

Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Life Science at UC Berkeley

Year End Summary Report: 2018-2019

Co-Chairs for the Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Life Sciences:

Dr. Rebecca Heald
Regional Associate Dean, Service Center 2
Professor, Molecular and Cell Biology

Dr. Mary Wildermuth
Associate Professor, Plant and Microbial Biology

In its first year, the Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Life Sciences made a strong impact on our campus and was a successful catalyst for positive change. It has been a high profile “proof of concept” that changing faculty search practices can result in successful recruitment of candidates that are both excellent researchers and committed advocates for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) through their research, teaching, and/or service.

This is a unique cross-divisional collaboration to advance faculty diversity in the life sciences rather than in just one department, division, or college. Inspired by the work of UC Berkeley’s College of Engineering, this initiative advances faculty diversity, equity, and inclusion in a way that builds on the momentum created by the College of Engineering, as well as the momentum created by other campuses. It serves to strengthen the life sciences community at Berkeley. The participants include: the Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management, the Department of Nutritional Sciences and Toxicology, and the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology in the College of Natural Resources; the Department of Integrative Biology and the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology in the Biological Sciences Division of the College of Letters and Science; and the Department of Chemistry in the College of Chemistry, with full support from the cognizant deans.

As part of the Initiative, participating departments agreed to incorporate interventions in all future faculty recruitments. This change has been more difficult in some departments and has met resistance by a small number of senior faculty members. Nonetheless, the interventions in the initiative will be part of the on-going recruitment practices for all participating departments. What cannot be emphasized enough is the value of the Initiative in bringing together faculty and staff across departments who share a common passion and set of goals. The Initiative established a group of allies across campus who are valuable resources for support and encouragement, and above all are committed to changing the status quo. With support from the campus leadership, the Life Sciences are now at a cultural and procedural tipping point in advancing faculty diversity, equity and inclusion.

Overview of the Pilot Project, Results, and Most Successful Interventions

The Initiative brought together faculty from several related but administratively distinct departments on our campus. A Life Sciences Initiative (LSI) Committee was formed early in the fall of 2018 to implement the initiative

and serve as the search committee for our joint open-field faculty recruitment. This committee included 22 faculty and staff members from all participating units. The LSI Committee met 19 times during the academic year to implement the interventions proposed in the initiative, to serve as the search committee for the cluster hire and to organize the Life Sciences Symposium. These committee meetings resulted in lively debate and a sense of shared commitment that strengthened the life sciences community on our campus. The committee will continue into the current academic year to lead the second year of the Initiative and will continue to develop effective practices to advance faculty diversity, equity and inclusion within departments and establish lasting cultural change.

The Initiative included four areas of intervention: building a critical mass, strengthening applicant pools, improving candidate evaluation processes, and institutional change.

I. Building a Critical Mass, Faculty Searches

The Cluster Search

The Berkeley campus committed five FTE for a broad search in the Life Sciences. This open area recruitment solicited applications from outstanding early career research scientists who also demonstrated strong potential to enhance equity, inclusion and diversity. The job ad was widely distributed to highly regarded journals and societies, and through personal outreach to PFPF and Chancellor's Fellows (and other prestigious fellowship programs) and to institutions with strong academic standing. A total of 993 applications were received, of which 893 met basic qualifications. The LSI Committee conducted a first review and evaluated candidates based solely on contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion. Only candidates that met a high standard in this area were advanced for further review, narrowing the pool down to 214 for serious consideration. The remaining applications were then opened to review by the departmental ad-hoc search committees for short-list consideration. Twenty-two candidates were selected for the short list and interviewed across six departments. Five finalists were ultimately proposed for hire; two in Molecular and Cell Biology (MCB), one in Integrative Biology (IB), one in Plant and Microbial Biology (PMB), and one in Environmental Science, Policy and Management (ESPM) with several outstanding alternative candidates identified. Ultimately, the "cluster search" was one of the most successful interventions of the initiative. It will result in an increase in faculty committed to advancing faculty diversity, equity and inclusion on the campus.¹

This search was unique, both in scale and in intent, and it presented several novel problems for the LSI Committee, as detailed in the LSI Committee Search Process (Appendix A). This led to an unexpected and impactful intervention; in the first review, the Committee evaluated redacted statements on contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion. Limiting the first review to contributions in DE&I is itself a dramatic change of emphasis in the typical evaluation process which generally focuses on primarily on research accomplishments. Furthermore, we believe that the redaction of candidate names from these statements reduced unconscious bias in the evaluation processes. Without presumptions regarding a candidate's gender, national origin or ethnicity, reviewers evaluated candidates solely on their statements on accomplishments, depth of understanding, and future plans.

