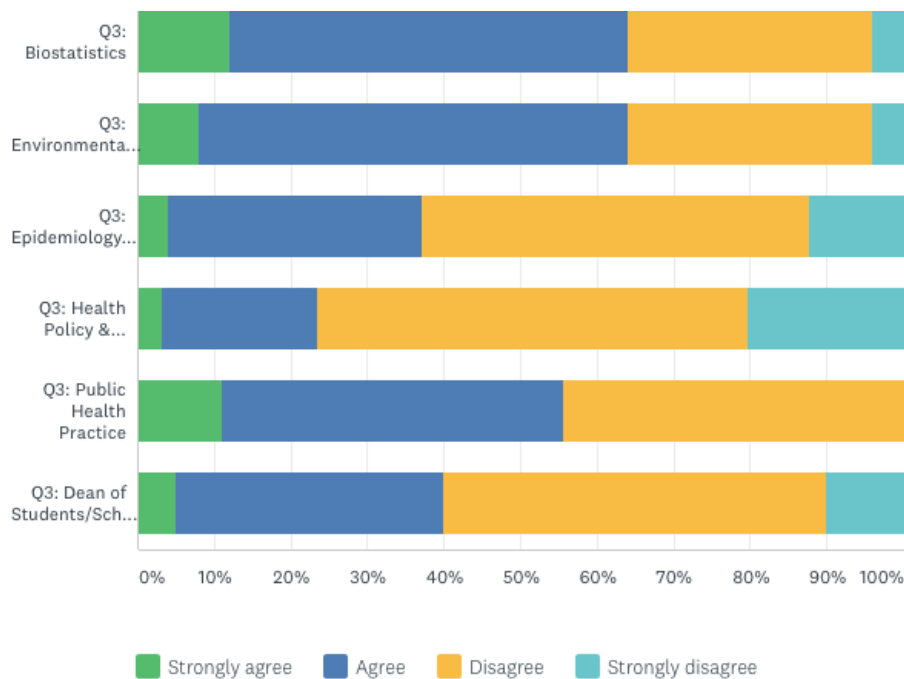
Here’s the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that the **overwhelming majority of respondents from DS/SWU agreed/strongly agreed with this statement (71%), while those in HPM mostly disagreed/strongly disagreed (58%).**

3. **DEI a Priority in Recruiting and Hiring (Q13):** 322 of 399 people responded to this question. **38% of respondents agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (5%)** with the statement, “SPH prioritizes members from BIPOC communities in recruiting and hiring,” while **62% disagreed (49%) or strongly disagreed (13%).** While this mirrors the statistical breakdown among white respondents, **72% of BIPOC respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.**

Here's the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that **64% of respondents from Biostats and EHS strongly agreed/agreed with this statement, while 76% in HPM mostly disagreed/strongly disagreed (which is comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents).**

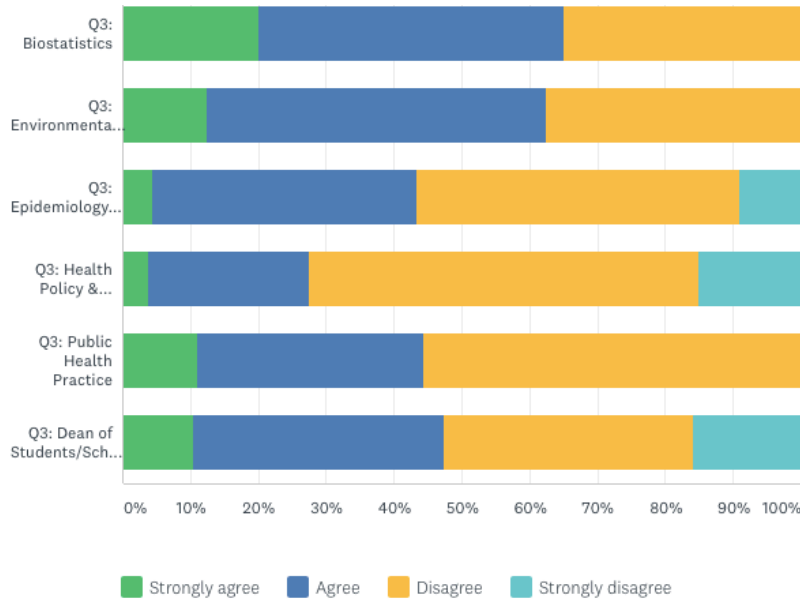
The comments below are representative of the 102 comments shared:

- *If SPH did, our staff and faculty would be far more diverse.*
- *In recent recruitment, I feel SPH is cognizant of bringing in diverse candidates and has made this a priority. However, **bringing candidates in and success in hiring are two different stories, and the latter needs to be improved.***
- ***Many recruitment and hiring processes are completed internally or by word-of-mouth, which we know to be inherently biased against communities of color***
- ***Oftentimes, a BIPOC potential hire is passed over in favor of a non-BIPOC candidate who has a connection with the hiring team.***
- ***In our first search for a division head, there seemed to be a resistance to someone who didn't have leadership experience in every area. But given that women and people of color do not get as many leadership opportunities, and have a harder time navigating the system until they can have those opportunities, it felt like a system was created that was biased towards white men.***
- ***When students have to take the initiative to create clubs like Black SPH Students and invite the only 5 Black faculty at the school that should be a major signal to UMN that there is a severe lack of diversity because safe spaces have to be created partially because there are so few of us.***
- ***Hiring practices vary depending on the unit and supervisor. I know of an example where twice the hiring supervisor chose the equally qualified white person over BIPOC. Even when HR suggests hiring the BIPOC.***
- ***Our hiring team chose to disregard the barriers that keep people from getting an interview. As a person who grew up poor, I know that there are so many gates that we don't even know we are running into. I am white, so I know there are so many more gates for BIPOC.***
- ***Why should any particular group be 'prioritized', the focus should be on everyone - 'any individual who is smart, hardworking, ambitious and has a desire to make something better in the world, regardless of race, creed, culture, etc.***



4. **DEI a Priority in Promotions/Advancement (Q14):** 289 of 399 people responded to this question. **43% of respondents agreed (36%) or strongly agreed (7%)** with the statement, “SPH prioritizes members from BIPOC communities in promotions and advancement opportunities,” **while 57% disagreed (48%) or strongly disagreed (9%)**. While this mirrors the statistical breakdown among white respondents, **72% of BIPOC respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.**

Here’s the breakdown by division:



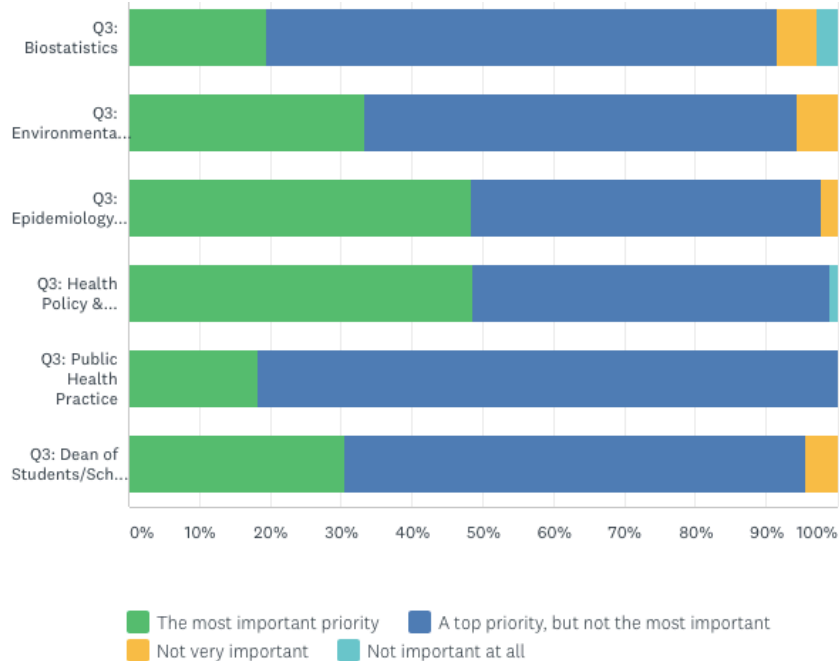
The chart above reveals that the majority of respondents from Biostats and EHS strongly agreed/agreed with this statement (over 60%), while 72% in HPM mostly disagreed/strongly disagreed (which is comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents).

