

## Department of Biology Diversity Committee Bylaws

Updated September 20, 2022

**Mission:** To assess the status and opportunities in our department for women, LGBTQ individuals, and other under-represented demographics

**Statement of purpose and scope:** Diversity is at the core of biology. Our field has been built by - and thrives because of - a community of individuals with a wide range of interests, backgrounds, identities, responsibilities, and approaches. The Diversity Committee seeks to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Department of Biology. Our remit includes policies/concerns affecting faculty, staff, postdocs, graduate students, and departmental researchers. University level offices and groups are in place to support our undergraduate students, and we will therefore address undergraduate issues by partnering with other committees as appropriate and/or by disseminating information to appropriate offices. We are tasked with the following:

1. Identify areas of concern. We will assess the status of, and opportunities for, members of under-represented and/or marginalized demographics in our Department. This task demands active engagement with our community.
2. Ensure that the groups or individuals that can enact helpful change (including but not limited to the faculty, other committees, the staff, and the Chair) are aware of these concerns. It is our responsibility to raise awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues (DEI), both specific and broad. We will also identify and promote access to relevant programs/resources (e.g., Safe Space Training) for the Department.
3. Identify strategies for improvement. In our role as an advisory group, we will actively seek out solutions to Department-level DEI concerns whenever possible. These solutions may include partnerships with other department committees and/or groups or individuals operating at the University level. The strategies that we identify will be brought to the Department Chair and other relevant individuals/groups for consideration, and it is the Chair's responsibility to decide on how policies are implemented.
4. Maintain open lines of communication with Department members. Our success in the above endeavors relies on continual conversations with our colleagues. Our communication will take the form of one-on-one conversations, interactions with relevant department committees, dialogue with focus groups, and the publishing of yearly progress reports.

We commit to achieving these goals in a respectful and collegial manner.

**Membership:** The Committee is composed of graduate student, postdoc, staff, and faculty members. The minimum size is therefore four, but multiple members of each group are possible. Undergraduate members may be included as appropriate at the discretion of the Committee Chair(s).

**Appointment to the Committee:** Membership on the Committee arises via appointment or election. The Department Chair appoints the faculty and staff members. The graduate student and postdoc members are elected by their constituents in the department.

**Appointment as Committee Chair:** The Committee Chair is appointed by the Department Chair and may change throughout the academic year in cases of sabbatical or other. The Committee can be chaired by a faculty member, a staff member, either, or both.

**Role of the Committee Chair(s):** The Committee Chair is responsible for setting the direction of the Committee and striving to meet the Mission. The Chair is also responsible for representing the Committee to any University administration and/or the Department. The Chair will set monthly agendas and appoint another member to take meeting minutes as necessary. The Chair may also appoint other members to sub-committees or special tasks as

needed. The Chair may bring topics to the Committee for special focus and may bring forth topics for voting as needed. The Chair should strive to make sure each member has the opportunity to voice opinions and to ensure that the Committee meetings entail open and fair dialogue. In cases of general disagreement, the Chair will make final decisions on direction. In extreme cases of disagreement, or when a committee member feels their feedback is not being valued by the Chair, members may approach the Department Chair to express their views and concerns.

**Elections:** Elections for graduate student and postdoc members commence in June of the relevant year. The process will begin with an open call for candidates. Candidates will submit a short biographical sketch and statement of intent, which will be made available to department members. Respective peer groups will vote via an anonymous web poll. The candidates that receive the most votes will join the Committee the following fall.

**Committee Member Roles and Responsibilities:** The main role is to fulfill the mission of the Committee. An important aspect of this role is for each member to represent the views of their relevant constituency. Each committee member is expected to engage regularly with their respective group. This includes disseminating Committee news to the community as appropriate, but also listening and seeking information from their peers to report back to the Committee. Each Committee member effectively acts as a two-way spokesperson - for the Committee and for their peer group.

**Terms:** Faculty and staff serve at the discretion of the Department Chair for an amount of time determined by the needs of the Department. Graduate student and postdoc members serve two-year terms. At the end of each spring semester, graduate and postdoc members will be asked to confirm their desire to continue on the committee, and will be given an opportunity to step-down.

**Stepping down or completing a term:** When any Committee member steps down or completes their term on the Committee, they will be asked to submit a summary of their experience to the Committee Chair(s) and the Department Chair. They should also leave a brief recap and instructions for the person taking their place.

**Confidentiality:** All Committee members must maintain confidentiality at all times, both during their membership and after stepping down from the committee. Members will sign a confidentiality agreement at the start of each school year.

**Regular Meetings:** The Committee meets regularly throughout the fall and spring semesters. The Committee may meet during the summer if necessary. Meetings will typically occur for 1.5 - 2.0 hours once per month. The meeting days/times for the entirety of the semester will be determined before the semester starts so that all meetings may be planned for.

**Special Meetings:** Special meetings may be called at any time by the Chair(s), as needed.

**Order of Business:** The Committee agenda will be set by the Committee Chair(s). Members should submit items to the Committee Chair(s) at least three days before a meeting. The Chair(s) will send out the agenda the day before the meeting.

**Voting:** If an item is presented for a vote, the vote will take place if a majority of Committee members are present. Voting will take place anonymously by paper ballot. In certain instances, the Committee Chair(s) may decide to table the vote for another meeting.

**Meeting Minutes:** Minutes will be taken at each meeting, will be reviewed by the Chair(s), and distributed to members within one week of the meeting time. Minutes will also be uploaded to the shared Box folder.

**Reporting:** The Committee Chair(s) will provide a written summary of the Committee's activities to the Department Chair and the Department every May.

**Updates:** Each member will read these bylaws each year and suggest edits to the Committee Chair(s) as needed.