

**Action for Justice, Equity and Diversity (AJED) Committee
Department of Biology
Duke University**

Spring semester 2022 report

AJED committee members:

François Lutzoni (Co-Chair of AJED), Professor
Justin Wright (Co-Chair of AJED), Professor
Amber Brooks, undergraduate student
Jill Chaskes-Foster, staff
Amanda DelVecchia, Research Scientist
Danae Diaz, graduate student
Dakota Douglas, undergraduate student
Elissa Foss, graduate student
Alison Hill, Senior Lecturer
Paul Magwene, Associate Professor
Steve Nowicki, Professor
Nina Sherwood, Associate Professor of the Practice
Lucia Strader, Associate Professor
Emily Bernhardt (ex officio - Professor and Chair of the Department of Biology)

Each semester of the regular academic year, the AJED committee submits a report to the Department of Biology. This is our fourth report since the inception of this committee in July 2020.

(1) AJED, undergraduate student subcommittee – Biology Cultural Union (BCU)

Subcommittee members during the spring semester of 2022:

Amber Brooks (Co-Chair)
Dakota Douglas (Co-Chair)
Jill Chaskes-Foster
François Lutzoni

Following up on the establishment of the BCU during the fall semester of 2021, this student organization is now included on the Department of Biology website (<https://biology.duke.edu/biology-cultural-union>), along with the AJED and IDEA committees.

As a result of an initiative from this subcommittee, the Department of Biology Newsletter is now sent to all undergraduate students that have declared Biology as their major.

Inspired in part by BCU, the Biology Major Union (BMU) was formed during the spring of 2022. Discussions followed about defining their distinct missions and how they can collaborate to reach their specific goals.

Because one of the BCU representatives on the AJED committee (Dakota Douglas) graduated this past spring (2022), a new representative – Yochebed Woldeyohannes – will be joining Amber Brooks to represent BCU on the AJED committee for the 2022-2023 academic year.

This subcommittee has been working with the Department of Biology to renovate a room in the Biological Sciences building that will be more inviting and conducive to foster synergistic interactions among members of this department, including BCU members and other undergraduate student groups part of the Department of Biology. This space is scheduled to be ready during the fall semester of 2022.

(2) AJED, education subcommittee

Subcommittee members during the spring semester of 2022:

Alison Hill (Chair)
Jill Foster
François Lutzoni
Steve Nowicki
Nina Sherwood

The education subcommittee continued its commitment to inclusive instruction in our major by (1) continuing to work with the assessments office on the analysis of Bio 201, to determine ways in which the lowest-performing students can be better helped. Related to this, (2) earlier AJED discussions regarding the addition of a new general biology course are now taking shape. Bio 199, Introduction to Biology, will be proposed, targeting undergraduates who have not taken Biology for several years (or perhaps ever). This will be a broad survey course with the goal of providing an inclusive introduction to the field. Such a change to the major will require approval by the entire faculty. Finally, the committee (3) met with Prof. Kelly Hogan, a candidate for the POP Education Innovator position, the duties of which include designing and conducting further assessments of the Biology major curriculum beyond Bio 201. Dr. Hogan was successfully recruited to our department and will be starting her position in Summer 2023.

(3) AJED, faculty recruitment subcommittee – Frontiers in Biology seminar series

Subcommittee members during the spring semester of 2022:

Lucia Strader (Co-Chair)
Justin Wright (Co-Chair)
Paul Magwene

The Frontiers in Biology Seminar series was very successful in highlighting research programs of 6 early career biologists. The series was well-attended and participants

reported positive experiences at Duke. While the seminar series was not specifically designed as a hiring mechanism, we have made an offer to one of the speakers, Arnaldo Carreira-Rosario and have high hopes that he will be joining our faculty as an Assistant Professor.

(4) AJED, undergraduate advising for students interested in research and graduate school – “BioGrad Pathways Program”

Subcommittee members during the spring semester of 2022:

François Lutzoni (Co-Chair)
Steve Nowicki (Co-Chair)
Justin Wright
Amber Brooks
Dakota Douglas

The Duke Graduate School has been hosting a [Graduate School Boot Camp](#) sponsored by the Sloan Foundation for undergraduates from underrepresented groups who are interested in pursuing a PhD in the physical sciences. Starting in the fall of 2022, matching funding from the Trinity College Dean of Graduate Studies will allow students with interest in graduate work in the biological sciences to attend as well.

(5) Departmental climate survey

During the spring semester of 2022, the AJED committee worked closely with Diana Kardia (Kardia Group LLC, Leadership and Change in Academia; <https://kardiagroup.com/>) to explore the possibility of working with this group to unpack the results of a recent departmental climate survey and to work with faculty in the Department of Biology to develop a list of steps needed to address the issues revealed by this survey. This will be followed by a yearly assessment mechanism to keep everyone involved accountable for the progress made towards the implementation of these necessary changes in the Department of Biology.

The AJED committee recommended to the Biology Steering Committee to accept the final revised version of the proposal by the Kardia Group to engage with faculty in the Department of Biology throughout the 2022-2023 academic year.