

Notes from the September 11, 2023, AJED meeting

In attendance:

Nina Sherwood
Kathleen Miglia
Natalie Kerr
Mar Martinez Pastor
Jill Foster
Paul Magwene
Lotus Lofgren
Scott LaGreca
Rossie Clark-Cotton
Jessica Harrell
Steve Nowicki
Carl Manner III
David Su
Alison Hill

(edit from Nina): As of this semester, **Alison is Co-Chairing** AJED, yay!! Also, welcome to new members **Colby Cheshire** (senior) and **David Su** (sophomore), who join **Yochebed Woldejohannes** (junior) in representing the Biology Cultural Association/Biology undergrads on AJED. (Colby can't make the meetings this semester so we'll see him next semester.)

- David is doing research in the Onishi lab and notes that he was inspired to join after hearing Francois' talk last year (also happening this year on 9/20) about how to find a research lab!
- Francois can't make our meeting times this semester due to his teaching schedule and is on sabbatical next semester.
- Shania Appadoo has left Biology for a job in MGM (Matsunami lab) (sorry I forgot to actually mention this at the meeting)

Review of AJED calendar for coming academic year:

Fall 2023

September 11
October 9
November 13
December 11

Spring 2024

January 8
February 12
March 18 (3rd Monday of the month to avoid Spring Break)
April

- Possibly plan for a BCA mixer for December's meeting
- January 8th meeting is before the start of classes
- ~4 meetings per semester
- This week is International House Keepers Week

Notes from the September 11, 2023, AJED meeting

- Daniele note to support the Durham Sanitation workers

Discussion of the reaction to Kardia's work in the department:

Hired last year (for one year) by the department with the mandate to help assess and address departmental issues raised by the Climate Survey and elsewhere. AJED's task was to assist with these efforts. What were people's impressions of the Kardia Group's work?

- People felt like the listening circles worked well.
- In general, the sentiment expressed was the Kardia report (delivered by Nelia as a power point in a spring faculty meeting) was generic, lacked specificity and was not particularly useful.
- Nelia's presentation did not make it clear what the key departmental issues are. It was described as sounding like a management talk delivered to business leaders ("business speak" and pop psychology) which seemed insulting in light of the audience
- The recommendation by various people is that Kardia should focus less on what is going wrong and more on what works. What are specific things the department can do?
- At this point, there is not a written report with a deeper, dug-down/causal analysis that has been made available to everyone. This would be appreciated.
- In summary, a few people expressed the sentiment that there have not been significant changes despite the fact that Kardia is very expensive.
- Diana Kardia will be coming to the retreat from 3:00-5:00 on Saturday and will also be there on Sunday.

Nina reminded the group that last year AJED worked a lot on community and identity groups and would like to continue building on this work. Also, that Nelia made some important (if slightly buried) points in her talk, including the need to be aware of and attend to inequities in academic/departmental culture.

"You are never not a leader in your group". We can all jump in and do the work. It is easy to feel like we don't have the power

Discussion of the upcoming retreat:

Much of this discussion centered on how some people felt that communication about the retreat was insufficient; it was not clear who was included (i.e. was staff included?) nor what the actual purpose of the retreat is. Some people remarked that only learning about the retreat on September 1 made it difficult to plan.

One person archives all of the Friday newsletters and confirmed that the June 9 departmental newsletter announced the September retreat (See Save the Date! from the June 9 newsletter).

The take home from this discussion is that scheduling for the retreat should be done in spring semester before people leave and that the messaging needs to get out differently: Who is

Notes from the September 11, 2023, AJED meeting

invited to attend? What is the purpose of the retreat? In general communication needs to be better

Additionally,

- It was discussed that, due to the interactive nature of the retreat, zoom would not be possible.
- Additionally, it was discussed there would not be a professional note-taker at the retreat to summarize what takes place. However, in the future it would be valuable to have a summary of the retreat, stating the purpose and the goals, describing the content of the retreat – more like the newsletter, less like minutes.

Save the Date!

The Biology Departmental Retreat will be held **September 23-24, 2023** at the Rizzo Center in Chapel Hill. All Biology faculty, graduate students, postdocs and staff are invited to attend. Details to follow later this summer.

Communications within the department and how to improve it:

This brought up the topic that overall communication within the department could be better. How do people get information in the department?

Some faculty complimented Emily on her recent note to faculty early in the semester with a clear message on expectations for faculty engagement for the 2023/2024 academic year

SCHEDULE FOR FACULTY ENGAGEMENT - DUKE BIOLOGY - 2023/2024

Each month of the academic year, we ask and expect that faculty members will participate in the majority of the scheduled activities listed below. We ask that all faculty make every effort to be a part of departmental decision-making and community building as part of our expectations of one another. If travel interferes with your attendance at key meetings, please make an effort to read the meeting summaries and speak with your colleagues to catch up.

