

# Building Bridges with the Next Generation of Diverse Biopharmaceutical Professionals: Focus Group with African American & Latino Students & Early-Stage Careerists

Center for Healthcare Innovation organized a focus group with Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino undergraduate and graduate students and early-stage careerists to collect feedback on how the global biopharmaceutical industry can optimize communicating with, attracting, and recruiting professionals of color to the industry. The focus group was designed to understand firsthand from young African American and Hispanic professionals the recommendations and steps companies can take to increase the number of Black and Latino professionals in the industry.



## Step 1 - Build an Inclusive Workplace

Biopharmaceutical companies need to build and maintain an inclusive and diverse workplace to attract talent. Prospective hires are most attracted to the organizations that are building and investing in inclusive cultures where all employees feel like they belong. Organizations that clearly and transparently communicate what they are doing to create an inclusive workplace will be most attractive to prospective new hires.



## Step 2 - Communicate & Reach

In order to reach diverse talent and communities, utilize different communication channels and styles. Preferred platforms or method of communication varies based on community, so it is important to not assume a one size fits all approach.



## Step 3 - Engage & Recruit

It is important for biopharmaceutical organizations to understand where to source underrepresented talent and develop appropriate recruiting strategies. Develop unique and nuanced recruiting strategies for professionals of color.



Center for  
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- ⇒ Biopharmaceutical companies should actively and perpetually strive to build and maintain safe, inclusive workplaces free from biases, where all employees feel like they belong. Companies should clearly articulate that they are invested in building and maintaining an inclusive workplace and convey what they are doing to create a safe work environment to attract the next generation of Black and Latino professionals. Professionals of color want to work for organizations and industries where they feel like they belong.
- ⇒ African American and Hispanic students and professionals want to work for organizations that are promoting and developing diverse professionals. Companies should demonstrate what they are doing to develop and promote Black and Hispanic talent within the organization. Job applicants of color often research companies and look at senior leadership demographics. The biopharmaceutical companies that are visibly developing and promoting diverse talent will better identify, recruit, and attract Black and Latino applicants.
- ⇒ Professionals of color often want to work for organizations that are consistently and proactively working to root out biases and inequities within the organization. Companies should require employees to complete mandatory annual DEI training that should include education on unconscious biases and microaggressions in the workplace.
- ⇒ Companies should create a platform to share experiences and communicate to colleagues the types of comments or behaviors that may be hurtful.
- ⇒ Unfortunately, many African American and Hispanic applicants encounter biases in hiring. To combat this, organizations should develop the appropriate hiring infrastructure and processes that prevent bias from creeping in, regardless of intention. Blind résumé reviews and removing nonessential information from resumes is an effective way to create a firewall against unintentional bias in the hiring process. Applicants of color often feel more comfortable and confident applying to organizations that have safeguards against hiring bias. Companies should clearly communicate these processes on application sites and in recruiting materials.



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## Step 2 - Communicate & Reach

To reach diverse talent and communities, utilize different communication channels and styles. Preferred platforms or communication methods vary based on community, so it is important not to assume a one size fits all approach.

- ⇒ Recruiting materials should clearly articulate the organization's commitment to building a safe, inclusive, and equitable workplace.
- ⇒ In order to develop an appropriate communication and recruiting strategy, companies must first create an inclusive workplace and culture.
- ⇒ African American entry-level professionals are particularly concerned with the lack of Blacks and African Americans in clinical trials. Prospective employees often want to know what biopharmaceutical organizations are doing to make clinical trials more inclusive. When communicating with prospective Black new hires, companies should highlight organizational efforts to design clinical trials that are more inclusive.
- ⇒ Biopharmaceutical companies should seek input from African American and Hispanic employees on recruitment materials.
- ⇒ Biopharmaceutical companies should create, join, and participate in LinkedIn groups and other professional social media groups.



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- ⇒ Biopharmaceutical companies should create mentoring programs with local colleges, universities, and high schools to expose Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students to opportunities/career paths in the industry while they are still in school. This can include on-site opportunities for students to potentially shadow employees to learn more about an organization, the types of roles and positions, and the different functional areas within an organization.
- ⇒ Encourage diverse employees to participate in mentoring and outreach, so students can see professionals that look like them working and thriving at an organization.
- ⇒ Biopharmaceutical companies should create partnerships with colleges and universities, especially HBCUs, HSIs and MSI's to promote internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students and participate in on-campus and virtual career expos.
- ⇒ Biopharmaceutical entities can also create internship referral incentives to stimulate word of mouth and peer-to-peer sharing of internship opportunities with current and former interns and professionals of color.
- ⇒ Companies should recruit prospective employees of color from the entire country by building an appropriate virtual recruiting and hiring infrastructure. Especially in the wake of the COVID pandemic and shifting work patterns and telecommuting, companies have a unique opportunity to expand their reach and talent communities. This can be especially useful for companies located in less diverse areas of the country.

# ABOUT US

The Center for Healthcare Innovation (CHI) is an independent, non-profit research and educational institute dedicated to making healthcare more equitable for all patients.

Our Vision is to be the leading global platform for meaningful change in health equity. Our mission is to bring together experts and ideas from all over the world to improve healthcare for everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, or other social determinants.

## KEY CONTACTS



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