



*The Graduate School  
Office of Diversity  
and Inclusion*

*FY 2023—24 Annual Report*

# *FY 2023–24 Annual Report*

*The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion*

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# Letter from the Deans

## Steadfast Commitment to DEI in a Changing Landscape

The Graduate School at Northwestern University (TGS) promotes academic excellence by providing leadership and support for our community of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. We are proud to train outstanding intellects, build a vibrant and diverse scholarly community, and watch our alumni transform the world.

We are stronger as an institution and as a society when we can learn from and consider a broad range of ideas and experiences. We recognize that fostering a diversity of perspectives is essential to stimulating an academic environment that advances the work of **over 100 graduate programs** across a broad range of disciplines and fields of study at Northwestern.

This mission does not come without challenges, including the 2023 Supreme Court ruling on race-conscious admissions. Today, an unrelenting commitment to **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** remains vitally important. The values of DEI continue to be a north star that compels us to protect the accessibility of higher education and the full measure of our academic environment. We aim to ensure students and scholars are empowered to thrive by tailoring our approach to meet their holistic needs.

Inside the pages of our 2023–24 annual report, you will find accomplishments that highlight our support in the recruitment and retention of underrepresented and marginalized graduate students and postdocs. This includes important demographics within the higher education environment, such as, but not limited to, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), first-generation, LGBTQ+, and women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

You will also learn more about our **Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI)**, which oversees the programming and initiatives at TGS that are designed and adapted to meet the dynamic needs and concerns of these and additional populations. During a recent period of leadership transitions, ODI has undergone restructuring and reinvigoration to continue to be impactful and keenly attuned and responsive to the needs of students and scholars. ODI also continues to collaborate with other TGS units and campus offices to ensure DEI considerations are integrated throughout our programming and partnerships.

At TGS, we endeavor to strengthen the opportunities for equitable and inclusive access to graduate education and postdoctoral training. We greatly admire the impactful achievements of our students and scholars, and we will continue to strive for our DEI values to be embedded throughout our programming and engagement initiatives to create a conducive learning environment for all at Northwestern.

Sincerely,



Handwritten signature of Kelly E. Mayo in black ink.

**Kelly E. Mayo, PhD**  
Dean of The Graduate School and  
Associate Provost for Graduate Education  
Walter and Jennie Bayne Professor of  
Molecular Biosciences



Handwritten signature of Sheehan D. Fisher in black ink.

**Sheehan D. Fisher, PhD**  
Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion  
Associate Professor of Psychiatry and  
Behavioral Sciences

# TGS Office of Diversity and Inclusion *Restructuring | Recruitment | Retention*





*TGS Office of Diversity and Inclusion*  
***Restructuring | Recruitment | Retention***





# Restructuring and Reinvigorating

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion



TGS is steadfastly and holistically committed to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. 2022–24 represented a time of leadership transitions for our team. In September 2022, **Damon L. Williams**, former Associate Dean of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), transitioned from Northwestern to become the Associate Vice President and Chief of Staff in the Office of Community Relations at the University of Kentucky. Damon established a legacy of innovative recruitment and retention programming at TGS that remain foundational within ODI. He continues to be an [outstanding leader within DEI](#) in higher education.



**Lauren-Ashley Buchanan, PhD**, Director of Student Life, stepped in as the Interim Director of ODI upon Damon's departure and successfully led and enhanced the team's ongoing initiatives and programming. We want to give special thanks to Lauren-Ashley for her tremendous efforts in leading ODI while continuing to support student life initiatives.



In addition, **Miriam Petty, PhD**, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, significantly contributed to TGS DEI efforts during the transition by initiating two major programs focused on equity-minded mentoring training for TGS faculty and DEI training for all TGS leaders and staff members.



In the meantime, **Kelly Mayo, PhD**, Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Provost for Graduate Education, along with the TGS leadership team, focused on ensuring that ODI was supported by senior leadership. The decision was made to expand the full-time Associate Dean staff position into a half-time Associate Dean appointment held by a Northwestern faculty member and a full-time staff Director position.



**Sheehan Fisher, PhD** was hired as the Associate Dean of ODI in June 2023. Dr. Fisher is an Associate Professor and perinatal clinical psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. He is a nationally and internationally recognized expert on perinatal mental health with a research specialization in understanding the unique contributions of birthing and non-birthing parents. Sheehan was recognized as one of *Crain's Chicago Business* 2022 Notable Black Leaders and Executives for his strong track record of leadership in DEI. As a former McNair scholar at Rutgers University, Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) participant, graduate student at the University of Iowa, and an intern and postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern University, Sheehan has first-hand academic experiences akin to many Northwestern underrepresented minority (URM) graduate students and postdoctoral scholars he serves.



# Restructuring and Reinvigorating

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion



**Brittany Young, PhD** was hired as the Director of ODI in August 2023. Brittany was the Associate Director of Multicultural Affairs and BIPOC Graduate Engagement in the Center of Intercultural Life at Tulane University. Prior to that she was the Senior Coordinator of Diversity Education in the Office of Equity and Inclusion at Loyola University New Orleans. Brittany completed her doctorate in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media at North Carolina State University. She brings a wealth of experience to supporting students of various backgrounds through culturally enriching programming, advising, collegiate instruction, and research.



**Rashaad Barnett** served as the Assistant Director of ODI and directed the **Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP)** and the majority of the office's retention programming until June 2024, when he transitioned to a position as the inaugural Associate Director of Culture and Inclusion for Northwestern Libraries. Rashaad was a member of ODI since 2019 and pivotal in the creation and optimization of various programs that serve the TGS community. Those initiatives and programming will be of benefit to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars for many years to come.



**Cindy Thompson** joined ODI in 2022 as a Program Coordinator and was hired into the ODI Assistant Director role in June 2024. She is vital to the success of ODI's recruitment efforts and has made significant contributions to various retention programming.



