We formed the AAPI Trainee Support Committee and held our first event in May. We also produced and distributed our first newsletter, featuring the need to support AAPI trainees (graduate students and postdoctoral scholars) at the U of R and an interview with an AAPI postdoctoral fellow. In addition, we set up a Listserv (SupportAAPI@lists.rochester.edu) and are in the process of setting up a website. We applied to become an official GEPA group, which will support hosting more meetings and gatherings.

We hosted an event focused on AAPI sub-cultures with support from the Institutional Office of Equity and Inclusion (IOEI) on May 20th, 2022. Although receiving confirmation on the space and time for the event only on May 9th did not give us a lot of time to advertise the event, sixty members from different colleges and departments at U of R including trainees, faculty, and staff RSVP-ed, and additional individuals attended our event.

Dr. Choe first introduced less-known statistics about AAPI persons in the US (Pew Research Center, 2021). Dr. Sasha Eloi-Evans from the IOEI shared a welcome message and expressed her wish to make this event an annual tradition. Then Jia introduced Chinese American culture (e.g., how she felt in between Chinese and American cultures), and Dr. Choe introduced Korean cultural values and cultural differences, how these can manifest in training, how to pronounce and spell Korean names, sexism against AAPI women regarding names, and Korean wedding traditions and attire, while attendees enjoyed Korean and Indian food. Afterward, attendees were encouraged to engage in conversations on AAPI issues. Many attendees expressed their appreciation for learning about AAPI sub-cultures and cultural values and differences. Wonkyung Chang joined the committee after this event, and we welcome others who want to initiate these efforts together.

What we plan in June

AAPI Faculty Panel Discussion

We will host our first AAPI faculty panel discussion on Friday 6/24/2022 from noon to 1pm on Zoom to fulfill the need of AAPI trainees to connect to AAPI faculty members to hear how they handle systemic racism in academia and how AAPI trainees can maximize training opportunities. Dr. Ying Meng, Dr. Jenny Shen, and Dr. Leway Chen graciously agreed to speak as panels.

Everyone who wants to hear about these topics is welcome to join us; the Zoom link will appear once people register via the QR code link or click the link below.

Register for
Faculty Panel
Event

AAPI Trainee Support Zoom

We will start an AAPI Trainee Support Group on Zoom on Thursday 6/16/2022 from noon to 1pm. It is to create a safe space for AAPI graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to check in, share experiences, and support each other. People can bring their lunch to the meeting and talk or hear others. The Zoom link will appear once people register via this QR code or the link below. We plan on monthly Zoom meetings on the 3rd Thursday from noon to 1pm, and we may discuss an alternative day/time if people want to join but need another time.

We will make a yearly budget with all meetings/gatherings for the 2022-2023 academic year (e.g., Lunar Thanksgiving celebration, Lunar New Year celebration) as an official GEPA group.
Interview with Jia

I am Jia, a current PREP student in the University of Rochester Medical Center-PREP (URMC-PREP) Program, a one-year intensive biomedical science training program that has given me valuable research experience and prepared me for the rigor of graduate school. Although I am at the U of R for only a year, I am grateful to be part of the AAPI Trainee Support Committee that will help build a community for AAPI trainees at U of R. During the AAPI Heritage Month celebration in May, I shared my experience of growing up as Asian American, specifically Chinese American, in the US. I was born in China but moved to the States at the age of five. I have always been a bit baffled about my identity because I was one of a few Asians in my school. I always felt a push-and-pull kind of force in terms of my identity. Am I Chinese or American? Sometimes, I felt that I was code switching between two worlds-- one where I speak Taishanese/Cantonese to my family and enjoy Chinese food at home and another where I speak English and discuss American pop culture, music, and current events outside of home. It was not until college when I took Asian American classes that I understood there is a whole history of AAPIs’ arrival, struggle, and persistence in the US and abroad that was overlooked and never taught during my K-12 public school education years. I began to read more and understand that AAPI identities are inherently complex. I do not have to identify as one or the other; I can be both. AAPI stories of perseverance and solidarity in face of challenges continue to inspire me. I do believe that sharing stories and experiences are ways that we can deepen relationships. The AAPI Heritage Month celebration was only a start. I hope the AAPI Trainee Support Group will continue to be a space where AAPI graduate students and postdocs across U of R can come together to share stories and uplift one another. And I invite you all to join this effort!

Want to join the AAPI Trainee Support Committee?

We need people to initiate these efforts together. Basically two people prepared for the AAPI sub-culture event. Dr. Choe and Jia Mei worked hard to advertise the event, coordinate food, and make programs, and Dr. Choe asked her partner to take a day off to help the two of us on the event day, and Jia asked Jaclyn McCoy who graciously picked up Korean food for the event. Especially now that Jia is leaving URMC, we need people in this committee to update the website, plan the events, and also support one another. We have been meeting weekly for 30 minutes to an hour, and we may be able to reduce time/frequencies once we set up the major things. Please let us know in this “Join the Effort” form.

Want to share your story as an AAPI trainee on our newsletter?

We want to feature an AAPI trainee in every newsletter. Sharing our stories can empower one another and increase awareness of AAPI issues. You can fill out this form, and we will contact you.

AAPI Trainee Support Committee:
President: So Young Choe, Ph.D., Postdoctoral fellow in Psychiatry
Executive Officer: Wonkyung Chang, Doctoral student in Nursing
Secretary: Jia Mei, PREP student in Microbiology & Immunology