

September 29, 2022

Dear PBS Community,

We are writing with our first monthly update on our efforts to increase diversity, equity, & inclusion in our department. We have listed below some of the actions that are currently underway. This is not an exhaustive list; if there is a DEI initiative you are working on in PBS and would like us to highlight it in our update next month, please send us the details!

Diversity Committee & Strategic Plan Development

- Both the Department Diversity Committee and Graduate Student Diversity Committees held their first meetings on September 19th. The Department Diversity Committee will meet next on October 3rd to begin discussing and refining a draft of a DEI Strategic plan framework and action plan. After we develop this draft, we will be reaching out to get input from the whole department. Graduate students Hector Sosa and Mar Nikiforova volunteered to serve as graduate student representatives on the Department Diversity Committee and will join faculty and staff members (Lisa Harvey, Rebecca Stowe, Evelyn Mercado, Mike McDermott, Ashley Woodman, and Heather Richardson) at our next meeting. Feel free to reach out to any of us if you have ideas, questions, or concerns you'd like to share.

Professional Development

- We have scheduled our first department-wide DEI training on Monday, October 3rd from 12 to 1:30 pm, titled, "Beyond Accommodations: Practices for Increasing Greater Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities in the Classroom." This will be held on [zoom](#). We are asking all faculty to attend; graduate students are strongly encouraged to attend, and post docs and staff are welcome.
- Our first Inclusive Teaching faculty learning group began on September 20th. Seven faculty met to discuss readings related to equity-focused teaching. We had the opportunity to learn strategies from readings and from each other about how to foster equitable engagement and success for students in our classrooms. We will meet four more times this semester to learn about universal design for instruction, integrating Diversity Science topics into our courses, using affirming & inclusive frameworks and language in class, and addressing world and community traumatic events in class. Rebecca Stowe, Joonkoo Park, Adam Grabell, Holly Laws, Carolyn Davies, Lisa Sanders, and Lisa Harvey are taking part in the fall group; feel free to reach out to any of us with questions about what we are learning. We will be in touch later in the semester to invite other faculty who may be interested in joining a group in the spring.
- We are in the process of scheduling a cultural humility workshop offered by the Women of Color Health Equity Collective. We will let you know as soon as we are able to find a time that works best for them and those who expressed an interest.
- Several PBS members attended the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion conference on campus at the beginning of the semester. We attended outstanding presentations on inclusive teaching, the [campus climate survey](#), promoting belonging at UMass, and UMass's efforts to address hate crimes.
- We have set up a PBS DEI Resources Team in Microsoft teams. This contains pdfs of articles on a variety of topics, particularly geared toward teaching and mentoring. We have shared this

Team with all faculty. If any graduate students, staff, or postdocs would like to have access to this Team folder, please email [Lisa Harvey](#) and she is happy to add you.

- We are exploring options for offering microaggressions training in the department in the spring. Stay tuned!

Undergraduate Initiatives

- Lisa Harvey is attending Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) meetings this semester to consult with the USC, led by Andrew Cohen, on how to best integrate diversity-related content into the undergraduate curriculum. Once this is finalized, she is chairing an ad hoc committee that will be developing a Letter of Specialization in Diversity Science for undergraduates. A draft proposal for this was developed by one of the action groups that was formed in 2020/2021, so we hope that we can develop a proposal that will be ready for broader input later this year.
- Lori Astheimer is developing a proposal to launch a Research Assistant Mentoring Program to provide a mechanism for encouraging undergraduates from underrepresented groups to become involved in research early in their UMass careers.

Graduate Initiatives

- Holly Laws is serving in a new role in our department as Graduate Student Advocate. She is working on offering professional development sessions focused on topics relevant to success in and beyond graduate school, such as well-being, financial security, and learning about different career paths. Lisa and Holly meet regularly to coordinate their efforts, including providing support for graduate student initiatives that promote connection and belonging among graduate students across programs.
- A new department-wide graduate recruitment committee has been formed this year, which we hope will allow for coordinated efforts to recruit a diverse group of graduate students each year. Faculty members of this committee are Kyle Cave (chair), Maria Galano, Adam Grabell, Becky Ready, and Joonkoo Park.
- The PBS BRIDGE committee is working to identify early career scientists to invite to campus for the 2022-2023 BRIDGE series. Click [here](#) to nominate scholars by September 30th. (See the email sent by Cierra Abellera for more details.)

Research Initiatives

- Maureen has been working with the dean to better support research in the Springfield area, including ensuring that faculty have adequate space in Springfield for their labs to conduct community research. The Executive Committee has voted to approve our department renting additional space in the UMass Springfield Center to support research in Springfield.

Faculty Recruitment

- I just received word that we have approval to advertise for a senior tenured faculty member with expertise in Diversity Science who could take on the role of Associate Chair for DEI. We will be circulating an ad shortly so folks can help us spread the word. As with all search committees (including 3 other faculty searches in PBS this year), each member of our committee has taken part in STRIDE training on campus, which educates us on strategies for ensuring that we follow an equitable search process.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, feel free to reach out to us by email to share your ideas and/or schedule a meeting with us. Thanks to everyone who is working hard on these and so many other efforts to foster DEI in our department!

Best,

Lisa Harvey, Interim Associate Chair for DEI & Co-chair PBS Department Diversity Committee

Rebecca Stowe, Co-chair PBS Department Diversity Committee