

Revisioning OHSU's approach to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion

Developed by [Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science](#)

June 2020

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Highlighting the problem

Current model for DEI work at OHSU

Revisioning Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) work at OHSU

Relationship between CDI and REI Centers

Required positions in each Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) Center

Benefits of an REI Center model

Model One: Mission-focused model

Model Two: Education-focused model

Summary

Who is AVDS?

Executive Summary

It is proven that increasing racial diversity and creating a safe climate within an institution increases productivity and ingenuity¹. OHSU's current model of supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) ignores the influence of systemic racism in our institution and is reliant on a disproportionately small number of people to conduct all DEI work across all OHSU campuses, for >22,000 people. **The Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science (AVDS) proposes decentralizing racial equity and inclusion (REI) work by creating multiple REI Centers to serve different populations of OHSU. The REI centers will actively work to dismantle systemic racism through community building, data collection, and policy improvement.** AVDS recognizes that racial equity and inclusion requires time, labor, and adequate resources. OHSU was recognized as one of the world's most innovative universities in 2019². Let's continue this innovation by implementing the REI Center Model in order to build a sound foundation in supporting racial diversity, equity, and inclusion work, thereby serving as a model and leaders for academic institutions across the nation.

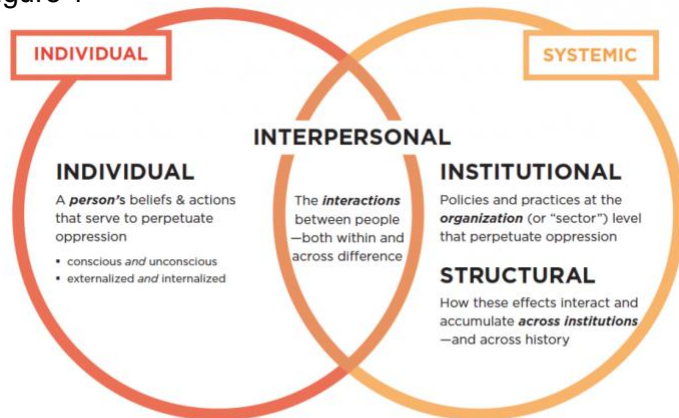
¹ <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/racial-diversity-pays-off>

² https://www.reuters.com/innovative-universities-2019?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=Social

Highlighting the problem

Although the term “diversity” includes many different identities, recent events across America highlight the necessity to *specifically address systemic racism* within our institutions. Without special resources to dismantle systemic racism, we *waste* countless dollars on ineffective race-related diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives while continuing to marginalize faculty, staff, trainees, learners, and patients of color. Institutions of higher education and healthcare across the nation are recognizing the need to establish or affirm equitable policies and practices to become more accessible to all, and in particular Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) who have been historically minoritized. It is clear that diversity (e.g., increasing representation) is not enough when the culture or environment continues to be exclusive. Past and current DEI initiatives are centered around recruitment while neglecting all the ways that systemic and institutional racism (Fig. 1) show up in our institution and continue to diminish our efforts in realizing our goals.

Figure 1



OHSU has the opportunity to lead as an innovator in the way these challenges are addressed.

Here, we propose a strategy to position OHSU to become an anti-racist organization. This includes decentralizing race-related DEI efforts, redistributing responsibility, and specifically addressing organizational culture through, community building, collecting and integrating data across the institution, and building racial equity into our polices. We provide two potential models to support this work: a mission-based model which addresses Healthcare, Education, and Research, and an Education-focused model.

Our proposed models reflect the complexity of OHSU's organizational structure. Our complete understanding of the current OHSU structure is limited and we will rely on executive leadership to further refine these models. We also understand becoming an anti-racist institution does not happen overnight. Our priority is to highlight the ways in which we uphold systemic racism through our existing structure and procedures, and to provide a framework for thought, discussion, and progress.

