

**Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science
End of Year Report
2020-2021**



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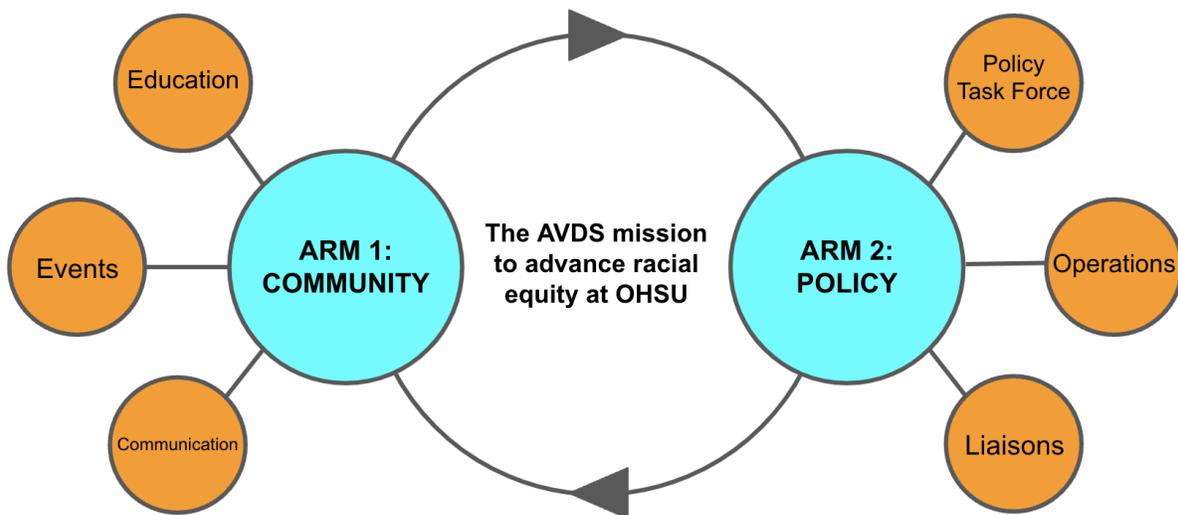
A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO AVDS

Our Mission

The Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science (AVDS) focuses on one central mission - to increase racial and ethnic equity within the research programs at Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) by recruiting, retaining, and most importantly, supporting graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, staff, and faculty members from **People Excluded based on Ethnicity or Race (PEER)** backgrounds.

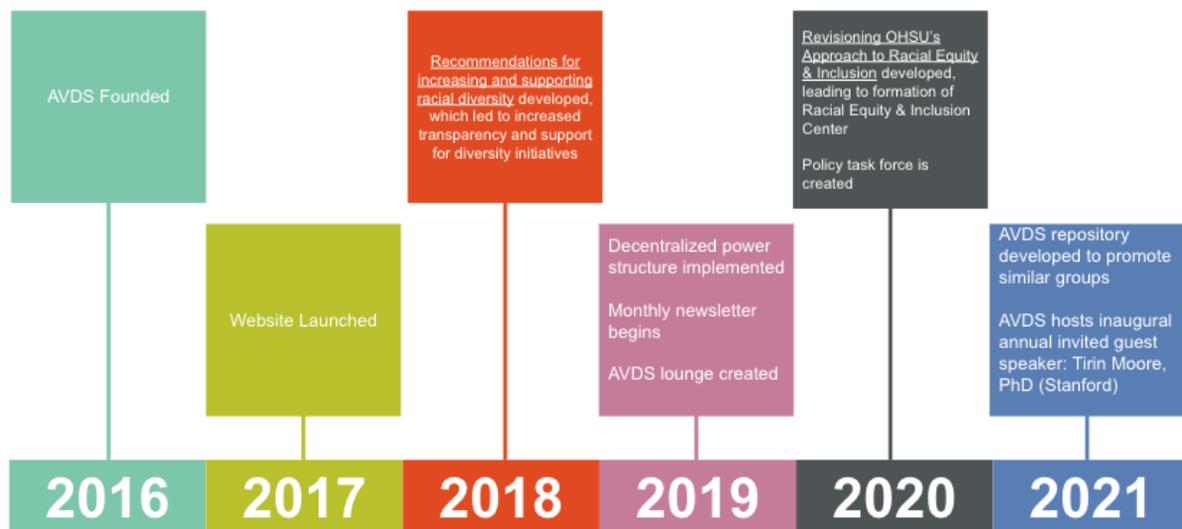
Our approach to addressing racial equity

AVDS takes a two-pronged approach to addressing racial equity, through **community building** and **policy change**. **Community building** is necessary to allow organic exposure to racial equity work that then fosters engagement. **Policy change** can be leveraged to build anti-racist systems and support grassroots culture shifts. Both approaches are essential components to racial equity work.



