

# Unique Perspectives

Celebrating Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in the University of Missouri's School of Medicine | Volume 1, Issue 5

## Happy Holidays!

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### **Contributor's Notes:**

Brought to you by the School of Medicine Faculty and Staff Diversity and Inclusion Committees. To be disseminated 5 times per year.

-To submit diversity and inclusion news and events, please e-mail: [folkerts@health.missouri.edu](mailto:folkerts@health.missouri.edu) and [wesslerk@missouri.edu](mailto:wesslerk@missouri.edu)

-To find out more about what's going on in the University of Missouri School of Medicine's diversity and inclusion efforts, go to:

<https://medicine.missouri.edu/about/office-diversity-and-inclusion>

## ***In the Spotlight:*** Maike Krenz, MD



*Maike Krenz is an associate professor in the division of Medical Pharmacology and Physiology*

### ***What is your definition of diversity?***

To me, diversity is celebrating the differences between us. Importantly, diversity is key to building a vibrant community, as sharing experiences from all walks of life stimulates out-of-the-box thinking and creativity, and can enrich everything we do.

### ***How do you think diversity and inclusion relate to one another?***

Diversity without inclusion is meaningless. Only if we value all different viewpoints, experiences, cultures, backgrounds, and interests, can everyone actively participate and feel that they belong.

### ***Describe how you help create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive as a faculty member in your department.***

I strive to be fully present in all interactions and to always pay attention to what others can bring to the table. Some days, I'm less successful at this, and social distancing has added a whole new layer of challenges! But that makes me even more

determined to look out for opportunities to learn from others, reach out, make space for marginalized voices in group discussions, and amplify or highlight the contributions of others. This is important to me in all aspects of my life – at home with family, talking to friends, working as a team in my basic research lab, teaching graduate courses or facilitating PBL groups, and in committee meetings.

### ***How do you encourage others to honor the uniqueness of each individual?***

My goal is to become a role model in how to apply kindness and curiosity to everyone and communicate how much I appreciate my co-workers' talents and expertise. I hope that by sharing my journey (including the large room for improvement I see for myself), I can help and encourage others. I've made it my mission to actively seek out and organize opportunities for conversations about difficult topics such as race and inequity. With practice, I've come to enjoy leaning into the potential discomfort and driving a deeper conversation, and I love getting to know and connecting with all the strong advocates and allies in our SOM community.



*Barbara Bannister, executive assistant to the chair in the Dept. of Surgery, entered the SOM Staff Advisory Committee's Workspace Decorating Contest. Pictured above is her theme, "Holidays of the World." Winners announced the week of Dec. 21st.*

## Activity Highlights

**Week of Dialogue**~ To provide an opportunity to continue conversations around diversity and inclusion and the impact of recent events on our nation, MU Health Care, in partnership with the School of Medicine, held a *Week of Dialogue* November 17-20. During these four sessions, members of the healthcare system and the School of Medicine discussed a range of topics. Members of our community served on panels to discuss *Elevating the Marginalized* and *Positioning for Allyship*. Our MU Health Care and School of Medicine leaders held a session using the Watch Night speech, *Breathe, Push* by Valarie Kaur, to talk about their current diversity work and plans for the future as we continue to push forward as a community. On the last day of the series, the Employee Resource Group leaders joined together with our Student leaders to discuss their visions and the wonderful work they continue to do to strengthen our community. This year has been a challenging one for many reasons. Nevertheless, the MU Health Care System continues to demonstrate a commitment to continuing dialogue helping us move forward toward a working environment that is inclusive and equitable in its practices. Please stay tuned for upcoming events in the new year!

**FCM Colwill Seminar**~ The African American Heritage Trail in Columbia has been years in the making. On December 2nd, the Department of Family and Community Medicine's Colwill Seminar presented via Zoom, *The Impact of the African American Trail in Columbia, MO* featuring Columbia treasure and MU graduate, Barbra A.B. Horrell, MS. Horrell narrated an hour-long discussion with SOM faculty and staff about the important history of the AAHT, including her experiences growing up in segregated Columbia and attending MU as one of 23 Black students enrolled at the time she was here. The AAHT project has been led by the Sharp End Heritage Committee along with help from community leaders and local sponsors of the markers throughout the trail. To view the map and marker locations on the AAHT, click [here](#). Horrell's Zoom presentation can be viewed [here](#). Scroll down to video #17 in the Colwill Seminars list.

**Indigenizing Healthcare Presentation**~ The College of Arts and Science along with MizzouEd-Bridge hosted a Zoom series called *Indigenous Futurism 2020* in November in recognition of National Native American Heritage Month. The School of Medicine's, Melissa Lewis, PhD, in the Dept. of Family and Community Medicine, was invited to speak on *Indigenizing Healthcare* on November 4th. Despite legal obligations by our US government to provide healthcare to Native Americans and Native Alaskans, they suffer major health inequities and a lack of access to comprehensive health care. Dr. Lewis works diligently with indigenous communities and healthcare professionals by creating training and educational programs to improve and strengthen the partnerships within these groups.



Melissa Lewis, PhD

## A Look Back...

In 1988, an ad hoc committee was appointed to review the status of minority affairs at the University of Missouri School of Medicine. The Assistant Dean, Edith Mitchell, became chairperson of the task force. At the time the task force was formed, the minority population of Missouri, defined as Black and Native American, was approximately 12.8%. Nevertheless, these same minority populations comprised only 2.7% of the physician workforce in Missouri at that time. The University of Missouri School of Medicine was itself observing a drop in its minority enrollment with four minority students in the first year class in 1986 and only two in 1987. To address this underrepresentation, the ad hoc committee made the recommendation to the School of Medicine leadership to develop and implement policies and procedures to help change the student population composition with the goal of improving the educational environment for all students.

