

Actions for Inclusivity in Scholarly Communities: A Working Guide

This document aims to provide practical, action-based guidance to professional societies across academia who want to enhance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)¹ in their organizations. The action items offered in this document intentionally focus on creating and maintaining a positive climate of inclusivity rather than on "policing" failures, though we name and encourage action to correct such failures when necessary, in a spirit of speaking truth with kindness to advance effective conversations and change.

The document was initially developed by Board members of [ReMeDHe](#); it was then refined to include feedback and recommendations from a group of scholars with shared commitments to DEIB in professional societies. We consider this to be a living document and we invite suggestions for additions or edits to keep the guide relevant and useful. Please contact upsonsaia@oxy.edu with any feedback.

WHY INCLUSIVITY MATTERS

Professional societies and organizations are becoming more aware of the crucial need to engage and advance DEIB measures in their organizations for many reasons, including:

- DEIB measures enable full participation of scholars independent of their abilities (health, mental, or physical) and identities (age, ethnicity and race, neurodiversity, gender identity and embodiment, sexual orientation) and circumstances (socio-economic status, career and employment status, institutional affiliation), etc. As such, they contribute to intellectual excellence, innovation in the field, and a thriving scholarly community. Fuller participation of scholars who have been historically excluded or marginalized lays the groundwork for a more robust academic enterprise because equality and excellence go hand-in-hand: greater inclusivity makes for better scholarship.
- DEIB measures lay the groundwork for a healthy *future* of the field because when junior scholars from historically excluded or marginalized communities see role models in the field, they are better able to envision a place for themselves in the field.
- DEIB measures that seek to reverse policies and practices that have historically excluded or marginalized scholars from academia can be regarded as reparations for past harms.
- DEIB measures signal a regard for the dignity and value of all scholars, and a commitment to their individual well-being and flourishing. Moreover, they aim to provide all scholars the conditions in which they can do their best work.

¹ Throughout this guide, we use "diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging" (DEIB) to refer to an underlying value for all people (grounded in human dignity as well as appreciation for what we as individuals contribute to the collective), and a commitment to and practices related to equitable access, fair treatment, and conditions that underwrite personal and intellectual flourishing. In short, the structures and culture that convey to all members of the professional society that they belong and that they matter.

ACTION ITEMS FOR PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES SEEKING TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE

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1. Leadership structures:

- In the application or nomination process for leaders of professional society include **selection criteria related to DEIB**. Ask applicants to **articulate a plan for enhancing DEIB efforts**, and/or ask applicants/nominators to provide **evidence of their past DEIB work**.
- Create **standing committees** to devote attention to the unique interests and needs of particular subgroups (e.g., standing committees on women/GNB scholars, scholars with disabilities, LGBTQIA scholars, scholars of color, etc.). Ensure that these standing committees have access to resources and power.
 - Regarding access to **resources**: for example, an annual budget; for example, some form of remuneration for standing committee leadership (such as a stipend, waived conference fees, covering hotel costs at annual meetings, etc.)
 - Regarding access to **power**: for example: a member of each standing committee serves as a full voting member of the Board in order to represent their constituency's interests and needs
- Evaluate the implications of the **process by which leadership slots are filled** (e.g., nominations, appointments), especially how these processes might privilege majority interests and/or replicate the scholars in the majority and/or create space for non-majority interests and scholars.

- Evaluate the implications of the **term lengths for leadership positions** (e.g., Are they long enough to allow the leadership to make real changes? Are they so long that they concentrate power in the hands of a few for an overly long period of time?).
- When **collecting demographic data**, provide multiple options to reflect a range of self-descriptors and provide an option for members to use identity terms they prefer.
- For full transparency and for goal-setting and planning purposes, provide **annual reports** on the demographics of their Board members, society membership, conference attendees, conference presenters, authors in professional society publications, etc. When reporting demographic data, **use the terms members' choose for themselves**.
- **Make public professional societies' budgets and spending**; and **periodically assess** budgets and spending (with the full membership) to discern if they accurately reflect the society's values and priorities.
- In general, professional society leadership should strive for **consistency** related to and **transparent communication** about their processes and decisions.
- Professional societies should **create a process and timeframe by which they assess their current leadership structures, and adjust as needed**. This assessment and realignment should include **ways for society members to safely provide feedback about the current state-of-affairs and contribute to formulating solutions**. And this assessment should clearly articulate a timeline for changes to be made, who will be in charge of the changes, and how the professional society will be held accountable for following through with their plan.