**Kehaolani "Lani" Voss** was hired as the ODI Program Coordinator in August 2024 and leads the majority of the office's retention efforts, including the **Peer Mentor Program**, ODI and cultural celebrations, and serves as the editor of ODI's **Inclusive Voice** monthly e-newsletter.

In addition, the FY24 ODI graduate student interns are instrumental in supporting the ODI staff on recruitment and retention programming:



**Kayla Boyden**  
English



**Daisy Donaji Matias**  
Performance Studies



**Jamie Guillen Magaña**  
Driskill Graduate Program in Life Sciences



**Spencer Nabors**  
Philosophy



**Tatiana Ortiz Serrano**  
Driskill Graduate Program in Life Sciences



**Erica Rosario**  
Interdisciplinary Biological Sciences Program (IBiS)

# Restructuring and Reinvigorating

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Finally, ODI is supported by a **TGS Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council** comprised of Northwestern and external faculty with expertise in DEI and representing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), social and behavioral sciences, and humanities disciplines. The advisory council offers sagacious input on various topics, including innovative approaches to recruitment of students in rural areas; challenges facing underrepresented, minoritized, and first-generation students and support needed in their first year; and international students' adjustment to the sociopolitical environment of the United States.



**Guillermo Antonio Ameer, PhD**

*Professor of Biomedical Engineering & Daniel Hale Williams Professor, McCormick School of Engineering; Professor of Surgery, Feinberg School of Medicine*



**Corey Barnes, PhD**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences*



**Crystal Clark, PhD**

*Adjunct Associate Professor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine*



**Karlene Cunningham, PhD**

*Assistant Professor, Director of Research, Vice-Chair of Diversity and Inclusion, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University*



**Toni Gutierrez, PhD**

*Assistant Director, Driskill Graduate Program in Life Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine*



**Joseph Hibdon, PhD**

*Associate Professor of Mathematics, Northeastern Illinois University*



**Susan Jackman, MA**

*Administrative Director, The Office of Doctoral Studies, Kellogg School of Management*



**Kelly Mayo, PhD**

*Dean & Associate Provost for Graduate Education, The Graduate School*



**Alicia McGeachy, PhD**

*Associate Scientist, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The Center for Scientific Studies in the Arts*



**Miriam Petty, PhD**

*Associate Dean for Academic Programs, The Graduate School; Associate Professor, Screen Cultures, School of Communication*



**Geoffrey T. Swanson, PhD**

*Vice Chair, Department of Pharmacology, Professor of Pharmacology, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences*



**Jessica Winegar, PhD**

*Professor & Chair of Anthropology and Middle East and North African Studies, Department of Anthropology, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences*



**Hilary Zimmerman, PhD**

*Director of Diversity Initiatives, Evaluation, & Assessment, Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion*



# SROP

SUMMER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM



Access our 2  
TGS Office of Diversity and Inclusion

North  
**Restructuring | Recruitment | Retention**

# Recruitment Initiatives

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion



ODI's recruitment initiatives aim to engage, attract, and matriculate prospective graduate students. The recruitment efforts of 2023–24 were very successful. Assistant Director Cindy Thompson spearheads recruitment trips, campus visits, and the **Introduction to Graduate Education at Northwestern (IGEN)** and **Navigating Northwestern** programs, and Director Brittany Young leads Northwestern's **Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP)**. These initiatives led to an increase in applications from underrepresented minorities.

### Recruitment Trips and Roadshows

Cindy organized recruitment trips to major conferences, including the **Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)**, **Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists (ABRCMS)**, the **University of Central Florida (UCF) Graduate School Expo**, the **Emerging Researchers National (ERN) conference**, and the **National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR)** to name a few.

She also organized two “roadshow” recruitment trips to visit major universities within a regional area. As a part of the roadshow, prospective students have the opportunity to enjoy a meal, recruitment presentation, and question and answer sessions about graduate school. The recruitment team travels with a student representative who can speak to their experience as a doctoral student or postdoc at Northwestern. Roadshows may also include special presentations and guest speakers. For the Atlanta roadshow, ODI visited **historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)** Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Clark Atlanta University. Cindy, Brittany Young, and **Spencer Nabors**, an ODI intern who is a Spelman College alumna, joined the roadshow. As part of the roadshow, Nabors, Young, and a Clark Atlanta professor guest joined to discuss their experiences as HBCU alumni transitioning into historically/predominately white institutions (PWIs) in their graduate studies.

For the Puerto Rico roadshow, Sheehan Fisher and Tatiana Ortiz Serrano, an ODI intern and University of Puerto Rico (UPR) alumna, visited various UPR campuses to present, including UPR Humacao, Ponce, Rio Piedras, and Mayaguez. In addition to learning about Northwestern graduate programs, prospective applicants were able to ask Sheehan and Tatiana about the experience and strategies to transitioning from Puerto Rico to Chicago, including adjusting to an English-speaking academic environment, a new cultural environment, and a disparate climate.





2024 SROP Participants

## Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP)

Northwestern's SROP is one of ODI's preeminent recruitment initiatives. SROP is a seven-week competitive research experience for rising junior and senior undergraduate students from colleges and universities nationwide. Brittany Young and Rashaad Barnett co-lead the application process and intensive preparation for the 2024 program, while Brittany directed the program throughout the summer. All fields of research at Northwestern are open to SROP participants including the social and behavioral sciences, humanities, physical sciences, chemical and biological sciences, technology, math, and engineering. Twenty-three applicants were accepted into the program, including students from partnerships with the **Mellon Mays program** at Northwestern and external partnerships with The City University of New York and Northeastern Illinois University. These partner institutions provided travel or research funds for five students to participate in the program.

