

Action for Justice, Equity and Diversity (AJED) Committee
Department of Biology
Annual 2020 report
Dec. 21, 2020

Members:

- François Lutzoni (chair of AJED - Professor)
- Danae Diaz (Graduate student)
- Amanda DelVecchia (Postdoctoral researcher)
- Shannon Fang (Undergraduate student)
- Jill Foster (Staff)
- Alison Hill (Senior lecturer)
- Richard Hilleary (Postdoctoral researcher)
- Clarice Hu (Undergraduate student)
- Paul Magwene (Associate Professor)
- Julia Notar (Graduate student)
- Steve Nowicki (Professor)
- Justin Wright (Associate Professor)
- Marie Claire Chelini (ex officio - Postdoctoral fellow/communications specialist)
- Emily Bernhardt (ex officio - Professor and chair of the Biology department)

AJED Vision Statement: We want the demographics of our students, postdocs, staff and faculty to become more similar to the demographics of the United States. We want all of those who join our department to have the opportunity to thrive while they are part of our community of scholars and beyond. We want to be just, equitable and transparent about the ways we evaluate, compensate and reward all members of our department. We want to be a department of scholars that gives back to the Durham community in which we are embedded.

Introduction to the AJED 2020 Report: This committee was initiated during the summer of 2020 as a replacement to the Faculty Diversity Committee. One of the first goals was to assemble a diverse and inclusive committee, representing all group members of the Department of Biology. Currently this committee includes five faculty members representing both tenure and non-tenure track faculty, one staff, two postdoctoral researchers, two graduate and two undergraduate students, as well as two ex officio members (communication expert and departmental chair). Because of the scope and ambitious list of goals for this committee, five subcommittees were formed to reach these goals more efficiently. Each subcommittee provided a report covering their activities and accomplishments during the fall semester of 2020, as well as

their objectives for 2021. Action items falling outside the realm of these five committees were grouped under "General Action Items". These subcommittee reports are available using these links:

Governance Review Subcommittee Report (led by Justin Wright, Paul Magwene and Steve Nowicki): page 3.

Education Subcommittee Report (led by Alison Hill, with Jill Foster, Danae Diaz, Shannon Fang, Clarice Hu, François Lutzoni, and Steve Nowicki): page 5

Recruitment and Hiring Subcommittee Report (led by Steve Nowicki, with Amanda DelVecchia, Danae Diaz, François Lutzoni, Paul Magwene, and Justin Wright): page 7

Inclusion and Empowerment Subcommittee Report (led by François Lutzoni, Marie Claire Chelini, Amanda DelVecchia, and Alison Hill, with Jill Foster and Steve Nowicki): page 10

Outreach Subcommittee Report (led by Danae Diaz and Shannon Fang, with Richard Hilleary): page 13.

Report for General Action Items (led by François Lutzoni): page 15.

Acknowledgment: The Action for Justice, Equity, and Diversity (AJED) committee acknowledges and is thankful for the work from the student-led *Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism* (IDEA) committee, for the Department of Biology to enhance fairness and foster the development of an embracing academic environment where everyone can thrive.

Governance Review Subcommittee Report - Fall 2020

Subcommittee members:

- Justin Wright (Associate Professor)
- Paul Magwene (Associate Professor)
- Steve Nowicki (Professor)

Charge of the subcommittee

The overall task of the AJED Governance subcommittee is to review the instructions and assessment tools of each reviewing / evaluating committee or team to ensure that we are just, equitable and transparent about the ways we evaluate, compensate and reward members of our department. At the start of the semester we were tasked with assessing how the department evaluates both existing and incoming faculty, graduate students, and staff.

Accomplishments

*** Faculty**

Revised annual report form to include key sections on Promoting Inclusive Excellence, Mentor training, and mentoring metrics with respect to both graduate and undergraduate students. For AY 2020-2021, the performance review committee will provide a score for each faculty but this will not be weighted for decisions about raises in 2021. Starting in 2021, this will become a fourth category of the score, and faculty will develop and vote on how the proportional scores will change as a result.