The comments below are representative of the 15 comments shared:

- *I have not seen more than five BIPOC faculty at SPH since my entire time here. It is disappointing to see that the **few BIPOC faculty** we do have in the school are often imposed to spearhead the diversity and inclusion efforts; this can be **exhausting and lead to burnout.***
- *There tends to be a framework of **tokenism** used when it comes to promotions and advancement opportunities. For instance, while Dr. Hardeman's work is absolutely outstanding and necessary, I feel the **SPH tokenizes her work** to portray that they are prioritizing BIPOC communities when they're really focusing on one BIPOC's success.*
- *Maybe they do for **tokenization purposes***

5. **Personal Priority (Q15):** 392 of 399 people responded to this question. **97% of respondents identified DEI as the most important (42%) or a top priority (55%)** for them personally. Only 3% said it was not very important (2%) or not important at all (1%). There was little statistical difference between white respondents vs. BIPOC respondents for this question.

Although there is little statistical difference, here’s the breakdown by division:



The following comments (out of 47) were shared:

- *I think that if we're all working in a school of public health, which is an inherently equity-driven topic, then it needs to be the top priority.*
- *How can it not be when I live in a country that repeatedly tells me, in and outside of academia, that not only do I not belong in the spaces I do occupy but that any spaces I do occupy is because of my race and not my hard work and intelligence?*

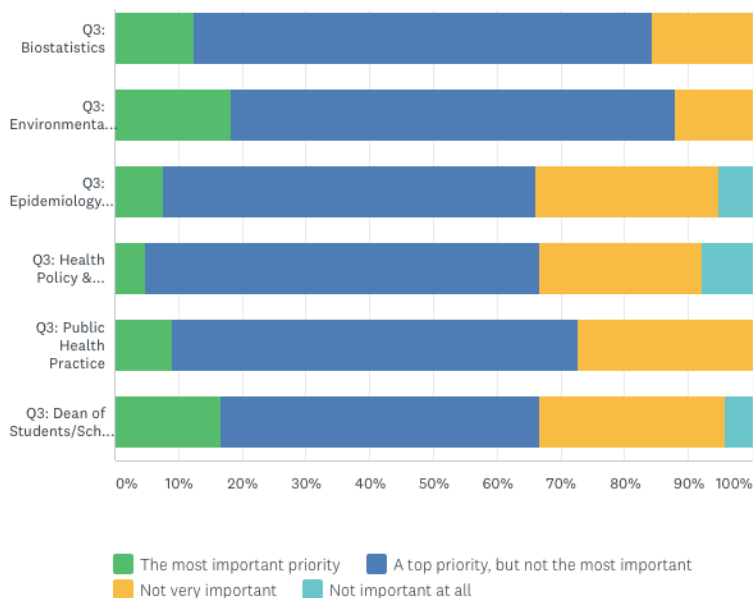
6. **SPH Priority** (what it *should* be) (Q16): 389 of 399 people responded to this question. When asked, “How much of a priority do you think diversity, equity, and inclusion *should* be to the SPH leadership?” **99.5% responded that it should be the most important (51.5%) or a top priority (48%) for the school**, leaving .5% to say that it should not be very important. There was little statistical difference between white respondents vs. BIPOC respondents or across divisions for this question.

The following comments (out of 48) were shared:

- **Systemic change should be the top priority** because the current culture of racism and discrimination is traumatizing and driving out talented students.
- **DEI should be elevated to the very highest priority and be injected into literally every conversation, until it collapses under its many, many contradictions**
- *To improve the health of the population, we must address racial/ethnic health inequities. To address racial/ethnic health inequities, we must take action so that our "public health workforce" reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population, including the most powerful people in the field which leaders across public health sectors and includes people in the "Ivory Tower." To address health inequities in this country, we must make the Ivory Tower less white. These are the reasons DEI should be the most important priority to leadership right now.*
- **It's the essence of Public Health!**
- **SPH cannot serve public health without prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

7. **SPH Priority** (what it *is*) (Q16): 382 of 399 people responded to this question. When asked, “How much of a priority do you think diversity, equity, and inclusion *is* to SPH leadership?” **70% responded that it seems to be the most important (9%) or a top priority (61%) for the school**, while **30% believe that it seems to be not very important (25%) or not important at all (5%)**. For the most part, the breakdown between white respondents and BIPOC respondents was similar, with **35% of BIPOC respondents believing that it is not very important or not important at all to the school.**

Here's the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that **respondents from Biostats and EHS strongly agreed/agreed with this statement (over 80%), while 35% in EpiCH, HPM, and DS/SWU mostly disagreed/strongly disagreed (which is comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents).**

The following comments (out of 62) were representative of what was shared:

- *It's a "reactive" priority. Lip service to DEI is a top priority. It appears to be more important in name than in practice.*
- **Administrators (who are almost all white) give lip service to diversity and inclusion but they are not willing to commit to (and actively resist) the systemic, institutional, and cultural changes marginalized students demand, such as mandatory faculty training on racism and ableism, required courses and curriculum addressing racism in every program, and universal design built into course structures.**
- *The DEI needs to be more robust and not just task faculty/staff/students with online DEI trainings.*
- *Talking about making change, and actually making change are two different things. I hear leadership say it is a top priority, but I don't see leadership taking action as if it is a top priority.*
- *I think leadership wants a more inclusive environment, but does not know how to create it.*
- **It seems to be in keeping with the surface: promo materials, seminars, special topics. But the act of putting the DEI money where their mouth is and supporting existing non-white, non-cis faculty, staff, students is where I see a gap**
- *I think it's only important because they're getting pressured by staff and students. It wouldn't be a priority without this pressure.*
- *In their words (and perhaps their intentions), I think DEI is an important priority to them. However, to me, the reason there is not action is that there is a critical misunderstanding of their own whiteness/ advantage/ privilege; and not contending with that in an authentic and meaningful way prevents work from happening. A common understanding of structural racism and white supremacy and the outcomes we each receive because of where we operate in those systems is a foundational, first step to have sustainable, meaningful, and measurable change within institutions. The leadership needs this foundation to move forward*

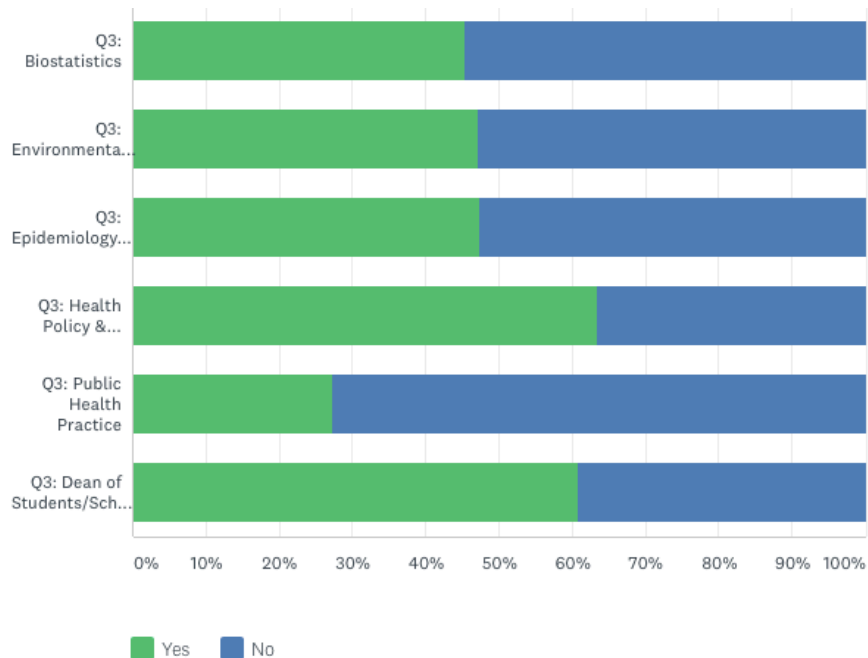
## AWARENESS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS AND/OR BIAS

1. **Experiencing/Witnessing Microaggressions (Q18):** 389 of 399 people responded to this question. **52% stated that they experienced and/or witnessed microaggressions at SPH**, while 48% say they have not. These statistics mirror the breakdown around white respondents; however, **BIPOC respondents had a slightly higher percentage: 60%** stated that they had experienced and/or witnessed microaggressions at SPH. Furthermore, **faculty** stated that they have experienced and/or witnessed microaggressions at a **higher percentage (69% - almost 20% higher) than staff, faculty, or alumni.**

The comments below are representative of the 77 comments shared:

- *I don't know if I would recognize one if I saw it.*
- *I cannot say I have personally witnessed this, but I have to say that I have not always been tuned in to what this would look like.*
- *The culture at SPH is rife with racism and microaggressions. It's part of the fabric of our day to day lives at SPH as BIPOC students.*
- *Especially with respect to the words and actions of male white faculty, microaggressions with respect to race and sex are baked in to our culture.*
- *All the time as a student from tenured faculty. Microaggressions against women and LGBTQ+ happened often in PhD classes. It was extremely uncomfortable. During some staff meetings, transphobic microaggressions have happened as well from certain faculty members.*
- *Yes, the way SPH does not aid international students with their particular issues related to funding and opportunities*
- *Everybody at SPH wants to talk about diversity and inclusion until it actually requires some work on their part to accommodate someone who is different from them.*
- *This is a place where the contributions of brilliant multilingual professors are reduced to whether or not white Midwesterners can understand their accents without having to extend a shred of effort or empathy.*
- *Professors have told the students not to bring in race to the topic we were discussing; professors used "Blacks" when referring to Black individuals/sample participants; professors asking students of color to speak on race/racism*

Here's the breakdown by division:



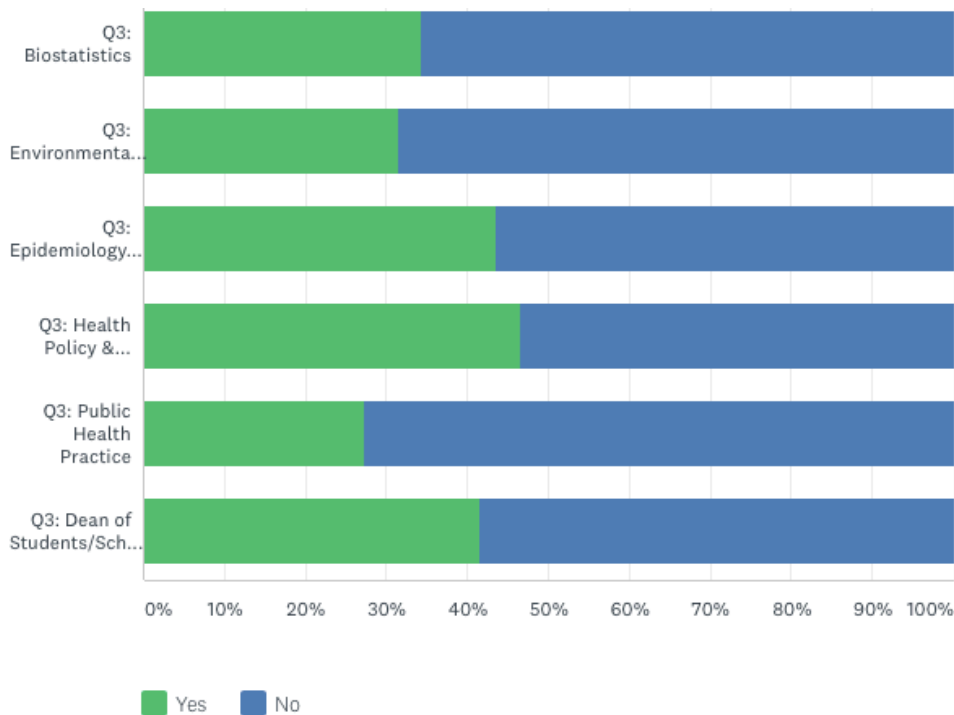
The chart above reveals that the **least number of people who witnessed or experienced a microaggression came from PHP (less than 30%), while over 60% of respondents from HPM and DS/SWU said they witnessed or experienced one at SPH (which is comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents).**

- Experiencing Discrimination/Bias (Q19):** 385 of 399 people responded to this question. **58% of respondents stated that they have not experienced or witnessed discrimination and/or bias** around any of their social identities, leaving **42% to say that they have**. These statistics mirror the breakdown around white respondents, while **BIPOC respondents had a slightly higher percentage: 49%** stated that they had experienced and/or witnessed discrimination and/or bias at SPH. Furthermore, **faculty** stated that they have experienced and/or witnessed discrimination/bias at a **much higher percentage (60% - at least 20% higher) than staff, students, or alumni**.

The comments below are representative of the 45 comments shared:

- *Some teachers just do not understand how to have conversations around equity and diversity and have majorly screwed them up during class.*
- *US students or UMN students in particular are more valued than international students*
- *I have observed bias in multiple professional interactions within SPH based on gender, nationality, race/ethnicity.*
- *Scrutiny of performance and undermining by white supervisors have resulted to people leaving the School.*
- *I have been in situations where blatantly racist comments have been made, and it is well known that men make more money than women and there is no pay equity at the school.*

Here's the breakdown by division:

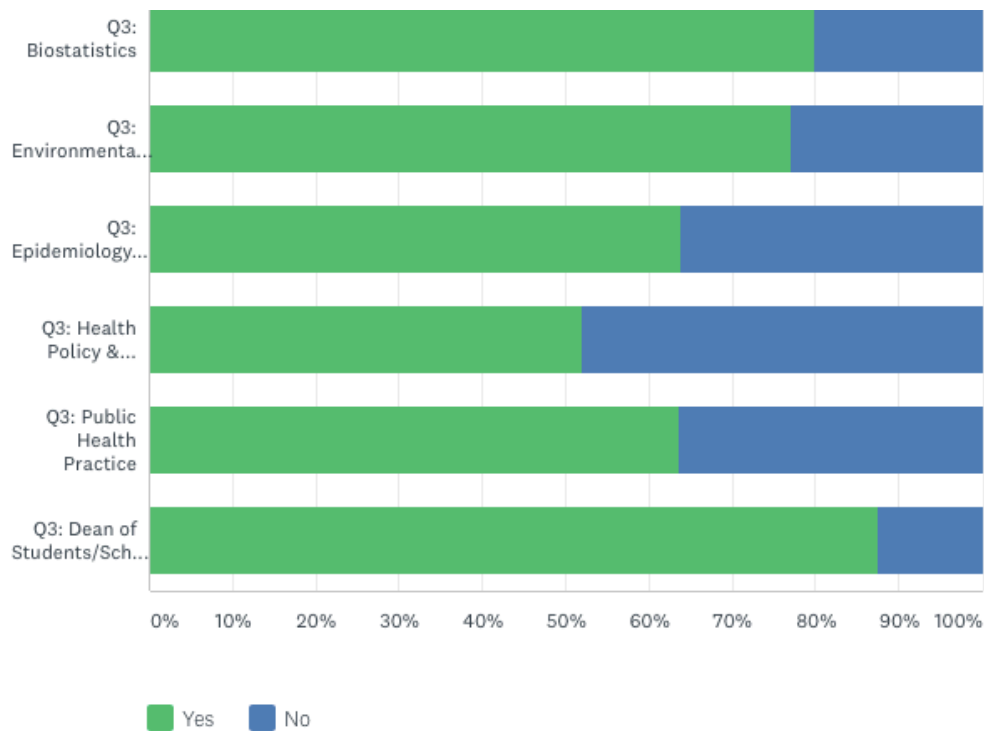


The chart above reveals that **the least number of people who witnessed or experienced discrimination and/or bias came from PHP (less than 30%), while over 40% of respondents from EpiCH, HPM, and DS/SWU said they witnessed or experienced one at SPH (which is comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents).**

- Social Identities Targeted (Q20):** 101 people submitted responses to this question, “If you are comfortable, please share the social identity or identities that were involved in the microaggression/micro-inequity, bullying, and/or discrimination/bias that you experienced or witnessed.” The majority of the responses stated that **most of the people who committed these harmful acts came from white faculty, staff, and students**. The instances were around **race, nationality, class, gender, and size (body shape)**.