2. Membership in professional societies and pathways into the field:

- **Devise strategies to make the society's programs more accessible**. For example:
 - **Fundraise or allocate a portion of the operating budget** for discounted membership fees, discounted conference registration fees, travel grants, childcare costs and lost wages while at the conferences, etc. for members with limited financial means.
 - To account for scholars whose participation is dependent on financial support: **pair the application process for financial support before and/or with the call for papers and pair the notification of funds received with paper acceptance**.
- Create **early pathways for entry** into the field. For example:
 - Create grants for undergraduate and masters level students who are underrepresented in the field to attend professional conferences in order to expose them to work in the field, orient them to various graduate programs, to build cohorts that can serve as peer support and community as they progress through graduate training.
 - **Form partnerships** with national or international programs (e.g., Upward Bound), and/or academic institutions (e.g., historically black colleges and universities) to create opportunities for undergraduate students to engage with the professional society. For

example, a mentoring program (undergraduates paired with graduate students or faculty), scholarships for prospective scholars to attend annual meetings, poster or presentation sessions for undergraduate attendees at annual meetings, etc.

- **Solicit input from society members** to identify additional ways to make entry into the field easier and on how to enable prospective scholars to participate/contribute at levels appropriate to their educational level.
- **Form partnerships** with coalitions and working groups representing historically excluded or marginalized scholars (e.g., Classicists/Ancient Historians of color, CripAntiquity, Women's Classical Caucus, Sportula, etc.) on **programming and resources**.
 - Devise partnerships and collaboration that are **mutually beneficial** (rather than exploiting the time and labor of underrepresented scholars).
 - When professional societies seek consultation from and collaboration with such coalitions, there should be a clear expectation that they will **listen to and heed their counsel**.
- To ensure access for all society members (regardless of family obligations, ability to travel, financial capacity, etc.), create a way for all members to **participate in society business meetings, and to vote remotely**.
- Professional societies should **create a process and timeframe by which they assess their current membership practices and entry points into the field, and adjust as needed**. This assessment and realignment should include **ways for society members to safely provide feedback about the current state-of-affairs and contribute to formulating solutions**. And this assessment should clearly articulate a timeline for changes to be made, who will be in charge of the changes, and how the professional society will be held accountable for following through with their plan.

3. Climate:

- Devise a **statement of professional values and conduct** that expresses the society's values and expectations.² That statement might include the following:
 - An **inclusivity statement** that articulates the inherent dignity of all members of the professional society, especially scholars from communities that have been historically excluded or marginalized in the field, and that articulates the value of an inclusive society in terms of both individual scholars' well-being and professional, intellectual livelihood.
 - **Expectations about the ways scholars engage with each other in-person and in online spaces** (i.e., social media guidelines)
 - A clear articulation of the kinds of behavior that constitute **violations of professional conduct**.

² Sample statements: <https://www.transformingsilence.org/code-of-conduct>; <https://www.medievalacademy.org/page/Policies>; <https://bsana.net/diversity/>

- Devise a clear set of **grievance procedures** to follow when members of the society are accused of violating the society’s professional values and conduct statement. These procedures:
 - Should be clearly and repeatedly communicated to society membership (for example, when joining/renewing membership in the society or registering for the annual meeting, scholars acknowledge that they are beholden to the professional conduct expectations and the grievance procedures); and should be easily located on society websites and in annual meeting program booklets.
 - Should minimize the impact on the time and energy of scholars submitting grievances, and should maintain their confidentiality to the greatest extent possible.
 - Should include consequences for violators that are serious enough to incentivize vigilance in upholding the society’s values and conduct and to disincentivize violations (including repeated violations).
 - Might include multiple pathways toward a resolution (i.e., formal complaints, restorative justice approaches, etc.)
 - Should identify a point person among the society leadership to manage all grievances (to ensure consistency); or employ an external organization with expertise to manage cases and advise the society leadership.
- **Provide training** for professional society leadership, especially those responsible for handling grievance complaints.
- Devise a **record keeping process for complaints** in order to detect repeat violators and long-standing patterns of behavior.
- Make available **bystander or upstander training**³ to society membership, especially participants of annual meetings or conferences and/or include bystander or upstander tips in the annual meeting program booklet.
- **Commit to working with partners** (i.e., organizations or businesses with whom the society collaborates, hires, receives funds, etc.) **that share the society’s values and professional conduct expectations.**
- Professional societies should **create a process and timeframe by which they assess their climate, and adjust as needed.** This assessment and realignment should include **ways for society members to safely provide feedback about the current state-of-affairs and contribute to formulating solutions.** And this assessment should clearly articulate a timeline for changes to be made, who will be in charge of the changes, and how the professional society will be held accountable for following through with their plan.

