The Biology DEI Committee:
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Mission of the Biology DEI Committee

We recognize that the history of Science and the current practice of research in higher education take place within the context of a fundamentally unequal and biased society. Racism, sexism, and discrimination against other marginalized identities causes talented scientists to be continuously excluded, marginalized and minoritized within Academia. While we as individuals, as a committee, and as a Department cannot “solve” the bias and discrimination endemic in our society, we work towards building diversity, equity and inclusiveness within our own community. It is our goal to raise awareness about racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination in our Department, provide support and resources for members of our community with a range of identities, and to promote discussions that can help us grow as a more diverse and inclusive environment.

Our Biology Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee aims to:
1. Understand the current state of DEI within the Biology Department and be responsive to the needs of our community
2. Make specific recommendations to the Department to promote recruitment, retention and support of women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color), LGBTQ+ and individuals with diverse lived experiences
3. Act as a conduit between the Department and groups at Boston College working towards promoting institutional DEI
4. Create opportunities, events, conversations and spaces that increase the inclusivity of our Biology Community.

Perceptions about the state of DEI in the Biology Department

In order to make informed decisions about DEI efforts, we have created numerous opportunities for members of the Department community to provide their input. Through in-person workshops, listening sessions and anonymous online surveys, several themes have emerged:
- There are polarized attitudes and experiences relating to DEI issues
- A lack of diversity among tenure-track faculty leads to a lack of role models for underrepresented trainees
- There is a perception that underrepresented members of the department are expected to do more service
- Many trainees are concerned about a lack of communication with Department administration
- There is an overall lack of trust in the Department and broader BC administration
- There is a perception that harassment complaints are not adequately dealt with
- Extreme power differentials across the Department and University create anxiety

DEI Events in the Biology Department, 2021-22

The Biology DEI Committee has organized several events to begin addressing the needs and concerns of our Community:

- November 23, 2021: Mentoring Up and Down: What About Diversity?
  - Led by Dr. David Burgess
  - Attended by ~20 Biology trainees

- February 3, 2022: Brain, Bias and Being Workshop Session I
  - Facilitated by Dr. Aja Allsop and Dr. Bruce Birren
  - Department was divided into:
    - Trainees (PhD students and postdocs; 46 participants)
    - Supervisors (Faculty and administrators; 28 participants)

- February 10, 2022: Brain, Bias and Being Workshop Session II
  - Combined session attended by 65 department members

- March 10, 2022: DEI Listening Session
  - DEI committee listened without interaction to the concerns of students in the department
  - Attended by 21 PhD students

- April 14, 2022: DEI Design Thinking Workshop
  - Follow-up session facilitated by Allison Neely from Institutional Research and Planning
  - Attended by ~20 PhD students

- May 12, 2022: Title IX at BC
  - Patricia Lowe gave overview of the Office for Institutional Diversity and Title IX and answered questions
  - Attended by 26 department members

Future Priorities

- Create more channels towards University resources related to mentoring, harassment and supporting diversity
- Establish lines of communication within the department to regularly discuss and address concerns, including anonymous concerns
- Develop a regular journal club and coffee hour to discuss issues of DEI in STEM
- Support a professional development series for Biology PhD students with support from the Institute for Liberal Arts
- Make recommendations for the Biology Graduate Student Handbook
- Increase the diversity of the faculty population
  - Interested in discussing the possibility of a Diversity “Cluster Hire”? Please contact us at biologydei-ggroup@bc.edu

Other Efforts and Resources Established

The Biology DEI Committee has established several resources within the Department:

- A Celebrate Diversity Board in the Higgins Hall atrium invites the community to reflect and share their thoughts on DEI issues
- The Board is also used to publicize upcoming DEI events
- Newsletters and additional information are displayed beside and below the Board

- A DEI Library in the Biology Department Office provides resources for the community to learn more about diversity and inclusion in STEM fields
- Featured books are profiled and displayed in the Biology Office
- A quarterly Biology DEI Newsletter features original content written by members of our community
- Seven issues of the newsletter have been disseminated digitally and in print

Contact us at biologydei-ggroup@bc.edu

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