

# Biology DEI Spotlight 2023

## 2022-2023 DEI committee

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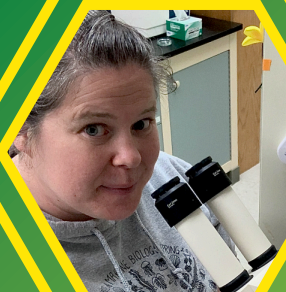
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**DEI Mission:** To assess and improve departmental climate with particular regard to diversity, equity and inclusion.

## Group Norms

The Biology Department, with input from faculty, students, and staff, developed a set of group norms, or code of ethics. We are not all experts in diversity, equity, and inclusion, but we are familiar with our own communities, and articulating group norms for our units is work each of us can contribute to in that context. The official set of Biology Department Core Values are listed below, and are posted online: <https://casweb.uoregon.edu/biology-core-values>.

1. We treat all members equitably and respectfully.
2. We express gratitude and appreciation for the work of others.
3. We listen actively to one another.
4. We strive to consider and acknowledge all members of our community in decision-making.
5. We hold ourselves and others accountable. We accept responsibility for our actions.
6. We commit ourselves to creating an environment where all members are safe, supported, and empowered regardless of rank, age, race/ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and other aspects of an individual's identity.
7. We value disagreeing in a respectful manner, without interruption. We disagree with ideas and do not attack individuals.
8. We show respect for one another's time. We will respond to requests as promptly as possible and provide adequate time to respond to requests.

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# Biology DEI Grants Results

## About DEI Awards

In 2020, the Department of Biology issued a call for proposals to be funded by Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) grants. A total of \$15,000 were available to support department members in their efforts to organize activities that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion. Applicants included faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and staff. Awardees were selected based on the potential of their proposed activities to support DEI infrastructure and improve departmental climate. Another criterion for awards is for the effort to reach as many people as possible, creating a large impact. Awards have been distributed over the past three years, and below we highlight the individuals and organizations awarded in 2022-2023 and their proposed activities.

## Undergraduate Instructional Mentor Fellowships



Dr. Mark Carrier

It is important to promote diversity in our classroom instructors—including undergraduate student teachers—in order to increase the representation and visibility of minoritized groups in our student body. **Professor Mark Carrier** has sought to alleviate this issue through offering funding to undergraduate instructors for Bi212 in the form of fellowships, so that students can afford to participate in this important academic work rather than more traditional service jobs on/off campus.

The establishment of funding for this position allows a student to continue to master biology concepts, mentor peers, and help generate teaching materials. This in turn may increase the potential for diversity in our student teaching population. As we transition to richer classroom experiences with more active learning opportunities, there is no substitute for a set of engaged, expert tutors who can guide students through these activities.



# OIMB Science Gatherings

Central to the goal of inclusivity is achieving the feeling of connect-edness. Yet, sometimes the work of a biologist brings us to distant field sites. Being both a remote campus and located in the small town of Charleston, OR, OIMB has a level of disconnect from other environmental and marine research being done in the surrounding area. Graduate students **Jessie Masterman** and **Erin Jezuit** orga-nized monthly community gatherings at 7 Devils, a brewery in Coos Bay, where OIMB scientists host other local scientists and the public for an evening of discussion on topics such as equitable beach ac-cess, invasive species management, and fishery sustainability.

Several events have been hosted, including one in April 2023 with two invited speakers: Ashley Audycki from Rogue Climate and Annie Merrill from Oregon Shores. Ashely gave a land acknowledge-ment, then Ashely and Annie gave some background information on the importance of having a clean and healthy estuary, and climate justice within this goal, including how low-income and indigenous folks are frequently left out of the con-versation & decision-making process even though they are often those most affected. There was a lot of good discussion at this event, with many questions and comments from attendees about the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan, House Bill 3382, and the future of the Coos Bay estuary.



