

My name is Ericka N. Merriwether, and this personal statement serves as notice of nomination for the Director position on the USASP Board of Directors (Seat #2). I am an Assistant Professor at New York University with dual appointments in the Departments of Physical Therapy and Medicine. I am also a physical therapist with dual licensure in the states of New York and Missouri. Lastly, I am an active member of the USASP, with memberships in the Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism in Pain and the Clinical and Translational Research Special Interest Groups (SIG). I believe the Seat #2 Director position would be the most appropriate given my research and clinical interests. I am confident in and enthusiastic about my potential contributions to the USASP Board of Directors in an advisory role.

My research examines the biopsychosocial mechanisms underlying obesity-related disparities in chronic musculoskeletal pain. In recent months, my work has centered the pain pathophysiology and lived experiences of adults from racially and ethnically diverse groups. Through my previous research training and in my faculty role, I have gained a lot of experience with managing and conducting patient-oriented clinical pain research. I have participated in data collection and analyses for two randomized controlled clinical trials, and have successfully established fruitful scientific collaborations with a dynamic multicultural and highly productive interdisciplinary team of basic, translational, and clinical researchers. Moreover, I am building on opportunities to become an emerging leader in the pain research through my appointments to three journal editorial boards, service as an NIH Early Career Reviewer, institutional leadership appointments, and service as an executive board member of the Anti-racism Coalition in Pain Research (ACTION-PR). ACTION-PR (informally known as the Pain Justice League) is a diverse multidisciplinary coalition of pain scientists supported by the USASP to identify methodologies and advocate for scientific narratives that promote equity, inclusion, belonging, and access in pain research praxis. My professional service activities are demonstrative of my fervent commitment to advocacy for the resources and support necessary for pain research that examines the mechanisms and impact of inequities in pain management. I hope to integrate these research capabilities with my lived experiences in an institution of policies and procedures that will serve a more inclusive vision for pain research to the USASP Board of Directors.

The scope and breadth of the programmatic research and clinical education agendas overseen by the USASP is robust and comprehensive. As an early career researcher with a 'non-traditional' clinical and scientific training path, I am also a staunch advocate for the identification of barriers to and opportunities for career advancement for early career scientists that account for a broader range of personal and cultural factors that often go unaddressed.

I thank you for your consideration of my nomination for the Seat #2 Director position for the USASP Board of Directors, and I wish you all well as you navigate the candidate selection process.

Sincerely yours,



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