4. **Knowing Where to File a Complaint (Q21):** 391 of 399 people responded to this question. **65% of respondents know where to go** to file a complaint related to discrimination, bias, or harassment. **35% do not know where to go.** About **75% of staff and faculty know where the go, whereas only 54% of students know.**

Here's the breakdown by division:



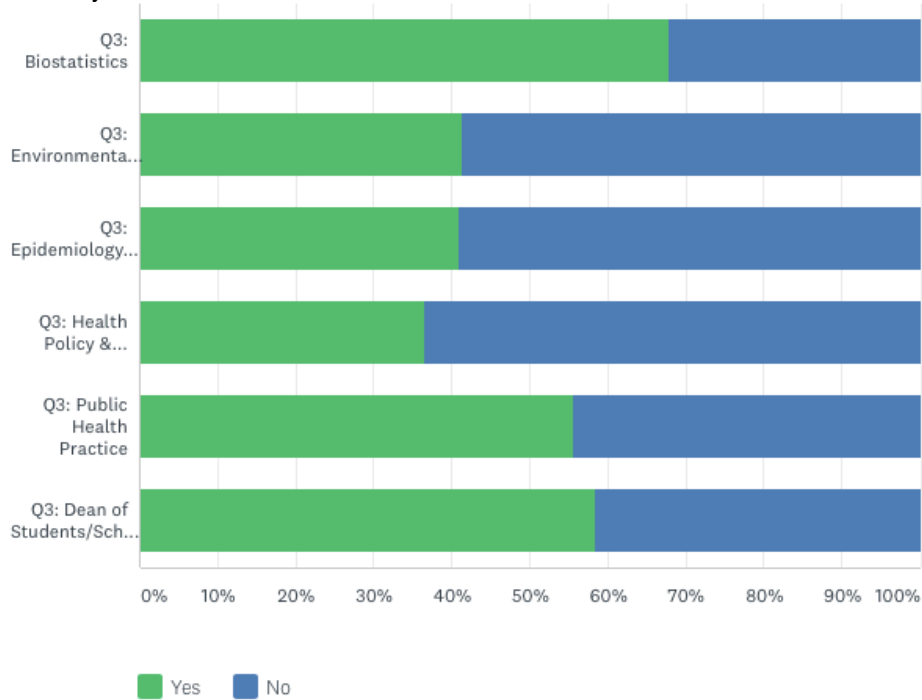
The chart above reveals that **nearly 90% of respondents from DS/SWU know where to go to file a complaint**; however, **slightly less than 50% of respondents from PHP do not.**

5. **Achieving Conflict Resolution (Q22):** 346 of 399 people answered this question: "Do you feel confident that the place(s) where you file to address your concerns would lead to a resolution?" 43% of respondents answered yes, while **57% are not confident that filing a complaint would lead to resolution.** While **66% of white respondents are confident that resolution would be achieved, 65% of BIPOC respondents are not.**

The comments below are representative of the 85 comments shared:

- *I'm saying yes and giving the benefit of the doubt. But I honestly do not know.*
- **SPH leadership has ignored issues in the past, or even blamed the victim. This is a pattern. Implicit bias has gotten in the way of true resolutions.**
- **Incidents have been widely documented with respect to abuse of women and BIPOC with no accountability or changes**
- **Things have been said and things have not changed.**
- **SPH administration likes to sweep things under the rug to avoid controversy**
- **Filing reports with the Bias Response and Referral Network or the EEOA does not provide meaningful support or redress while students are actually experiencing harassment or discrimination in a course. It's an after-the-fact solution, exposing us to retaliation.**
- *I must add the disclaimer that if it is a student filing against student or faculty filing against a student, I do feel it would be addressed. However, if it is student filing against faculty, I do not feel confident. I feel even less confident about the filing if it is a member with a larger division or School role, or if the faculty is tenured. As an example, numerous students in SPH have mentioned experiencing prejudice in the form of sexism, racism, and intolerance/disregard of diversity and equity. Multiple women have expressed their experiences about a certain faculty member over the course of many years.*
- **I don't see a pathway for tenured faculty to be held accountable for their own unlearning.**

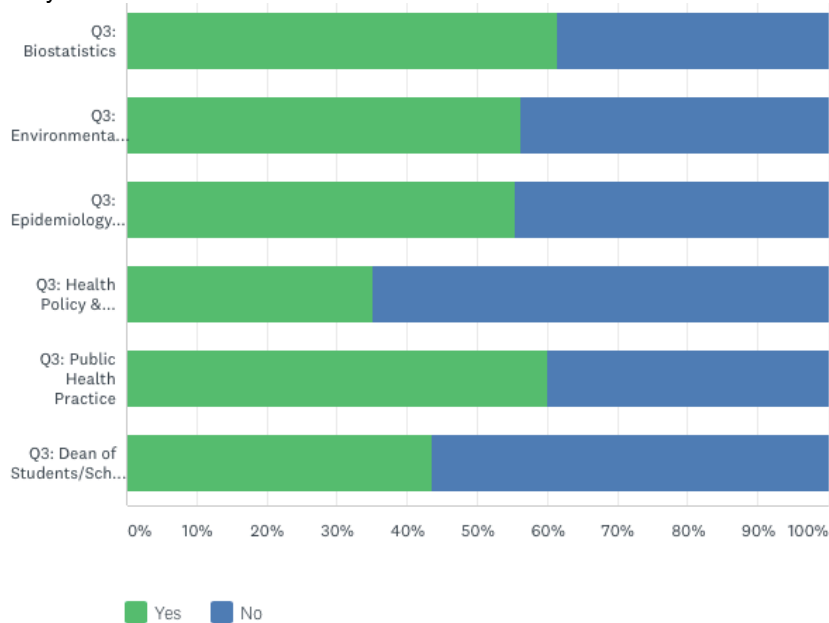
Here's the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that **nearly 70% of respondents from Biostats are confident that their complaints would be addressed, while only 36% from HPM are confident (which is comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents).**

- 6. **Education around Bias (Q23):** 356 of 399 people responded to this question. In response to the prompt, “SPH does a good job educating its staff and faculty about minimizing bias and creating an inclusive workplaces and classrooms,” 49% said yes, while **51% said no**. Of this group, **57% of students agreed with this statement, while only 42-43% of staff and faculty agreed**. There’s also a stark contrast between BIPOC and white respondents: **63% of BIPOC respondents answered no, while 52% of white respondents answered yes.**

Here's the breakdown by division:



The chart above reveals that **just slightly over 60% of respondents from Biostats answered yes to this statement, while 65% from HPM answered no (which is comparable to the responses from BIPOC respondents).**

The comments below are representative of the 97 comments shared:

- *Opportunities are there (e.g., through UMN CEI and OED), but there is minimal encouragement to take work time to take advantage of them. **We need the vocal support of leadership/managers for people to take paid time to prioritize this type of individual learning.***
- ***If they did, we wouldn't have so many faculty, staff, and students who are clueless about DEI matters.***
- *This is a bit more complex as one can provide trainings, but **faculty and staff have to show up. OED trainings are optional and, because of that, most faculty have not taken them.***
- *SPH overall has a good training but **sometimes the more people know, the better they are good at pretending** themselves as an unbiased individual.*
- ***Trainings such as the OED Equity and Diversity certificate should be an essential component for full-time staff and faculty,** even if it is requiring one course/year toward the certificate. Again, there is also a lack of accountability when issues arise.*
- *Yes, but in the words of Rachel Hardeman, **we cannot train our way out of this. We need policies that eliminate bias.** In my experience, **only the choir attends the training, not those who need to change.***
- *This has been **solely insufficient,** especially given that understanding health inequities and promoting social justice are so key to public health*
- *Absolutely not. **In all my courses we exclusively read articles authored by white men.***
- ***I don't see anything happening beyond one-off trainings. No accountability.***
- *As postdocs, **we did not receive any training** on minimizing bias at all. We were not informed about opportunities specifically tailored to help BIPOC succeed in research.*
- ***It educates staff but does not give staff space to practice facilitating these discussions.***
- ***Definitely not!** Let's just take into consideration what I believe is a recent development in SPH which is the acknowledgment of the land that the U lies on. 1 professor of my 6 classes has mentioned it, and she did a horrible job. She didn't know what to say. The rest of the professors went over the syllabus, skipped over that piece, and just kept going. **These professors do the bare minimum.** They at least put it in their syllabus, but not even a verbal mention. Did SPH train them? Or did they tell them go make sure you have it on the syllabus so they could cover their butts?*

7. **Suggested Ways to Increase Belonging (Q24):** 208 of 399 people responded to this question: "What does SPH need to do to become a school where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued?" **5 main themes emerged around a) centering and listening to the voices of members who identify as BIPOC and increasing b) diversity, c) inclusion, d) education, and e) transparency and accountability from leadership.** The following comments are representative of these 5 themes:

A. Centering and Listening to BIPOC members

- *Go beyond lip service to and **commit to the systemic, institutional, and cultural changes marginalized students have demanded***
- *EpiCH leadership and Dean Finnegan have consistently **failed to listen to BIPOC students, faculty, and staff.***
- ***Listening without defensiveness** is always the first thing on the list of things white people can do to create a more inclusive, welcoming environment for a diverse community of students*
- *It needs to truly **center BIPOC communities** and follow through with **putting them in positions of decision power without push-back on their decisions***
- *Start/continue **recognizing ideas and perspectives of those who aren't at the top** of the power pyramid and **believing those who have been victimized or slighted***
- *The leadership needs to use their power to **address the needs that BIPOC students repeatedly put forward***