Current model for DEI work at OHSU

By many accounts, the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) is considered responsible for addressing *all* forms of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for the *entire university*. However, **their limited institutional power and extensive responsibilities, coupled with the entrenched nature of systemic racism, limits the efficacy of their work to improve racial equity**. These are a few of many factors contributing to high CDI staff turnover and limited impact. **In reality, we perceive individual departments and programs to have the most influence over the culture within their local communities, but they lack resources and guidance to effect change**. Thus, **every area of OHSU currently struggles to create better communities and policies** for learners, faculty, and staff of color.

OHSU’s current DEI model lacks:

Shared Responsibility & Incentives	CDI’s perceived responsibility to manage university-wide DEI efforts allows departments and programs to declare DEI work as “CDI’s problem,” shifting responsibility . Further, there are few incentives to encourage departments and programs to engage in DEI work. Effective DEI work requires investment from every program, department, and individual, and should not be the burden of any single entity.
Accountability	There is no mechanism to hold anyone accountable for the completion or efficacy of DEI work. In order for DEI work to change institutional culture, someone must be held accountable for that work.
Data-driven Decision-making	Recurring collection and analysis of DEI data is neither required nor enforced. Without this information there is no mechanism to identify and modify antiquated or harmful racialized policies/practices. A regular review of DEI metrics is necessary to ensure that OHSU holds itself to appropriate standards. Evidence-driven policy updates are essential for effective DEI work.
Community Building	OHSU is so populous and regionally dispersed that community building is only effective at the local level. The demand for a single group (CDI) to cultivate the desired culture across OHSU’s entirety detracts from their ability to facilitate localized and meaningful community building efforts. Building community and relationships with those we trust and are a part of our daily community is more effective.
Focused efforts to address systemic racism	Being an anti-racist organization requires an intentional and focused effort. Dismantling systemic and institutionalized racism is a unique challenge that depends on an understanding the origins and social impact of racial constructs . By lumping anti-racism efforts in with broader diversity initiatives, we lose the ability to make targeted changes that directly address institutional racism. In order to address systemic racism, the effort must be concentrated and specific to racism and white supremacy.
Efficiency and Efficacy	All of the previous points contribute to a lack of efficiency and efficacy in OHSU’s approach to addressing racial inequities. As scientists, doctors, and professionals, we must agree that it is time for a different approach.

<p>Adequate Recognition of the Labor of BIPOC Members (e.g., credit/pay/promotion)</p>	<p>With this lack of efficacy and oversight, unmet DEI needs fall to those willing to volunteer their time unpaid, most often BIPOC faculty, learners, and staff. They are <i>completely</i> overworked as they carry this load for the institution, oftentimes sacrificing their career potential and advancement, without proper recognition or fiscal compensation. This unethically and inappropriately leaves the burden of DEI work to be completed by the affected population, contributing to systemic racism. This contributes to the high attrition rate of BIPOC at OHSU. Their presence and service to the community must be quantifiably valued in order for DEI work to not perpetuate systemic racism.</p>
--	--

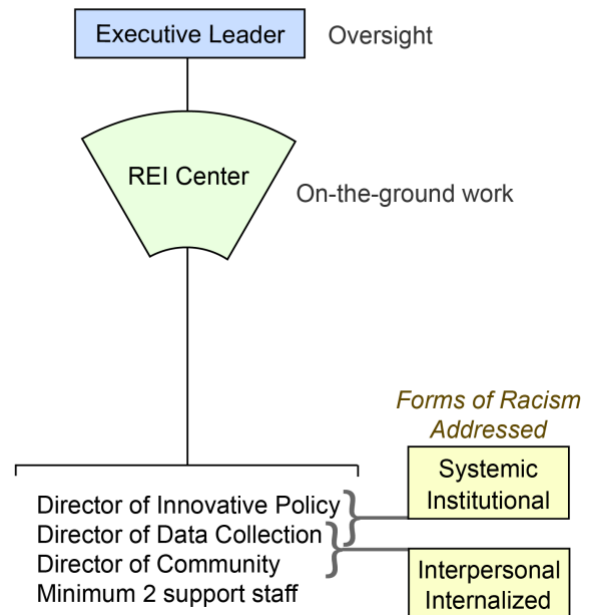
Revisioning Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) work at OHSU

We propose decentralizing and **redistributing the responsibility of racial equity and inclusion (REI) work by creating multiple “REI Centers”**. Each REI Center will directly report to an existing executive leader, and include personnel to actively participate in remedying systemic, institutionalized, interpersonal, and internalized racism (Fig. 2). CDI will evolve to support the REI Centers and provide an independent reporting mechanism (Fig. 3).

