

Hannah Valantine, MD

Stanford Medicine, Professor of Medicine
Former NIH Chief Scientific Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity

**Tuesday, June 8, 2021
12:30 pm - 1:00 pm ET**

**Paul I. Terasaki State-of-the-Art Lecture**

*Sponsored by the Paul I. Terasaki Research Fund*

Inclusive Excellence in Biomedical Research: Applying Genomics To Unravel Health Disparities In Organ Transplantation

Hannah Valantine recently returned to Stanford as Professor of Medicine having served for six years as the inaugural NIH Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity, and a Senior Investigator in the Intramural Research Program at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

Prior to starting this position in April 2014, Dr. Valantine was Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and the Senior Associate Dean for Diversity and Leadership at Stanford, a leadership position she held since November 2004. She is nationally recognized for her transformative approaches to diversity and is a recipient of the NIH Director’s Pathfinder Award for Diversity in the Scientific Workforce. Citing NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins’ statement about Dr. Valantine’s accomplishments at NIH, “her laser-like focus on expanding recruitment and retention of the brightest minds regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status has produced remarkable results over a few short years.”

For example, she established the Distinguished Scholars Program, which has had a dramatic, positive impact on the diversity of tenure-track investigators at NIH. Hannah established the NIH Equity Committee to systematically track and evaluate diversity and inclusion metrics in each NIH Institute and Center’s intramural program.

Under her leadership, there has been a significant increase in representation of women as tenure-track and tenured principal investigators (PI), and of African American/Black and Hispanic tenure-track PIs in the Intramural Program. There also has been a significant increase in representation of women in NIH leadership positions, such as Institute/Center Directors and Scientific Directors. she played a major role in taking on workplace harassment at NIH. One of her significant achievements was developing and implementing the first NIH Workplace Climate and Harassment Survey. The findings provided critical data that have informed NIH’s strategies to improve the workplace moving forward. The survey provides a tool (now published) for NIH-funded institutions across the country to assess and improve their workplace climates.

The impact of Dr. Valantine’s work has been felt well beyond the NIH campus. She has made several important inroads into improving diversity and equity among the extramural research community. For example, Hannah designed the Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) program that is being implemented by the NIH Common Fund to create cultures of inclusive excellence at NIH-funded institutions. She also guided the National Research Mentoring Network program on coaching and mentoring for grant writing toward successful applications and awards supporting scientists from diverse backgrounds, including those from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Since her arrival at NIH, there has been a significant increase in the number of R01 applications and awards that identify African American/Black and Hispanic scientists as the Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI). And for early career scientists, she has focused on career development awards (K-series), the penultimate stage before R01 grants, increasing the number of applications and awards on which African American/Black and Hispanic scientists are identified as PD/PIs, essentially eliminating the racial gap in success rates for K-awards.

At NIH Dr. Valantine established a highly productive research program within the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). She created the Genomic Research Alliance for Transplantation (GRAfT), a consortium of five heart and lung transplant programs in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, which has enrolled and is actively following more than 500 patients, 40% of whom are African American/Black. She is using the technology that she co-invented with Steve Quake, professor bioengineering at Stanford — donor-derived cell-free DNA in blood — to monitor organ transplant rejection in the GRAfT cohort, and to understand the mechanisms that explain how and why African Americans/Blacks reject their organ transplants at higher rates than White recipients.

Dr. Valantine was elected to National Academy of Medicine in 2020, “for her national leadership in both scientific workforce diversity and cardiac transplantation research. Her data-driven approach in these two important areas has led to game-changing policies and new programs that enriched the nation’s biomedical talent pool and have generated paradigm-shifting innovations in patient care.”