

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

### MEMBERS

Sonali Paul, MD, FACC, Chair  
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Suha Abushamma, MD  
Tonya L. Adams, MD  
Paula G. Adamson, MD  
Patricia Ajayi-Fox, MD  
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Mohammad F. Ali, MD, FACC  
Mazer R. Ally, MD, FACC  
Fray M. Arroyo-Mercado, MD  
Aliana M. Bofill, MD  
Sindhu Chadalawada, MD  
Janice Cheong, MD  
Kalpit H. Devani, MD  
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Sujaata Dwadasi, MD  
Corlan O. Eboh, MD  
Chukwunonso B Ezeani, MD  
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Samita Garg, MD  
Yasmin A. Gerais, MD

Damanpreet K. Grewal, MD  
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Averill Guo, MD  
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Barani S. Mayilvaganan, MD, FACC  
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Than Nguyen, DO  
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Kashif R. Osmani, MD

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Raj Jessica Thomas, DO  
Sophie Trujillo, DO  
Shifa Umar, MD  
Kenneth J. Vega, MD, FACC  
Christopher D. Velez, MD  
Christina P. Wang, MD  
Bushra Zia, MD



*Sonali Paul, MD, FACC*

### RESPONSIBILITIES AS STATED IN THE ACG BYLAWS

This Committee shall be responsible for heightening awareness of issues and strategies related to diversity, equity and inclusion by which the College can better serve the interests of all members and their patients. The Committee will work collaboratively with other committees in providing input through a healthy equity lens on programming such as educational, research and community engagement activities conducted by the College. This includes serving as an advisory group to the College on health disparity-related issues among racial, ethnic, gender, LGBTQ+ and other minority groups that the College can be a leader in addressing through programming for all members and patients. The Committee will also promote and advocate for inclusive representation in College leadership and work with other committees to increase participation, visibility, and advancement of members from underrepresented backgrounds in College-related activities such as appointments as faculty of ACG educational programs.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To heighten awareness of issues and strategies related to diversity, equity and inclusion by which the College can best serve the interests of all members and their patients.
2. To work collaboratively with other committees in providing input through a healthy equity lens on programming such as educational, research and community engagement activities conducted by the College. This includes serving as an advisory group to the College on health disparity-related issues among racial, ethnic, gender, LGBTQ+ and other minority groups that the College can be a leader in addressing through programming for all members and patients.
3. To promote and advocate for inclusive representation in College leadership and work with other committees to increase participation, visibility, and advancement of members from underrepresented backgrounds in College-related activities such as appointments as faculty of ACG educational programs.
4. To help educate students from minority populations and underserved groups about careers in medicine and gastroenterology, through outreach, mentorship and research opportunities.

## **COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee continues to work harmoniously to fulfill its mission to inform the College about health care issues among diverse population groups through a variety of programs:

### **DEI URIM Awareness Months**

The DEI URIM Awareness Months Co-Leads along with subcommittee members put together month-long, weekly spotlights highlighting individuals/organizations that have enriched the field of gastroenterology for the following:

- Black History Month: [gi.org/2025/01/31/black-history-month-2025](https://gi.org/2025/01/31/black-history-month-2025)
- Women's History Month: [gi.org/2025/03/06/womens-history-month-2025](https://gi.org/2025/03/06/womens-history-month-2025)

### **ACG URIM Luncheon**

The DEI Committee will be holding the second annual "ACG URIM Luncheon: A Time to Shine – Underrepresented in Medicine" on Sunday, October 26, 2024, from 12:20 pm – 1:35 pm, in Phoenix during the Annual Meeting. The luncheon will be led by Drs. Lanla Conteh, MD, MPH, MBA and Dominique Howard, MD, FACP. Panelists will include Drs. Darwin Conwell, Renee Williams, Kira Newman, and Freddy Caldera. The Committee looks forward to welcoming attendees to this exciting learning luncheon which will focus on a variety of career paths, mitigating and overcoming unique obstacles faced by URIMs and honing the art and skill of networking.

### **Summer Scholars Program**

The Summer Scholars Program is a formalized mentorship and clinical research program designed to help increase representation of underrepresented groups in medicine in academic gastroenterology careers. The program is an 8 to 10-week structured clinical research experience for medical students in the U.S. from underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups. Three students are chosen from the pool of applicants, paired with research mentors who share similar clinical research interests in the fields of gastroenterology and hepatology, and awarded a \$5,000 stipend. At the end of the program, the students are required to submit a progress report and an abstract to a local, regional, or national conference.

The Summer Scholars Program subcommittee, led by Dr. Shifa Umar, selected the following recipients for the 2025 program:

- Sunita Brimmer (Sam Houston State University – College of Osteopathic Medicine); Mentor: Eric D. Shah, MD, MBA, FACP (University of Michigan)
- Benedicte Deshommes (Frank H. Netter School of Medicine – Quinnipiac University); Mentor: Natalee S. Campbell, MD (Mayo Clinic – Scottsdale)
- Kiona Nowlin (Norton College of Medicine – SUNY Upstate Medical University) Mentor: Kajali Mishra, MD (Cook County Hospital – Chicago)

### **Prescriptions for Success Program**

The Prescriptions for Success Program will be held at Phoenix Bioscience High School in Phoenix, on Tuesday, October 28. The ACG Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Healthcare Scholarships will be awarded after the program and consists of an award of \$1,000 for up to three students who are interested in higher education and a career focused on healthcare.

### **Leonidas Berry Health Equity Research Award (HERA)**

The Committee partners with the ACG Institute's LE&E Center on the Leonidas Berry Health Equity Research Award (HERA). The 2025 recipient, Monica Tincopa, of the University of California San Diego, received a two-year award of \$75,000 (\$50k in year-one and \$25k in year-two based on project progress) and will be researching "Advancing Health Equity for Hispanic Adults With MASLD Through Patient-Focused, Stakeholder-Informed, Tailored, Non-Invasive Screening, Risk Stratification, and Treatment." Applications for 2026 are due by December 1, 2025.

### **DEI Virtual Grand Rounds**

Dr. Christopher Velez, MD will be moderating a Virtual Grand Rounds on August 7, 2025, from Noon – 1 pm EST to highlight the work that has been done under the Leonidas Berry Health Equity Research Award type as well as cover opportunities and methods on funding health equity research.