

Approximately one year ago, the medical school community convened for a candlelight vigil in response to issues related to police-involved shootings of Black males and escalating violence across the country.

The Center was one of nine recommendations Black medical and biosciences students delivered to the Dean last year as to improve diversity and inclusion at the School of Medicine. Dean Minor's address underscored the importance of involvement and commitment to issues affecting our Stanford Medicine community: "At a deep level, it's our responsibility to make an impact." Since that time, the School of Medicine administration has established several mechanisms to support diversity and inclusion in medical school community. Dean Minor established the School of Medicine Diversity cabinet, co-chaired by Fernando Mendoza, MD, MPH, Pediatrics, Associate Dean of Minority Advising and Programs, and principal investigator of the Center of Excellence in Diversity in Medical Education, and Yvonne "Bonnie" Maldonado, MD, Professor and Chief, Pediatric Infectious Diseases and Senior Associate Dean of Faculty Development and Diversity. Also working with the office of the Dean is the Task Force for Diversity and Societal Citizenship, composed of faculty, staff, and students examining issues affecting the Stanford Medicine community from medical student through faculty and communicating recommendations to School of Medicine executive administration.

Osama El-Gabalawy, a medical student instrumental in launching the Stanford Muslim Medical Student Association and in establishing the new center, was one of a core group of students who helped develop the recommendations. After asking for patience while he gathered himself, his words to attendees included his vision for the space: "It is a physical space that can house these tough conversations where we can learn from each other and build trust...between us and the communities we serve...between the student body and administration...between students and teachers."

El-Gabalawy emphasized the importance of challenging social norms that degrade the health and wellness of communities. He reminded us that medicine as a field that contributed to poor health outcomes in communities of color and marginalized populations:

"As long as we live and practice, we must earn the trust of our patients and we must earn the trust of our peers, and this can only be done with dignity, compassion and respect...the truth is - modern medicine has a long history of exploiting minorities for scientific advancement. From the use of slaves for medical experiments, to the Tuskegee syphilis study, to the forced sterilization of indigenous women: these things happened, they have sowed deep distrust in communities of color, and we must talk about them and must build trust with our patients and with each other... these are uncomfortable truths which we must talk about and address. And when it's tough to find space to have these conversations, it is on us to make space."

His closing words reminded the group of the work that the Stanford Medicine community must undertake from this starting point, "This center, especially in its infancy, merely represents the potential for all that we seek to accomplish. But if we do not come together to use this space to build, to create, to learn, and to resist the forces that try to bring us down, then it will [only] be as good as any other empty space...our work is just getting started."