³ These trainings teach participants to recognize harmful situations and to intervene in safe and effective ways, interrupting and de-escalating the situation and providing allyship to the harmed party(ies).

4. Awards and recognition:

- Secure **diversity within the committee in charge of conferring awards and prizes**.
- **Solicit nominations** for awards and prizes from coalitions of underrepresented scholars to ensure an inclusive pool.
- Devise **evaluation criteria** for the professional organization's awards and prizes. accolades that value and reward innovation and new perspectives in the field. And create a **rubric or list the criteria** that selection committees use to guide their deliberation (to minimize the use of alternative criteria).
 - Consider carefully instituting awards and prizes for scholars from particular backgrounds, since these can be tokenizing and can unintentionally limit these scholars' ability to win awards and prizes open to all members of the professional society.
 - Consider whether it is more appropriate to devise awards and prizes for scholarly contributions that are introducing innovative approaches or new perspectives in the field, or for scholarly contributions in particular areas (such as embodiment).
- Create a timeline for the review of nominees/materials that ensures committee members have **sufficient time** so that decisions aren't rushed (hence amplifying biases).
- Professional societies should **create a process and timeframe by which they assess their current practices related to awards and recognition, and adjust as needed**. This assessment and realignment should include **ways for society members to safely provide feedback about the current state-of-affairs and contribute to formulating solutions**. And this assessment should clearly articulate a timeline for changes to be made, who will be in charge of the changes, and how the professional society will be held accountable for following through with their plan.

5. Conferences and Annual Meetings:

A. Event Planning

- Ensure that there are **sufficient resources—staff and budget—to execute the best practices** below without putting additional burdens on existing personnel.
- Set **dates for conferences** that do not overlap with major holidays, whether national or religious, and avoid dates prior to or after major holidays (since ticket prices tend to increase at these times, making it difficult for scholars with limited financial means). Announce dates as early as possible so scholars can purchase cheaper tickets in advance.
- Verify that all **venues** (e.g., hotels, restaurants) and **hosting organizations** (e.g., academic institutions, event companies) has a **non-discrimination policy**, and have pledged support and inclusion of all gender identities and sexual orientations. Perhaps give preference to venues/host organizations that have **DEIB training for staff** and that have **devised DEIB measures related to their work**.

- Considerations about venue (enumerated below) should be part of discussions **as contracts are negotiated with hotels, conference centers, and events companies/organizers**, *before* contracts are signed.
- Choose a **venue** that meets the needs of all members. For example:
 - **Enough places to sit down and rest** within the venue, especially between meeting/reception rooms.
 - **Seating set up** around the venue should accommodate face-to-face conversations conducive to scholars with hearing impairments, should provide sufficient space for everyone to navigate, or ideally should be easily movable so it can be reconfigured as necessary.
 - All spaces related to the conference (including rooms for receptions, book displays, etc.) are **accessible for people with mobility challenges**.
 - **Dedicated rooms for breastfeeding or pumping** (including a sufficient number of electrical outlets for breast pumps and ideally a mini-fridge for the storage of breast milk so scholars don't have to waste milk or transport it back to their hotels) and **rooms where parents can change diapers or let their children run around**.
 - **Dedicated quiet rooms** where scholars can go for sensory deprivation, resting or stretching, to pray, etc.
 - Dedicated rooms should neither be located in prominent places in order to avoid unsolicited disturbance, nor at the periphery where they are difficult to reach.
 - A sufficient number of easily accessible **gender-neutral bathrooms**.
 - A venue with proximity to **restaurants that include options for people with dietary restrictions** (e.g., gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan options) and/or **grocery stores**.
 - A venue with proximity to restaurants with various **noise-levels**, or nearby spaces (e.g., parks) where conference participants can take food.
 - A venue with proximity to **restaurants at various price points**.
 - A venue with proximity to **pharmacies**.
 - Create a **map** for conference participants with the information above.
- **The set up of meeting rooms** should allocate space for wheelchairs, and also some unobtrusive space and/or standing tables to stand, stretch, or move for scholars for whom sitting for prolonged periods of time is uncomfortable or impossible.
- Provide **affordable childcare**. Create bursaries or grants for those who need help subsidizing on-site childcare, as well as for those who must (or want to) leave their child(ren) at home and need childcare while away.