Figure 2

Overall mission of REI Centers:

Empower the OHSU community to dismantle racist structures and policies affecting faculty, staff, and learners through data collection and integration, data-driven policy improvement, and localized community building and education.



REI Center Responsibilities:

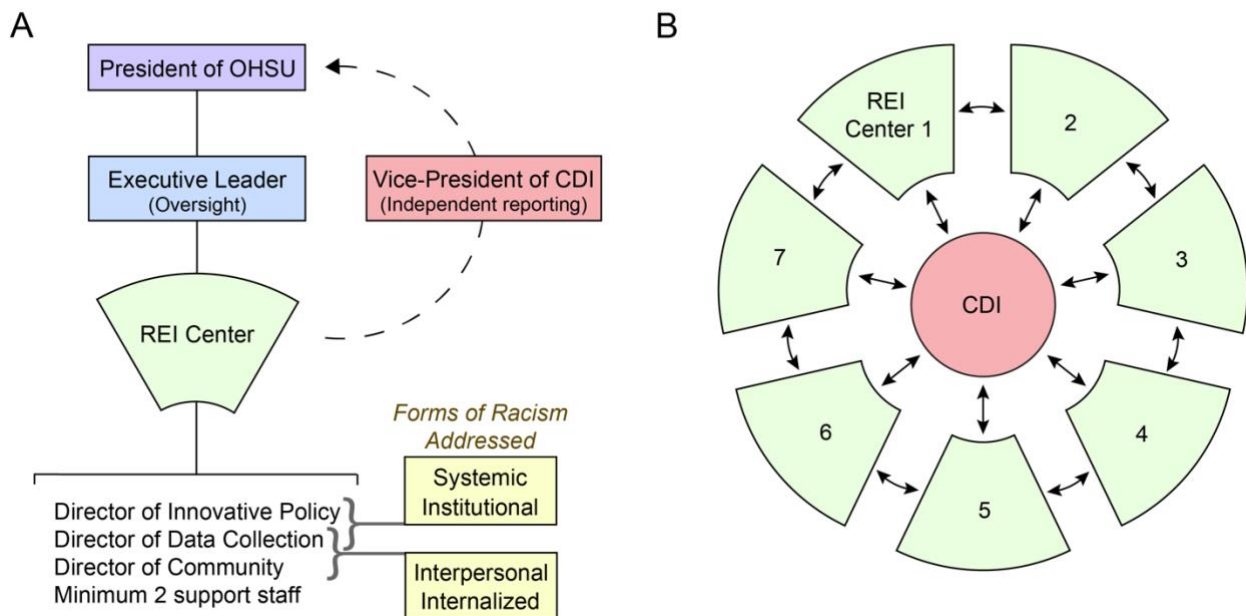
- Collaborate with “local groups” (defined as: internal programs, departments, institutions, and centers) to build local communities and support.
- Work with “local groups” to collect data to inform evidence-driven decision-making for the creation and implementation of progressive REI policies.
- Publish an annual diversity report, including details such as the allocation of resources, REI efforts, and REI-related data. **This transparency creates accountability, allowing individuals to understand exactly which REI initiatives are being completed by their REI Center, and which initiatives are successful or effective.**
- Apply for grants with the purpose of using funds to support REI initiatives in their “local groups.”
- Collaborate as needed with other REI Centers through CDI.