*** Students**

Worked with Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) to institute a number of changes to the process of reviewing applicants to the Biology Graduate Program including developing a formal rubric for assessing applicant materials which includes a section on “Contribution to the Duke Community”; instituting implicit bias training for all GAC members prior to evaluating applications; and formalizing the procedure for interviewing to standardize the experience across all applicants. Next year, portions of the rubric will be placed on the Biology Website so that all applicants will have the opportunity to know how they will be evaluated.

*** Staff**

Nothing substantial to report. For administrative staff this is largely an issue for the Departmental Manager (although it should be noted that there is now Administrative staff representation on the AJED Committee). For research staff there were discussions about how to increase diversity in hiring.

Future efforts

*** Faculty**

One of the charges that was moved to a lower priority given the lack of hires in 2020 was to develop best practices for the hiring process. This charge will be prioritized again in 2021 if new hires are made possible. The work done to improve the GAC's evaluation of graduate applications involved fruitful conversations that will inform our work in this area.

An additional area for future work is to collaborate with the Chair and Steering Committee to carefully read the Biology Faculty Handbook and Bylaws to look for areas that need to be revised and updated to reflect new practices and to ensure that all members of the faculty are receiving information in a transparent and equitable fashion.

*** Students**

There is no current mechanism by which graduate students can provide feedback to the Department about the mentoring they receive. Work in this area is currently underway by the Department's faculty. The sub-committee recommends that the Department develop a survey mechanism for graduate students to provide yearly feedback about the nature and effectiveness of the mentoring they receive. Several key questions need to be addressed if this is to be implemented including: is this a requirement?; anonymity; standardized survey vs. free text; how and by whom is the information collated, analyzed, used, and reported?; how would graduate students be assured that they would not suffer negative consequences for providing critical feedback about mentoring? The sub-committee recommends that AJED work with the DGSs and the GAC, with representation from graduate students, in their ongoing efforts to develop such a reporting mechanism.

An additional future item for the department to discuss is whether to institute Individual Development Plans (IDPs) to help formalize the assessment of how our graduate students are progressing through the program. These IDPs are already required in NIH training grant sponsored graduate programs as well as all NSOE affiliated graduate programs (including UPE), so many of our graduate students are already using this process. In addition, the Reimagining Doctoral Education (RiDE) report from the Provost's office has recommended that IDPs be required for all graduate programs at Duke.

*** Staff**

A key issue for future efforts is faculty-research staff interactions. What is the perception of research staff in terms of inclusivity, equity, etc. in the Department and the University. Are there steps that need to be taken in how research staff annual evaluations are conducted to ensure equity?

Education Subcommittee Report - Fall 2020

Subcommittee members:

- Alison Hill (Senior lecturer)
- Jill Foster (Staff)
- Danae Diaz (Graduate student)
- Shannon Fang (Undergraduate student)
- Clarice Hu (Undergraduate student)
- François Lutzoni (Professor)
- Steve Nowicki (Professor)

The overall task of the AJED education subcommittee is to evaluate the introductory biology curriculum (i.e. the gateway courses) to determine whether we are providing an inclusive experience for all incoming students regardless of their high school preparation. The ongoing focus and discussion of the AJED education subcommittee is centered on the following questions:

- What would an inclusive biology curriculum look like?
- What is the evidence that either supports or refutes that our current curriculum is inclusive or not?
- If the current curriculum is not inclusive, what do we need to change about our gateway structure to give an equal opportunity to all incoming students?
- What is the best way for our committee to learn about undergraduate perceptions of the inclusiveness of the biology curriculum?
- Some of the highlights of our fall semester meetings have included discussions on:
 - the pros and cons of the introductory biology curriculum over the last 20 years
 - how the integration of structure into our molecular biology gateway led to a reduction in the achievement gap for URMs (based on a comparison of the achievement gap in Bio118 versus Bio201L)
 - proposals and ideas for an alternative intro biology curriculum which might include:

Bio101: an introductory level biology course with integrative biology content that emphasizes the skills that biology students will need as they progress through the major

A placement exam for all incoming Biology majors as a way to alleviate some of the inequities for students without access to AP exams.

Different acceleration pathways through the curriculum that would be either slow, medium or fast acceleration depending upon prior AP biology exposure or score on a placement exam. Slow acceleration would be : Bio101; Bio201L and Bio202L. Medium acceleration would be Bio101 and Bio203 or Bio 201L and Bio202L. Fast acceleration would be Bio203L.