Students were paired with faculty mentors who supported their completion of research projects that were ultimately presented at the **38<sup>th</sup> Annual SROP Research Forum**. In addition to intensive research, the participants engaged in ODI's graduate school professional development series, **Navigating Northwestern**, led by campus partners, including workshops on mentoring, research, and writing skills. A new interview etiquette session was introduced for rising seniors to prepare them for graduate school interviews. Participants also received coaching from our **Purple Table Talks** hosted by SROP group leaders, who are current Northwestern PhD students. These coaching sessions covered a wide range of topics, including budgeting, cultural awareness, mentorship, sponsorship, acclimating to life as a graduate student, and mental health. As part of their holistic experience at Northwestern, SROP participants also enjoyed our annual "**Summertime Chi**" event, where they had the opportunity to network with current Northwestern graduate students while experiencing the highlights of summertime in Chicago.

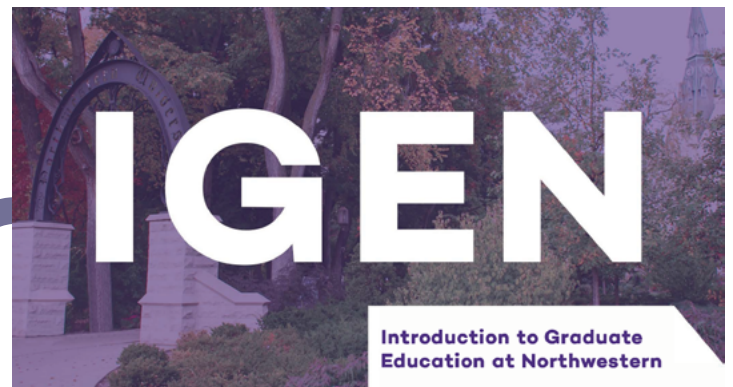
Faculty mentors have the opportunity to nominate stellar rising seniors for the **Early Admission Decision Program (EADP)**. EADP is an accelerated and early admission process that enables PhD programs to recruit highly qualified students who have excelled in a one-on-one research experience with a faculty mentor. We are proud to have 12 students nominated by their faculty mentor for EADP. These noteworthy students will be evaluated by specific academic programs' admissions committees to determine their eligibility for the early admission process.

# Recruitment Initiatives

The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion

“I went into SROP as someone who was excited by research but had no idea if I had what it takes to pursue it, and I left the program with the true aspirations to pursue a PhD in English. The program expanded my horizons of possibility.”

Kayla Dierks, 2024 SROP Participant



## Introduction to Graduate Education at Northwestern (IGEN)

**IGEN** is a program for underrepresented rising juniors and seniors interested in doctoral study to experience a snippet of graduate student life at Northwestern. IGEN is a two-day program that includes round-trip travel to Northwestern, two-night accommodations in downtown Chicago, and visits to Northwestern’s Chicago and Evanston campuses. IGEN is designed to provide participants with the opportunity to gain a feel for the institution and city in which they would live for the next five plus years and to engage directly with their program of interest by networking with faculty, staff, and current students. IGEN accepts a cohort of 30 students and helps them make fully informed choices of where they want to undertake their graduate education. All participants receive an application fee waiver to apply for a doctoral program in TGS. IGEN continues to be a successful pipeline program, either funneling students into SROP or supporting graduating seniors to have stronger applications for TGS doctoral programs.



# Recruitment Initiatives

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion



### Navigating Northwestern

**Navigating Northwestern** is a virtual graduate school information series for prospective students from underrepresented and minoritized populations and for students from minority-serving institutions. Participants are able to engage with Northwestern graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and program administrators to learn more about the expectations, resources, and opportunities of the many aspects of graduate education. ODI hosted 14 events in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) with an average of 10-35 attendees per event, depending on the topic.

### Campus Visits

ODI hosts campus visits for **Ronald E. McNair Scholars** and **TRIO McNair** undergraduate student groups who are interested in Northwestern doctoral programs. Campus visits consist of a 60-minute overview of TGS and Northwestern with time for Q&A, typically followed by a 60-minute walking campus tour. We host approximately 15 campus visits between May and August for groups of 10-20 students. The popularity of this program has grown, so we are only able to accommodate half of the campus visit requests we receive. ODI is working across TGS to increase our capacity to meet this demand.





11:30 AM - 1:30 PM  
 The Women's Center  
 2000 Sheridan Road  
 Evanston, IL 60208



Facilitated by  
**Hannah Simmons**  
 PhD candidate  
 in History

Northwestern | WOMEN'S CENTER  
 THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
 OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

6:00-8:00 PM  
 JOIN ODI FOR A FUN HAPPY HOUR  
 WITH FREE FOOD AND DRINKS!

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 OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

ABBOTT HALL



Faith Ringgold:  
 American People



**NUestra Gente**  
 Latinx Heritage  
 Month Celebration

Formal Dinner and Donation Drive  
 w/ keynote speaker **Leslé Honoré**

**Oct. 18th**  
**6:00-7:30**  
**Parkes Hall 112**

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Kelly Bencoia, MA



Daniela Maria Feijoo, MSED

Let's Talk  
**Diversity**  
 Dialogue Series

**Racial Equity Impact  
 Assessments (REIAs) &  
 Leadership Development**

Thursday, May 18  
 12:00 PM CDT  
 Zoom

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**ODI Social Justice Mini Grants  
 Social Changemakers Video Series**

ODI Social Justice Mini Grants support Northwestern graduate students in advancing ideas of social justice and belonging on campus. This video series highlights the remarkable work of prior awardees. Watch today's video @ link in bio!

We invite those who share our commitment to social justice and inclusivity to apply for a 2023 ODI Social Justice Mini Grant (applications due Monday, May 1st.)

**Today's Social Changemaker**



**SACNAS**  
 Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics  
 and Native Americans in Science (NU-SACNAS)

"STEM Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committees Training"

"The mini-grant was used to fund a DEI committee training open to all STEM departments/committees at Northwestern. The mini-grant allowed NU-SACNAS to provide a platform for professors and students to reflect, exchange and discuss their parallel experiences and to foster empathy and understanding. Additionally, it allowed DEI committees to have a framework as to how to execute their work. Finally, it inspired and forwarded the foundation for departmental DEI committees to provide community-building activities."