The long-term action plan included four parts: (i) pre-matriculation, which involved looking at ways to increase applicants from minorities through intervention at high school and college levels, with plans for financial assistance, (ii) matriculation, which involved the establishment of formal activities, such as skills programs, tutorial assistance, task preparation sessions and financial assistance, (iii) graduate medical education, which involved examining ways to increase minority residents and fellows at the School of Medicine, and (iv) faculty development, which involved providing adequate role models and support systems to retain and recruit minority faculty.

Today, the School of Medicine continues to make great strides to support and increase the number of underrepresented minorities in its educational community. Over the past three years, an average of 17% of the first year incoming classes were underrepresented minority students and an average of 32% in each incoming class identified themselves as a member of a minority group.

The School of Medicine continues to implement and grow its pipeline programs starting with 5th grade students in the Caleb Project and Science Club and extending forward to students at the undergraduate level with programs such as MedPrep and Pathways to Success (PAWS). Although these programs and active recruitment measures have made a significant difference in our educational environment, there is still work to be done as we continue to work to recruit, retain and graduate a diverse student population and strive to make similar advances in our resident, fellow and faculty populations. The commitment of our leadership to the creation of a diverse academic community places these goals within reach.



**Christine Heath** is a Project Manager- Quality Improvement in the Department of Family and Community Medicine. To get to know Christine better, we asked her these 5 questions:

## Give Me 5!

### 1. If you could live anywhere or do anything, where/what would it be?

I would love to live on a boat and just sail around. I like to meet new people, see new places, and try different cuisines, but still go “home” at night.

### 2. What is your favorite food or restaurant?

I haven’t tried many foods I *don’t* like, but I think I’d have to say my favorite is comfort food like fried chicken, mashed potatoes and my grandmother’s biscuits and chocolate pie.

### 3. What is a favorite cultural/family tradition you celebrate every year?

Each October (except this year) my family has a reunion. All the descendants of my great, great grandparents (and their nine children) are invited to the family’s century farm. Most years 100+ relatives show up for delicious food, a hayride and music.

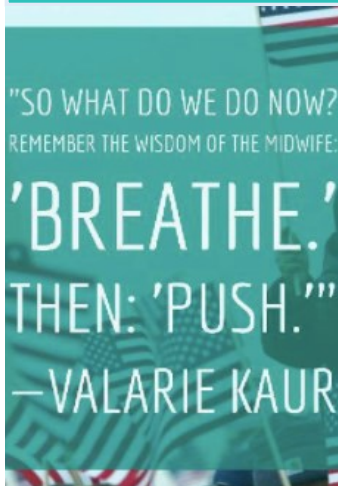
### 4. FUN FACT!

I still wear children’s shoe sizes. Needless to say, I have a terrible time shopping for dress shoes!

### 5. If you could make one change in the world, what would it be?

Everyone would learn that “different” doesn’t mean better or worse.

## Brain Food



For a myriad of reasons, the world is looking forward to closing 2020 and leaving it far behind us. It’s been a year that has challenged our patience, adversity, hope and empathy. The year 2021 could be a new beginning, giving us yet another chance to do things right, differently, better. Valarie Kaur has many titles including lawyer, civil rights activist, interfaith organizer, award-winning filmmaker,

educator and author. She is also a mother, a daughter, an American of Sikh faith and a firm believer in a world where everyone, no matter what your religion, skin color or background may be, is treated equally and with understanding. In Washington D.C. on New Year’s Eve in 2016, Valarie’s inspirational six-minute prayer for America, also known as the *Breathe, Push* video, reminded us that together, we can work to create a better world for future generations— a promising future that practices true “revolutionary love,” to all of it’s people. Let’s take her encouraging message into our hearts for the new year ahead. Valarie Kaur also debuted her first book in June of this year called, “*See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love.*”

The *Breathe, Push* video can be viewed [here](#).

## Calendar of Events~

Upcoming events on campus and in the Columbia community



\*WIMMS next First Friday Empower Lunch is, *Developing a growth mindset*, by Carol Dweck on **January 8th**, 12-1pm via Zoom. E-mail [Kate Wessler](#) to RSVP. [Click here](#) for more info about WIMMS.

\***Thoughtful Thursdays** are coming in February! This is a joint effort between MU Health Care and the School of Medicine. Join us every third Thursday of each month for a respectful conversation on difficult topics surrounding race and inequities that face our society and healthcare system. More details coming soon.

\***UPDATE!** The 24th annual Columbia Values Diversity celebration presented by the City of Columbia’s Office of Cultural Affairs will be held **virtually** on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, **January 18th, 2021**. Time TBD. [Click here](#) for more info.

*The holiday season can mean something different to each of us. Below is a list of several holidays that are celebrated by many different cultures and religions from around the world during this time of year. Click on each to learn more!*

[Diwali](#)  
[Saint Nicholas Day](#)  
[The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe](#)  
[Saint Lucy’s Day](#)  
[Hanukkah](#)  
[Las Posadas](#)  
[Christmas](#)  
[Epiphany or Three Kings Day](#)  
[Boxing Day](#)  
[Winter Solstice](#)  
[Kwanzaa](#)  
[Omisoka](#)  
[New Year](#)