B. Increase Diversity

- ***Recruiting more BIPOC students** should be a priority. UMN is a public school that is supposed to be serving the residents of the state. MN has some of the worst racial disparities in educational and health outcomes in the country! **If we at SPH believe we have a role to play in addressing those disparities, then we must be more serious about recruiting people from those marginalized groups** into those groups (including prioritizing scholarships for Minnesotans from those groups).*
- ***Hire faculty who prioritize equity/social justice in their research and teaching***



- **Hiring and promoting faculty and staff of color**, especially in upper administrative roles **that reflect the actual makeup of our diverse state and national communities**
- **Prioritize the retention of BIPOC students, faculty, and staff who are already here**

#### C. Increase Inclusion:

In the decision-making process:

- SPH needs to **include students and faculty in administrative decision making** to a greater extent. They also need to **be more transparent in how decisions are made**
- Need to prioritize engaging and seeking out student body feedback like this. Needs to continue making progress towards **including student voices in institution decisions.**
- Host community forums/listening sessions to **create opportunities for input and feedback regularly**
- **Create a survey/form linked in every SPH newsletter inviting anonymous comments/input**

In Curriculum:

- SPH should **require racial equity courses for their degrees.** A lot of the microaggressions I encountered was as a student from other students, but I would say that the microaggressions from my faculty advisor was probably the one that really made SPH feel like an unsafe place.
- **Require a public health equity/racism course such as Dr. Hardeman's class**
- **Required courses and curriculum addressing racism in every program**
- **Conduct equity audits of faculty syllabi and course materials:** Are all or the majority of the reading materials assigned from white people? Or white men, in particular? Are their slide presentations using gender neutral language?
- **Include the work done by BIPOC and non-Western scholars**
- **Ensure that universal design is built into course structures and delivery**

For International and BIPOC Students:

- **Increase spaces and opportunities for both international & BIPOC students to share their stories and how they relate to academic goals**
- Set up an **SPH-wide mentorship and coaching program** between students and faculty, faculty mentors from adjacent programs (medicine, sociology, etc) that exists outside of the traditional academic advising arena
- **Give priority funds to BIPOC students.**
- **Don't be dismissive when BIPOC students offer suggestions** and ideas in the classroom or when they are part of a research team. **Don't be condescending** with BIPOC students.
- **Be curious about BIPOC students** and who they are and where they come from

#### D. Increase Education/Trainings:

- **The people who think they don't need training are the ones that MOST need training.** The SPH leadership team, ALL of them, absolutely **MUST** commit to this in a real way. It still very much feels like they see themselves as not needing anti-racist training or accountability. **No one on the leadership team seems to be able to see or admit their own contributions to the problems**
- We need to get to a point where staff, students, faculty, and others **feel comfortable calling out individuals who commit microaggressions** and this can only come through **more training and opportunities to normalize these conversations** at the school
- There needs to be **courses offered to educate students about institutional and systemic oppression in the health care field that does not fall on the backs of only BIPOC instructors and professors**
- **Mandate ongoing training on racism, ableism, and other systems of oppression for all faculty/staff (tie to hiring/annual evaluations if necessary)**
- **Require training and coursework on anti-racism, the history of racism, and social and theoretical frameworks of race** for all students, faculty, and staff
- Be aware that **BIPOC folk don't need the same trainings as White folk.** Racial trainings can be emotional draining and traumatizing to BIPOC folk. These events impact others differently.
- **Mandate faculty to have continued education regarding issues affecting BIPOC students and communities**
- Continue with this more recent focus on education regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion, and **continue to hold forums/meetings where these issues can be illuminated and discussed**
  - Create new groups on campus, involving students and staff in more conversations about race, diversity, equity. Even in small groups, continuing the conversations about how important these issues are in our field of work.

#### E. Increase Accountability:

- Implement an **anonymous reporting system** to report racist or biased behavior from faculty, staff, or other students (must ensure anonymity to protect them from retaliation (e.g., loss of funding, limited opportunities))
  - Make it a simple, confidential process for reporting microaggressions or discrimination. Have clear steps in place for action.
- **Faculty needs to address what students say** in course evaluations; need to actually reply to students who bring up concerns or ideas for improvement
- Leadership and all of us need to be humble and **admit our mistakes and commit to learning and holding ourselves and others accountable for our/their behavior**
- **Implement a transparent plan of accountability for tenured faculty members.** Make a very clear statement that social justice is more important than grant funding or academic tradition.
- **Implement clear consequences for racist, heterosexist, ableist, etc. behavior.** There needs to be consequences for discrimination even for tenured faculty and it should be public. **Creating an inclusive culture requires reprimanding or some form of consequences to curtail certain types of behavior the same way that students are reprimanded when they do not adhere to a certain code of conduct.** If a faculty member is openly prejudice and receives only private warnings or reprimanding and not something public, the institution loses the trust of the students. The students begin to feel that the community does not have its back and that the community does not truly support equity and diversity. These types of experiences also spread fast, extremely so if the prejudice was public. **During one public display of prejudice by a faculty this year, it wasn't even 48 hours before entire cohorts of students heard about it and were discussing "Why the department does nothing about this behavior when this person has done these things multiple times over the course or years."** Frustration builds and even from a marketing perspective, it will damage the reputation of the program when these students are on social media telling their stories and advising applicants not to come there. That also hurts diversity, especially because a large factor of candidates who have experienced prejudice reach out to forums/social media to discuss programs where they may feel safe and accepted for who they are.

## DEI POTENTIAL BARRIERS

1. **Potential Barriers to DEI** (Q25): 199 of 399 people responded to this question: "What challenges, obstacles, or patterns of resistance, if any, would hinder SPH's ability to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable?" **The biggest barrier that people cited was denial and resistance from current leadership.** Other themes centered around a) **culture of silence and complicity**; b) **homogenous white culture of the school**; c) **hierarchical, academic structure**; and d) **unwillingness to invest in resources.** The following comments are representative of these 5 themes:

#### A. Denial/Resistance from Current Leadership:

- **Upper management: because they are all white and have perpetuated many microaggressions and been very resistant to changes demanded by marginalized students**
- **Current leadership is very white, very male, and very out of touch.**
- **Denial that there is a serious issue within the SPH; unwillingness to prioritize this; resistance to making a commitment to take specific actions** to address student and faculty/staff concerns.
- **Leadership team: they are "well meaning" but ill-equipped to lead this work. The fact that leadership cannot come out and truly name racism or bias as an issue within the SPH seems to be one of the biggest issues that hinders change.**
- **There are program directors who are in leadership roles but have no ability to appropriately talk to students about racism and social justice.** There needs to be a more appropriate method of identifying program leadership and ensuring that leaders have the humility to develop the skills necessary to appropriately lead.
- **All-white leadership and an extremely hierarchical decision-making structure** are a huge barrier to change.
- **The entrenched "we've always done this" attitude.**
- **Leadership does not listen to BIPOC.** They are unable to unwilling to understand, empathize, and accommodate the needs and experiences of BIPOC staff, students, and faculty. Instead, leadership continues to center themselves and their own voices.
- **Lack of self-awareness:** Many leaders think they are already educated enough about this topic, acting on unexamined bias and good intentions; however, the **most egregious offenders do not see that they are a problem**
- **Leadership is unable to relinquish power and get out of their own way**

- *Entrenched older leadership/faculty see diversification of faculty or DEI initiatives as a threat to their status or the status quo;*
- **Defensiveness of white faculty/staff** regarding DEI is a huge obstacle
- **Resistance to changes in policies or the implementation/enforcement of them**, particularly by long-standing faculty and staff would be problematic

#### B. Culture of Silence or Complicity

- **When people – especially white males – behave badly, there is no accountability**
- *There are no consequences. And the older, white ranks of faculty are untouchable.*
- **Requests for greater accountability often lead to “we are working on it”— they have been working on it for years, with very little to show for it.** *Given that many leaders in the division are researchers who evaluate or design public health interventions, and who nominally have an understanding of racism, it is especially galling to hear endless amounts of pearl-clutching with **very little improvement in outcomes.** They are also very defensive even for simple questions (e.g., in a meeting intending to hear student voices). Questions were met with unnecessary aggression, condescension, or incomprehension.*
- **Not being willing to reflect/build self-awareness/admit personal biases, etc. Not being open to criticism/constructive feedback.** *Not being willing/able to engage in effective conflict resolution and **not holding people accountable.***

