

MEDNEWS

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Schmidt College of Medicine Welcomes Inaugural Chief Officer for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Anita Fernander, Ph.D., has been selected as the inaugural Chief Officer for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and will officially join the Schmidt College of Medicine on June 7. Dr. Fernander currently serves as the Health Equity Thread Leader for medical education and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director in the Department of Behavioral Science in the College of Medicine at the University of Kentucky, where she also serves as associate professor of behavioral science. At the University of Kentucky, she previously co-chaired the Dean's Diversity Advisory Committee and served as the College of Medicine's Interim Diversity Officer.



"We are delighted to welcome Dr. Fernander to our Schmidt College of Medicine family and we are very excited and enthusiastic about this new leadership role within our medical school," said **Phillip Boiselle, M.D.**, dean, FAU's Schmidt College of Medicine. "Dr. Fernander believes that the concept of diversity does not relate solely to race and ethnicity but also includes diversity of thought, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion, among other qualities."

Throughout her academic career, Dr. Fernander has passionately championed efforts to promote greater equity, inclusion and diversity among students, faculty and staff in the health sciences and health professions by informing, educating, and advocating for social justice in medicine. Her research and teaching have focused on understanding the impact of race-related stress, and the historical and contemporary political and social determinants of health on health inequities among African Americans.

"I am excited to be joining the FAU family and look forward to building upon the various initiatives already implemented within the Schmidt College of Medicine to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in medicine and science, which will enable our society to reach

the ultimate goal of creating what Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned as a Beloved Community," said Dr. Fernander.

Dr. Fernander's current scholarly passion is focused on increasing the number of underrepresented minorities in medicine, training and mentoring students and faculty regarding cultural humility, and promoting diversity, inclusivity, and equity in academic medicine and research. She developed and is in the process of implementing a mentorship pipeline program for Black males from kindergarten through residency to increase the number of Black males applying to and successfully matriculating through medical school.

About Anita Fernander, Ph.D.

Anita Fernander, Ph.D., currently serves as an associate professor of behavioral science in the College of Medicine at the University of Kentucky. Prior to joining the University of Kentucky, she completed a post-doctoral fellowship in medical psychology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Her primary area of research and teaching has focused on examining the impact of race-related stress and the political and social determinants of health on health inequities among African Americans. As such, she also received funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to examine the impact of racism on smoking behaviors and nicotine metabolism among African Americans.

At the University of Kentucky, Dr. Fernander teaches medical students and graduate students across the spectrum of health and social sciences in her courses titled: "Race, Racism and Health Disparities among Blacks in the U.S.;" "The History of Medicine among Blacks in the U.S.: Implications for Health Disparities;" and "Introduction to Clinical Medicine."

Dr. Fernander also is the founder and chair of the Lexington-Fayette County Health Disparities Coalition, a cross-network community organization whose mission is to transform the community where health inequities are mitigated and/or eliminated through intentional actions, strategic policies, and targeted advocacy that result in tangible and sustainable health outcomes for disparate populations in Lexington-Fayette County.

She received her Ph.D. and a master's degree in clinical health psychology from the University of Miami. She holds two bachelor's degrees - one in physical education and the other in psychology - from Oakwood College (now Oakwood University), a historically black college or university in Huntsville, Alabama.