

## **Promising Practices for D&I committees: approaches, goals and achievements**

### **Panel Moderator:**

**Juan Ibarra**

### **Panelists:**

**Dr. Susan Kidwell**, William Rainey Harper Professor, in the Department of Geophysical Sciences and the Committee on Evolutionary Biology, where she's been part of ad hoc D&I efforts

**Dr. Shannon Elf**, Assistant Professor in the Ben May Department for Cancer Research, and serves in the Ben May D&I committee

**Jessica Robertson**, Senior Clinical Research Coordinator in the Department of Medicine, and Chairperson for COAR, Committee on Anti-racism

**Meike Lobb-Rabe**, Graduate Student in the Cell and Molecular Biology program, and serves in the Cell and Molecular Biology D&I committee

**Samantha Gartner**, Graduate Student in Integrative Biology, Integrative Biology D&I Committee

### **What motivated creating a local D&I committee within your department or program?**

Susan commented that students were the initial driving force - the students started talking about their concerns around DEI issues and that prompted faculty to listen and get involved. Their efforts were first reflected in the implementation of “weekly all committee in evolutionary biology meetings” where both faculty and students discussed DEI issues in CEB. These efforts were also followed by implementation of an anti-racism course that aimed at becoming an integral part of professional development for both students and faculty; the course was launched in fall of 2020.

Meike also agreed, she mentioned that their motivation to create a D&I committee arose from student movement and concerns which later brought faculty involved.

### **How does one go about creating a D&I committee, what are the initial steps, how does one build support and synergy, and where do resources (if any) first originate from?**

Shannon commented on being a good listener initially was central, and then finding and building support from faculty and students who were interested in advancing DEIJ was important. She mentioned that having support from their department chair was helpful to get started and building synergy across the department. Audience commented that faculty involvement was critical to create and sustain D&I committees.

**How has the engagement response from students and faculty been? Have there been any challenges in gathering support?**

Susan mentioned that students have been very pro-active and ultimately the ones driving the efforts, while faculty have also been involved.

They all agreed that initially there was a sense of “isolation” that came from starting, but as students and faculty became more aware of it, their support system expanded. She stressed not get discourage particularly at this initial stage where the support might not be as visible.

**What are some examples of actionable outcomes that have come out of the work from your respective D&I committees?**

Meike highlighted the initiation of weekly meetings with both faculty and students involved to discuss DEI issues. She also mentioned advances in students’ involvement in recruitment and admissions directly. In addition, there have been more efforts that have come out of their committee to recruit diverse faculty.

Susan noted their group aimed at addressing the issue of compensation for student DEI effort and training, by coming up with “DEI-ships” fungible with TA-ships and comparable in supervision & evaluated results; formal proposal to BSD (August 2020) became focus of broader BSD discussion & survey in Fall-Winter; program now approved to launch with 6 slots in AY 2021-22; a new subgroup is forming to take DEI-ships STEM-wide on campus (PSD, IME)

**What are some strategies you are taking to keep your committee sustainable? Are the members driving the work and efforts in your committees being compensated in any form? Should they be?**

Jessica commented on being constantly attentive to the DEI concerns and dividing the efforts across members to make it less heavy on single individuals. They all commented that members of their committees, particularly students, are not getting compensated in any form. But they agreed, they should, as this important and necessary work that does take time out of their schedules.