## Biology Research Symposium

While the structure of the Department of Biology (comprised of Institutes) can in some cases be advantageous for promoting interdisciplinary research, there are limited opportunities for inter-institute interactions. Additionally, due to the pandemic, students have had little opportunity to present their work outside of their lab or institute. To address this lack of science communication and exposure to the research in our department, graduate students **Sabrina Mostoufi** and **Rose Al-Saadi** organized the accessible and inclusive Biology Research Symposium in October 2022, where poster costs were funded, eliminating one of the barriers to engagement. Twenty five presenters from IEE, IMB, ION, and OIMB attended. The event organizers also hosted instructional meetings focused on poster design tools, printing services at UO, and presentation tips. This event provided opportunities to learn how to design, print, and present a research poster, and facilitated community building and peer support for graduate students and postdocs.





# Spotlight Seminar by a Junior Scholar

A promising way to advocate for and increase representation of scientists from historically excluded groups is to select them to speak in departmental seminars. It is especially impactful to select early career scientists, as the networking opportunities and prestige associated with an invited talk may help them land their next opportunity. A team of graduate students and postdocs, **Caitlin Kowalski**, **Killian Campbell**, **T. Jarrod Smith**, and **Julia Ngo**, were awarded funds to host an in-person Spotlight Seminar in 2023. The goal of this seminar is to highlight the contributions of a junior scholar, from populations historically excluded from and underrepresented in science because of race, ethnicity, disability status, gender etc., to the broad field of biological research from the molecular to ecological level. The awardees sought nominations from the Biology Department and identified and selected Dr. Stephanie Aguillion from Stanford (see DEI Seminar Highlights, below).



## Decolonizing Field Research

The Department of Biology has researchers that work in a variety of lands and countries. Part of our role as a department is to impart skills and practices that promote an equitable, diverse, and inclusive research environment. Every researcher belonging to our department, especially those that do field work, should have a clear understanding on how to decolonize research. Many times, field work areas are especially vulnerable to being dominated by a particular sector of privileged individuals. For example, the word “Neotropical” is still used in ecology, which underscores the European-centric view that dominates the field. To promote connections with the natives of these lands, consciously honor them, and provide the same opportunities, we need to learn the proper ethics and take steps to decolonize research. Graduate student **Nicole Martinez Llaurador** and **Professor Lauren Ponisio** hosted an expert on the topic, Dr. Madhsunda Katti from North Carolina State University, for a virtual IEE seminar in January 2023, and are hosting Dr. Katti for an additional, in-person visit to UO in 2023 or 2024.



# Conferences Supporting Diverse Students

## Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists



Three graduate students (**Rose Al-Saadi (IEE)**, **Shelby Sharp (ION)** and **Natanya Villegas (IMB)**) and one faculty member (**David Garcia (IMB)**) attended the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists (ABRCMS), a gathering of more than 5,000 students, faculty and academic administrators from across the country in Anaheim, CA in November 2022. There they interacted largely with undergraduate students curious about PhD program opportunities. There were thousands of research presentations which were mostly by undergraduate students, keynote talks

from eminent scientists, educators, and public figures, and numerous workshops and panels aimed at people from all different training phases as well as mentors and administrators. The next ABRCMS conference will be held in Phoenix in November 2023. Biology graduate students and faculty interested in attending should contact the DEI committee now.



# Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science

The Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in October 2022, and was attended by **Professor Santiago Jaramillo**, and graduate students **Erin Jezuit**, **Killian Campbell**, **Gabriel Luna-Arvizu**, and **Rose Al-Saadi**. Killian reported: “Being able to represent UO and IE2 at SACNAS was a very special experience.

SACNAS was the very first large conference I attended before coming to graduate school, and it played a very important role in empowering me to pursue my own graduate career. This time around, it was very special to be on the other side of that experience meeting diverse young trainees from all walks of life.

Meeting all of the students that attended SACNAS reminded me why I chose the career path I did.”

Gabriel wrote: “I attended SACNAS 2022, and it was one of the most gratifying experiences during my Ph.D. I met students from different backgrounds and their research, as well as professionals in the industry. The conference reinforced my desire to improve the academic environment by supporting underserved communities in STEM.”





