2025-2026 CMSRU Standing Committee Report Out
Committee on Cultural Competency and Belonging
Committee Chair: Kyle Gleaves M.D. FACP

Members

Kyle Gleaves (Chair)
Guy Hewlett (Staff)
Charles Johnsen
Amit Joshi
Danielle Nordone
Kathryn Treese
Jocelyn Mitchell-Williams
Douglas Reifler
Evelyn Robles-Rodriguez
Caitlin Baldwin
LaPree Burgess
Angelica Alvarado (Transitioning off)
Carlo Foppiano-Palacios (Transitioning off)

Meeting Dates

September 29, 2025
December 3, 2025
March 4, 2026
June 3, 2026

2025-2026 Highlights of Committee Work

During the 2025-2026 academic year, the Committee on Cultural Competency and Belonging in the Learning Environment focused on strengthening cultural humility, promoting belonging and inclusivity, supporting student success, and ensuring that graduates are prepared to care for patients from diverse backgrounds. The committee served as a forum for collaboration among faculty, administrators, students, residents, and community representatives and provided recommendations to medical school leadership on initiatives designed to improve the learning environment.

Psychosocial Content in ALG

- Evaluated current approaches to teaching bias recognition, microaggressions, and psychosocial determinants of health within active learning groups (ALGs)
- Developed recommendations to improve the visibility and prioritization of biopsychosocial and cultural competency learning objectives within small-group learning environments and faculty facilitation which include having a faculty expert on this topic and prioritizing some of the content towards the beginning of the sessions.

Spanish Language within the Curriculum

- Identified Spanish language proficiency as an important educational need based on the demographics of the communities served by CMSRU and Cooper University Health Care.

- Explored development of a pre-matriculation Spanish immersion experience and additional opportunities to expose students to introductory medical Spanish content regardless of prior language proficiency.
- Recommended integration of Spanish terminology and language exposure throughout the curriculum and clinical learning environments.

Recruitment, Pathway Programs, and Retention

- Reviewed the impact of national changes in higher education admissions practices and discussed strategies to continue recruiting and supporting students from diverse backgrounds.
- Received updates on pathway, outreach, and mentoring programs designed to increase awareness of careers in medicine among students ranging from elementary school through college from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Reviewed efforts to strengthen student retention, mentorship, academic support, and psychosocial support services for learners at CMSRU and potential collaboration opportunities with newly revitalized South Jersey Medical Society

Faculty and Student Affinity Group Engagement

- Evaluated faculty advisor engagement with affinity groups and student organizations and identified opportunities to strengthen mentorship and communication.
- Recommended strategies to improve visibility and accessibility of faculty advisors and facilitate stronger connections between advisors and student leaders.
- Considered approaches for supporting affinity groups through advisor development, clearer role expectations, and intentional relationship-building opportunities.

2026-2027 Future Goals and Plans

- Assess progress on recommendations related to biopsychosocial content and faculty development within active learning groups and other learning environments.

- Support implementation and evaluation of Spanish language instructional opportunities, including pre-matriculation experiences, curricular integration, and community-based learning opportunities.

- Review learner feedback and educational outcomes related to cultural competency, belonging, and the learning environment to identify areas for continuous improvement.

- Continue to support the Office of Engagement and Community Impact to support pathway, recruitment, retention, mentoring, and student success initiatives.

- Strengthen faculty advisor engagement with student affinity groups by improving advisor visibility, clarifying advisor expectations, and facilitating stronger mentor-mentee relationships.

- Explore additional opportunities to promote belonging, community engagement, and cultural humility among students, faculty, and staff across CMSRU.