#### C. Homogenous White Culture of the School

- *All of the white people! And the white savior complex. **It would require a lot of well-educated white people to learn how to step back, sit down, and let BIPOC people take the lead for a change.***
- *SPH is an institution rooted in white supremacy, racism, and anti-Blackness. It is this normalcy in its culture that makes becoming more equitable seem so challenging. **SPH would have to reckon with the fact that those who benefit the most from the current structure, who are typically white, would have to let go of a lot of those benefits** that come with the privilege of being at an institution that was created to serve them and no one else. SPH would have to think more collectively and **break free from the historically hierarchical system it was built on.***
- **Lack of diversity in positions of power**
- **Hiring people we know already** will keep us stuck in a white-dominated culture while we wring our hands about not having diverse enough faculty and staff. **We are too insular, not willing to take risks.**
- **Don't keep paying lip service to diversity and then hire middle aged white men and women as leaders.** *Honestly, this isn't walking the talk at all.*
- **Tokenism** – SPH seems to only be comfortable with less than a handful of BIPOC members at each level of the school
- **Faculty expect and want BIPOC students to be exactly like white students**, just with different color skin. *Faculty have to learn that BIPOC students bring different cultural values, skillsets, and often have resource-related constraints that they bring to the classroom.*
- *In medicine we always say the biggest predictor of future behavior is past behavior. **We need to diversify the top admin floors across sectors, SPH included going forward.***

#### D. Hierarchy/Tenure Structure

- *Tenure/long-standing employment of white professors and staff; tenured, stubborn, and willfully ignorant faculty*
- *Tenured positions and power dynamics between students and faculty. **There does not seem to be a formal process to report and resolve incidents like a workplace HR. The system is not designed to protect students who experience discrimination** which I've heard stories about.*
- *The power differential inherent in the University structure is the single biggest obstacle I see in creating change. **Faculty are set apart from the rest of the school in a way that makes them untouchable, immune from being held accountable for many of their actions.** In the current structure, we are not all considered equal (faculty, staff, students, etc.).*

#### E. Unwillingness to Invest in Resources

- *A **lack of fiscal and human resource** to making significant needed change.*
- **Not making space and funds available for BIPOC people to lead these efforts.**
- *Time—learning and reflecting and applying takes time—**SPH needs to allocate effort for these things, state them as expectations, model participation** and initiate and facilitate discussions.*
- *To see real change, I think **we need policy changes** (e.g. that support funding new BIPOC faculty for longer to help them establish their research programs, relieve BIPOC faculty of some teaching responsibility if they're mentoring additional BIPOC students, as many do, etc.), and I can see there being resistance to that. **Those kinds of changes also cost money**, which is another challenge.*

- There needs to be **support for faculty and staff to participate in trainings**; however, this support seems missing.

## GENERAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

90 of 399 people responded to the prompt, "Feel free to share any other information related to your experience around diversity, equity, and inclusion at the SPH." The following comments are representative of the key themes that emerged:

### STRENGTHS/PRAISE

- There are **pockets of AMAZING leaders and champions and great DEI efforts but it needs to be something everyone in SPH is committed to - not just the work of a few.**
- **I have had an amazing time at UMN.** My experience here has been so wonderful that I always feel lucky and appreciative. **But I know others have not,** and that is why I have made the comments I've made [thus far in the survey].
- I think that SPH has really worked hard to focus on DEI in the last two years and **I appreciate this focusing of effort on such important issues.**
- SPH, I feel, is one of the most inclusive and welcoming departments at the university. **I feel very comfortable speaking up and being heard with no judgement.**
- **I do feel as though the SPH, administration, staff, and faculty are committed to DEI.** This area was the focus of my education and experience here, which is why I chose to attend the UMN-SPH. **I had a very positive experience here overall as a non-traditional student with marginalized identities.** 10/10 would recommend.
- I've been impressed with the **level of awareness and responsiveness of both EPHAP and PHAP programs.** The leadership shown by faculty and staff there is a positive sign that things are moving in the right direction. I've been pleasantly surprised by the work of MHA program to invite consultants into faculty meetings to lead conversations on DEI related issues in the classroom and among employees.
- **I have been happy to see an increase in conversations, presentations and groups and positions on campus to work for stronger inclusion.** Especially the continuing of the conversations because the problem isn't just going away, it is something we continually need to work on together in the university and in our careers in the future.
- **I am proud of our leadership for stepping up to the plate** to make sure that there are fundamental changes in this area in the SPH. It is long overdue at our school and in our nation.

### CONCERNS/CRITIQUES

- **I hate this culture. It is deeply dehumanizing to me,** and I'm so wearied from trying. **I don't believe change is possible with the current leadership.**
- This reckoning is long overdue. **We need to move swiftly from declarations of fidelity to DEI issues to actual action.** Time to "walk the talk." This will require a shifting of resources in support of these commitments.
- The division leadership and faculty at large treat **anti-racist work** as secondary. It is not. **It must be a focus and incorporated into every aspect of their roles.** They act as if there is racism at large, in the air, that sometimes impacts the divisions — not something they actively benefit from and perpetuate. BIPOC students are not asking for much — just that leadership do their job.
- Compared to my other graduate education experiences (i.e. Masters program), the **SPH seems very hierarchical. Students are not valued and are not treated with respect.** I believe this is, in part, an issue in academia generally. But compared to my past educational experiences, **the environment here has been jarring.** I have been **shocked at how students (especially BIPOC students) are treated. Students have very little power to address unfair treatment, concerns, or stress.** In addition, except in rare circumstances, I have been shocked at how little awareness, discussion or analysis occurs in courses about issues of diversity, equity, social determinants of health, etc. As a result, **I have felt isolated, undervalued and somewhat unwelcome (and I am a white student!). I can only imagine how BIPOC students feel in this environment.**
- SPH says it's important, but that historically hasn't been backed up with tangible resources and leadership. **I think there's been a false assumption that because we're in public health we all automatically care about this and know about it and how to do it.** Also, I'm disappointed that this wasn't covered more comprehensively proactively in my MPH coursework.
- A lot has surfaced in our SPH community and the rest of our society on these issues of institutional racism and sexism. I am feeling quite discouraged. I now see our SPH Divisions going on their own to try to improve. **I see a lack of a strong united front for the SPH as a whole. It seems fragmented.** I find it hard to concentrate on my work in this environment and I am a white male! I can't even imagine what it would be like to be a BIPOC individual.
- Honest, I feel like these issues are at the forefront because it's a trend everywhere after George Floyd not because it's a genuine priority of the university. I still participate because I hope to be wrong, but **it feels like BIPOC have brought this up and been ignored and suddenly white people woke up and now working on diversity, equity and inclusion is a thing.**

- **Students and some faculty have raised these issues for years without attention.** There is no reason to believe that leadership now understands how to lead and advance racial equity. **Unless leaders are willing to give up power and partner with those impacted by unfairness and injustice, nothing will change.**
- **I have witnessed fatphobia and weight bias and discrimination in classes from faculty.** Please consider including weight status and body size as part of the inclusion and equity practices in the SPH.
- **I think it is good that people are talking about it, but I have concerns that the tough decisions will not be made because it impacts those in power**
- **The paternalistic mindset of 'helping' or 'fixing' the community permeates the SPH and creates an "othering" effect** that translates into relationships among faculty, staff and students. It also appears SPH doesn't see itself as part of the surrounding community. If health equity is framed from a deficit model, then wouldn't that reinforce an implicit bias toward staff, faculty and students of color?
- **I've been frankly shocked at the lack of leadership at SPH, when compared to other leading SPH across the country.** Minnesota is a top-five school but the traditions here are not positioning the school for future success. In fact, there are indications that the school is losing ground nationally and without some serious changes in leadership at the school level, I can only see these challenges getting worse. I've got the impression that employees at SPH keep to themselves and work hard on their own success. The hypocrisy of public messages about "community and partnership" stand in stark relief against an SPH backdrop characterized by insularity, personal gain, individual achievement and blind ambition.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- **All SPH faculty, staff and students need to hear the experiences of BIPOC students during their graduate school time here at the SPH.**
- **I think developing a climate of mutual respect will be important to open communication** as we are all at different levels of understanding and experience addressing DEI issues
- **I see OED, ISSS, and CEI as leaders in these areas already, and places from which SPH can continue to learn and grow.** Humphrey has also been a recent example of demonstrating responsive commitment to renewed energy for dismantling racism.
- **DEI/antiracism is a continuing process to change our culture and climate. It requires constant attention, planning and accountability until it becomes an institutional value.**
- **I would like guidance on how to bake this "experience" into my course content.** I'd like to be more included in efforts so that it shows in my teaching
- **One thing I think would be very helpful is a real focus on how to re envision hiring in such a way that improves our outreach to attract diverse candidates and at the same time, challenges our own internal biases in the interviewing process** and shift a mindset shaped by a historical lens that privileges a certain type of candidate.
- **The answers to these questions would be different if I was answering for my division only versus for the school.** I wish it could have captured these differences
- **There is a desire for change within the school, but many express the feeling that it is difficult to make change.** The only way to make change is to DO it. **Leadership needs to stop looking for the "best way" to make change and start making actual change.**
- **I just want things to be better.** I've mentioned throughout this survey that I am a privileged individual based on my race, legal status, and SES. But during my time here, I have comforted friends as they literally cried with frustration with barriers to their well-being. I see that change is happening. This survey is proof of it! But it is heartbreakingly slow. **I want my time here to be the time where real, sustainable, institutional change began at the SPH**
- **I feel that the SPH is doing good with diversity, equity and inclusion.** However, I think a lot of faculty and students still do not have a pretty good understanding with International students. **They need to understand that international students can have different opinions, views, maybe take longer time to learn, process, and understand these concepts.** However, people are not very understanding and anticipate the same level of expectations and knowledge from international students leading to pretty stressful situation and put bias on them. I believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion is not only about BIPOC, but also understanding immigrants, non-citizens, and international students, and **people should be more generous, sympathetic, and create supportive, safe, and helpful environment for international students to learn about diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

