

# Cluster hiring towards elevating diversity and inclusion in the health research workforce: SDSU FUERTE

Faculty Unified towards Excellence in Research and Transformational Engagement

María Luisa Zúñiga, PhD

SDSU

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Preparing Postdocs and Institutions for the New Faculty

Diversity Intervention: Cluster Hiring

20th National Postdoctoral Association Annual Conference

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Awarding Agency: National Cancer Institute

## Presentation Overview

- The U.S. research workforce diversity gap
- NIH efforts to accelerate closing the gap
- **SDSU FUERTE Cohort hire focused on Diversifying Scientific Workforce**
  - ◻ Reaching and engaging diverse early career trainees and faculty
- **Preparing postdocs to succeed in cluster hires**

*“Diversity, it turns out, goes to the heart of how to do research and innovation effectively.” -- Fred Guterl*

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) among researchers is known to expand improved, evidence-based health-related treatments and interventions.

<https://diversity.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk731/files/inline-files/InstitutionalBarriersStrategies2020.pdf>

## **Imperative to eliminate the persisting diversity gap among biomedical researchers**

Without new and effective strategies, it will take nearly 50 years for women to reach parity among full professors (Valantine et al., 2014; National Science Foundation, 2019) and centuries for underrepresented racial/ethnic groups to reach parity among medical school faculty with the current recruitment pool

(U.S. Medical School Faculty Trends: Percentages). <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-20-022.html>

## NIH FIRST PROGRAM GOALS

Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST)

- Augment and sustain “cultures of inclusive excellence”
- Facilitate inclusive excellence effort through the recruitment of a cohort of early career faculty
- Positive impacts on faculty
  - Development
  - Retention
  - Progression through RTP process and promotion
- Development of sustainable (institutionalization) inclusive excellence environments

<https://commonfund.nih.gov/first>

## SDSU FUERTE, one of six NIH First Awardees

U54 Cooperative agreement, Funded September 2021

Administrative Core

Dr. Mark Reed, Co-PI &  
Core Director



Faculty Development Core

María Luisa Zúñiga, Co-PI &  
Core Director



Evaluation Core

Dr. Eileen Pitpitan, Core  
Director



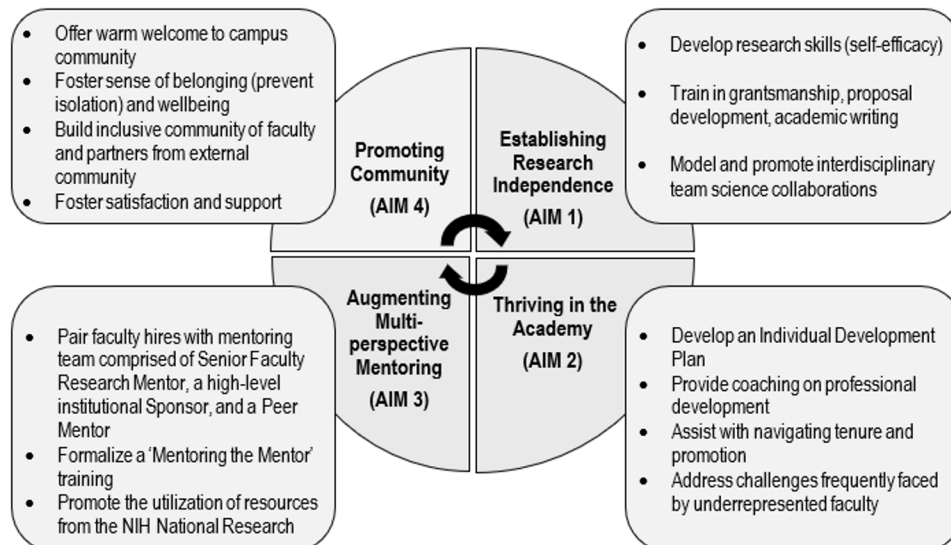
Core Leadership will work across SDSU to implement, evaluate, and refine new strategies to transform the SDSU community into one that will be nationally recognized as an exemplar in research and inclusive excellence

## SDSU FUERTE Overarching goal: Recruit and hire a diverse cohort of nine early career faculty at SDSU & SDSU IV Campuses

- Three faculty positions in each of three focal areas of research:
  - Environmental Health (SDSU IV)
  - Obesity/Physical Activity/Nutrition Science
  - Cancer and Cancer Disparities
  - + 2 later career faculty
- Implement a comprehensive Faculty Development Model
- Program evaluation at the individual, department/school, institutional levels
- Broaden institutionalization of inclusive excellence in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of faculty at SDSU

## FUERTE Faculty Development Model

**Figure 1. FUERTE Faculty Development Model (FDM)**  
(based on Griffin, 2020 and NIH Scientific Workforce Diversity Strategic Plan, 2016)



## Phase 1: Active Outreach

### Expanding and personalizing outreach efforts

Moving beyond Chronical of Higher Ed. to include:

- ❖ Hispanic Serving Health Professions Schools (HSHPS);
- ❖ National Hispanic Science Network, Minority Postdoc.org,
- ❖ Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and
- ❖ Native Americans in Science; Native Research Network;
- ❖ Black Doctoral Network; use of Twitter(#WomenInSTEM, #STEMdiversity)
- ❖ National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals (NOGLSTP)

**Being mindful that retention starts at outreach**

## Phase 2: Hiring and Selection

### Hiring & Selection Committees actively trained in Diversity, Equity and Inclusive hiring practices

- 1 committee for each cluster (e.g. 3 committees total)
- Comprised of diverse faculty from five colleges and SDSU IV
- Each committee:
  - Six T/TT faculty members and **1 inclusion representative**
  - One student representative (non-voting)
  - One community advisory member (non-voting)

Across all 3 committees, FUERTE's purposeful focus on diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the search and selection process yielded candidate short-lists of > 60% diverse scientists

How is FUERTE setting the stage for diverse postdocs to thrive in the academy?

Supporting future success of current postdocs

“Unless new professors from historically excluded backgrounds experience academia as a good environment for a whole career, efforts to bring in young professors may fail to effect lasting change.”

Oldach, American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Feb. 23, 2022  
<https://www.asbmb.org/asbmb-today/careers/022322/the-evolution-of-cluster-hiring>

FUERTE's faculty development approach to address barriers that can undermine success of historically excluded researchers also applies to postdocs...

- Effective mentoring teams, including peer mentors; Best practices for mentorship including mentor cultural awareness
- Envisioning and mapping a successful research trajectory
  - Preparing early career investigators to
- Faculty-centered approach to professional development
  - Supporting faculty to manage potential issues related to Cultural taxation/service burden; Imposter syndrome; Isolation
- Building community

Thank You

María Luisa Zúñiga, Co-PI & Faculty Development Core  
Director, SDSU FUERTE

[mlzuniga@sdsu.edu](mailto:mlzuniga@sdsu.edu)



#### Resources

- Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research  
<https://cimerproject.org/>
- Conn, V. S., Anderson, C. M., Killion, C., Bowers, B. J., Wyman, J. F., Herrick, L. M., Zerwic, J. J., Smith, C. E., Cohen, M. Z., Benefield, L. E., Topp, R., Fahrenwald, N. L., Titler, M. G., Larson, J. L., Varty, M. M., & Jefferson, U. T. (2018). Launching Successful Beginnings for Early Career Faculty Researchers. *Western journal of nursing research*, 40(2), 153–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945917725999>