

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Equity in STEM can be driven by scientific societies

ROCKVILLE, MD – Efforts to increase the representation of underrepresented minorities (URMs) in academia over the past several years have fallen short. URMs (defined as differing in race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, mental or physical ability, age, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation) face higher attrition, less support, and higher workloads than non-URMs. Additionally, anatomical and medical research has an unfortunate history of excluding URMs from receiving honors, teaching with Euro-centric imagery, and using unethically-obtained bodies of URMs for dissection and instruction.

In a new paper published in *The Anatomical Record*, authors Dr. Melissa A. Carroll (The George Washington University, School of Medicine and Health Sciences), Shawn Boynes (American Association for Anatomy), Dr. Loydie A. Jerome-Majewska (McGill University), and Dr. Kimberly S. Topp (University of California San Francisco), discuss how scientific societies can be drivers of change in academia, focusing on the American Association for Anatomy as a case study.

According to the authors, “professional societies have a unique opportunity and responsibility to intentionally engage and effectively serve members who bring diverse life experiences and perspectives to benefit all members and science.”

The authors put forth the following recommendations for scientific societies to increase the equity and diversity of their membership:

- 1. Vigilance: Investigate past and current inequities and revise practices.** Societies should determine whether current practices are unintentionally exclusionary. This includes democratizing committee nominations practices, adjusting criteria for Fellows nominations and awards, and honoring dedication to diversity efforts (such as through AAA’s newly added Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award).
- 2. Equity: Recruit, develop, and empower URM leadership throughout the organization.** Societies should develop transparent processes for recruiting and selecting leaders, create additional leadership opportunities, and provide leadership training.
- 3. Investment: Commit to substantial, sustained investment in URMs.** This includes creating URM retention programs, such as the AAA Anatomy Scholars Program; funding opportunities such as the AAA Innovations Program; and helping AAA members attend meetings of URM scientists.



In the paper, the authors report on the progress that AAA has made regarding each of these recommendations and discuss how the implementation of these strategies has resulted in an increase in the diversity of AAA's membership.

The authors state that they hope that the “recommendations of *vigilance*, *equity*, and *investment* will be used as guideposts for the AAA and other scientific societies, accelerating transformational change in the face of science in academia.”

“In this moment, it is no longer sufficient for organizations to claim to be accepting of diversity. Now is the time for societies to take active steps to help counteract the inequities that exist in society, and especially in STEM fields. This important paper outlines how scientific societies can increase the diversity and equity of their membership through critical self-evaluation, recruitment and empowerment, and investment in retention of URM scholars. I sincerely hope that other professional organizations follow the excellent recommendations and example set by AAA,” says Dr. Heather Smith, Editor-in-Chief of *The Anatomical Record*.

“The Imperative for Scientific Societies to Change the Face of Academia: Recommendations for Immediate Action” will be available open access for three months.

About AAA: The American Association for Anatomy is an international membership organization of biomedical researchers and educators specializing in the structural foundation of health and disease. AAA connects gross anatomists, neuroscientists, developmental biologists, physical anthropologists, cell biologists, physical therapists, and others to advance the anatomical sciences through research, education, and professional development. To join, visit anatomy.org.

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