Our committee recognizes the need to gather additional information to help us better understand and define what the overall needs of our introductory curriculum are in terms of both academic and cultural inclusion. Some of the near-term (Spring, 2021) action items are:

- **Action item:** Determine whether our education subcommittee can gain access to the Biology Department’s end of semester course evaluations to ascertain how our students respond to this statement: **The course had a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment.** This information could be used to determine whether specific biology courses can improve in this.
- **Action item:** Suggest that our departmental Chair Emily Bernhardt request course data analysis from the Office of Student Assessment, Office of the Provost or from the Dean of Natural Sciences, Mohamed Noor, to ascertain whether there is a demographic bias in students’ performance in our gateway courses (Molecular Biology Gateway Bio201L and Genetics and Evolution Gateway Bio202L).
- **Action item:** Analyze some of the responses to the Bio201L and Bio202L end of semester internal survey questions to determine whether there is a demographic bias to answers to questions such as: “My experience in Bio201L/Bio202L increased my overall interest in biology.”
- **Action item:** Identify guidance on how to design a successful focus group with undergraduates. Our medium-term goal is to ensure that, before graduating in May 2021, Shannon Fang and Clarice Hu are able to facilitate a focus group with biology undergraduates to discuss student perspectives on our introductory biology curriculum.

Recruitment and Hiring Subcommittee Report - Fall 2020

Subcommittee members:

- Steve Nowicki (Professor)
- Amanda DelVecchia (Postdoctoral Researcher)
- Danae Diaz (Graduate student)
- François Lutzoni (Professor)
- Paul Magwene (Associate Professor)
- Justin Wright (Associate Professor)

As originally articulated, the overarching charge of the Recruitment and Hiring subcommittee is to design “outreach and recruitment processes that maximize our ability to attract candidates from underrepresented groups” across all elements of the Biology department community, including undergraduates, graduate students, postdocs, faculty, and staff. The subcommittee approached this charge both by considering the extent to which, and why, disparities in representation exist for each of these groups and by considering the agency Biology has in implementing change (that is, the extent to which Biology as a department can implement change on its own or just advocate for change if control lies elsewhere). One outcome of the subcommittee’s discussion and a subsequent discussion of the full AJED committee was the realization that many of the action items initially assigned to the Recruitment and Hiring subcommittee were highly overlapping with action items worked on by other subcommittees. These instances are noted below.

In regards to undergraduate representation: The issue here is not a matter of recruitment, but rather a matter of retention. Duke undergraduate admissions is highly successful in attracting and admitting a very diverse student body, and there is no evidence to suggest that underrepresented students who matriculate at Duke are disproportionately less interested in pursuing STEM majors, including Biology. Thus, engaging with undergraduate admissions to improve their outreach is not a task that needs to be undertaken by the department. Rather, the issue is to ensure that students from underrepresented groups are not disproportionately discouraged from continuing their interest in Biology as a major. Two action items can directly address this issue:

- (1) Ensure that introductory-level courses are inclusive and welcoming of students from all backgrounds. *Note that this action item is a primary task of the AJED Education subcommittee.*
- (2) Increase the number of Biology faculty who participate in college advising through the Academic Advising Center (formerly referred to as “pre-major advising”), especially serving as advisors to students from underrepresented groups through programs such as the Rubenstein Scholarship for first-generation, low-income

students. *Note that this task is also an action item being addressed by the Inclusion and Empowerment subcommittee.*

In regard to graduate representation: Here, there is indeed an important concern that Duke Biology is not portrayed externally as a welcoming and inclusive environment for graduate training. Biology has little agency in determining how the Graduate School is portrayed (as illustrated, for example, by the Graduate School's unwillingness to completely eliminate the GRE requirement). However, Biology does have complete control over its own external presence and recruitment efforts. Three action items follow:

- (1) Ensure Biology's presence and active recruitment in venues such as SACNAS and ABRCMS. *Note that departmental leadership has already committed to this goal, and Bio staffed its own outreach booth at the 2020 SACNAS meeting.*
- (2) Revise Biology's website to create explicitly welcoming and inclusive messaging, including a transparent description of the admissions process and the graduate experience in Duke Biology. *Note that the department has already begun this revision, led by Dr. Marie Claire Chelini, recently hired as Science Communication Fellow for Biology and Evolutionary Anthropology, and the DGSs.*