Timeline- A brief history of AVDS

Below is a timeline that summarizes the development and achievements of AVDS over time. For a more complete overview of how we were founded, how our group is structured to decentralize power, our work to date, and more, please refer to our inaugural [2019-2020 Annual Report and Summary](#).



AVDS 2020-2021 REPORT

AVDS Members 2020-2021

<p>Events</p> <p>Mateo Lopez Espejo* Alexandra Houser Dennis Weingarten</p>	<p>Policy</p> <p>George Burwood Robin Champieux* Kalene Dominguez - Savage* Lilli Klug Grace McCarthy Sean Molloy Karin Osterberg Jessica Parks Sierra Smith Brandon Wilder Alexis Young</p>	<p>Operations</p> <p>Eric Earl Anthony Galassi Mason Handford Dave Jacobs Omar Koita Ernesto Manzo Mollie Marr* AJ Mitchell* Luci Moore M. Kathrina Oñate Nithya Ramalingam Erica Hankins Regalo Nita Sridharan Gayle Stamos Sophia Weber</p>	<p>Communications</p> <p>Eleanor Battison Kim Engeln Amanda del Giacco Jennifer Jahncke Katherine Lehmann* Grace McCarthy Tania Miramontes Younes Noudeh*</p> <p>REI Liaisons</p> <p>Antoinette Foster Sarah Kissiwaa Letisha Wyatt</p> <p>Faculty Liaisons</p> <p>Catherine Morgans Kevin Wright</p>
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*Find out more about our 2020 - 2021 Board members on our [website](#).

Board Members 2020-2021

Zachary Schonrock - *Receptionist*
 Arielle Isakharov - *Secretary*
 Ozama Ismail - *Treasurer*
 Letisha Wyatt - *Historian*

Katy Lehmann, Younes Noudeh - *Communications Committee Chairs*
 Sweta Adkihary, Sarah Kissiwaa - *Education Committee Chairs*
 Mateo Lopez Espejo- *Events Committee Chair*
 Mollie Marr, AJ Mitchell - *Operations Committee Chairs*
 Robin Champieux, Kalene Dominguez-Savage - *Policy Committee Chairs*
 Letisha Wyatt, Antoinette Foster, Sarah Kissiwaa - *REI Liaisons*
 Catherine Morgans, Kevin Wright- *Faculty Liaisons*

Message from the Board

First and foremost, AVDS is immensely proud of our volunteers. You have all exuded an incredible amount of perseverance, patience, and care through these tumultuous times. We recognize that our volunteers provided educational opportunities for those wanting to become (better) allies and often had to field difficult questions. They also cultivated [brave spaces](#)¹ for BIPOC to discuss long-standing equity issues, many of which were exacerbated by the pandemic. Finally, they hosted community building events such as virtual game nights in order to provide a space for connection, play, and casual social interaction. We greatly appreciate the efforts these individuals put in while often dealing with their own hardships; these efforts have, in our opinion, bettered the OHSU community in many ways through simply being present. We also credit our decentralized structure, as it proved to be sturdy and steadfast through these successive years of societal turmoil. We feel prepared for the challenges ahead and ready for the work that will have to go into achieving the goals within our mission statement. We also look forward to holding in-person events, as well as re-establishing personal connections with our members and other like-minded OHSU communities.

2020 - 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Inaugural AVDS Elevate Award

The AVDS Elevate Award was created to honor the support of dedicated volunteers who critically contribute to creating a climate of inclusion and dismantling systemic racism at OHSU. AVDS acknowledges the emotional labor and personal sacrifice involved in actualizing racial equity in our institutions as well as the fact that this labor too often falls on the shoulders of minoritized and oppressed people without compensation. As such, the recipient of the award is publicly recognized and provided \$500 for their service. Our board members identify the recipient of this award based on nominations submitted by the OHSU community as an individual who has catalyzed positive change in cultivating a more equitable and inclusive environment within the research community. For more information please visit our website. Award recipients to date include:

2020: [Antoinette Foster](#), PhD, Director of Community Transformation, Vollum Racial Equity & Inclusion Center

2021: AJ Mitchell, PhD Candidate, OHSU Department of Behavioral Neuroscience

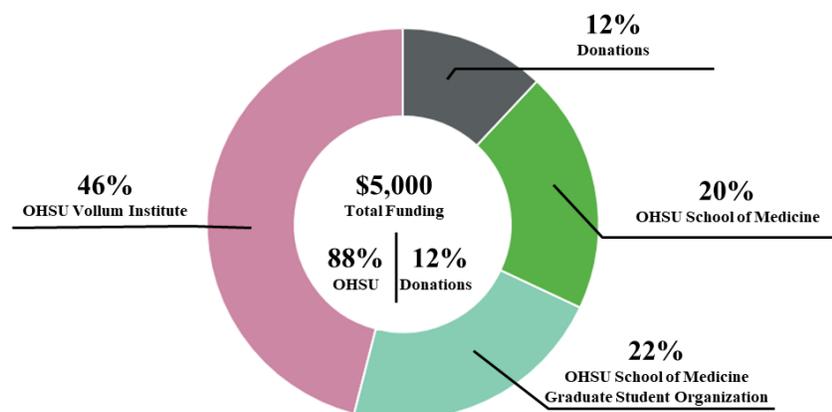
¹ Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: a new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice. In Landreman, L. (Ed.), *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators* (pp. 135-150). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

BUDGET and EXPENSES

We believe that an institutional/organizational budget is a *moral document*. AVDS aspires to spend our funds in thoughtful, transparent, and mission-aligned ways in an effort to provide resources that advance our steps towards community building and policy change. Information related to who we receive funds from and how we spend said funds are visualized then described below. Ozama Ismail is the current AVDS Treasurer. Please direct any questions to a4vdis@ohsu.edu.

Source of Funding

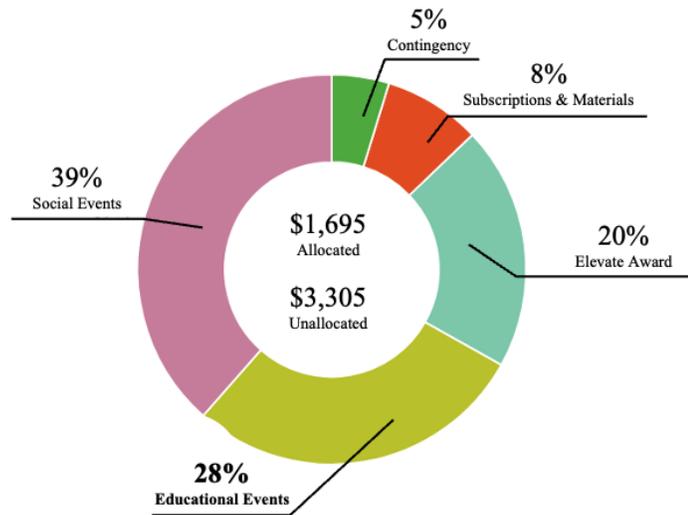
The majority of AVDS' 2020-2021 funding (46%) is allocated from the Vollum Institute at Oregon Health & Science University. Other sources of funding include: the OHSU School of Medicine Graduate Student Organization (GSO) (20%), OHSU School of Medicine (22%), and online donations (12%).



Use of Funding

COVID brought about many challenges during the past year. AVDS dealt with these uncertain times by adhering to our original allocations from our proposed budget, regardless of whether we were able to spend the amount. For example, since in-person events were largely canceled, AVDS did not spend a significant amount of the funds allocated for Social Events. In order to adapt all our activities to the virtual format, AVDS spent some funds on maintaining a Zoom Professional subscription. Currently, AVDS invests allocated but unspent funds in various projects focused on improving internal structures and systems.

(Use of Funding continued)



This year, AVDS used funds from the Vollum Institute to hire Ghanaian artist, [Dennis Mensah Bonsu](#) to paint an incredible six-by-four-foot mural (shown below) for the AVDS Lounge, a space where we hope to host social events in the future (please visit our website for more information about the artist and this piece). We also allocated some funds towards paying for a facilitator for a non-violent communication training course that we hope to offer in the following year. In other areas, AVDS was able to utilize 100% of originally allocated funds (i.e the Elevate Award). Percentages are based on the total amount of funds (\$5000).