Relationship between CDI and REI Centers

While continuing the ongoing DEI work related to forms of diversity other than race, we propose CDI's responsibilities evolve to include support of REI Centers in the following ways:

- **The Vice-President of CDI, the Chief Diversity Officer, should officially be designated an Executive Leader who directly reports to the President of OHSU.** This not only establishes DEI as a top priority at OHSU, it also generates an **independent reporting mechanism** for REI Centers to communicate challenges in achieving their goals. **This 'checks-and-balances' system builds accountability and transparency, and ultimately ensures REI Center success (Fig. 3A).**
- **Establish institutional goals for racial equity across all three missions.**
 - While CDI's [Diversity Action Plan](#) is a good starting point, it was last developed in 2013. The plan should be updated annually to authentically reflect successes, failures, and ongoing work, as well as provide justifications for unmet annual goals.
- Coordinate regular meetings between Directors of REI Centers to integrate campus-wide REI work and share best practices.
- Integrate data from each REI center to build a university-wide "OHSU Racial Equity Report" to be published on O2 and updated annually.
- **Become a hub of information and resources for REI Centers (Fig. 3B).**
 - For example, CDI would maintain an updated list of grants that REI Centers can apply to, and coordinate meetings between the Directors of each REI Center to facilitate collaborative grant-writing.

Figure 3



Required positions in each Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) Center

1. Full-time (1.0 FTE) Director of Innovative Policy (Faculty)
2. Full time (1.0 FTE) Director of Community Transformation (Administration)
3. Full-time (1.0 FTE) Director of Data Collection (Administration)
4. Full-time (1.0 FTE) support staff: 1 support staff for every 1000 people overseen by individual REI center, with a minimum of 2 support staff per REI center (research and administrative duties)

Position	Major Responsibilities	Justification for Position
Director of Innovative Policy	<p>Assists in securing REI-related funding within programs/departments & applies for funding to further REI Centers' efforts.</p> <p>Works with their local community to review and revise internal policies and procedures affecting racial equity in the recruitment and retention of faculty, learners, and staff.</p> <p>Determines and implements incentives for their local community to join REI efforts.</p> <p>Develops, tests, and disseminates findings on best practices (e.g., policies and procedures) for equity in recruitment and retention of faculty, learners, and staff from underrepresented racial minority groups.</p>	<p>The policies that we create and abide by reflect our values and commitment to members of the OHSU community. Depending on their design, our policies either directly uphold or actively dismantle systemic and institutionalized racism. Dedicating focused effort towards establishing equitable and well-researched policies is a necessary and critical step towards becoming an anti-racist institution.</p>
Director of Community Transformation	<p>Assists in securing REI-related funding within programs/departments & applies for funding to further REI Centers' efforts.</p> <p>Develops/researches/implements educational materials, organizes invited guest speakers, and plans community events.</p> <p>Collaborates with the local community to establish avenues and incentives for broader community engagement in REI work, and to compensate volunteer work.</p> <p>Provides tangible and tailored recommendations for their local community on ways to increase racial inclusion for faculty, learners, and staff.</p> <p>Creates and facilitates community-based discussions surrounding race to increase inclusiveness within each program/dept.</p>	<p>Internalized and interpersonal racism must be addressed in order to become an anti-racist institution. The cultural climate within our institution directly impacts the retention, productivity, and success of OHSU members.</p> <p>Addressing internalized and interpersonal racism requires education and community trust. Establishing personnel that work beside local communities, provides educational/training pathways, and establishes community participation allows for collaborative, inclusive community building critical for community transformation.</p>

<p>Director of Data Collection</p>	<p>Works with each program/department within their purview to create a standardized framework for data collection and analysis that assesses strengths and weaknesses of REI efforts.</p> <p>Utilizes “open science” principles and practices to ensure standardization, interoperability, reproducibility, and transparency.</p> <p>Advises programs/departments on the variables and data collection techniques required to identify strengths and weaknesses of REI efforts.</p> <p>Integrates REI data from each program/department within their purview, and shares this data on O2. Works with other REIs through CDI to integrate data across OHSU.</p> <p>Shares resources with other universities to improve REI efforts across Oregon and beyond.</p>	<p>Data collection is essential in assessing the success or challenges of ongoing REI efforts. Data helps identify racially inequitable policies and procedures in need of further attention or refinement and should be used to drive future policy and procedural decisions.</p> <p>Additionally, collecting and sharing data across all areas increases efficacy.</p>
<p>Support staff members</p>	<p>Co-facilitate/assist in community engagement sessions and event organization.</p> <p>Function as research assistants for data collection and review/revision of institutional policies and procedures.</p>	<p>The number of individuals within each mission requires adequate personnel to ensure REI Center success. Support staff assists with the organization, coordination, communication, and implementation of all REI Center initiatives.</p>