- ***The Recruitment & Hiring subcommittee will work with Dr. Chelini to help review and revise the Biology department website, especially with regard to information about the Biology graduate program.***

- (3) Create graduate school preparation and admissions preview programs for underrepresented students. The February 2020 report of the Biology Task Force on Graduate Admissions and Recruiting recommended creating two such programs, one targeted at Duke sophomore students from underrepresented groups who are just beginning to think about the possibility of pursuing a career in academic science, and another targeted at juniors from a broader set of institutions who are closer to the point of applying to graduate programs (as is currently done by Princeton, Cornell, Brown, and several other peer institutions). The Recruitment and Hiring subcommittee agreed that this is a top priority, although the realities of the current pandemic means that a tractable first step will be to create a program for Duke students initially delivered in a remote fashion. *Note that this task overlaps with the goals of the Outreach subcommittee.*

- ***Beginning in December, the Recruitment & Hiring and Outreach subcommittees will convene a group of upper-class Biology majors and graduate students coming from underrepresented groups, including low-income and first-generation students to help brainstorm the content for a pilot program to be run in the Spring 2021 semester. Following this brainstorming session, graduate students and faculty will be recruited to complete the implementation and delivery of this program. It is essential to emphasize that the implementation and delivery of the program is understood to be the responsibility of faculty with the assistance of Biology graduate students, and not seen as the responsibility of students***

of particular backgrounds or demographics who may already face higher demands on their time and energy.

In regard to postdoc representation: The primary goal listed in the original charge to the Recruitment & Hiring subcommittee was to ensure that all postdoctoral positions are posted on Academic Jobs Online and also advertised on job listings that target underrepresented groups, such as DiversifyEEB (<https://diversifyeeb.com>). *The subcommittee learned that advertising postdoctoral positions in Academic Jobs Online is already Biology department policy.*

- ***The Recruitment & Hiring subcommittee recommends that the Biology department further agrees to implement a mechanism for ensuring broader listing, such as by requiring advertisement copies prior to submitting offer letters for approval.***

In regard to faculty representation: Current Biology faculty and leadership have already expressed strong support for increasing faculty diversity, as has the dean and her leadership team in Trinity College. Unfortunately, the pace of faculty hiring across all departments was greatly slowed by financial constraints even before the negative economic impact of the ongoing pandemic. The good news, however, is that the Provost is initiating a program with support of The Duke Endowment^[1] that will specifically target hiring of faculty from underrepresented groups. Biology will, of course, participate in this process. In the advent of future searches, the Department will ensure that a wide diversity of potential candidates is contacted. An example would be the recent cohort of MOSAIC K99/R00 awardees (<https://loop.nigms.nih.gov/2020/08/mosaic-announcements-and-upcoming-webinar/>).

In regard to staff representation: A challenge with hiring diverse staff is that many qualified applicants in the Triangle region may not consider Duke (or any local academic institution) as a place where they would look for employment. The subcommittee discussed the case of a recently advertised position in the Biology greenhouses, which did not attract a diverse pool of candidates even though the region has many greenhouse and landscaping businesses where highly qualified candidates would likely be found.

- ***The Recruitment & Hiring subcommittee will offer to arrange a brain-storming session with Biology department manager Randy Smith to consider new ways to advertise staff openings that might be effective in attracting more diverse candidates to future openings.***

Inclusion and Empowerment subcommittee - Fall 2020

Subcommittee members:

- François Lutzoni (FL - Professor)
- Amanda DelVecchia (AGD - Postdoctoral Researcher)
- Jill Foster (JCF - Staff)
- Alison Hill (AH - Senior Lecturer)
- Steve Nowicki (SN - Professor)
- Marie Claire Chelini (MCC - Postdoctoral fellow/Communications specialist)
- Emily Bernhardt (EB - Professor, Chair of Biology Department)

Overarching goal: We want all of those who join our department to have the opportunity to thrive while they are part of our community of scholars.

