

AJED Meeting Notes 11-13-2023

Agenda

Welcome with Nina!

Updates:

- News from the DGS Amy Schmid
- Summary of Staff Retreat with Jill Foster
- Update on the Gender-Neutral Bathroom with Steve Nowicki

Visit and discussion with IDEA Aeran Coughlin and members:

- Discuss the desire to improve alignment of faculty and graduate student goals
- Define our respective goals (e.g. what does community engagement look like?),
- Discuss initiatives and potential ways to collaborate and to ensure we avoid any duplication

Additional topics for discussion are welcomed!

In attendance (thanks for the extra chairs, Dan!):

Nina Sherwood
Mar Martinez Pastor
Jill Foster
Lotus Lofgren
Scott LaGreca
Rossie Clark-Cotton
Jessica Harrell
Steve Nowicki
Carl Manner III
David Su
Alison Hill
Aeran Coughlin
Yochebed Woldeyohannes
Dan McShea
Kathleen Miglia
Diego Garfias Gallegos
Anita Simha
Yaning Yuan
Danae Diaz
Paula Collado Cordon
Ze-Yi Han
Richard Wong
Amy Schmid
Desiree Outten-Berrios

248 Cogitron and on Zoom, 11A-1P

Nina: Welcome to new AJED member Ze-yi Han who will help with international representation in the department and on AJED specifically

Updates to AJED about DGS activities from Amy Schmid

1. Request: The DGS office in collaboration with DUS and a campus group called "Increasing Neurodiversity Competency in Faculty " (funded by Office of Faculty Advancement) to offer training and conversation with faculty next semester. We would like to use departmental DEI funds to support the efforts of the facilitators, ~\$300 honorarium. We request AJED approval to use these funds.

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- The committee voted unanimously to provide funds for this honorarium/training
 - It was requested that similar training be offered for postdocs and other interested parties in the department.
2. **Announcement:** Faculty can now take mentorship training offered through the School of Medicine Office of Mentorship Training. Foundational training is offered in April and advanced training in December. Information is [here](#) and in last Friday's newsletter. Mentorship training is required of faculty who want to have graduate students.

Jill Foster summarized the staff retreat:

The staff meeting/retreat began with introducing ourselves with our names, roles, years at Duke, etc. Then there were presentations from the DUSA/DGSA, Teaching Labs, Grants/Contracts, Phytotron/Greenhouse, Finance, Bio Sci and French Lab Managers, HR, and IT team outlining the scope of their work and successes & challenges. Emily, Steve, and Dave took notes on the challenges and action items they might be able to help with. Emily expressed her thanks to the staff, Mai conducted some brainstorming for a future retreat to be held, and a tasty lunch was served. It was good to have the whole staff together, put names to faces, and meet folks who we may not interact with regularly since various work sectors tend to be siloed.

Quick discussion of the Departmental Holiday party (happening in January) and previous ice breakers

- It would be nice to have the Bingo game again to help people meet one another but possibly simplify the questions by making them more general and less specific.
- The silent auction of previous years was a big hit and was a great way to meet new people and see what type of arts and crafts people do.
- Blythe is putting out a call for volunteers to help with the party

Gender-neutral Bathrooms

Steve Nowicki reported that (after being consulted about the style of sign to have on the GNBs and after Bobbi had ordered the GNB door locks) Bobbi was informed by the locksmith that North Carolina has a bathroom code that prohibits locking the external door if the facility has multiple stalls with multiple fixtures. This code will likely prohibit the proposed solution for establishing a GNB. The bathrooms in the department, currently under consideration, have multiple stalls and fixtures. The NC bathroom code was put in place due to concerns that a locked door on such a facility could encourage illicit activity in the bathroom. One simple solution was proposed to use a reversible sign on the outside door that indicates whether the room is "occupied" or "not occupied" eliminating the need for a lock on the external door. Another proposed solution is to remove the extra fixtures with a sledgehammer and pickup truck (more conventional fixture removal would cost \$20K). Several people expressed that the potential rejection of the GNB plan creates the feeling of an unsafe environment for people who are vulnerable and feel unsupported. Steve Nowicki will continue with this effort. Rossie suggested possibly circling back to OIE. The question of what "lockable" means was also raised; what if there's a key?

IDEA led discussion:

IDEA recently participated in a "listening" lunch intended to provide graduate students with the opportunity to discuss departmental initiatives and to debrief from the retreat. An important outcome is the desire for IDEA and AJED to work together on overlapping issues and to support one another. The following points were raised by IDEA during our combined AJED/IDEA meeting:

1. **Define our respective goals (e.g. what does community engagement look like?)**
 - As a community we are now doing more social events together.

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- IDEA would like to have more graduate student input on departmental decisions or initiatives (particularly ones that directly affect them).
- There is an information barrier that needs to be broken down.
- An example of a specific issue that could benefit from graduate student input is determining who will serve as the next DGS.
- It was proposed that all departmental committee meetings should post links to the recent meeting minutes positioned at the top of the weekly newsletter so they cannot be missed. (As discussed at the retreat: [Clickable Links](#). Can include: AJED, IDEA, CurrComm, GAC, etc.)
- We will plan to have a joint IDEA-AJED meeting once per semester! (And of course Carl and Aeran are at monthly AJED meetings as well so we can provide each other with regular updates.)