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THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

welcome

RECEPTION

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**ODI Peer Mentor  
 Kick Off**

Date: Tuesday, October 22nd  
 Time: 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM  
 Location: TGS Commons

Light refreshments provided.

TGS Office of Diversity and Inclusion  
**Restructuring | Recruitment | Retention**

**Friends, Food, & Fire**  
 in celebration of  
**Native American Heritage Month 2023**  
 hosted in partnership by  
 TGS Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI),  
 the Indigenous Graduate Student Collective (IGSC),  
 and the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research (CNAIR)

**Wednesday, November 8**  
**6:00-7:30 PM**  
**Center for Native American  
 and Indigenous Research  
 at 515 Clark Street**

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 OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

CENTER FOR  
 NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS RESEARCH



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 OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

**HBCU  
 HANGOUT**

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26  
 6:00-7:30 PM • PARKES 120

**Bouchet Speaker Series**

**Three-Minute Thesis  
 (3MT) Speaker Series**

Tuesday, April 16  
 12 PM CT via Zoom

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 OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



# Retention Initiatives

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion



ODI retention efforts are primarily geared toward graduate students and postdoctoral scholars but also include programming for faculty and staff who affect their academic experience. During his time with ODI, former Assistant Director **Rashaad Barnett** spearheaded the office's retention efforts to support graduate students' and postdocs' academic and personal thriving at Northwestern. The following programs are some of the highlights of this academic year.

### Let's Talk Diversity

**Let's Talk Diversity** is a series of strategic programming that offers workshops and dialogues for TGS-affiliated faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdocs led by guest speakers on topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. The 2024 series included a fireside chat with Associate Dean Sheehan Fisher and Director Brittany Young to introduce new leadership perspectives, and a discussion session on Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs) and Leadership Development.

### Diversity Peer Mentor Program

The **TGS Diversity Peer Mentor Program** is designed to enrich the first-year experience of underrepresented graduate students as they navigate graduate life at Northwestern. Advanced graduate students are paired with incoming graduate students to provide support, encouragement, and information as first-year students embark on a new academic journey. During the academic year, 29 mentors were paired with 44 mentees. The program consists of a welcome reception, monthly check-ins, mid-year social, and closing ceremony. This mentorship structure has facilitated meaningful connections and supported a successful transition year.

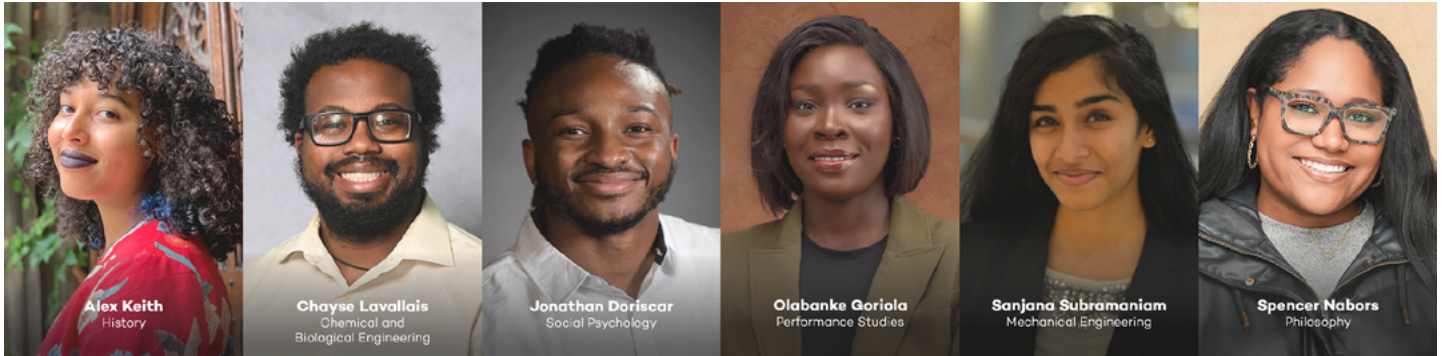
### Social Justice Mini-Grants

Individual graduate students and graduate student organizations may apply for the **ODI Social Justice Mini-Grants** of up to \$2,000. Mini-grants support Northwestern graduate students in facilitating, promoting, and advancing innovative ideas for social justice and belonging in the Northwestern community. During the academic year, we received competitive applications and provided 11 awards for projects across a variety of foci. These projects spanned from promoting equity in Chicago public schools, promoting gender diversity in STEM, and supporting Black queer organizers. Social justice mini-grants allow the impact of this work to reach far beyond Northwestern to directly impact communities.

# Retention Initiatives

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion

### 2024 Bouchet Inductees



## Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society

In 2005, Yale University and Howard University collaborated to establish the **Bouchet Graduate Honors Society** in recognition of Dr. Edward Bouchet, the first African American to earn a doctorate from an American university. The Bouchet Society seeks to develop a network of preeminent student scholars who exemplify academic and personal excellence, foster supportive environments, and serve as examples of scholarship, leadership, character, service, and advocacy for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in the academy. Each year, ODI supports the incoming cohort as they travel to Yale University to be inducted. This year marked a significant milestone as Northwestern graduate students presented at the **Bouchet Graduate Honors Society's annual conference** for the first time, showcasing our institution's academic excellence and contributions to the scholarly community. The inductees also presented during the annual **Virtual Bouchet 3MT Speaker Series**. The Bouchet Speaker Series brings together content experts, researchers, professionals, and practitioners to discuss the critical and inclusive implementation of research and diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in various fields.

“Being a part of the Edward Bouchet Honor Society has allowed me to connect and network with scholars across the country who are pushing the boundaries on scholarship, leadership, and service in their respective field.”