¹ The size of the search, and cumbersomeness of navigating multiple units slowed the selection and offer process. Most offers and appointments for the finalists were not resolved in until late spring semester. This resulted in several delayed starts.

Three departments (MCB, PMB and ESPM) are experimenting with new interventions in the coming year and emphasizing diversity, equity and inclusion in the first review is now an agreed practice in these departments. However, use of redacted statements will likely not be a widespread practice until a streamlined process can be developed; redactions in our current system must be manually applied creating a strain on department resources.

Departmental Searches

Eight departmental searches were conducted using the Initiative’s interventions to strengthen applicant pools and improve candidate evaluation processes. The search committee in ESPM took this farther than the others and opted to follow the same review process as the larger cluster hire:

Before reviewing applications in their entirety, the committee reviewed the diversity statements submitted by the candidates. To prepare for this step, the committee initially conducted a calibration exercise with 10 blinded diversity statements (selected from the pool by OFEW) to ensure inter-rater reliability and consistency in the application of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) rubric. The committee then met to discuss these results and determined that our approach to scoring of the diversity statement was effectively calibrated.

The department analyst redacted the applicant diversity statements and randomly assigned two committee members to review each redacted diversity statement. Possible scores based on the rubric ranged from 3-15. Applicants who had scores that diverged widely were assigned a third reader. A minimum average score of 11 or a combined total score of 22 (across two committee reviewers) was required to continue to the next round of review. The committee met to discuss the results of this first stage of review, which yielded a total of 80 viable candidates. These were marked in AP Recruit as under “serious consideration.”

Both the ‘cluster search’ and the ESPM search yielded significant increases in URM candidates advanced to shortlist consideration:

Table A: Life Science Faculty (Cluster) Search Demographics:

GENDER	Applicant Pool	Longlist	Shortlist
Count	894	214	22
Female	41.70%	60.30%	63.60%
Male	56.50%	39.30%	36.40%
Unknown	1.80%	0.50%	0.00%
RACE/ETHNICITY	Applicant Pool	Longlist	Shortlist
Count	894	214	22
African American	2.80%	6.10%	9.10%
Hispanic	13.20%	22.90%	59.10%
Native American	0.40%	1.40%	0.00%
Asian	25.70%	18.70%	18.20%
White	53.70%	48.10%	13.60%
Unknown	4.10%	2.80%	0.00%

TABLE B: ESPM Faculty Search Demographics:

GENDER	Applicant Pool	Longlist	Shortlist
Count	360	80	5
Female	45.30%	60.00%	60.00%
Male	51.40%	38.80%	40.00%
Unknown	3.30%	1.30%	0.00%
RACE/ETHNICITY	Applicant Pool	Longlist	Shortlist
Count	360	80	5
African American	4.20%	8.80%	20.00%
Hispanic	11.10%	22.50%	20.00%
Native American	1.10%	3.80%	20.00%
Asian	18.10%	11.30%	40.00%
White	58.90%	52.50%	0.00%
Unknown	6.70%	1.30%	0.00%

II. Strengthening Applicant Pools

Participating departments followed the interventions described in the proposal to increase diversity in application pools of concurrent departmental searches by including the following practices:

- Use of standard text in faculty search ads emphasizing the importance of contributions to advancing diversity on the Berkeley campus and confirming ongoing support.
- Improved outreach practices: contacting specific potential candidates to ask them to apply, and actively considering current or former PFP participants and potential candidates from similar esteemed programs.

III. Improving Candidate Evaluation Processes

Participating departments applied the following standardized candidate evaluation processes to counter implicit bias and increase the value of candidate contributions to diversity in the evaluation process:

- Requiring a statement on past contributions and future plans to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Candidates were directed to the Office for Faculty Equity and Welfare (OFEW) website for guidance in writing their statement and preparing for a campus visit if selected as a finalist.
- Search committees were given clear guidance about how to evaluate the statement in three areas: candidate knowledge and understanding, track record of contributions, and future plans if hired at Berkeley.
- At least one member of each search committee participated in annual training workshops organized by OFEW to counter implicit bias and reinforce best practices in candidate review and interviewing.
- Committees used quantitative candidate assessment tools including a rubric to evaluate contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Finalists were asked to describe their efforts to promote equity and inclusion, as well as ideas for advancing equity and inclusion at Berkeley, as part of their job talk. They also met with the department equity advisor, and/or with a student panel during their on-campus interview.
- Only candidates who demonstrated, through their knowledge, past contributions, and/or future plans for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, potential to meet Berkeley standards were advanced as finalists and ultimately proposed candidates.