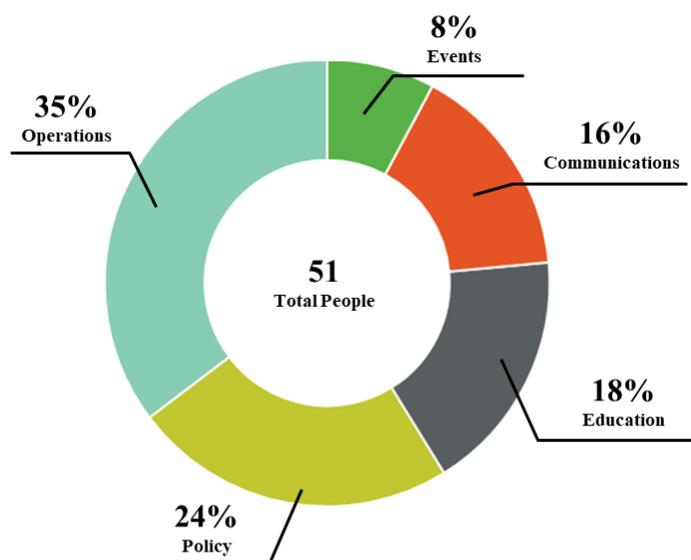


MAINTAINING COMMUNITY

AVDS works to build community in ways that create avenues for everyone to become involved, regardless of knowledge or experience. We believe that grassroots community engagement within safe spaces stimulate critical conversations regarding anti-racist education and structure. Within AVDS, we have developed a non-hierarchical structure where several committees are made up of representation from nearly all research positions at OHSU including staff, trainees, and faculty from several OHSU departments. Though our efforts were frequently hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated

modified operations, several of the AVDS committees persevered to keep community events alive via an online format. The next few sections aim to highlight efforts of our **Education**, **Events**, and **Communications Committees** related to community building at OHSU.

Committee Composition 2020-2021



Education Committee

The Education Committee provides and manages educational opportunities critical for deconstructing systemic oppression with a focus on understanding race/racism and its many manifestations. Highlights from this year include:

Annual Invited Speaker

The Education Committee hosted its inaugural annual invited speaker event this year, focusing on PEER researchers in STEM. We were fortunate to host [Dr. Tirin Moore](#) from Stanford University, who gave a wonderful talk about his research on the neural circuitry underlying fundamental perceptual and cognitive function. Dr. Moore also spent time meeting with students and sharing his experience as a successful PEER scientist.



AVDS Book Club

The Education Committee hosts a bimonthly club to provide a [brave space](#)¹ for discussing nuanced materials (books, articles, podcasts, etc) related to ongoing DEI history, work, or movements across the nation. This past year, the Education Committee co-hosted a book club event with [Women in Science PDX](#) reviewing the podcast [Nice White Parents](#). In another book club collaboration, the Education Committee teamed up with the AVDS Events committee to develop a book club specifically designed for program directors and incoming graduate students. The selected readings for this session pertained to the recruitment and retention of PEER students, as well as the disparity in grant funding for POC and women PIs. Attendees were also exposed to foundational concepts of anti-racism, with examples taken from AVDS' mission, structure, actions, and experiences.

Documentary Screenings

The Education Committee continued to collaborate with Events to host community building events. Facilitated by Dr. Sarah Kissawa, Dr. Sweta Adkhiary, and Mateo Lopez, the AVDS Education and Events Committees collaborated to host AVDS' first ever virtual event with the movie screening of *Ava DuVernay's 13th* for MLK day. This successful screening was followed by a screening of *Dolores*, the story of Chicana activist Dolores Huerta.

External Collaborations

In an effort to educate those involved in recruitment, the Education Committee collaborated with [Women in Science PDX](#) to host an event focused on increasing awareness of *Imposter Syndrome in Women of Color*. Here, discussions were centered around the voices of women of color in science who are or have previously experienced imposter syndrome, with the intent of providing them a space to discuss their experience, as well as how they overcame them. In addition, the Education Committee collaborated with the Black Employee Resource Group (BERG) and Center for Diversity & Inclusion (CDI) at OHSU to co-host five separate events for Black History Month.