Chayse Lavallais, 2024 Bouchet Inductee



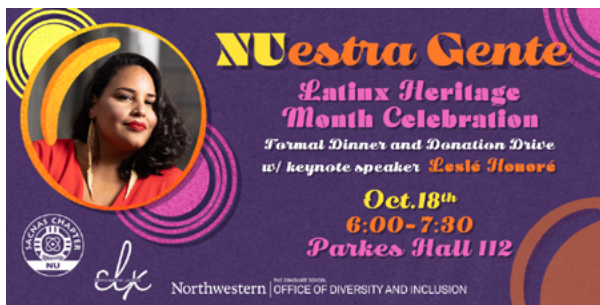


# Retention Initiatives

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion

### Diversity and Cultural Celebrations

ODI hosts and collaborates on monthly diversity and cultural heritage celebrations at Northwestern to ensure that we recognize and celebrate diversity. These gatherings offer opportunities for community building among underrepresented graduate students and postdocs. Successful cross-collaboration efforts were achieved with key organizations such as **Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA)**, **Comunidad Latinx (CLX)**, the **Indigenous Graduate Student Collective (IGSC)**, **Northwestern University Archives**, and **The Women's Center**. This collaborative approach enhances the quality and diversity of the events while fostering a sense of shared responsibility and continued efforts toward inclusivity and community engagement. In addition, ODI hosts two general celebrations that foster inclusivity and a sense of belonging among participants: the **Fall ODI Welcome Reception** and the **Winter Celebration**. The events organized by ODI received high levels of engagement and had a notable impact based on participant feedback.



# Retention Initiatives

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion

### HBCU Hangouts

ODI recognizes that our interns have a keen awareness and lived experience of the DEI-related needs of graduate students, and they are given autonomy to pursue initiatives and programs representative of their interests. ODI intern and Spelman College alumna **Spencer Nabors** is passionate about building community among other **historically Black colleges and universities** (HBCU) graduates matriculating through Northwestern. Nabors recognized that Black graduate students who attended HBCUs but are now attending a predominantly white institution (PWI) may experience a distinct transition to graduate school not reflected in the experiences of other Black students that can be challenging. She developed and inaugurated the **HBCU Hangout** event, which brings together a community of HBCU alumni graduate students to build connections and community. She hosted two “HBCU Hangout” events that included food, games, and networking to allow HBCU alumni at Northwestern to meet each other, build community, and discuss their experiences transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI. The community that was built has been sustained and resulted in several off-campus social events and continuous group chat communications. After positive feedback, we have decided to make this event a staple of ODI programming and a template on how to assess, understand, and tailor programming to various subpopulations of students who may be better served by our programming.

“*I have thoroughly enjoyed assisting in recruitment and retention efforts for underrepresented students during my time as an intern with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. I am especially grateful to have had the opportunity to start an initiative for graduate students at Northwestern who attended historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to build community with one another.*”

Spencer Nabors, ODI Graduate Intern





# Collaborative Initiatives Across TGS and Northwestern

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion



# Expanding Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion Across The Graduate School

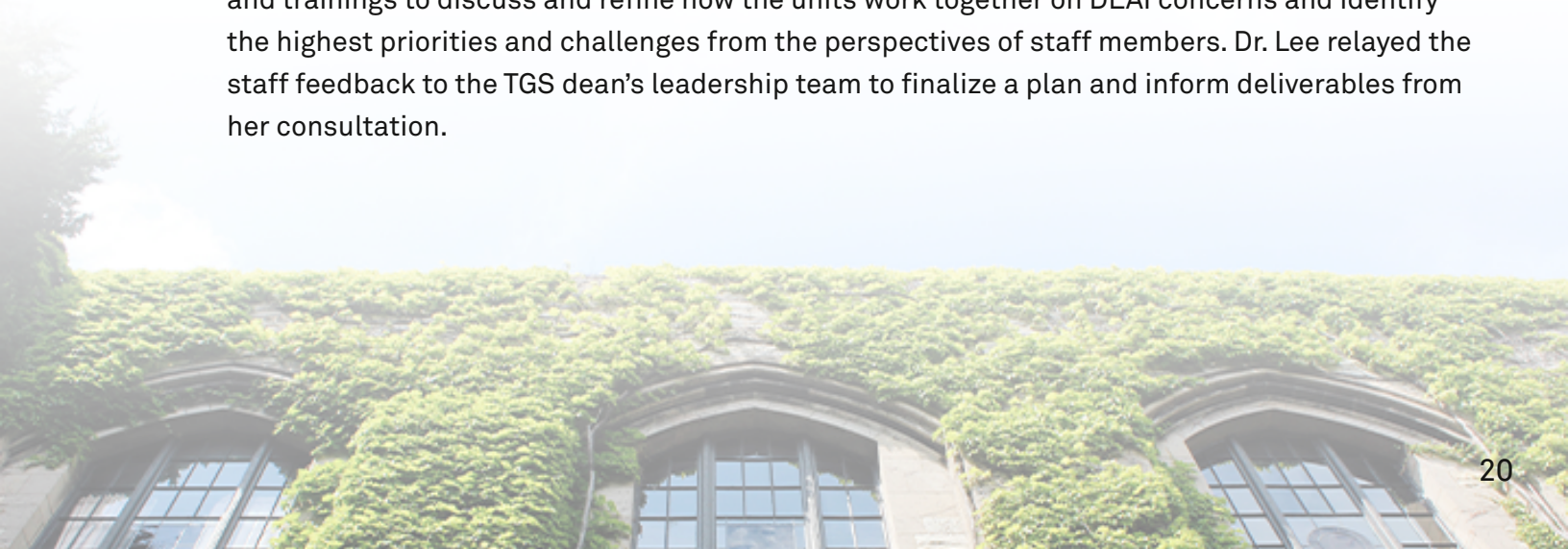
During the interim period when ODI did not have an Associate Dean, Dean **Kelly Mayo** and Associate Dean **Miriam Petty** invested in the edification and competency of all of the TGS units in addressing DEAI-related topics and issues. This ensures that the DEAI mission is not siloed to one unit but is embedded throughout TGS. This approach is novel, expanding beyond the traditional model of institutions limiting DEAI to offices of diversity and inclusion alone. The founder of Sources Cultural Resources Management, **Calinda Lee, PhD** was hired as a consultant for a year and a half to address critical DEAI concerns of the TGS community, as well as create measurable impacts on equity-focused knowledge, culture, and scholarly production.

