Equitable evaluation Scribe document

Please note and remind yourself frequently: The intent of this document is for it to lead to a public-facing record of your workgroup's activity. By the day of the Summit it will be accessible to anyone at the Summit, and after the Summit it will be turned into a fully public-facing document. This means that although you should take notes however makes sense for you, it will be important to refine the notes to be comprehensible to others.

Guiding Committee: None before Summit
Moderator: Tim Strauman
Scribe: Amanda Jensen-Doss

Describe intended product of the workgroup: Generate pragmatic, immediate, implementable ideas about how to engage in equitable evaluation and selection of applicants.

Who is willing to lead on this topic (future efforts at the Summit and beyond):
    Christine Bird (UCLA)

Main Notes Area

First question: What is working in your program to help with more equitable selection of applicants?
- Having separate statements
    - A personal history statement (in addition to the more traditional statement) that speaks to their life experience (sample prompts on Berkley website)
    - Diversity-focused essay: invite people to comment on their diversity philosophy-provides an opportunity to share identities, but also has a way to understand their experiences, this helps make sure the program is attracting people who can contribute in that space.
- Not making things optional so that you have standard information for all applicants
- Assigning a review team- graduate student not in your lab has to help you evaluate the applications to make sure you aren't engaged in biased review
- One interviewer spends the interview focused on DEI- either asking them to talk about it or allowing them to ask questions
- Provide more information on your website about what types of things people might include in their statements, including research interests, personal background, who you are as a person and who you want to become
- Having a rubric
    - Questions about whether making it public will help increase transparency versus narrow the pool because people self-select out after seeing it
- Having a committee of faculty who review all applications before they go to the primary mentors

Second question: What are the roadblocks that you run into in ensuring equitable admissions processes? (*Note: In parking lot there are ideas about helping cultivate a stronger pipeline as well*)

- Resource issues:
    - Mentor funding- we only get to take so many students and it feels difficult to "take a risk" on a less traditional candidate over someone who has an established track record
    - Class sizes restrict how many students can take and similarly discourages "risk taking"
- Even with a rubric, how it's utilized still varies across mentors- e.g., how they weigh different criteria
- Time can be challenging- holistic review takes longer and we get a lot of applicants
- We don't have clear criteria for what you need to succeed in programs, so there's a potential for bias to come in
    - Pulling together datasets across programs linking admission characteristics to outcomes could help us identify this

Third question: How can we appeal to colleagues who are not on board with shifting our approaches to equitable evaluation and selection?

- It may not be possible- try to centralize decisions so that any one person is not in sole control of the decisions.
    - E.g., having all faculty review all finalists in the pool
    - How do we make sure that this process doesn't end up with students being with mentors who aren't supportive?
        - Counsel them to go to another program- how do we know where they end up? Is the system picking them up elsewhere?
- Get pragmatic- take a reward focus
    - E.g., NIH expects us to have more diverse samples and do more relevant research. Your work will be strengthened by having a richer team
- We need to be willing to have discussions about the need to take risks
    - And we have to be willing to be committed with supporting folks once they get into the program
    - Can we incentivize this?
- When funding comes from the university versus people's grants, people are often more willing to take more risks in admissions
    - Fellowships for admitting diverse students

Fourth question: What is one thing that we can do differently when we are reading recommendation letters?

- In other fields: letters of rec do not predict performance
- Call the people who write the letter to get more information

- Could we as a field provide more guidance to letter writers about what it's helpful to include? For example, encouraging writers to focus on contextual variables that helpw ith a more holistic view
- Could we have better rating scales? Focus more on characteristics that actually predict success in graduate school.
- Should we move away from letters and more toward calling references when people are finalists?
- Could we keep them, but de-identify them so we don't privilege letters from big name people?
- On the other hand, can't letters help highlight strengths that might not appear in the other materials? Underrepresented applicants may not be comfortable addressing weaknesses head on but a letter writer can.

Cross-cutting themes:
- Pulling together data across programs is needed to create a science of equitable admissions
- We have best practices and we need to pull them together to share out with one another
- We need to get our funders (e.g., universities, fellowships) to help us have the resources to allow us to expand the ways we do admissions

Parking Lot
The parking lot is for anything that was noted during the group that does not fit well on the topic. You may wish to refer this information to other groups after your group meets.

- We also need to attend to pipeline issues in helping people be prepared for graduate school
  - Undergraduate mentorship is where we can also start working on mentorship and helping folks succeed
  - Could we put together a packet on what undergraduates need to know to be successful in the process (e.g., get research experience, Ph.D. programs are paid, etc.)?
  - What else can we do in our programs, like teaching intro seminars and highlighting career options?
  - Intro to psych may not be the place because students come in with credits
  - "Pre-mental health" advising- e.g., do I want clinical psych, social work, counseling, etc.- Could we create a document on this?
  - Clinical scientist certificate program at Indiana University might be a model
  - Partner with other departments to help students get research experience
  - Incentivizing mentoring undergraduates for faculty so they are more willing to do so