Future Goals

AVDS is immensely proud of each of its volunteers, but especially proud of these collaborative efforts by the Education Committee. AVDS would like to thank the Education Committee for persevering through all of the hurdles brought about by COVID. The Education Committee aims to continue to pursue collaborations to build community and share expertise across OHSU. We are particularly excited to use the book club as an opportunity for collaboration with various [interest groups at OHSU](#) and are currently working with the Culturas Unidas ERG (CUERG) to host a book club event centering LatinX voices.

Events Committee

The Events Committee organizes regular social events that allow OHSU community members to form the personal connections and community empowerment required to engage with efforts to dismantle systemic racism. The majority of AVDS' regular social events organized by the Events Committee were put on hold during quarantine, so Events frequently redirected their efforts towards assisting with Education Committee projects in lieu of this hiatus.

Highlights from this year include:

- Reintroduced our popular AVDS Game Night in a virtual setting after a brief hiatus due to COVID.
- Organized AVDS' annual involvement with graduate program recruitment to provide information and personal perspectives on the experience of student life at OHSU and in Portland. We invite prospective students to send us questions that are then answered by current students who identify as URMs.
- Collaborated with the Education Committee to host a book club specifically designed for program directors and incoming graduate students as well as educational documentary screenings (see full description of these collaborations above).

Future Goals

The Events Committee will continue working to improve virtual events and get consistent attendance. We are hoping to restart in-person outdoor and distanced social gatherings and aim to energize and reward our volunteer base once in-person events are allowed again.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee shares news and events relating to AVDS through social media (Twitter, Instagram) and our [monthly newsletter](#), which allows us to share resources to those outside of the OHSU community. Some highlights from the year include:

Social Media

This year, we continued to grow the AVDS Twitter following and worked on creating more content for our Instagram. Follow us on [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#).



@A4VDiS



@avds_ohsu

Ongoing Projects

We continued to maintain our monthly newsletter and collaborate closely with the Events and Education Committees to boost involvement. [Click here](#) to subscribe to our monthly newsletter and check out our [newsletter archive](#) on our website. This year, we reached a total

number of 442 subscribers. We also continued to keep our [website](#) up to date with new resources.

Future Goals

The Communications Committee will work closely with the Education Committee and Events Committee to spread the information about upcoming events as well as educational resources. We also hope to continually spotlight the achievements of PEERs in the OHSU community.

POLICY and OPERATIONS

Addressing formal policies and structures that uphold systemic racism is the second facet of our two-pronged approach towards racial equity at OHSU. Like all large organizations, OHSU integrates formal policies into programs, departments, centers, and institutes. Any policy decisions must be approached from a racial equity framework in order to avoid unintentionally implementing inequitable policies and practices. Examples of such inequities include disparities in the recruitment of faculty, staff, and students; lack of financial prioritization in addressing systemic racism; and pay inequities across racial groups. When we use a racial equity lens to evaluate our actions at all levels, many areas of improvement emerge. The combined efforts of our **Policy Committee, Operations Committee, and Faculty Liaisons** carry out AVDS' policy work:

Policy Committee

Originally established as a task force in July of 2020, the now Policy Committee works with volunteers and advocates to address and increase racial equity within the institution. Our primary goal is to highlight issues and provide evidence-based approaches that could be used to encourage various departments to actively integrate a racial equity framework into their policy decisions. We hope that moving away from models that rely solely on the efforts of volunteers and institutional diversity centers will result in more sustainable and impactful efforts towards addressing racial equity.

Inaugural Year

During our first full year as an established committee, we focused on defining our roles and responsibilities, spent time building our understanding of administrative structure, and

identifying key stakeholders/decision makers to contact to optimize delivery of policy guidance.

Achievements this year include:

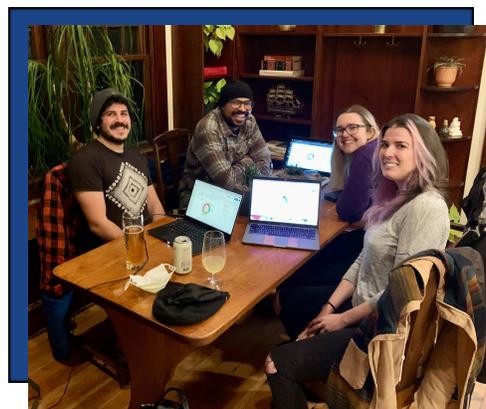
- Development of committee structure and objectives with regard to policy appraisal within OHSU
- Defining a new workflow practice to produce our standardized policy factsheets
- Drafting a policy template form for the AVDS Steering Committee to communicate our recommendations to persons of interest
- Establishing lines of communication with administrative leadership at OHSU
- Periodic strategic meetings to make decisions on which policy issues to prioritize

Future Goals

In the future we plan to pilot and optimize the official Policy Recommendation form in addressing financial disparities and support for economically disadvantaged students, with an emphasis on how lack of and inadequate financial support impacts PEER graduate students. We also want to work with partners and other AVDS committees to discuss problematic policies within OHSU, address issues within graduate programs retention strategies, and establish new liaison relationships.