- Make a plan to incorporate at least a handful of **virtual sessions** that allow for the inclusion of scholars who could not attend the conference for health, financial, caretaking, etc. reasons.
 - If possible and with permission of participants, virtual sessions should be recorded for registrants' later access.
 - All virtual sessions should use **affordable (preferably free) technologies** and technology should be **accessible** (i.e., closed captioning automatically turned on without attendees needing to ask).
- Create transportation and escort services to **ensure accessibility** and to ensure that participants **feel safe** walking between the hotel and meeting/reception rooms.
 - For example, **provide transportation** between venues or **subsidies** for taxi or ride-share services for all scholars with mobility impairments or for scholars who need to swiftly return to hotel rooms to breastfeed infants between sessions, and for all participants in the evenings.
 - And/or arrange for a dedicated set of individuals to serve as **escorts** (with wheelchairs or golf carts), perhaps hiring graduate students to serve in these roles for part of the conference as a way to help them cover their expenses (perhaps in exchange for waived registration fees or covering hotel costs).
 - Provide an **emergency contact** for participants, clearly printed in the annual meeting program booklet and on the website.
- Create a **handout that enumerates all of the inclusivity measures**, as well as an **accessibility guide** for navigating conference spaces.
 - **Share the inclusivity measures and accessibility guide with coalitions and working groups** representing, for example, women/GNB scholars, LBTQIA scholars, scholars of color, scholars with disabilities, etc. and ask for further recommendations to ensure that their constituencies are able to fully participate. These consultations should be made with sufficient time to incorporate any recommendations they have.
 - Once updated with the above recommendations, **communicate the inclusivity measures and accessibility guide to members** of the professional organization. Make sure this communication is sent prior to registration since accessibility may inform whether or not scholars are able to register.
 - Identify a representative from the society/event planning company to **field requests for additional accommodations**, technologies, or assistance that is not already on the existing plan.
- **Registration forms** should allow registrants to determine which information will be displayed on name tags: their lived names, self-identifying gender fields, pronouns, institutional affiliation, preferred levels of contact (e.g., wave, handshake, hug welcome), and a space for them to write-in information of their choosing.

- **Coffee breaks** should provide a caffeine-free option and, if snacks are provided, ensure that they are offerings for those with dietary restrictions (e.g., gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan) snacks. All ingredients (esp. common allergens) should be clearly labeled. **Receptions** should provide non-alcoholic beverages (beyond just water).

B. Program Development

- The first step towards obtaining an inclusive conference program is to secure **diversity within the program committee**.
- Create a timeline for conference planning that gives the program committee **sufficient time** to review submissions, to create sessions, to assign Chairs, to assess representation, to consider barriers or conflicts, etc. so that decisions aren't rushed (hence amplifying biases and overlooking issues for some members).
- Design breakout sessions, roundtables, workshops and other **alternatives to the traditional panel format** to help bring scholars into the discussion who tend to be silenced or marginalized by the panel/large Q&A format.
- Create space in the program to **directly address topics of inclusivity and exclusivity**, for example sessions on anti-racist pedagogy, sessions that confront the enmeshment of the Christian past with white supremacy, sessions on the use of Classics among white nationalists, the role of the field/profession in perpetuating subjugating ideologies and practices, etc.
- **Develop incentives and resources to increase the diversity of presenters**, especially at the level of individual sessions/panels. For instance:
 - Devise **incentives**—such as priority given to sessions proposed by BIPOC scholars, automatic acceptance for proposed panels with diverse representation.
 - **Create resources** for proposers/chairs to enact true inclusivity (vs. just inviting a woman/GNC or BIPOC scholar to sit on a panel for the appearance of diversity).
 - When sessions/panels lack diversity, **encourage the Chair to name the failure** and to **suggest** names of BIPOC and women/GNC scholars working in the field, **recommend** their publications
- Devise a **land acknowledgment** that is printed in the annual meeting booklet and that Chairs can read at the beginning of each session.
- Be considerate of the **panels competing with early career researchers' (ECR) presentations** to support participation in their sessions/panels.
- As standard practice (i.e., without having to make a special request for such a format) **make the program booklet available in OCR (machine-readable text)**.
- Be attentive to the times at which **receptions and networking events** tend to be scheduled (namely in the evening, thereby often making it difficult to attend for those for

