SNEB Committed and Engaged

In the past 3 years, we have strengthened the mission and values of SNEB to more clearly express what we believe, including refining our equity values. Following the murder of George Floyd and recognizing the police violence against Black people and other people of color, we recommitted to racial justice in our 2020 SNEB Statement on Addressing Racial Injustice and outlined action steps. During the 2020 SNEB conference, an open discussion about equity included 200 participants, signaling member interest in further action. The 2021 SNEB conference, Raising Reliance and Resilience, included keynotes and sessions speakers that spoke to reliance between people in keynotes and sessions speakers that included 200 participants, signaling member interest in further action. The 2021 SNEB conference, Raising Reliance and Resilience, included keynotes and sessions speakers that spoke to reliance between people in keynotes and sessions speakers that included 200 participants, signaling member interest in further action.

As the internal work of SNEB Board of Directors and members continued, I invited Susan Stephenson-Martin, chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) standing committee to talk about the efforts of this past year and our vision for the immediate future.

Can you talk about how this DEI work has evolved?

After recognizing Black violence by police, SNEB responded, and the internal work by the board was initiated. This birthed 2 major actions; the first was formalizing DEI as a lens of our strategic plan, which had never been done. The second action was to move the DEI subcommittee to a standing committee within the board of directors (BOD), recognizing the significant work ahead and dedicating efforts to bring the SNEB membership along the continuum of equity change.

How does leadership, including the DEI committee, address this continuum of change with concrete deliverables?

DEI training is now included in the BOD orientation for new members. In our BOD meetings, racial equity and diversity are discussed in our leadership tasks and review of strategic planning activities. Most recently, the DEI committee vetted our DEI statement through the Advisory Committee on Public Policy (ACPP), which is a very transparent process that follows our policies and procedures and includes representation from all divisions.

As an example of the impact of these changes to our BOD deliberations, we have been discussing the barriers that some members have in participating in our annual conference. For the past several years, we have acknowledged the needs of low- and middle-income countries and offered adjusted rates. In our recent meeting, we realized that Indigenous Peoples are recognized nations within the United States and have similar economic barriers for attending the conference. With this consideration, there are adjusted rates for both categories starting this year.

What are the deliverables to members?

This year, the Sustainable Food Systems Division invited the DEI committee to partner in weekly discussion groups during the 21-day Racial Equity Challenge. While SNEB members were specifically invited to this challenge since 2020, this was the first year to provide members a private space to discuss the topics. The resources remain available to our members throughout the year for their personal development.

To support our transparent and deliberate process, we will have a roundtable at the 2022 SNEB conference business meeting to discuss the DEI statement. We are also planning a webinar this year to present the continuum toward becoming an anti-racist multicultural organization to members, as a framework for members to assess our progress. Lastly, we are developing a process for a resource repository so that research, nutrition communication, nutrition education, and practice can benefit. This repository would reflect our own regions where we practice.

What message does the DEI committee want to communicate?

We need to have membership understand that this is not a 1-stop, and this is a committee that's going to evolve with whatever is happening in the world and within our organization. We would like this to be a continuous thread throughout our organization, including the board, our divisions, and members, to the roots on the ground in our profession. This demonstrates our commitment as an organization to take up the hard charge. We are building the foundation, involving membership, and will be providing more opportunities for feedback and accountability by the membership.

What lies ahead for the DEI committee and SNEB?

We recognize that it is our members that are driving the necessary changes, and it is their involvement that will sustain change. It's important to provide spaces for membership discussions, such as forums, so members continue to move us forward, we respond to the changing world and our organization moves along the continuum. We want to be aware of pitfalls and barriers and address these as they come up, both
internally and externally. We will encourage members to help build a robust resource repository.

We have not addressed gender identities and issues. We consider that people have the privilege to identify themselves as who they are, how they want to be addressed. We have not discussed how this might be reflected in our organization.

Importantly, we want to recognize that it’s more beneficial for us to work on the continuum and focus on moving forward. As we recognize our progression across the continuum, we become more aware as an organization of how DEI topics and issues within a nation impact our society. We want tools for those in our profession to be self-aware of biases and issues and to be more inclusive. So, if I am a member, not only am I part of us, but I see us moving up and I know I have a place to make myself an even better professional to my constituents, because I have all these tools. I can speak to my students, I can understand this concept better, or I have the resources that I can help provide to other entities.

Thank you for your work as the first chair and to the DEI Committee for their work during this, our inaugural year. We appreciate your careful deliberations in moving us forward with transparency and authenticity.

With submission of this editorial, comes the news of the deadliest mass shooting in 2021; 13 people were shot, at least 10 murdered, by an 18-year-old White male who crossed state lines to find a concentration of Black Americans at a supermarket in Albany, New York. Given the trail of evidence he left, there is no doubt that this was a hate crime. My deepest condolences to the family and friends of these workers, customers, and the Albany community.

We must do more. Racism flourishes in small and large spaces in society. The efforts to dismantle racism must always be greater than the efforts to retain it. SNEB efforts available to members include the following opportunities: 1) resources from the 21-day racial equity habit challenge are available all year; take the challenge as your personal journey and commit to the time; 2) participate in the summer DEI webinar; 3) answer the call for resources to build a robust repository; 4) attend the conference and participate in the roundtable and talk with leaders to make your voice heard. SNEB is small and mighty—we make change happen, together.

REFERENCES