

Summary of Fall 2011 – Spring 2012 Diversity Committee Work and Department Survey Results

By the Biology Diversity Committee (Andreas Chavez, Andrea Crosby, Carl Bergstrom, Horacio de la Iglesia, Jeff Riffell, Barbara Wakimoto (chair), and Leslie Zeman)

Following the guidelines of the UW Diversity Blueprint, the Biology Diversity Committee defined the following goals for its work in 2011-2012:

- 1) gather information about the viewpoints of students, postdocs, faculty, and staff about departmental culture;
- 2) identify priority needs and concerns about equity and diversity issues;
- 3) guide the development of a departmental Diversity Strategic Plan; and
- 4) define the types of data needed, baseline information, and timelines to monitor successes and deficiencies in our departmental diversity efforts.

To achieve the first goal, the committee asked all members of the department to complete an anonymous survey. Our survey questions were based largely on those developed by the UW School of Public Health's Climate Assessment Committee (<http://sph.washington.edu/diversity/climate/>). We asked for input about a new department diversity statement, which was drafted by our committee, and whether current departmental practices reflected a commitment to diversity and sufficient action to address diversity issues. We also invited respondents to elaborate on their ratings and provide suggestions to guide future plans.

Survey was sent to everyone on the biodept@uw.edu list. Response rate was high, with 112 respondents, of which 88% have been in the department for more than one year. Thirty-four respondents were graduate students (35% of 98 grads), 7 were postdocs (19% of 37), 42 were faculty (estimated 62% of 68 regular research and instructional faculty), and 29 were staff members (40% of 72 departmental and laboratory staff).

Based on analysis of survey responses, the committee made the following conclusions and recommendations.

1. Diversity is considered to be an important issue by all of the major groups in the Biology Department. The Diversity Statement, which describes the importance of diversity for our work and states a commitment to build a more inclusive culture, was considered relevant by 92% of the respondents. Fifty-one individuals also provided written comments. The comments were reviewed by the committee and used to improve the statement. We now have a statement that reflects input from all groups within the department (and will be approved as an official departmental statement by faculty vote at the end of March).

2. There is concern by all of the major groups that we are not proactively pursuing efforts to ensure equity and improve diversity. There was general agreement that there is departmental good will and respect for diversity. However, many individuals felt that simply stating a commitment to diversity and accepting things "as is" have been inadequate. Improved effort to recruit a diverse group of graduate students was noted by many and is regarded as perhaps our best effort. Many faculty and graduate students felt that efforts to try to recruit diverse faculty were improving, but noted our failure to actually do so in recent searches. Individuals from each group asked for information about what is currently in place for other areas (e.g. for staff support or for undergraduate teaching), indicating little awareness of what, if anything, the department as whole does for diversity. In contrast, we received frequent comments about diversity resources outside the department (e.g. Q Center, Veteran's Center and ADVANCE).

3. There are specific examples of disrespectful behavior by individual members of the department and a need to know the mechanisms to address these cases. There are examples of disrespectful behavior in our department, and it is critical for us to recognize and address concerns. Department leaders and all faculty members should make clear to all groups that we do not tolerate disrespectful behavior. All members of our department should be informed of formal mechanisms that are in place to guarantee that these situations are addressed directly, rapidly and fairly.

4. There is widespread agreement from all groups in the department that communication about diversity issues and action to address inequities should be improved. A significant proportion (20-39%) of respondents reported

feeling neutral or disagreeing with the statement that “I feel comfortable discussing diversity issues” with peers, or staff or faculty leaders. When asked to describe level of agreement with the statement that “there is sufficient transparency in the way that departmental decisions affecting my success are made”, 14% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33% agreed, 19% were neutral, 14% disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed. We conclude that dialog about diversity and action to address equity issues should be improved. A larger percentage should feel that the department invests in diversity efforts for success of individuals, our community, and research, training, and teaching missions. In addition, there should be improved transparency to inform stakeholders how important decisions about departmental policy, space, and other resources are made and executed.

5. Diversity training should be regular departmental practice. Members of all groups in the department acknowledge the need to know more about what diversity means, how to talk about diversity, and how to be trained in diversity issues for the benefit of the department and to successfully recruit and retain colleagues. Suggestions include asking diversity experts for advice, connecting with diversity centers on campus, and developing departmental policies to educate all groups on a regular basis. Training should help us address concerns about insensitive treatment of particular individuals or groups. It is imperative that department leaders and faculty members make a strong commitment to this training by participating themselves, and by conscientiously encouraging staff, postdocs, and graduate student participation.

6. Diversity efforts should be highlighted, supported, and monitored quantitatively to evaluate progress. To move beyond the *status quo* and make significant progress, diversity efforts should be more fully integrated into departmental functions. Each of the standing committees responsible for department policy, personnel hiring or evaluation, student training, or teaching should value the importance of diversity and set specific diversity goals as integral parts of their directives. The Diversity Committee’s roles are to work with all committees and all groups within the department to coordinate and integrate diversity efforts and monitor whether we are meeting our diversity goals. Our aim is to establish our department as a campus leader in successful diversity practices.

