

DEI Committee Meeting Notes

Wednesday, March 17-- 4:15-5:15pm

Attendees: Pamela Bjorkman, Michael Dickinson, Mary Kennedy, Derrick Morton, & Leo Green
Absent: Jean Badroos, Matthew Alexander, Shelley Diamond

Creating Outreach Class for College Credit:

Pamela and Mary discussed the topic of creating a class similar to the Geology 298 Outreach class. This class gives college credit for outreach projects. The biggest concern about going forward with adding the course to the curriculum is going through the institute curriculum committee. There is urgency since to get it approved and in the catalog in order for Mary to write the grant for the IMSD Program discussed in previous meetings. This class along with the outreach postdocs fellowships.

**Action Item: Mary will look into how GPS got the course approved.

Mary mentioned that one of the projects of this class could be mentoring a student through the PEER program Derrick presented in a previous meeting and will present to the faculty at a faculty meeting April 2, 2021.

Caltech Shines:

Michael touched based with the committee on the event. Momentum with the event has increased to the extent that it will happen. People have begun committing to participate. Other URM in other divisions besides BBE & CCE (the ones that are hosting) have been invited to participate in the other activities.

Faculty Mentoring:

Michael received an email from an anonymous graduate student about concerns they have with their PI. It's a real life example of the issue brought up by a BBE faculty colleague in a previous meeting. A portion of the email states that the lab they are in the PI is very hands off, people are left to figure things out on their own, work is not distributed equally, and there is no mentoring. Graduate women in the lab have either left, took a medical leave or found mentoring elsewhere. Their graduation date has been pushed back and they've received little assistance from fellow members of the lab.

At Caltech there is a lot of academic freedom and a taboo about questioning the practices of colleagues. The fact that a graduate student is writing in on this problem and are not being served well/being mentored is upsetting.

The was brought to light by the Caltech Shines survey that was sent to current graduate students asking for what they would have liked to know about when they first started at Caltech and if they would participate in the event. The individual that stated they wouldn't take the survey but would contact Michael directly to provide feedback on the program they are in.

Pamela has experienced a similar problem when a graduate student came to her about their PI and the lab environment. When she brought this up to the dean of graduate students at the time, she suggested mentoring classes for that PI to take to understand how to run a lab. The dean then stated that they already took courses like that and the PI is still the same.

Mary brought up the historical context of this issue. The mentors used to be mostly men and the culture of biology and biomedical research encouraged a narcissistic entitled behavior on the part of mentors. It has gotten better over the years but still needs work.

Though it is not up to the committee to help this person, the issue is relevant because URM and women who can feel less entitled to be here and can be susceptible to this sort of treatment.

There is room for mentoring the younger newer faculty members on how to run a lab/mentor that can be implemented within the division. Richard would have to sign off on it/implement it.

Michael mentioned that fellow faculty member, Joe Parker, was a member of a ground roots association of faculty who drafted a training program for assistant professors coming in. Assistant professors from 6 divisions agreed that there's little training in lab management/mentoring. The institute mainly focused on discoveries that could turn into intellectual property. Last Michael heard about this project was that there would be a one day training course that would be required to be taken by all new faculty.

****Action Item:** Invite Joe to a meeting to discuss this.

Leo asked, as a way to help this person, to establish a support group specifically for this person with her peers to discuss the next step or how to deal with it. Even if there's no solution found, for their own mental health, at least someone is hearing them. Michael mentioned that the person does trust him and he could reach out in some way.

DEI Reps:

Pamela asked about how many DEI reps do we have now that a second email went out via Richard. There are 12 labs participating.

Website:

Identifying core principles are and some programs that the committee will implement can be highlighted on the website to make it/committee stand out/demonstrate what we're doing.

The wording of the first paragraph on the site that states how Caltech seeks to get the best minds was suggested to be changed to a more humble approach. Leo shared his research on other DEI websites from other schools as inspiration.

****Action item:** Discuss with the DEI reps their role and what are the next steps.

Meeting ends at 5:15 pm and the committee will meet again in two weeks, March 31.