whom a conference is overly tiring, or those with caring responsibilities). Attempt to schedule at least some of the receptions and networking events throughout the day (e.g., breakfast and lunch receptions). Such events should not be held before the conference officially starts.

C. *Climate and Safety*

- **Create conditions for respectful engagement with other conference participants** by, for example, making available **stickers** and/or **editable name tags** so conference participants can designate their lived name, pronouns, and levels of contact (e.g., wave, handshake, hug welcome).
- Make available **bystander or upstander training**⁴ to participants of annual meetings or conferences and/or include bystander or upstander tips in the annual meeting program booklet.
- See recommendation in 5a above re: **escorts** and designated **emergency contact**.

D. *Instructions for Presenters and Session Chairs*

- **Make available DEIB training for session/panel Chairs** so they can recognize discriminatory patterns and possess strategies to intervene.
- **Contact Chairs and presenters** well in advance of the conference with clear guidelines for sessions/panels, including the practices described below.⁵
 - Clear guidelines for **designing accessible presentations** (e.g., captioning, guidelines for universal design slides, large-print handouts, etc.), and clearly delineating the **length of the paper** to ensure presenters stay within the time allotted.
 - As routine practice (i.e., without having to request), all video and live AV presentations should use **captioning**.⁶
 - **The Chair should be prepared to appropriately introduce presenters**, keeping in mind equity (e.g., using titles consistently, including the same kind of information in all introductions, etc.), referencing only their scholarly profile and work (not protected characteristics), and asking scholars about name pronunciations and gender pronouns in advance.

⁴ These trainings teach participants to recognize harmful situations and to intervene in safe and effective ways, interrupting and de-escalating the situation and providing allyship to the harmed party(ies).

⁵ Sample guides: <https://www.associationforjewishstudies.org/2022cfp/guidance-for-panel-chairs>; [Guidelines for NAPS Chairs and Presenters](#)

⁶ See, for example, <https://otter.ai/>, Google Slides or Powerpoint auto captions, and Chrome software for live captioning.

- **The Chair should communicate availability of accessible materials**, as well as spaces for standing or moving, both at the start of the session and between papers (for those who arrive in the middle of the session).
- **The Chair should ensure that each presenter is confined to their allotted time** and that no presenter is being foregrounded at the expense of other presenters (especially since underrepresented scholars tend to be disadvantaged in these situations).
- **The Chair should ensure that presenters use provided microphones** (even if they claim they can speak loudly enough, explaining that some participants need the amplification to hear).
- **Chairs should be sensitive to DEIB during Q&A** and might get ahead of problems by:
 - taking the first question/comment from a minoritized scholar
 - when questions are not directed at minoritized scholars on the panel/in the session, the Chair poses a question to them
 - when comments/questions directed at minoritized scholars are disproportionately skeptical or critical (relative to comments/questions directed at non-minoritized scholars), the Chair intervenes (e.g., shifting the direction of the conversation or calling out bad behavior), and checks in with the scholar after the session concludes.

E. Networking at Conferences

- Chairs should be actively encouraged to **bring panelists into contact and conversation with each other**, especially if the panel was formed through individual submissions. This can happen via email or videocall before the conference, or after the panel, as debrief after the session, or over a meal.
- **Create opportunities for positive and supportive networking**, such as:
 - Creating a mentorship program. (TIP on structuring such programs: give agency to ECRs so they have some control over who their mentor is (e.g., solicit senior scholar volunteers and then allow junior scholars to choose from the available volunteers). The person in charge of the mentoring program should have an appointment of a few years to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the program. The program should retain records of senior scholar mentors who have not done a good job mentoring their mentees or who have done harm, so they can be counseled or not be given mentees in the future.
 - Creating venues for peer-to-peer networking (e.g., panel for ECRs to give advice to graduate students, breakfast or reception networking, etc.)