# SURVEY EVALUATION

## AREAS OF STRENGTH

There are a lot of things that SPH is doing well based on the survey results. The majority of SPH members feel welcomed, included, and feel a sense of belonging. Many of them have had and are having positive experiences at the School.

Granted, 81% of survey respondents identified as white, so the data is skewed towards the overwhelming white majority. But when comparing responses between white and BIPOC respondents, the majority of people from both these groups communicated these areas of strength at SPH:

1. **Strong Sense of Inclusion (Q6): The majority of respondents (between 59-67%)** agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that SPH is welcoming and inclusive of people who identify as BIPOC.
2. **Strong Sense of Belonging (Q7): The majority of respondents (between 67-84%)** feel like they belong at SPH.
3. **Strong Sense of Opinion Being Valued (Q9): The majority of respondents (between 68-86%)** feel like their opinion is valued when they share it.
4. **Strong Sense of Support (Q10): The majority of respondents (between 75-86%)** feel like there are people at SPH who "have their back."
5. **DEI as a Personal Priority (Q15): There is major consensus around this item, with 97% of respondents** identifying DEI as the most important or a top priority for them personally.
6. **DEI as an SPH Priority (what it *should be*) (Q16): There is major consensus around this item, with 99.5% of respondents** stating that DEI *should be* the most important or a top priority for SPH.
7. **DEI as an SPH Priority (what it *is*) (Q17):** While 99.5% of respondents believe that DEI should be the most important or a top priority for the school, **65-75% of respondents believe that it actually *is* a priority for SPH based on the *lip service* provided (vs. actual action taken).**
8. **Knowing Where to File a Complaint (Q21): The majority of respondents (54%-75%) know where to go to file a complaint** related to discrimination, bias, or harassment, with the large majority of staff and faculty knowing (75%). However, students (54%) were less knowledgeable about this.

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

**NOTE: Items with an asterisk signal mixed results (a mix of strengths and growth areas)**

1. **\*Sense of Being Heard (for white people) (Q8):** The overwhelming majority of white respondents (71%) feel like they can voice a contrary opinion without fear of retaliation; however, **only 55% of BIPOC respondents feel that way.**
2. **\*DEI a Priority in Decision-Making (Q11):** There were mixed results with this question, as **53% of respondents agreed** that SPH makes decisions that reflect a commitment to DEI, **while 47% of respondents disagreed.**
3. **DEI a Priority in Admissions (Q12): An average of 47% of respondents do not believe that SPH prioritizes members from BIPOC communities** in graduate program admissions. **The majority of BIPOC respondents concur (57%).**
4. **DEI a Priority in Recruiting and Hiring (Q13): The majority of respondents (67%) do not believe that SPH prioritizes members from BIPOC communities** in recruiting and hiring. **The overwhelming majority of BIPOC respondents concur (72%).**
5. **DEI a Priority in Promotions/Advancement (Q14): The majority of respondents (57%) do not believe that SPH prioritizes members from BIPOC communities** in promotions or advancement opportunities. **The overwhelming majority of BIPOC respondents concur (72%).**
6. **Witnessing/Experiencing Microaggressions/Discrimination/Bias (Q18-19): 42% and 60% of respondents stated that they have witnessed and/or experienced** a microaggression (60%) or bias/discrimination (42%). **Among faculty, this number increases to 69% (Microaggressions) and 60% (Bias/Discrimination).** The large percentage range and difference between faculty (who consistently had 20% pts higher) and the other cohorts suggest an uneven understanding of what microaggressions, discrimination, and bias actually are and what they look like. For example, **sentiments shared such as "I don't know if I would recognize one if I saw it" or "I'm not really aware of these type of things" indicate a lack of understanding or knowledge about these things,** which may account for the wide range in percentages.
7. **\*Achieving Conflict Resolution (Q22): The majority of respondents (57-65%) are not confident** that their concerns would be addressed if they filed a complaint. **While 66% of white respondents are confident that their concerns would be addressed, 65% of BIPOC respondents feel the complete opposite.**

8. **\*Education around Bias: A slight majority of respondents (51%) believe that SPH does *not* do a good job of educating its staff and faculty about minimizing bias and creating inclusive classrooms and workplace. While 52% of white respondents feel that SPH does a good job, 63% of BIPOC respondents disagree.** It seems that there are plenty of opportunities for training and education (the OED Certification program was cited many times); however, staff and faculty don't seem to attend these training opportunities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

(based on Survey, Focus Group, and Interview Findings)

### IMPROVING SPH'S CULTURE & CLIMATE

There is an overwhelming consensus among respondents on prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion personally (97%) and institutionally (99.5%). **Nearly 100% of respondents believe that DEI should be a top or the most important priority for the school and are personally committed to ushering in this work.** This bodes well for SPH, as nearly everyone who took the survey supports this type of work at the School.

That said, many survey respondents, interviewees, and focus group participants expressed their doubts and concerns about leadership actually taking action on the findings and recommendations from this assessment based on past behavior. They expressed sentiments such as, "I'm hopeful but also doubtful that something will come from all this" or "I really hope that that they will listen to us this time and utilize what we're saying and actually do something about it." Given this, **SPH leadership is poised to repair and restore trust among staff, students, faculty, and alumni by creating meaningful changes that can be both *seen* and *felt* (and not just heard) if the School implements these recommendations below.**

Findings from the survey, interviews, and focus groups revealed **five (5) main areas of improvement:**

- a) listen to and **prioritize the needs of BIPOC communities**
- b) **increase diversity**
- c) cultivate a more **inclusive environment**
- d) create systems of **accountability**
- e) **incentivize DEI training/education**

1. **Listen to and Prioritize the Needs of BIPOC Members:** Survey, focus group, and interview participants shared that the problems regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and access that have been raised at the School are not new. They have been around for many years, even decades. While those who have been around for 10+ years have seen some changes, the changes that have been made haven't been sufficient in equalizing the playing field between white members of the School and those from historically marginalized communities – especially in regards to race and ethnicity. Racial equity can only be accomplished when we create change based on the feedback from those who are most disproportionately harmed by current policies. And that group is currently composed of BIPOC members.

Therefore, a key recommendation is to a) **believe the stories and experiences** shared from the BIPOC community; b) **listen to their stories and concerns from a position of curiosity** (to understand the issue) **rather than defensiveness**; and c) **implement the proposed solutions they suggest.** Not doing so will continue to foster suspicion, doubt, and mistrust of leadership from students, staff, and faculty. As many participants shared, "We keep hitting a wall when it comes to DEI because they won't listen to us."