Implementation of this mission included four phases:

- **Phase One — Institutional Discovery, Assessment, and Team Building**
- **Phase Two — Commitment and Strategy Development**
- **Phase Three — Building Capacity/ Training an Internal Core Team**
- **Phase Four — Documenting Processes and Lessons**

Dr. Lee worked with the TGS dean's leadership team to determine how to best tailor her consultation to the structure of TGS and the needs of graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and TGS staff who support them. She conducted individual interviews to assess each leader's experience and baseline competency on DEAI in relation to their unit's responsibilities. In addition, she held meetings with the **TGS Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council** to clarify outcomes, sequence initiatives, identify benchmarks, and develop a sustainable, peer-driven process for DEAI work across TGS.

In addition, Dr. Lee engaged with TGS staff members and conducted one-on-one interviews to gain their perspectives on DEAI concerns within their units. She provided unit-level exercises and trainings to discuss and refine how the units work together on DEAI concerns and identify the highest priorities and challenges from the perspectives of staff members. Dr. Lee relayed the staff feedback to the TGS dean's leadership team to finalize a plan and inform deliverables from her consultation.





# Expanding Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion Across The Graduate School

## Key Deliverables and Outcomes

**Action Plan:** Dr. Lee developed a comprehensive, 31-page final report with a **DEAI Action Plan** for TGS based on the feedback, group exercises, and collaborative discussions within TGS. This is a living document that TGS will continue to develop based on the evolving needs of our graduate students, postdocs, and staff.

**Values Statement:** The entire TGS staff is involved with the development of a **TGS DEAI Values Statement** based on an initial draft that was included in the DEAI Action Plan. The aim is to develop a final DEAI Values Statement that will guide TGS activities across all units and be posted on the TGS website.

**TGS DEAI Ambassadors:** The **DEAI Ambassadors** consist of nine staff members representing various TGS units to advance DEAI initiatives across TGS, and to translate related priorities into the daily activities of each unit. The aim is to ensure DEAI efforts are not simply directives from the dean's leadership team but informed by staff who are directly engaged in daily operations and student interactions. The mission of the DEAI Ambassadors is to present concerns, propose initiatives, and collaborate with the dean's leadership team and TGS staff on establishing priorities and implementation plans. Associate Deans **Sheehan Fisher** and **Miriam Petty** co-lead the monthly DEAI Ambassadors meetings to support this mission.

**TGS Team Talks:** One of the first initiatives proposed by the DEAI Ambassadors was designed to ensure that TGS is committed to increased transparency and communication across units. The goal was to establish decentralized, staff-wide, collaborative discussions and to empower all staff to present or contribute to any topic. The **TGS Team Talks** is an opportunity to prioritize the voice of TGS staff and leverage their strengths and expertise to best support graduate students and postdocs. All TGS units join the monthly meetings and individuals/teams can host and/or present on key topics that affect TGS. Dean **Kelly Mayo** approved the monthly TGS Team Talks to start at the beginning of FY25.



# *Expanding Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion Across The Graduate School*

## *TGS DEAI Ambassadors*



**Jennifer Alexander, PhD**

*Language Pedagogy  
Specialist, English  
Language Programs*



**Sarah Clewett, MA, MT-BC**

*Senior Program  
Coordinator & Assistant  
to the Deans*



**Jerica Griffin-Stewart**

*Senior Communications  
Coordinator*



**Beth Healey, PhD**

*Associate Director  
of Postdoctoral Affairs*



**Hosea Lee, MS**

*Senior Systems  
Analyst & Programmer*



**Eric Long, MPP**

*Assistant Director  
of Academic Affairs*



**Angela Lorenzo**

*Assistant Director of  
Events and Engagement*



**Tamra Wysocki-Niimi, PhD**

*Language Pedagogy  
Specialist, English  
Language Programs*



**Brittany Young, PhD**

*Director of Diversity  
and Inclusion*



# *ODI Partnerships with Academic Programs on the Admissions Process*

Associate Dean **Miriam Petty**, Director of Admissions and Recruitment **Melissa Sersland**, and Graduate Admissions Business Analyst **Alex Smith** from the TGS Admissions team invited the ODI team to consult on DEI-related topics for the 2023–24 and 2024–25 graduate school application process. The Admissions and ODI teams have a long-standing collaborative relationship to support the recruitment and admissions of underrepresented graduate students. Below are highlighted adaptations to the admissions process emphasizing our dedication to ensuring that the admissions process is representative and accessible to all students.

## **Racial/Ethnicity Identification**

We recognized that the federal requirements for reporting race and ethnicity may not match how people self-identify. We aimed for our public-facing materials to respect how applicants self-identify while collecting the required data for federal reporting. For example, Middle East and North Africa (MENA)/Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) students are classified as “White” under federal standards, but many do not identify with this classification. Therefore, we consulted with Northwestern’s MENA program and the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISS) for their guidance on a contemporary preferred categorization from groups in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. The 2023–24 application cycle included updated categories with detailed descriptions: Middle Eastern, North African, or Southwest Asian; East Asian; Southeast Asian; and South Asian. Student information will still be reported to the federal government based on federal requirements. In addition, although TGS continued to collect data on race and ethnicity, the data was not shared with faculty and staff during the admissions process.