- Creating sessions tailored to ECR needs, give ECRs the control to create the sessions they most need/want (e.g., how to write a dissertation proposal or workshopping draft dissertation proposals; how to write a cover letter for a tenure-track job at a research university/liberal arts college or workshopping draft cover letters; how to design a course or workshopping draft syllabi; how to write cold call emails to scholars you haven't met; how to find referees for your work; advice on the job market from scholars who serve on search committees; etc.)
- Use 5 minutes of the allocated time of a panel to ask scholars to **greet the scholars around them**, especially those they do not know.
- Ensure that at least **some networking spaces are designated as alcohol-free in a manner that makes them appealing and inviting to all**.

6. Publications:

- **Collect data** on society publications stats: demographic info on scholars who submit papers, scholars whose papers have received R&Rs or straight acceptances, scholars whose papers have been published, scholars who serve as peer reviewers, scholars on the editorial board, etc. **Make this data public (at least annually) and easily accessible**.
- Editors of society publications and members of the Editorial Board should devise a **plan for outreach** to underrepresented scholars, incentivizing their submissions to the publication.
- Editors of society publications should carefully review and excise all discriminatory comments on **peer reviewers reports** *before* forwarding them to the author. They should keep track of the scholars who provided such reviews, discuss the issue directly with them, and depending on the nature of that discussion, restrict their engagement with the journal in the future (as authors and/or peer reviewers).
- There should be a **process and timeframe by which editors and editorial boards assess their current publication practices, and adjust as needed**. When appropriate, bring in (and compensate) society members with relevant expertise or professional consultants to audit current practices, to suggest additional best practices or innovations. And/or pattern new practices off of models from other fields. And this assessment should clearly articulate a timeline for changes to be made, who will be in charge of the changes, and how the professional society will be held accountable for following through with their plan.

7. Assessment:

- **Annual training** for society leadership to stay up-to-date on scholarship and best practices. Perhaps form a subcommittee of the board to conduct this research and training of the full board, or hire an outside consultant.
- Devise a process when scholars join or renew their memberships by which scholars may **self-identify** (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity) for assessment purposes. This personal information

should be kept confidential and not be disclosed without the scholar's consent (i.e., on name tag). All demographic questions should be optional.

- **Make part of the contract with events company a stipulation that they will solicit feedback from conference participants** with a specific question about what steps could have been taken to make the conference accessible. Collaborate with events company on a **summative assessment that** incorporates participant feedback and includes a section dedicated to the evaluation of DEI measures implemented and plan for changes to make for future events. For accountability, in subsequent years, the report should detail which of these changes were instituted.
- **Holistic record-keeping** to collect data and to assess all of the inclusivity measures of the profession (e.g., the demographics of article authors in society-sponsored journals; the identities of keynote speakers, all-male panels, panels/sessions with diverse representation, BIPOC-proposed sessions/panels, etc. at society-sponsored conferences (per year and over time); the demographics of scholars hired in tenured/tenure-track jobs in the field each year, etc.)
- Professional societies should **create a process and timeframe by which they assess their all current practices, and adjust as needed**. This assessment and realignment should include **ways for society members to safely provide feedback about the current state-of-affairs and contribute to formulating solutions**. And this assessment should clearly articulate a timeline for changes to be made, who will be in charge of the changes, and how the professional society will be held accountable for following through with their plan.

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Contributors: ReMeDHe Board, Monika Amsler, Tara Baldrick-Morrone, Chance Bonar, Claire Burridge, Sonia Dixon, Maria Doerfler, Cora Beth Fraser, Emily Gathergood, Melissa Harl Sellow, Meghan Henning, Susan R. Holman, Andrew Jacobs, Kirsty Jones, Molly A. Jones-Lewis, Julie Kelto Lillis, Angela Kim Harkins, Dominika Kurek-Chomycz, Jon-Paul Lapeña, Victoria Leonard, Tat-siong Benny Liew, Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen, Kenneth Litwak, David Maldonado Rivera, Heidi Marx, Victoria Pagán, Ruma Salhi, Nathan Tilley, Kristi Upson-Saia, Colin Webster, David Wilhite, Jonathan L. Zecher.