Operations Committee

The Operations Committee is responsible for the internal operation of AVDS and using data-driven approaches to assess our impact at OHSU. In addition, Operations works with departmental and student group liaisons with similar interests in racial diversity and equitable change at OHSU in an effort to develop a cohesive voice towards equitable change. Our main focus this year includes the following:



Survey Development and Standardization

The Operations Committee developed membership surveys to assess the internal climate of AVDS. These surveys will be used to assess how AVDS is operating internally, so that we can identify areas for improvement.

AVDS Internal Data Repository

To more efficiently compile and visualize data collected to track the development of AVDS as an organization, we developed the AVDS Internal Data Repository as a central location for AVDS internal data collected at various events like book clubs, AVDS invited speakers, and happy hours.

AVDS Resource Repository

In addition to the internal data repository, Operations has developed a resource repository for other organizations that may want to adopt our model. Driven by requests from students across the country, and spearheaded by founder Dr. Lucille Moore, the AVDS Resource Repository serves as a central location with documentation about AVDS structure as well as FAQ about common obstacles faced by AVDS and how they overcame them.

Future Goals

The Operations Committee will develop internal practices and organizational standards that increase AVDS' ability to support racial equity efforts at OHSU. One challenge we aim to address is to develop flexible data collection mechanisms that can adjust to a society that may constantly fluctuate between in-person and virtual event attendance. Current efforts are focused on standardizing data collection through effectively designed Qualtrics surveys for events as well as other general feedback.

Faculty Liaisons

The Faculty Liaisons were formed to provide faculty members an opportunity to be involved with AVDS and a space to collaborate around issues that they are in a unique position to address. The overarching goals of this committee are to: a) identify barriers to racial diversity in the faculty through conversations with members' home departments and programs, and b) learn about white supremacy culture and racial equity in the professor-student relationship, and recruit faculty participation in the racial justice work of AVDS to help form and advocate for policy improvements.

Inaugural Year

This year was the first year of this liaison. Our activities to date include:

- Organized monthly meetings for AVDS faculty members
- Creation of an anti-racism guide for graduate admission committees, titled "Bias in Graduate Admissions," in collaboration with the REI Center
- Wrote a letter to NIH in response to an official [Request for Information](#) on advancing racial equity in the biomedical research workforce
- Began to establish a database of departmental REI committees including their structure, goals, and strategies

WHAT'S NEXT FOR AVDS?

AVDS has focused on dismantling racial inequities within communities across OHSU, placing a specific focus on graduate research programs within the School of Medicine. We recognize that circumstances surrounding COVID-19 renewed attention to the ways in which racial inequities and white supremacist structures are embedded into US culture and policy. AVDS aims to ensure that this focus doesn't lose its momentum as communities across OHSU shift into whatever the new normal may be. To do this, AVDS plans to continue to introduce policy initiatives that hone in on specific issues facing PEERs at OHSU. We will also focus on strengthening our internal community by coming together to understand how the needs of volunteer members may have changed post-COVID.

Over the upcoming academic year, we will continue to provide educational spaces for the OHSU community that focus on relevant and nuanced materials related to anti-racist structures and equitable advancements for PEERs in STEM. We hope this report inspires you to join us in our future endeavors toward racial equity at OHSU. Please use the links below to sign up to volunteer or email us if you have specific questions. Thank you.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

We are always looking for more dedicated individuals to join our team. Please fill out our [interest form](#) and we will get back to you!

If you have limited time, you can also keep up with us by [signing up for our newsletter](#) or help our cause by [donating](#)!

Email us @ a4vdis@ohsu.edu

Follow us on Twitter @a4vdis or Instagram @[avds_ohsu](#)

References

Alliance for Visible Diversity in Science. (2020, July 9). Revisioning OHSU's approach to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion. Zenodo. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3937800>

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