Benefits of an REI Center model

REI Centers will be positioned to immediately and **sustainably address the unique needs of each OHSU community**. Additionally, they will **provide a platform for empowering the community**. Without broad community engagement, the work will be pushed onto a single “diversity center” and unpaid volunteers, and individuals will not assume any personal responsibility for campus culture. As REI Centers facilitate greater community engagement, programs and departments will make greater progress on dismantling institutional and systemic racism in our institutional policies and procedures.

This strategy answers the overwhelming question from community members of “what can we do?”. REI Centers address all of the limitations of the current OHSU model, and provide additional benefits.

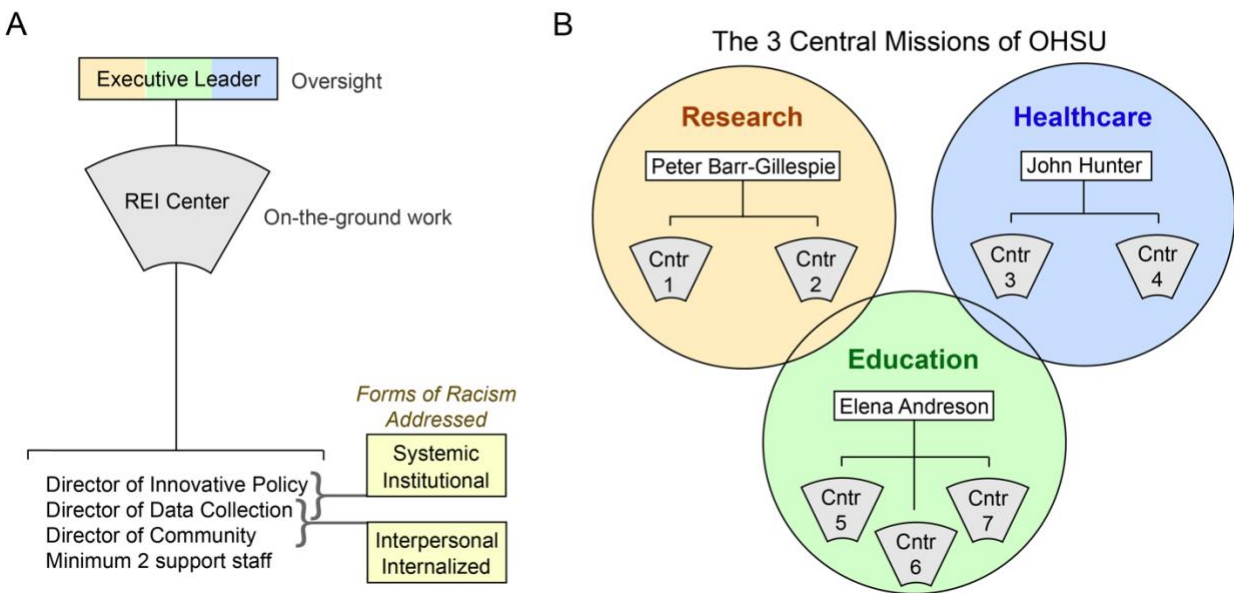
Benefits of REI Center Model:

Shared Responsibility & support	This model supports and reflects the notion that REI work is a shared responsibility and provides a direction and support to departments and individuals in contributing to REI work.
Accountability	Requiring each REI Center and CDI to internally publish an annual diversity report increases transparency and allows individuals to hold their respective REI center and programs/departments accountable. Additionally, with the REI Centers reporting to CDI, and the Vice-President of CDI reporting directly to the OHSU President, a checks-and-balances system is generated. This ultimately ensures REI Center success.
Data-driven Decision-Making	This model specifically focuses on the data collection/integration required to develop effective and equitable policies.
Community building	This model allows education, conversation, and community building with those we trust and are in our local community. Conversations and education surrounding race are difficult, but learning and building within those we interact with daily increases our sense of community. This increases the community's investment in anti-racism work.
Efficiency & efficacy	Decentralizing and redistributing REI work using a standardized approach to policy and community building creates the community engagement <i>required</i> for a meaningful, sustainable culture shift. Using data and transparency to honestly assess and optimize tactics ensures maximum effectiveness.
Adequate Recognition of the Labor of BIPOC Members	This model shifts the REI work from unpaid/unrecognized employees and learners of color to actual paid positions supported by the institution. Additionally, it provides community members with avenues to get involved and receive credit for their efforts. This REI model upholds and publicly reflects OHSU’s mission and the core educational competency of social justice.
Reproducibility	Most institutions, including OHSU, struggle with racial DEI. This innovative strategy could be modeled by other institutions, making us a leader in this area.

Model One: Mission-focused model

- **Model one breaks down REI Center jurisdiction across OHSU’s three central missions: Healthcare, Education, and Research (Fig. 4).**
- Each REI Center will report to an executive leader over one of three central missions, and will include personnel to perform tasks to dismantle different forms of racism (Fig. 4A).
- **Two Research REI Centers** report to the Chief Research Officer (Fig. 4B, orange). One REI Center addresses the REI needs of research faculty, the other supports research staff. The **number of positions within each REI Center is proportionate to the number of people served within their local community** (i.e.: Multiple people may need to focus on policy, data, and community transformation).
- **Two Healthcare REI Centers** report to the Chief Executive Officer of OHSU Health System (Fig. 4B, blue). One REI Center addresses the REI needs of medical faculty, the other supports medical staff. The **number of positions within each REI Center is proportional to the number of people served within their local community** (i.e.: Multiple people may need to focus on policy, data, and community transformation).
- **Three Education REI Centers** report to the Provost (Fig. 4B, green). Each Center addresses the REI needs of different populations of learners.
- Due to interplay between faculty and learners, the Education REI Centers will need to collaborate with REI Centers in Research and Healthcare.