# EAGER Program

The EAGER program (Early Arrival for Graduate Education and Research) ran in Fall term 2021 for incoming Biology PhD students to (i) enhance students' feeling of belonging in the program, (ii) build cohort cohesion, and (iii) to build familiarity and connections with faculty and current Biology graduate students. The program

was led by **Jen Strong** and funded by the DEI committee and ran over the course of two weeks.

In addition to workshops and meet and greets, activities included: tours of campus and individual labs, a pizza lunch hosted by Nikon, bike rides and running on Pre's trail, a Ninkasi Brewery tour, coffee at Farmers Union, ice cream at Handel's, and hiking Spencer's Butte. Of the 23 incoming PhD students, 14 chose to participate in EAGER. One participant summarized: "In short, I thought it was an amazing welcome and absolutely worthwhile."

I had a blast, I made friends, I got all my questions answered, I got to hang out with faculty and current students. It helped me to immediately feel comfortable and at home in the department/city/state and (I'm) really excited to start the term in a way that the regular orientation week alone would not have done".



# Intent to Impact

“Intent to Impact” (I2I) is a graduate mentor training program offered by Movement Consulting. The program focuses on improving equity and inclusion in Natural Science graduate mentoring relationships, and bringing participating faculty in touch with cultural humility.

**Professor Lauren Ponisio**, a faculty member in IEE, participated in the program in 2022. She wrote “It was an incredible program. It started with more common summaries of why mentorship and diversity are important. Then we got into the meat of everything from white supremacy in our culture to the abuse we had experienced and perpetuated in academia. On the last day, we acted out challenging mentor-mentee scenarios (i.e., your mentee accuses you of being racist) and got feedback on how we handled the situation. It helped inform my mentorship practices and also how I view my role as an academic.”

Biology DEI funds covered Dr. Ponisio’s participation in the program, with a subsidy from CAS. Biology faculty who are interested in participating in this program should contact **Edward Davis (Department of Earth Sciences; [edavis@uoregon.edu](mailto:edavis@uoregon.edu))**.



# DEI Seminar Highlights

Dr. Sara Brownell, Arizona State University



**Dr. Sara Brownell (June 2, IEE seminar)** is a biology education researcher at Arizona State University focusing on making undergraduate science learning more inclusive. In particular, Dr. Brownell is an expert on course-based undergraduate research experiences, and making active learning courses and undergraduate research experiences more inclusive. Her research focuses on students with concealable stigmatized identities such as religious students, LGBTQ+ students, and students with disabilities, as well as the impact on students of instructors revealing these identities in the context of the classroom.

**Dr. David Asai (June 16, ION/DevBio Training Program)** is part of the Inclusive Learning Group at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. His work is guided by three beliefs: (1) the dynamic demographics of the U.S. population presents the greatest opportunity and the most compelling challenge for U.S. science; (2) all students—regardless of where they come from and where they’re going—deserve a meaningful, effective, and positive experience through which they can better understand the process of science; and (3) providing that experience is the responsibility of the faculty, staff, and administrators who define the institution’s culture.

Dr. David Asai, Howard Hughes Medical Institute



Dr. Angela Byars-Winston, University of Wisconsin



**Dr. Angela Byars-Winston** is a tenured faculty member in the Division of General Internal Medicine and the inaugural Chair of the University of Wisconsin Institute for Diversity Science. Her research examines cultural influences on academic and career development, especially for women and individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in the sciences, engineering, and medicine with the aim of broadening their participation in STEM fields. In February, Dr. Byars-Winston gave a seminar on culturally aware research mentorship for the IMB seminar series and for the Women in Graduate Sciences.

**Dr. Stephanie Aguillon** is a postdoctoral scholar in The Schumer Lab at Stanford. Dr. Aguillon is an evolutionary biologist interested in understanding why organisms look and behave the way they do, and how this influences the speciation process. She combines field approaches with genomic sequencing—primarily in naturally hybridizing systems. Dr. Aguillon was selected for the inaugural Spotlight Seminar. The title of her talk was “Integrating genomics and behavioral ecology to understand speciation”. In addition to her talk, she participated in a Trainee Q&A session.

Dr. Stephanie Aguillon, Stanford University