Roles: Work with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) office, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) office, the Steering Committee and Department Manager Randy Smith in designing outreach, advising, and reporting mechanisms, that will enable underrepresented groups in our department to excel.

Action items and accomplishments during the fall semester of 2020:

Action item 12 - Implement an interactive user-based online assistance system for members of our department subjected to racial and social injustice, and all forms of harassment and inequity (led by NSOE), and develop clear pathways for how submitted concerns, issues, and instances of bias, harassment, and inequity will be handled.

Achievement: The implementation of this interactive discrimination/harassment workflow is scheduled for the spring. AGD, MCC and FL met with Kirsten Overdahl (graduate student in NSOE, developer of the interactive tool) to determine how this tool could be adapted for our department and expanded beyond our graduate student population. We contacted the two NSOE faculty members responsible for the implementation of this reporting tool, who indicated that the implementation was now college wide and is being led by the Graduate School. We are now in touch with the Graduate School who confirmed that each department will be able to use this resource for their graduate students.

Using the system developed by NSOE we plan to develop our own reporting workflow for faculty, postdoctoral researchers, staff and undergraduate students.

Action item 13 - Advocate for, and be more inclusive, of housekeeping staff, and staff in general, in the Department of Biology.

Achievement: JCF posted *Thank You* signs in the BioSci building during International Housekeeping week (Fall 2020), and departmental leadership provided a breakfast buffet from RISE. During our departmental giving thanks party in November, several dozen personal notes of thanks were written by department members and delivered to the housekeeping staff. Most of our housekeepers came to the ‘party’ and were celebrated and thanked in person.

We will include our housekeeping staff on our departmental staff list, listserv and web page and will invite them (along with departmental staff) to have their photos and bio included as we update the departmental website in Spring 2021.

Collections for the holiday funds for housekeeping and staff were challenging this year. Randy Smith and Johanna Bernhardt found a way to collect and distribute these donations to all housekeeper and staff. A special thank you should be given to housekeeping who have been essential workers during most of the pandemic. We were pleased to learn that both funds received a record level of donations in 2020.

Action item 17 - Encourage faculty in the Department of Biology to be College Advisors for students with different backgrounds, and support participating faculty with culturally-appropriate mentorship training.

Achievement: On November 19, 2020, FL contacted the Director of the Academic Advising Center, David Rabiner, to determine if he would be willing to come to one of our departmental meetings to inform our faculty about College Advising at Duke. The main goal is to encourage more tenure-track faculty in our department to join this effort.

The timing is good in terms of recruiting and training new college advisors and he is interested (with Kelly Cottrell) to participate in one of our departmental meetings. David indicated that it would be good to know by mid-March how many faculty are interested in getting involved. Therefore, a departmental meeting scheduled for February 2021 seems ideal.

The main goal of this action item (# 17) is to use college advising as a way to better integrate first generation students, students with diverse high school preparation, and students from underrepresented segments of the population into our department. Having more faculty from the Department of Biology advising students during their first- and sophomore-year would enable a smoother transition to the Biology Major and would allow a

more integrated and continuous advising experience for students during their four years at Duke. It might also attract more students to select Biology as their major.

Following up on this positive answer from David and Kelly, FL contacted the chair and co-chairs of our department to explore the possibility of having David and Kelly participate in our February (2021) departmental meeting.

Action item 20 - Provide better support for foreign and underrepresented minority faculty.

Recommendation 20.1: We propose that all faculty in the Department of Biology take the full TFEF training (over the course of an entire academic year) to help them gain a better understanding of the racial, ethnic and social dynamics in the United States.

Achievement: Duke Biology has more TFEF alumni than almost any other department on campus, with sixteen faculty members selected as prior and current TFEF fellows.

In 2020 - we note that nearly all department faculty took part in a series of formal training sessions facilitated by Dr. Krista Robinson-Lyles of the Hope Education Group (and facilitator of Duke's yearlong TFEF program) during the Fall of 2020. Thirty faculty members attended a training session on culturally inclusive pedagogy facilitated by Dr. Nicki Cagle in early December. Also in December, all members of the Graduate Affairs Committee and Performance Review Committee participated in formal bias training sessions run by Duke OIE and the AdvanceGEO partnership.