The discussion centered on whether it would be possible to have a similar form of communications sent to the different role-specific interest groups in the department. This would be made easier with the various list-servs been generated by the AJED Listserv subgroup (Katherine, Rossie and Lotus)

Subgroups Recaps

General Neutral Bathrooms

Steve Nowicki summarized the status of the general neutral bathrooms in BioSci. The subgroup researching this (Scott LaGreca, Rossie Clark-Cotton, and Steve Nowicki) and the Department (which paid for an analysis of French and BioSci) found a location in BioSci where a permanent GN bathroom could be built and looked into the cost (in consultation with Bobbi Weinberg from Duke FMD, who came and spoke to us last semester). Recently, it was announced that BioSci will undergo a comprehensive remodeling/renovation starting in two years from now. In light of this, it is not cost effective to build a new permanent bathroom so the construction is on hold and will be integrated into the renovation plan for BioSci. The subgroup did, however, determine that there are existing female and male bathrooms (1 each) on the first floor of French that can be converted into GN bathrooms. (Originally the plan was to change the signs stating they are GN, but lawyers were consulted, and this no longer seems to be an option.) The determining factor on the availability of this space has to do with a building code that specifies that there must be an equal number of male and female bathrooms available. Steve's proposed stopgap is to put a lock on the door making it possible for one person to occupy the space. The ease and low cost of doing this is extremely appealing, at least until a better solution can be found for FFSC (because renovating an existing bathroom to a proper GN bathroom will be extremely expensive since floor-to-ceiling walls need to be installed; Steve estimates we are 3-4 years out from that, as well as the BioSci renovations).

Undergrad belonging and mentorship BCA (Yochebed and Jill)

From Yochebed:

Year in review for BCA: We had two successful bookbagging events, each with 20+ people in attendance. We had a BCA/AJED mixer in April and a meet-the-professors event, which was not as successful as the bookbagging events.

General Updates: We are finally an approved Duke Group, and we recently got our fund code! We were able to participate at the group fair this year, so we were able to engage with underclassmen who would want to participate in the mentorship program. We have a lot of people in the group at the moment (116), and a good amount of people following the instagram @dukebca (47). We have had an issue with having people actually attend events though, so we are trying to brainstorm ways to engage students and increase attendance.

Goals: For this year, our main goals are maintaining member retention with our events and establishing the mentorship program. Some of the activities that we hope to hold are a meet the professors, how to get involved with research panel, and social mixers.

Committee members who were at the mixer suggested some restructuring to make it more mix-y and better attended; maybe make it more of an Event, e.g., at WU or a nicer space? The goals could have been clearer and it ended up feeling too formal; it was suggested that it's helpful to have a set of questions or an agenda just in case for freeform events that turn overly formal.

Onboarding: Nina, Lucia and Kathleen

This subgroup discussed what information is essential for someone newly employed by the department to have during their first week, and what departmental information is important for reference more generally. Nina showed the Google Doc Kathleen and Lucia (and she, slightly) have been working on...it's still rough, and we would welcome edits to the information (some of which is outdated...e.g. Mai has a new who's-who flow chart):

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FODsPRb0xcVEuyQMfy41ubnRGPhke449kbbf7MC82D4/edit?pli=1>

A discussion of how to distribute essential information to the department focused on the value of a Wiki model that serves as a living document that can be updated by anyone. Natalie shared that when she was a graduate student at Tufts, she constructed a wiki model for fellow graduate students that contained essential information and could be updated. This model can be found at <https://ase.tufts.edu/bugs/> Lotus agrees this is an excellent model as it is modular by design, which is important when you are serving different groups.

If AJED members would like to add/edit the Google doc (regardless of whether this is its final form, the information still needs to be collated), join this subgroup, etc., please let Lucia, Kathleen or Nina know! It's clearly still a work in progress, and the Wiki idea is extremely appealing aside from the general lack of time and Wiki-coding knowledge. Perhaps this is a good time to look into hiring a web-savvy undergraduate work study student for this and other web-based needs.

Mentoring: (Jessica Harrell)

Jessica gave an update on her work in the Undergraduate Research Support Office. She has gotten funding that will support undergraduates with work-study awards to use the funds towards research. Jessica explained that depending upon the funding source (either Duke or the Federal government) there is a gap in the amount of the monetary award granted to the undergraduates and what they actually receive. If the WS award is from Duke, the university covers only 50% of the award; if the award is from the Feds, the grant covers 75% of the award. The expectation is that when a student does research with a faculty member, the faculty will fill in the monetary gap. Note, the WS awards are typically \$1,100 per semester and \$2,200 per year. This means the gap filled in by the faculty could be as much as \$1,100 per year. Jessica let us know that she has gotten funding to fill in the gap in the funding ensuring that the WS undergrad gets their entire funding without having to rely on their faculty P.I. to provide the funds. This should ultimately make it easier for a WS student to be accepted into a research lab. The other topic that was briefly discussed was the fact that Duke does not allow paid undergraduate research to count for academic credit. This is in contrast to the situation at UNC where students can receive academic credit for paid research. Kelly Hogan is looking in to why this rule exists.

Submitted by Alison Hill and Nina Sherwood