IV. Institutional Change

The creation of the LSI Committee was another successful element of the initiative. Staffed primarily with faculty Equity Advisors from the participating units, the Committee served as a working group to provide governance for this initiative with the support of the Deans and Department Chairs. The LSI Committee will reconvene in the new academic year to provide ongoing program development, serve as a resource for new ideas and innovations, and provide mentorship to the cohort of new faculty hired under the initiative. The Committee will also serve as additional mentors for new faculty, providing resources and advice on the development of equity and inclusion programs/activities. Additional funding has been allocated for the incoming faculty to support their DE&I efforts and may be used for travel, support for student or mentee events or activities, and/or for teaching buy-out to allow faculty additional time to launch a new initiative. The incoming faculty will receive support and mentorship from the LSI Committee in effective use of these funds. In addition, all new hires under this initiative will participate in the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity Faculty Success Program in the spring of 2020 or fall of 2021.

Adjustments to Proposal

The LSI Committee organized a successful symposium rather than a winter seminar series, as described in the initiative proposal. The “Life Sciences Symposium on Integrating Research with Education and Outreach” was held on May 9. The daylong event focused on successful strategies to forge a synergy between research and education, and other efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through a combination of presentations, panel discussions, and break-out sessions, participants learned about successful programs and practices that have increased graduation success and research opportunities, improved the science pipeline for underrepresented groups, and improved classroom climate for all students. The event was attended by roughly 100 faculty, postdocs, graduate students and staff engaged in student programs. PFPF and Chancellor’s Fellows in the Life Sciences were invited to attend, as were finalists in the faculty searches. This brought potential candidates to campus and expanded Berkeley’s reputation as a campus that values diversity. The work of the symposium will be continued in the coming year, as an annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion retreat to share and develop best practices with department faculty, equity advisors, and leadership. A portion of the retreat will be dedicated to developing new initiatives and programs for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Due to organizational constraints, search committee chairs were not required to complete the UC Managing Implicit Bias Series course, “Managing Implicit Bias in the Hiring Process.” In its place, the Office for Faculty Equity and Welfare, in collaboration with the Equity Advisor from the Plant and Microbial Biology department conducted a training for search chairs titled “Diversity and Unconscious Bias in Faculty Searches.” Eighteen faculty search members attended from across the initiative.

Generation of a database of promising candidates with potential to contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion who have been identified at conferences, seminars, poster sessions, or other science and research venues has been started but not completed. It currently includes essential information such as research areas and interests but in a rudimentary spreadsheet. Programming on the database is underway and we expect to make it available for use in the AY 2019-2020 searches.

Establishing funding for a competitive faculty fellowship in support of equity and inclusion initiatives led by existing faculty has also been delayed. The Life Sciences Equity and Inclusion Council will work in 2019-2020 to

fully develop this program and establish funding from a combination of sources including campus grants, department contributions and potential donors.

Challenges

Administrative management of the initiative was significantly more challenging than expected. Many of the delays and adjustments in our proposal can be directly connected to the decentralized nature of this initiative and the lack of dedicated staff support. The difficulty of reconciling practices and processes across multiple departments also required significant effort and resulted in some confusion and poor communication.

Future Plans

In the coming year, participating departments will adhere to the interventions developed in this Initiative. Several will be experimenting with additional methods to increase diversity, equity and inclusion through their faculty searches as already described. The LSI Committee will reconvene to advise and support these new interventions. The Committee will also develop and implement the mentorship program for incoming faculty cohort, prepare for the annual retreat or symposium on advancing DE&I, oversee completion of the recruitment database and spearhead fundraising efforts for faculty programs.

In 2019-20202, the College of Natural Resources and the Biological Sciences Division will both initiate new Associate Deans for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to provide additional leadership and help address some of the administrative challenges of the Initiative.