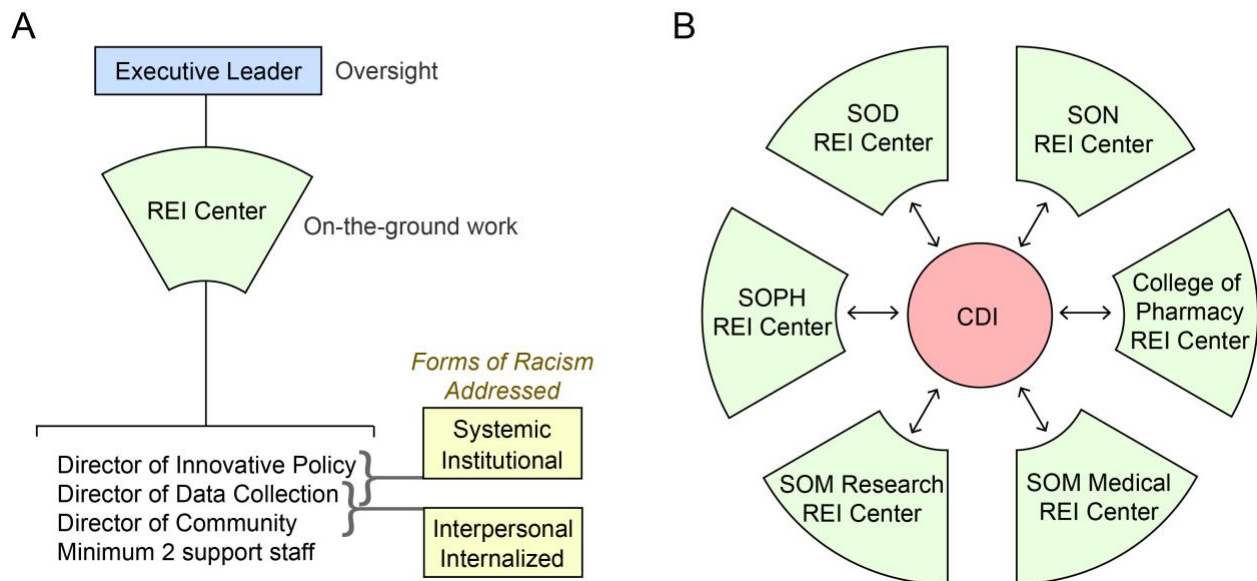
Figure 4



Model Two: Education-focused model

- **Model two breaks down REI Center jurisdiction by OHSU’s schools and colleges (Fig. 5).**
- Each REI Center will report to the executive leader of their school/college, and will include personnel to perform tasks to dismantle different forms of racism (Fig. 5A).
- SON, SOD, SOPH, and College of Pharmacy each have one REI Center to address the REI needs of faculty, staff, and learners (**Fig. 5B**).
- Given the size of SOM and the different needs within the medical and research communities, **SOM requires two separate REI centers to ensure efficacy (Fig. 5B)**. The Clinical REI Center, including the MD and other clinically-based programs, reports to the Dean of SOM and the Research REI Center, including PhD and other research-based Master’s programs, reports to the Chief Research Officer.
- A strength of this model is the ability of each REI Center to specifically focus on the individual needs of each school. A challenge of this model is the difficulty in determining REI Center constituency when considering combined programs or programs that have multiple educational models.

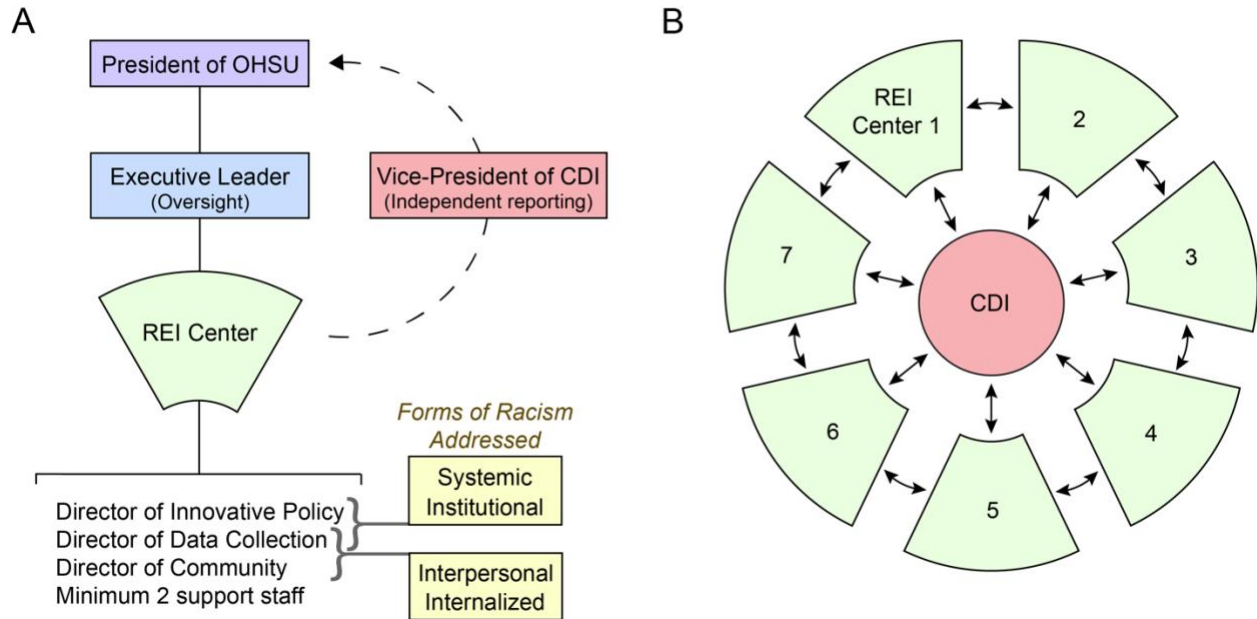
Figure 5



Summary

The Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science (AVDS) proposes decentralizing racial equity and inclusion (REI) work by creating multiple REI Centers to serve different populations of OHSU. The REI centers will work to dismantle systemic racism through community building, data collection, and policy improvement. This decentralization creates a structural foundation to move OHSU towards becoming an anti-racist institution and demonstrates their core values of [transparency, diversity, quality, and service excellence](#).

The Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) Center Model



Current OHSU Model	REI Center Model
Lumps race/ethnicity in with other forms of diversity, which downplays systemic racism	Recognizes that systemic racism is a unique challenge that requires special focus
CDI is responsible for all DEI work at all OHSU campuses, for >22,000 people	Multiple REI Centers, each with a minimum of 5 full-time employees devoted to REI work
No standards or enforcement for data collection and transparency	Data collection is standardized, shared with the community, and drives decision-making
No one is accountable for completion or efficacy of racial equity work	REI Centers and their programs/departments can be held accountable for their REI work
Tries to build one community across all OHSU campuses, a virtually impossible task	Builds local communities with the people we work with and see day-to-day
Volunteers, mostly BIPOC, carry the burden of REI work with little to no recognition or pay	Gives adequate pay and recognition for REI work, and compensates volunteers

Who is AVDS?

Founded in 2016, the [Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science](#) (AVDS) is a group of students, staff, postdocs, and faculty who work together to fulfill one central mission: *to increase racial equity within the research programs at OHSU by recruiting, retaining, and most importantly supporting graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, staff, and faculty members from underrepresented backgrounds.* AVDS achieves its mission by taking a two-pronged approach: working with those in power to change policies that uphold systemic and institutional racism, and building community in a grassroots fashion to improve the culture of inclusion.



AVDS advocates for change by meeting regularly with administrators and faculty to discuss and implement anti-racist policies. In late 2017, we were recognized by administrative leaders within the OHSU School of Medicine (SoM) for our on-campus advocacy work and asked to create [recommendations](#) for improving diversity and inclusion, which we presented in March 2018. The SoM has partially acted on some of our recommendations by creating a part-time Dean of Diversity position (Dr. Derick Du Vivier, FTE 0.3) and compiling the first annual diversity report. Additionally, the Chief Research Officer, with the Vollum Institute and the Department of Behavioral Neuroscience, internally funded a pilot [Neuroscience Postbaccalaureate](#) training opportunity (extramural funding pending). We have also built relationships with individual departments and programs by establishing liaisons, allowing our group to better understand and influence program/department racial equity policies, procedures, and culture and gather data about these initiatives. We hope that this data can be synthesized and utilized for best practices. We continue to engage with administrators through our new policy committee, and recently began creating a faculty coalition to cater to faculty needs in the DEI space.

To promote community-building, AVDS organizes several well-attended events each year to educate and engage with the OHSU community. We host a monthly happy hour; weekly book club discussions; monthly game nights; quarterly documentary showings; an annual invited speaker; and more. Additionally, AVDS is involved in recruitment events with most of the graduate research programs each year. We welcome each applicant who interviews (170+ recruits in 2020 alone) and offer our group as a resource.

AVDS was founded by four individuals. Nearly four years later, we have an executive board of eight members, five committees with a sixth in development, and over 40 active members. We frequently collaborate with a number of groups, including the SoM, the Vollum Institute, Graduate Student Organization, Women In Science PDX, the OHSU Black Employee Resource Group, OHSU Graduate Programs, the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, OnTrack, and *many* more. We receive regular funding from SoM, the Vollum Institute, and GSO. Our monthly newsletter has over 400 subscribers, and we are active on social media. We recently created and hosted a virtual community forum where our members presented on allyship and dismantling white supremacy, which was attended by over 250 people.

Our mission is far from over, but we hope that recent events have opened many eyes to a problem which we have recognized for years: that our institution, along with so many others, needs drastic change to break out of the holding pattern that has kept systemic racism alive for centuries. With our community supporters, we continue our efforts to dismantle systemic racism and white supremacy, and continue to work towards a better institution.