Recommendation 20.2: Members of the Biology Department without US citizenship have reported severe problems with visas due to mishandling of paperwork (things done too late, or done wrong). To truly give support to foreign faculty (and staff, and postdocs, and graduate students!), the department needs to sort out the way it handles visa issues, and be more sensitive to the precarious situation in which foreigners often find themselves.

Action item 35 - Propose a recommendation to the Department of Biology about the appropriateness of calling 911 for minor non-violent offenses, i.e., develop a code of conduct for the Department of Biology. This includes organizing a town hall meeting (led by Randy Smith) with Daryl Mount (Community Outreach Officer for Duke Police) in the Department of Biology during the fall semester of 2020.

Achievement: Randy met with Daryl Mount (Community Outreach Officer for Duke Police) to organize a town hall meeting for the Department of Biology to address concerns, questions and best practices.

A town hall meeting is scheduled for February 2021 to address this issue. Randy Smith and Daryl Mount will answer questions. FL will be the facilitator. Daryl suggested that we use a pre-town hall survey/questionnaire to get a sense of the issues that will be discussed. We will distribute the same questionnaire they used previously for another department.

Action item 36 - Address the chasm between research and teaching faculty. (Led by AH and FL).

Recommendation: Expectations for PoPs and Lecturers need to be revised globally in partnership with the Biology Steering Committee and A&S. The teaching contributions of PoPs and Lecturers for gateway courses needs to be recognized and acknowledged.

Outreach Subcommittee Report - Fall 2020

Subcommittee members:

- Danae Diaz (Graduate Student)
- Shannon Fang (Undergraduate Student)
- Richard Hilleary (Postdoctoral Researcher)

Action Items:

- Grad school Preview Weekend for BIPOC students throughout the South- Working with Recruitment subcommittee
- Improve transparency and communication of ongoing Outreach efforts
- Participate in existing outreach efforts as a department (rather than individuals)
- Create a Bio Dept. Outreach event
- Bio Education Outreach program

Progress as of Nov. 30 2020:

- **Graduate School Preview Weekend for BIPOC students throughout the South:**
 - Working with Recruitment subcommittee
 - Planning stages
 - Recruit undergraduates liPOC Liaisons
 - Set agenda, date, etc.
- **Improve transparency and communication of ongoing Outreach efforts:**
 - Work with Marie Claire Chelini to update Outreach website
 - Collate & Highlight ongoing outreach efforts
 - Sent Survey on outreach efforts across the department 10/2020
 - Upcoming: Re-send 12/2020
- **Brainstorm better methods of community outreach:**
 - K-12 School officials, community centers, life sciences museum, etc.
- **Participate in existing outreach efforts as a department**
 - Science under the stars
 - Collaborate with Chemistry department to help pack and distribute take-home experiments
 - In the future (next year) also plan bio-related experiments
 - Darwin Day (sign up for 2 slots and organize two activities)
- **Create a Bio Dept. Outreach event**
 - Brainstorm: For Darwin Day?

- **Outreach program**
 - Meet with CAC to understand community interest
 - Draft Goals and design

Goals/ Accomplish by:

- **Grad school Preview Weekend for BIPOC students throughout the South- Working with Recruitment subcommittee**
 - Host at end of spring 2021
- **Improve transparency and communication of ongoing Outreach efforts**
 - Work with Marie Claire Chelini to update Outreach website (ongoing)
 - Collate & Highlight ongoing outreach efforts
 - Have complete list by beginning of spring 2021 and share with Marie Claire for communication on website
 - Ongoing (New survey at beginning of each year?)
- **Develop better methods of community outreach**
 - Reach out to local public schools and distribute collated outreach efforts and opportunity for involvement by fall 2021
 - Participate in existing outreach efforts as a department
 - Science under the stars
 - Help pack and distribute take-home experiments
 - In the future (next year) also plan bio-related experiments
 - Darwin Day
 - Host two activities (Feb 2021)
- **Create a Bio Dept. Outreach event**
 - Design by Fall 2021 to Host Spring 2022
- **Outreach program**
 - Design by Fall 2021 to Host by Summer 2022

AJED General action items report - Fall 2020

Committee members:

- François Lutzoni (Professor - chair of AJED)
- Danae Diaz (Graduate student)
- Jill Foster (Staff)
- Amanda DelVecchia (Postdoctoral Researcher)
- Shannon Fang (Undergraduate student)
- Alison Hill (Senior lecturer)
- Richard Hilleary (Postdoctoral Researcher)
- Clarice Hu (Undergraduate student)
- Paul Magwene (Associate Professor)
- Julia Notar (Graduate Student)
- Steve Nowicki (Professor)
- Justin Wright (Associate Professor)
- Marie Claire Chelini (ex officio - Postdoctoral fellow/Communications specialist)
- Emily Bernhardt (ex officio - Professor, Chair of Biology Department)

The following action items are outside the realm of the four AJED subcommittees. For this reason this progress report is done separately from the subcommittee reports.

Action items 1 and 2 – Establish a diverse committee with representatives from each segment of our department.

Accomplishment: We have assembled the most diverse and comprehensive diversity committee (AJED) ever established for the Department of Biology. In addition to several faculty members, this committee includes two staff members, two postdoctoral researchers, two graduate students and two undergraduate students.

Action item 3 – Give two Town Hall meetings during the #ScholarStrike (Sept. 8 and 9, 2020) to share the list of action items the AJED committee has already generated, and seek new suggestions from our department at large, including the relative priorities of these potential action items.

Accomplishment: We did hold these two Town Hall meetings. The first meeting was for undergraduate students and the second Town Hall meeting was for all other members of our department.

Action item 4 – Response to the petition from the IDEA committee.

Accomplishment: Members of the faculty participated in a series of facilitated discussions to propose action items in response to the IDEA committee petition. The resulting “Living Into the Vision” breakout groups considered what they need to know and what they could accomplish in response to each recommendation. Those discussions are informing the work of the department’s Steering Committee, Graduate Affairs Committee, Curriculum Committee and AJED.

Action item 5 - TFEF and OIE sessions for Biology faculty with Krista Robinson-Lyles and Robert Crouch, respectively.

Accomplishment: The TFEF sessions with Krista Robinson-Lyles took place during the fall semester of 2020. A large fraction of the faculty participated. The OIE session with Robert Crouch is scheduled for the spring semester of 2021.

Action item 7 - Promote training opportunities to graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and faculty to improve mentoring skills.

From AGD: I am particularly interested in considering how varying public school writing educations could affect both prospective and admitted graduate and undergraduate success at Duke, but particularly graduate students for whom writing can be an especially large barrier to entry.

Action item 22 - Contribute to the development of a post-baccalaureate program via an R25 grant led by the School of Medicine.

Accomplishment: Ongoing.

Action item 27 - Consider elitism negatively impacting graduate students in the Department of Biology.

From AH: For item # 27 we need more information about this because determining which action could be taken to remedy this problem is somewhat unclear. The challenge is Duke University, by its very nature, is exclusive and elite. There is a lot of pride wrapped up in this identity.

This was discussed during our Oct. 2 meeting. “Elitism” seems to be associated with expectations from faculty for their students to focus on research with the goal to pursue a

career in academia. The counterpoint argument was that many graduate students with Ph.D. from the Department of Biology at Duke pursue careers outside academia.

Action item 29 - Assess progress and success for each proposed action items.

Accomplishment: This report with the reports from each AJED subcommittee will be available publicly.

Action item 30 - Report progress of the AJED committee at future town hall meetings.

Accomplishment: Two town hall meetings are scheduled for the beginning of the spring semester (2021) to report progress made by the AJED committee and to seek additional feedback from all members of our department.

Action item 32 - Consider compensation for contributions to the AJED committee by undergraduate and graduate students, as well as postdoctoral researchers.

Action item 33 - Consider compensation for contributions to the IDEA committee (JN).

From JPW: For action items # 32 and 33 I want to go on the record as having concerns about compensation of graduate students for departmental service. I think it is an important part of graduate training and provides a real benefit to the students for career development. I also think there are slippery slope concerns - if we compensate for this committee, should we also be compensating for other committees?

[1] The Duke Endowment is a private philanthropic organization located in Charlotte, NC, and should not be confused with Duke University's own endowment.