This is only a preview of the survey. Responses will not be saved. [Close](#)

Biology Diversity Survey 2011

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THANK YOU in advance for providing your input about departmental diversity issues.

Please read the draft of our Diversity Statement below, then answer the survey questions that follow. The Diversity Committee greatly values your input and guarantees that this survey is designed so that responses are anonymous.

DRAFT Diversity Statement – Department of Biology

In the Department of Biology at the University of Washington, we are proud of our tradition of respect and concern for human diversity of all types. We continue to evolve an inclusive and welcoming departmental culture that recognizes and encourages human differences, that fosters the constructive expression of ideas, and that promotes shared values such as intellectual curiosity, creativity, collaboration, and sense of mission. Traditions of inclusivity however strong, flourish and reach full potential only through continued active nourishment and effort. Accordingly, we as a Department state our commitment to the following goal: we strive to enhance an increasingly diverse and collegial community of peoples, and a variety of approaches in our teaching, training, service and research missions.

To achieve this vision:

- 1) We believe that the privilege of participating in the processes of scientific research and science education should be equally accessible to anyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or background. Therefore, members of the Department, individually as well as collectively, will promote and foster diversity. We will seek to maintain an environment that promotes freedom of expression, and freedom of intellectual exchange.
- 2) All members of our Department will conduct themselves in ways that do not discriminate against individuals or groups based on sex, race or ethnic background, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, nationality, religion, or economic circumstances. Should any member of the department she or he has been the recipient of discrimination of any type, she or he should be able to initiate discussion or levy complaints without fear of reprisal. Should such issues arise, concerns regarding discriminatory behavior within our department will be addressed immediately by the Chair of Biology in a commitment and sensitivity.
- 3) The department will take active steps to foster an increasing sensitivity to diversity issues and an ever-more-inclusive atmosphere, because we are convinced that by doing so we can develop the fertile ground for creative thinking, and for training the scientists and educators in our increasingly multicultural society. Diversity training for departmental leaders is an ongoing commitment. We will apprise incoming graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, faculty, and staff of diversity issues and departmental culture and values as pertain to diversity. The department will sponsor periodic forums to address diversity issues. The Departmental Diversity Committee, with members representing staff

students, postdocs, and faculty, welcomes and actively solicits input about diversity issues from e in the department. The committee's role is to develop departmental policies and regularly review procedures (e.g., faculty and staff hiring and reviews, graduate student recruiting, scholarship/fel application and performance reviews, undergraduate teaching and training) to assure that the De of Biology adheres to the values espoused in this document.

SURVEY BEGINS HERE

Question 1.

Are you

Required.

Question 2.

How long have you been in or closely associated with the Biology Department?

Required.

Question 3.

Please tell us your impressions of the Biology Diversity Statement. Do you consider it to be

Question 4.

Which parts of the Diversity Statement need improvements?

Please designate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Question 5.

Thinking about our department, the current environment is respectful of diversity.

Question 6.

Thinking about our department, the current efforts reflect a commitment to achieving

a diverse STAFF group

Select one...

a diverse FACULTY group

Select one...

a diverse POSTDOC group

Select one...

a diverse GRADUATE group

Select one...

a diverse UNDERGRADUATE
student body

Select one...

Question 7.

Please use the space below if you wish to elaborate on your responses above

Question 8.

Thinking about our department, professional development support is provided in an unbiased r

Select one...

Question 9.

Thinking about our department, there is sufficient transparency in the way that departmental c
affecting my success are made.

Select one...

Question 10.

Thinking about our department, I feel comfortable discussing equity and diversity issues with r
group in the department.

Select one...

Question 11.

Faculty, including faculty leaders, readily engage in dialogues concerning equity and diversity i

Select one...

Question 12.

Staff, including staff leaders, readily engage in dialogues concerning equity and diversity issue:

Select one...

Question 13.

Please use the space below if you wish to elaborate on your responses above

Question 14.

How often have you heard someone in the department make an insensitive or disparaging comment about people of the following characteristics:

Females

Males

Racial / ethnic minorities, or
people of a specific
nationality

White people

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or
transgender people

People with physical
disabilities

People with mental health
issues

People in specific age groups

People of specific religions

People with a certain
socioeconomic status

Question 15.

Please use the space below if you wish to elaborate on your responses above

Please designate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Question 16.

I have felt that I or others have been unfairly treated in the Department due to

Gender	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Race	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Sexual orientation	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Marital status	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Family situation	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Disability	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Age	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Socioeconomic status	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Nationality	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>
Job description	<input type="text" value="Select one..."/>

Please designate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Question 17.

The department adequately addresses incidents that may include discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or nationality, sexual orientation, disability, age, or socioeconomic status

Question 18.

The department has provided enough opportunities to participate in meaningful activities or venues that would enhance diversity within the department.

Question 19.

Please tell us your ideas on ways to foster meaningful discussions about diversity and appropriate actions to respond to diversity issues within the department.

Question 20.

Please tell us about the types of resources or connections that you think would further a cultural inclusion in our department.

Question 21.

Please include any additional comments here.

Thank you for your input!

Sincerely,
The Biology Diversity Committee

Submit responses

Questions or Comments?

Contact Barbara Wakimoto at wakimoto@u.washington.edu