## **Citizenship**

Previously undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applicants had to choose “International Student” for the citizenship question as their best option. We decided to remove the categories of “Naturalized,” “Temporary U.S. Resident,” and “International Student” to avoid confusion and simplified the options for applicants to “U.S. Citizen,” “U.S. Permanent Resident,” or “non-U.S. Citizen.” We updated the questions on citizenship to align with best practices of other universities and updated guidance for DACA and undocumented applicants on the application portal.



# ODI Partnerships with Academic Programs on the Admissions Process

## Additional Changes

- The **Gender Pronouns Data Set** was updated to align with **NUValidate** options to have continuity between the systems.
- The **Michigan English Test (MET)** language test was added as an alternative English language proficiency exam option that is more cost effective for international applicants.
- The language for the application fee waiver based on low-income status was simplified by removing or defining tax jargon. The **Pell Grant** was added as an eligibility criterion to be more inclusive.
- The request for the applicant’s “legal name” was changed to “name on government ID;” along with language explaining why this information is being asked. The prompt “sex assigned at birth” was changed to “sex listed on government issued ID.” Programs are also provided the applicant’s “chosen name” and guidance on which name to use when addressing the applicant.
- The general criminal background question was removed from the application.

## PhD Fall Admissions Comparison: 2023 vs. 2024

### PhD Admissions

Fall 2023

	Applications	Admits	Matriculants
Total	11,838	1,471 (12%)	594 (40%)
Domestic URM	1,116 (20%)	238 (26%)	101 (29%)
LGBTQ+	2,464 (21%)	339 (23%)	137 (23%)
First Generation	2,967 (25%)	283 (19%)	125 (21%)

### PhD Admissions

Fall 2024

	Applications	Admits	Matriculants
Total	13,570	1,379 (10%)	606 (44%)
Domestic URM	1,311 (21%)	155 (18%)	80 (22%)
LGBTQ+	2,936 (22%)	352 (26%)	176 (29%)
First Generation	3,685 (27%)	278 (20%)	156 (26%)



# ODI Partnerships with Academic Programs on the Admissions Process

## 2024 Admissions Data

### TGS Academic Programs – Fall 2024

**113**  
Total Programs

**62**  
PhD  
Programs

**39**  
Master's  
(MA, MFA, MPH,  
MS) Programs

**12**  
Combined  
Programs

### Gender

PhD	49% Female	50% Male	2% *
Master's	66% Female	32% Male	2% *
MFA	63% Female	34% Male	3% *
Postdoctoral	43% Female	57% Male	<1% *

\* Gender non-binary or undisclosed

### Underrepresented (UR) Domestic Population

PhD	26% UR	74% Non-UR
Master's	24% UR	76% Non-UR
MFA	48% UR	52% Non-UR
Postdoctoral	18% UR	82% Non-UR

### International Population

PhD	40% International	60% Domestic
Master's	25% International	75% Domestic
MFA	23% International	77% Domestic
Postdoctoral	72% International	28% Domestic

Please see our interactive data visualization tool of our PhD and master's programs' admissions, enrollment, academic outcomes, and career placements on our [Program Statistics](#) webpage.

# Equity in Graduate Education

## Providing Equity-Minded Mentoring for Graduate Students



“*The EGE training helped me see a number of blind spots in my mentorship and gave me the tools to rethink and improve the care and training I offer to my graduate students.*”

Ryan Dohoney, PhD, Professor of Musicology

Faculty seldom receive direct training on how to be effective mentors, although the quality of mentorship greatly affects graduate students' academic performance, progress in their programs, professional socialization, well-being, and graduation rates. The risk of an ineffective mentoring relationship can be pronounced when underrepresented and marginalized students do not feel their experience is understood by their faculty mentor, due to incongruity with the mentor's personal experience and/or a lack of mentor training.

In 2022, Northwestern joined the **Equity in Graduate Education (EGE) Consortium Mentoring Track** to offer faculty training in equity-minded mentoring. The EGE Resource Center, under the leadership of **Julie Posselt, PhD** is focused on conducting and translating research on equity-minded change in individuals and organizations to inform evidence-based professional development for faculty and administrators to promote sustainable institutional change. The EGE consortium consists of 23 top-tier universities that are “change-ready” and invested in DEI within graduate education. Northwestern's membership in EGE is a joint partnership between TGS and the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (OIDI) led by **Miriam Petty, Michelle Manno, Majida Kargbo, and Sheehan Fisher**.

Three EGE mentoring workshops were adapted to fit the needs of Northwestern faculty: **Introduction to Equity-Minded Mentoring; Fostering Wellbeing in Racialized Mentoring Environments; and Creating Cultures of Mentoring & Wellbeing**. Six change-ready Northwestern programs and schools were identified to participate in the training: English, School of Communication, School of Music, Clinical Psychology, Philosophy, and Sociology. Faculty representatives of the programs were provided the three workshops with additional optional office hours.



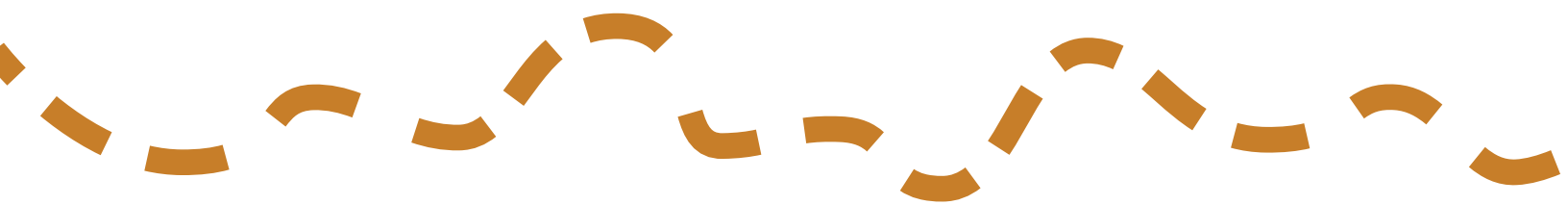
### Key FY24 Outcomes

#### *Mentoring Compacts*

A key product of the faculty workshops was the development of “mentoring compacts.” A mentoring compact is developed collaboratively between a mentor and graduate student. It is designed to demystify program policies and unspoken expectations, affirm the social identities of the mentee, and support the mentee within the program and institution. The function of the mentoring compacts is to ensure transparency, clear communication, respectful engagement, mutual agreement of expectations and responsibilities, and acknowledgment of positionality to support a positive mentoring relationship between the faculty mentor and graduate student. Each faculty participant developed a mentoring compact draft that is specific to their academic field and can be shared as a model for faculty in their academic program. Faculty can use the mentoring compact template to collaboratively tailor agreements with each mentee.