2. Discuss the desire to improve alignment of faculty and graduate student goals

- Many students do not yet have compacts with their faculty mentors.
- Graduate students worry there are power dynamics where they feel vulnerable—and their voices do not carry as much weight as the faculty.
- Every student should have an advisor and mentor. The advisor would act as a middle person in a moderator role thus spreading the responsibility amongst faculty reducing the pressure on the PI/advisor should a conflict arise
- Tristan reported that he had recently gone through a successful mentorship compact with Steve Nowicki. All parties were transparent and an equal exchange of expectations took place. Amy Schmid played the role of moderator. Steve suggests establishing a cohort of “third person” (i.e., moderator) faculty members.
- Jessica Harrell (jessica.harrell@duke.edu) reiterated her offer to help facilitate conversations and to work with graduate students in biology on how to “mentor up”. [Dr. Harrell is a trained facilitator for the National Research Mentoring Network](#) and has led numerous workshops for faculty, postdocs, and students to improve the mentor-mentee relationship and how to successfully navigate the relationship with one’s PI and department. Lotus added that the postdoc training (both mentoring up and mentees) they did with Jessica was fantastic.
- Carl suggests that mentee training would be a great addition to the Biograd requirements

3. Discuss initiatives and potential ways to collaborate and to ensure IDEA and AJED avoid any duplication

Danae enumerated on three initiatives IDEA is pursuing and hoping for partnership with AJED:

1. IDEA mini seminar series: 5 speakers focusing on equity and inclusivity in mentorship and teaching
2. Community Pantry/Mutual Aid Closet (point person: Jimmy Kieu)
3. Integrating IDEA concepts and teachings into Biology classrooms. (pp: Spencer Rhea)

Points of discussion:

- IDEA has successfully acquired a Friday 3:30 seminar slot for inviting a speaker to the department. A flier advertising this event will be posted
- IDEA would like to encourage the integration of IDEA content into existing graduate classes such as the Data Science Class or Noor’s Career class
- IDEA would like to integrate equity and anti-racism lessons into the undergraduate curriculum.
- Kelly Hogan, who is the department’s new DUS would be an excellent connection for discussing the undergraduate curriculum
- [Brian Donovan](#) gave a seminar in the department in September that generated lots of interest.
- The Community Pantry (aka the **Mutual Aid Closet**) is envisioned as a small closet located in the department (BioSci or FFSC) that would contain items that could be borrowed such as field clothes,

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professional clothing for conferences, tents for field work etc. Additionally dried goods and food items would be available. This initiative would require administrative approval and funding. IDEA point person(s) on this: Jimmy Kieu, Danae, Carl

Discussion of resources for graduate students and how to ensure community awareness

Ze-Yi Han, a new member of AJED, discussed her perspective on the many resources available to graduate students through the Duke Graduate School.

- There are lots of resources available through the [Duke Graduate School](#) but there are an overwhelming number of options.
- It would be helpful if we could create a forum or simply a list of students who have used these resources.
- The crowd knowledge and experience of Biograd is rich and developing a way to use crowd knowledge would be more helpful than listing names of resources that can be found online.
- Connecting students who want to explore those resources to those who have experience would be more helpful and will help people connect.
- The Bio Buddy is a good resource for students with more experience to mentor new students, but it could be improved (didn't work for some)
- Adding a happy hour for early-stage PhD graduate students looking for some buddies and later-stage PhD students who would like to offer help letting people chat with one another to organically establish these connections would help.

This brought us back to the discussion (from previous meetings) of a need for a wiki or webpage with helpful answers to FAQs for the graduate students, as well as for the other members of the department (especially new arrivals). Natalie has discussed how the Tufts grad students had their own webpage that she found tremendously helpful as a resource (<https://sites.tufts.edu/bugs/>) and went on to manage while a grad student. Kathleen, Lucia, and Nina started work on a general FAQ page (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FODsPRb0xcVEuyQMfy41ubnRGPhke449kbbf7MC82D4/edit>) but that has been tabled while we try to figure out what the best format for such a document(s) is/are, and what resources we have to 1) create and 2) maintain it. Suggested options (via email communications, not this meeting) from our excellent resource Matt Hartman (Trinity's Director of Content Strategy) are below:

1. The most direct would be using a series of Box folders and Box notes (basically the Box version of a Google doc): <https://box.duke.edu/>. That's what our team does, though it might be a little harder to do with a larger group. Basically, we use Box notes to provide guides that include links to files, resources, etc. that are also saved within organized folders.
2. OIT does offer a wiki service: <https://oit.duke.edu/service/duke-mediawiki/>. We've never used it and I don't know about any departments who currently are, so I don't have any particular insight about it, sadly.
3. You could also build a Sites@Duke Wordpress page: <https://sites.duke.edu/>. It looks like that's what the Tufts site is. It requires a little more work, but it's a fairly user-friendly experience, and it is free. I've built a bunch of these, so I can offer more specifics if you think you want to go that route.