Picture A Scientist Panel Discussion Update

You asked….we answer!

Thanks to those of you who attended the Office of the Learning Environment’s “Picture a Scientist” Panel Discussion, either in person, or virtually. We promised to do our best to answer submitted questions and we now respond to concerns that we didn’t have time to address that night (almost 30 of them!).

Below we provide updates on the topics you asked about and...your concerns and suggestions have also been passed along to Dean Shekhar for review.

CHILDCARE

Concern was expressed that F30 and F31 grants allow for childcare supplements but Pitt policy prohibited students from utilizing these funds.

OLE is happy to report as of FY2022 the policy has changed so that students can now use these funds. From our perspective, this policy change is a direct result of students speaking up and bringing the issue to the administration’s attention.

Another concern was what to do when there is a child-related emergency and trainees have other obligations.

As of September 1, 2021, Pitt is offering a variety of benefits to selected full-time employees through Care.com. Go to https://www.hr.pitt.edu/news/new-benefits-offering-through-carecom to assess resources and eligibility. OLE understands that not all trainee categories are covered by this new benefit and have passed along that concern to administration.

It seems like Pitt/UPMC is a big enough place for a 24 hr childcare facility, is that something we are looking at?

The childcare issue in general (including compensation) is being assessed at the University level, as opposed to solely at the level of UPSOM. Representatives of Dean Shekhar are involved in this process. Currently, Pitt is in the data gathering stage, looking to assess things like numbers who need childcare, proposed costs, etc.

What’s being done about nursing stations for new mothers?

• **Pitt has another list of several available rooms:** [https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/diverse-populations/lactation-rooms](https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/diverse-populations/lactation-rooms).

• **Departments are supposed to and will accommodate requests to set up individual lactation rooms** for nursing mothers. If you haven’t asked, we encourage you to do so!

**MENTOR/TRAINEE RELATIONSHIPS**

How can we assure faculty are being trained on harassment issues? How are upstander (bystander intervention) trainings being disseminated? Why don’t we implement mandatory annual trainings related to things like implicit bias? How are we addressing microaggressions? How will UPSOM be held accountable for implementing/not implementing changes?

These questions get to the heart of the OLE mission to ensure a safe, respectful, and equitable education experience for all students in the School of Medicine. OLE is actively working to help to change attitudes and cultures throughout UPSOM. Working with OEDI and other offices, **OLE has already implemented a series of initiatives.** Some examples are:

- Fall and spring trainings for incoming and senior PhD students that cover the topics of a) Title IX, b) implicit bias, c) understanding EDI, d) recognizing microaggressions and e) bystander intervention. We believe learning to recognize microaggression and how to respectfully speak up when it happens is key to changing the culture.
- Extending these OEDI training sessions to targeted groups of faculty such as those on training grants.
- Presentations on best practices at Departmental and Program mini-retreats and faculty meetings.
- Working with the University Center for Teaching and Learning, to implement required mentor training programs.
- Working with UPSOM Office of Faculty Affairs to implement an acknowledgement of the UPSOM Learning Environment statement as part of the faculty annual review process.

What are we doing to overcome faculty staying silent when faced with discrimination? How do you prevent career suicide when you report mistreatment/harassment?

To prevent retaliation by reported parties, incidents should be reported to the OLE (preferably using PAIR) or alternatively, the Pitt Concern Connection, PCC, (coi.pitt.edu/resources/pitt-concern-connection-report-concerns.) **OLE and PCC**
procedures for following up of these types of incidents are specifically designed to protect the identification of the reporting individual. In addition, both UPSOM and the University have strong non-retaliation policies.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

How can we reduce the cost of applications to graduate and medical school to increase diversity or our trainees?

Graduate application fees going forward will be waived for applicants who are eligible and request it. This includes students who provide evidence of financial hardship. Medical students must first apply to AAMC for a waiver and if denied, may directly apply to UPSOM for consideration.

How can UPSOM leadership work to increase diversity in areas where there are obvious inequalities in numbers related to gender, sexuality (i.e. LGBTQIA+), race, etc., as well as the additional pressures put upon these marginalized students and faculty that pose barriers to their success?

One of the best resources for information on Diversity issues and how they are being addressed is the website for the Office of Health Sciences Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (OHSDEI). Currently, an active recruitment initiative is underway to enhance our diversity profile. UPSOM recruiting committees receive implicit bias training. The OHSDEI website also lists other resources available for students and faculty to assist in their growth. Further, UPSOM is actively gathering and analyzing information regarding career outcomes for our graduate/med students as part of a larger Pitt initiative to determine where our students go, what happens next, and why.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Is there a program or theme in graduate school for “professional identity development?”

There is indeed! A two-part course (fall and spring) is available to all UPSOM graduate students that addresses professional development: class numbers MSMPHL3340 and MSMPHL3341. Registration is required.