

Implementation of a New Research Group Role in BBE: DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Representative

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Revised from CCE and WiBBE proposals by the BBE DEI committee:
Matthew Alexander, Jean Badroos, Pamela Bjorkman (chair), Shelley Diamond,
Michael Dickinson (co-chair), Leo Green, Mary Kennedy, Derrick Morton (KPSOM)

Background: Throughout the past year, the United States populace, the state of California, and Caltech have taken numerous initiatives orientated towards promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). At Caltech, initiatives have been taken by the Institute as a whole and in some divisions. However, research groups do not yet have a format to collectively address DEI themselves. Our students have asked that we create a mechanism to facilitate collective action within lab groups, where our graduate students spend most of their time. Members of research groups participating in DEI-oriented activities have occasionally been seen as acting outside of the group's interests because they are diverting a portion of their time away from their research towards their extracurricular involvement. Given the commitment of the Institute to create a climate and research culture that is comfortable for all minoritized groups in our nation who come here to pursue scientific careers, it is appropriate for BBE to respond to this request from our students. The following proposal is adapted from a version developed by the Diversity in Chemistry Initiative (DICI), presented by the CCE Diversity Officer (Professor Brian Stoltz) in mid-October for faculty review, and adopted by the CCE division.

Proposal: We propose the following pilot program: the implementation of a new role within the research groups in BBE, namely a DEI Representative. The DEI Representative role will be open to senior graduate students (G2+) or senior postdocs. This role will be fully supported within BBE and *will be held by students or postdocs on a volunteer basis. We emphasize that the existence of a DEI representative in a lab group will be voluntary.* If more than one lab member volunteers, the PI may meet with the volunteers to select a DEI Representative. In research groups with over 20 members, two DEI Representatives may be selected. The BBE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee* will serve as a primary point of contact for each DEI Representative. The purpose of the DEI Representative will be to help foster a welcoming space within their research group for all members, to inform members about DEI-related ideas and initiatives, and encourage their voluntary participation. While they should be familiar with on campus resources for reporting, the DEI Representative should not directly intervene to try to correct reported instances of discrimination within the group. Instead, DEI Representatives will assist individuals in reporting these events to appropriate Institute authorities to handle such cases.

Each research group's DEI Representative will:

- 1) Be trained by the Caltech Center for Inclusion and Diversity (CCID) through their Diversity Ambassador training program (<https://diversity.caltech.edu/programs/dia>).
- 2) Familiarize themselves with current DEI-oriented initiatives (e.g., outreach, seminars,

etc.) and regularly (ideally at least once per quarter) spread awareness of them to their research group in group meeting or other meeting formats, inviting group members' participation.

- 3) DEI representatives can also devise and suggest activities appropriate for their lab group. Examples of activities that have been initiated in BBE labs include:
 - Dedicated DEI book clubs or a journal club.
 - Taking the first 5 minutes of every lab meeting to discuss some aspect of racial or gender diversity in science and medicine.
- 4) If they wish, they may distribute an anonymous survey to their research group, requesting feedback or comments on DEI-related practices. Alternatively, large research groups may opt to hold focus groups to receive and provide feedback from the group.
- 5) Attend quarterly meetings with the appointed BBE DEI committee* to discuss the DEI climate on campus and to propose new activities and/or relay feedback (via a survey) to promote DEI in their groups.

The position is to be renewed annually (with approval of the PI) and the student or postdoc will be re-trained by CCID every other year. If the position is to be held by a non-renewing student or postdoc, CCID training will take place at the start of the term.

The program will be evaluated yearly by a survey, created with help from CCID, administered to participating research groups (faculty and student sections separately) to determine its successes and shortcomings.

Impact: The addition of a Diversity Representative role to research groups in BBE will:

- 1) Demonstrate BBE's commitment to its students and staff to promote a more inclusive and diverse climate at Caltech.
- 2) Increase general knowledge of existing campus resources for reporting DEI issues.
- 3) Increase participation in DEI initiatives.
- 4) Promote direct integration of inclusive policies, training and intentional conversations about improving DEI at the level of individual research groups.
- 5) Encourage involvement at the research group level in diversity-oriented advocacy and outreach in the lab setting and beyond.
- 6) Provide opportunities for more junior scientists to receive formal training in taking leadership on DEI issues.

In summary, this proposal seeks to normalize and encourage involvement in activities surrounding the promotion of DEI in BBE, in keeping with the Institute's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We also hope that the implementation of a DEI Representative role will encourage potential incoming students to choose Caltech by demonstrating the campus's consideration of DEI-related issues.