2. **Increase Diversity:** Participants shared that they believe diversity is a value at SPH because they hear it from all levels at the School; however, one wouldn't know that by looking around. As a School that many people described as "just a bunch of white men and women everywhere," the homogeneity of the school – from the people to the culture – was cited as a huge barrier to advancing DEI at SPH. **A concerted effort needs to be made to recruit, admit, hire, and promote BIPOC members (not to be conflated with international students or faculty) at all levels of the School, including the leadership level. *It isn't enough to say that SPH is committed to this; the outcomes must match their intent.***

There are many ways to tackle this issue; however, **best practices** reveal that both the pool of applicants and the selection committee need to be composed of greater than 50% BIPOC members – anything less than that significantly decreases the chances of BIPOC candidates being admitted or hired. Studies reveal that **when BIPOC members are in the minority** (re: candidate pool or selection committee), **there is virtually zero statistical chance that a BIPOC member will be selected given the pro-white, anti-black bias that we all hold.**

So recruiting, hiring, and performance evaluation practices and procedures need to be revised in such a way to offset the inherent anti-black, pro-white biases we all hold. Job descriptions and the criteria used to select candidates to admit/hire/promote need to reflect the School's commitment to DEI, signaling to candidates the importance of having expertise in these areas. **The more people who are admitted into SPH with knowledge and expertise around issues of systemic racism and oppression, the more built-in capacity the School will have around advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

Given the lack of diversity at SPH, it may be beneficial to approach the admission of students and the hiring of staff/faculty through "cluster hires" so that there is a cohort of support built into the process. Many BIPOC members lamented about being "the only one" (in their class, office, unit, division, program, etc.). To mitigate or lessen that feeling of tokenization, SPH can set

up the new students/hires for success by admitting/hiring a group of BIPOC members all at the same time to foster a “built-in” support system.

As participants shared, Public Health is about the community. **As the School of Public Health, it should reflect the communities that we study and serve.** Creating a more diverse learning and working community will more fully equip staff, students, and faculty to serve the diverse populations they work with, leading to the next generation of Public Health practitioners who are confident and nimble at navigating conversations about systemic oppression and the various ways it manifests in our lives, health, and relationships.

3. **Cultivate a More Inclusive Environment:** Increasing institutional diversity will help make SPH more inclusive. However, it takes more than numbers to achieve a culture of inclusion. As previously mentioned, **at least 50% of BIPOC respondents shared that they have witnessed and/or experienced microaggressions, bias, and/or discrimination at the School.** Survey comments, interviews, and focus group sessions all revealed how microaggressions in the classrooms, hallways, meetings, orientations, etc., create an additional burden on BIPOC members – on top of the regular stressors of life and work – as they have to process the verbal abuse they endured with little or no support from the School, which takes a toll on their mental and emotional health. And as indicated earlier, the culture of hierarchy and the lack of transparency in how decisions are made also hinder inclusion. As such, the key recommendations are suggested:

Create More Structures of Support for BIPOC Members:

- a) **Social Justice/DEI Education:** Microaggressions can be mitigated through education. BIPOC participants pressed for more education around systems of oppression and how social identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality, etc., impact life experiences and life chances for students, staff, and faculty. **This type of education is needed because many people think they are knowledgeable about these issues; however, their actions reveal otherwise.** Therefore, opportunities to be trained and educated on these matters should be enfolded into onboarding, degree program, and tenure requirements (and the like) so that every person who comes through SPH doors will be educated on these matters.
- b) **Create Safe Spaces:** While working to mitigate microaggressions, bias, and discrimination through education is a necessary step to creating a more inclusive culture, the reality is that these kinds of harm will happen. Both BIPOC members and international students (and it’s important to make that distinction because many international students do not identify themselves through the lens of U.S. racial hierarchy) stated that they have little to no spaces at the School where they can go to get comfort or reprieve from the racism they are experiencing at the School. International students communicated their need for structures of support outside of ISSS so that they feel more a part of SPH. BIPOC members (students, staff, faculty) shared the need for safe spaces where they can “just be” and not have to worry about performing for others or managing the fears or insecurities of their white counterparts (e.g., white fragility).
- c) **Diversify Curriculum:** Not only do BIPOC members not see themselves represented at the School, but they also don’t see themselves represented in the curriculum. Diversifying the curriculum to include the methods, methodologies, and research conducted by BIPOC scholars and practitioners would lead to creating a more inclusive learning environment that does not center white logic or white methods.
- d) **Expand Decision-Making Power:** Just because academia as an institution is hierarchical doesn’t mean that systems and processes can’t be changed to make it less so. Survey, interview, and focus group participants shared that the lack of transparency in how decisions are made hinders a sense of inclusion and belonging. There was a large consensus across racial lines around the need to include more BIPOC members at the decision-making table across all levels of the school. The white majority in leadership positions hold much of the power when it comes to how and what decisions are made. In order to make SPH more inclusive and equitable, BIPOC voices must be present at the decision-making table and the process in which decisions are made needs to be more transparent.

In addition, leadership could create more avenues where staff, students, and faculty can weigh in on key decisions through town halls/listening sessions and through surveys, inviting anonymous comments or input. This would make the process more transparent and inclusive.

Bottom line: **those who are most impacted by decisions made should have the majority say in what is decided. Therefore, students, staff, faculty, and those who identify as BIPOC should be integrated into the decision-making process.**

4. **Create Systems of Accountability:** While 66% of white survey respondents are confident that their issues would be addressed if reported, 65% of BIPOC survey respondents feel the complete opposite. Given the prevalence of microaggressions and instances of bias and discrimination that target and harm marginalized communities, a key recommendation is to **create several systems of accountability to ensure that BIPOC members feel supported, valued, and heard when issues arise.**

BIPOC members in survey comments, interviews, and focus group sessions shared that there is no one to go to who will actually address their complaints when they experience issues of racism. Many people shared that they have reached out to “higher ups,” as well as HR; however, nothing happens and nothing changes. There is no recourse, no follow-up, and no one to go to with power who will actually address these issues. Furthermore, because of the current hierarchy, those who hold power and influence (e.g., tenured faculty, senior level admin, etc.) get away with bad behavior with little or no repercussions.



Essentially, “the powerful (because of their title, reputation, or the resources they bring in) are protected and can do no harm.” This last sentiment was shared by white staff, students, and faculty members, as well.

There are several ways to address this. SPH could implement a simple, easy to use, and anonymous system of reporting microaggressions and instances of bias and discrimination. While this will help the School track the type and frequency of these instances (which can inform future professional development opportunities, etc.), there also needs to be a clear, transparent plan for reporting and holding people accountable for those cases that are not anonymous. **All members of SPH should know where to go to report an incident, what the reporting process looks like, and what the potential repercussions are for violating certain codes of conduct.** And this protocol must apply to everyone regardless of position and status to ensure equity. This is essential to fostering a learning and workplace environment where all people feel valued. As numerous participants expressed, **“Everyone deserves to work and learn at a place where if X happens, I can be confident that X will be addressed in a timely and fair manner.”** When equitable systems of accountability are implemented, this sentiment can be a reality for *all* SPH members (vs. just those who are white and hold positions of power).

5. **Incentivize DEI Education:** There was a strong consensus across racial lines and positions/roles (e.g., students, staff, faculty, etc.) that stipulated the need for ongoing education and training around racism, white supremacy, and other systems of oppression – along with a power analysis of how our social identities (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) create uneven experiences and dynamics of power within these systems. This kind of education is crucial not only for mitigating microaggressions, bias, and discrimination but also for creating inclusive classrooms and workspaces. Given how important it is to be skilled and well-versed in these topics, students, staff, faculty, and alumni all suggested that this type of training be required and be framed as on-going professional development, since this type of skill (being able to hold conversations around and address instances of microaggressions, bias, etc.) is essential to doing one’s job well at the School (whether it’s teaching, advising, leading, managing, etc.). The wonderful thing about this suggestion is that the UMN has all kinds of training and educational opportunities already in place.

Although making certain things mandatory can be difficult to do in an academic setting, a key recommendation then is to **require or, at the very least, incentivize all SPH members to undergo the Equity and Diversity Certificate Program offered by the Office of Equity and Diversity**, or something comparable. SPH members can be incentivized in a variety of ways, including rolling it into performance/tenure reviews, providing time to complete these trainings during work hours, etc.

It’s important to point out that people from BIPOC communities are typically more knowledgeable and well-versed in these topics and more skilled at holding these kinds of conversations than white people. Therefore, it is recommended that some type of process is set where people can “opt out” of certain trainings if they can demonstrate a particular level of expertise and comfort around holding these kinds of conversations and navigating issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.

As a reminder, nearly 100% of survey, interview, and focus group participants stated that increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion was not only a top priority personally but that it should be a top priority for SPH. The people who make up SPH are hungry and eager to make this shift, to see the School transform and live up to its mission and values around DEI. Implementing the recommendations suggested here is a crucial step for leadership to take, as it signals that leadership is not only listening but also valuing the feedback from its members – which is a vital message to be sending at this stage of the process.

This report was prepared by Strategic Diversity Initiatives in October 2020.

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