#### *2024 Annual EGE Consortium Meeting*

Northwestern had the honor to host the annual **EGE Consortium Project Meeting** in Evanston. Representatives from the 23 universities in the consortium attended the two-day meeting, which included panel presentations, community discussions, and workshops to plan for the upcoming academic year. **Ivuoma N. Onyeador, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Management and Organizations at Kellogg, gave a keynote address on the final day of the meeting.



“EGE training provided invaluable guidance concerning mentoring needs for students from underrepresented groups, first-generation students, and in fact all graduate students. Especially helpful were reported testimony from students concerning what most helped them, or didn’t, and concrete suggested best practices, including mentoring compacts, which my department plans to implement.”

Rachel E. Zuckert, PhD, Professor of Philosophy

# Supporting DEAI within TGS-Affiliated Graduate Student Organizations

**TGS-affiliated graduate student organizations** are student-developed, student-led organizations that provide their fellow graduate students with opportunities for community building through educational, cultural, and social activities. **Lauren-Ashley Buchanan, PhD** is the Director of Student Life and provides **45+ student organizations** of TGS with financial and logistical support to ensure the success of their association and programming. Graduate students have the option to join established organizations or apply to develop new organizations to meet any unaddressed need for community. Lauren-Ashley also leads various engagement programming and events throughout the year in support of TGS-affiliated student organizations and the greater graduate community within TGS at Northwestern.

A number of TGS-affiliated student organizations represent minoritized, identity-based groups that aim to build community based on shared cultural backgrounds, practices, language, and/or experiences. Associate Dean **Sheehan Fisher** established a plan to meet twice a year with the presidents of these affinity-based organizations to learn more about their missions and how ODI can support their initiatives and activities. These meetings, which center on feedback and input from TGS student leaders, have been vital in tuning into the needs of various groups across campus. Dr. Fisher emphasized the importance of collaborations between TGS-affiliated organizations and mutual support to encourage a unified Northwestern graduate student community.

**Comunidad Latinx (CLX)**, the **Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA)**, the **African Graduate Student Association (AGSA)**, and **Northwestern Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (NU-SACNAS)** joined forces over the summer to plan the launch of the first annual **Northwestern Inclusive Scholar Symposium** in the fall of FY25. The event included a poster session followed by a networking reception for which Sheehan provided opening remarks. The symposium aimed to create space to promote DEI within the Northwestern community and share innovative research among graduate students, educators, and alumni.

Finally, the establishment of new and the restoration of previously dormant TGS-affiliated student organizations is essential to the growth of the graduate Northwestern community. Sheehan worked with Lauren-Ashley to identify new and reestablished TGS-affiliated affinity groups and offer resources to champion their successful launch.





# *Next Steps*

*The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion*



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Office of Diversity and Inclusion

# Next Steps

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion



ODI has had many accomplishments over the past year to increase the recruitment of underrepresented and marginalized students and enable them to thrive once they are at Northwestern. We also have been evaluating our programs and listening to TGS graduate students, postdocs, and faculty, along with undergraduate students whom we recruit to be prospective graduate students. Below are some highlights that we plan to undertake during the 2024–25 academic year and beyond based on what we learned.

- ODI will pilot **an expansion of our IGEN recruitment programming** to students who have recently completed their undergraduate programs. We understand that underrepresented and minoritized students are at higher risk of not matriculating immediately into a graduate program after graduating from their undergraduate program. We want to ensure these students have equitable access to and the opportunity to learn about Northwestern graduate programs.
- ODI is exploring opportunities to expand our reach to recruit undergraduate students interested in humanities graduate programs. Humanities programs have fewer large-scale conferences across disciplines compared to STEM programs, so we are thinking creatively about ways to **increase our engagement with humanities students**.
- ODI will **expand the relationships with HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)** to support the recruitment of a diverse student body across STEM, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities, including through our roadshow recruitment trips.
- Although ODI successfully increased the applications from racially and ethnically minoritized students, TGS saw a decline in the percentage of these students who were admitted into Northwestern graduate programs. At the end of FY25, ODI plans to enroll in the **Equity in Graduate Education Consortium's Admissions and Recruitment Track** that will provide training on equity in graduate admission and equity-based holistic review.



# Next Steps

## The Graduate School Office of Diversity and Inclusion

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has enhanced the requirements for the **“Recruitment Plan to Enhance Diversity”** section of training grant proposals. The major change is that this section transitioned from having no page limit to a 3-page limit and the content was moved from “Additional Review Considerations” to “Additional Review Criteria,” which means the program’s plan to enhance diversity will now affect the overall impact score. ODI, in partnership with Director of Graduate and Postdoctoral Training and Development **Liz Stein** and Assistant Director of the Training Grant Support Office (TGSO) **Amelia Litz**, will provide an annual workshop to training grant directors to support their development of intentional recruitment and retention plans for underrepresented and marginalized graduate students.
- ODI, in partnership with **TGS English Language Programs (ELP)**, **Graduate and Postdoctoral Training and Development**, and **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**, will launch programming to support the acclimation of international students and postdocs to the sociopolitical environment of a U.S.-based academic institution that affects their ability to engage effectively in academic conversations and interpersonal interactions related to race and racism.





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