

Department of Biological Sciences Diversity and Inclusion 2019-2020 Year Action Plan

I. Diversity Definition

Diversity is a pluralistic term and includes all aspects of human differences. The Department of Biological Sciences adopts the definition of diversity as the range of human differences including age, career experience, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, philosophy and viewpoint, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and socioeconomic and ability status.

II. Mission Statement

We aim to grow a diverse and inclusive departmental culture that encourages respectful open dialogue and challenges itself to ensure learning is accessible for all. We believe in science education without barriers of any kind: gender, socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, spirituality, and cultural identity. We believe in the inherent strength and advantages of diversity. A key element of this vision is faculty, staff, postdoctoral, and graduate student populations that reflect the diversity of our undergraduates and our community.

III. Departmental History and Diversity

The Department of Biological Sciences was formed in 1972 with five faculty members, two Asian and three Caucasian males (Figure 1). The first female faculty member was hired a decade after the opening of the Department. The first faculty member of African descent was hired within the first few years of the Department founding, but the total number has never been higher than two, and for about half of the life of the Department has been one. The first Hispanic was hired early, in the first 3 years, but it took more than 10 years before the second Hispanic was hired. The number of Hispanics remained at two until a slow increase began in the late 1990's that has continued to the current percentage of 25%. The ratio of females to males has steadily increased to the current 40:60 ratio reached in 2014. Although the Department doubled in size in the first three years, it remained small averaging fewer than 10 faculty over the first 12 years. In the mid-1980s the Department started on a steep growth trajectory and reached 20 faculty members by the late 1980s. The number has steadily increased, except for a pause from 2005 to 2011. The Department maximum of 61 was reached in 2016, before four faculty retired and three left for other positions.

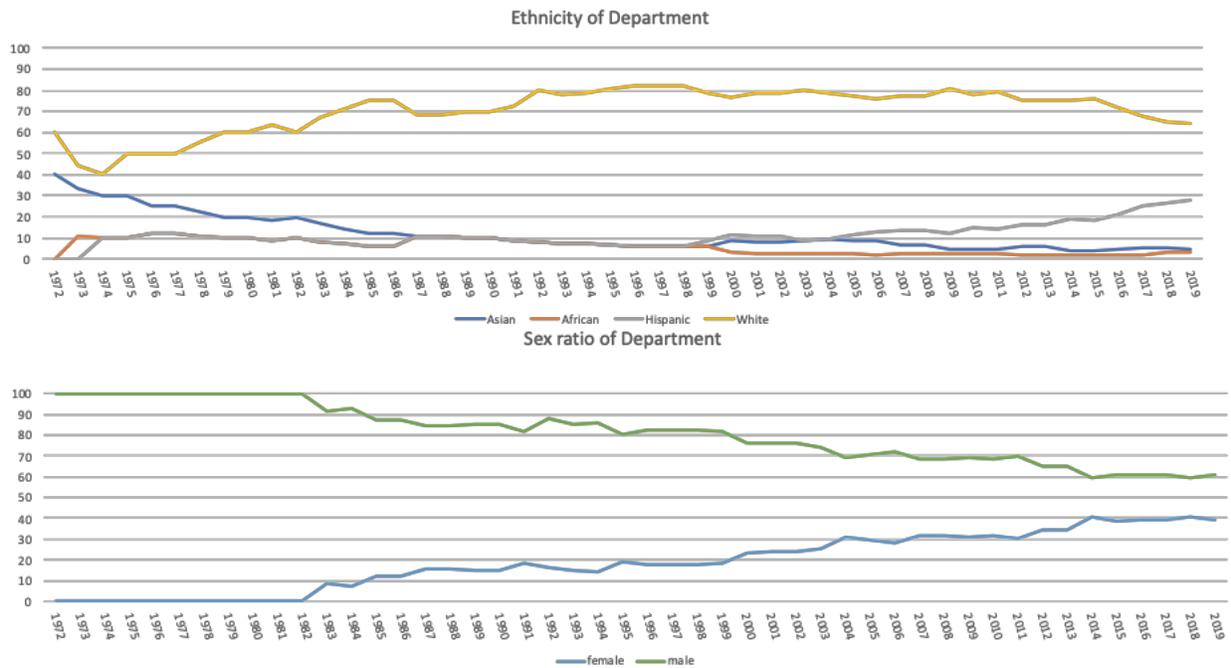


Figure 1. Ethnicity and sex ratio in Department of Biological Sciences from origin to present. Data taken from FIU catalogs, some timing of hiring is off (behind) by a year as a result of publishing date of catalog.

III. Overview and Objectives

The Department of Biological Sciences values a climate that is grounded in inclusion, respect, and equity, enriches the educational experience of students, supports positive workplace environments, promotes excellence, and cultivates intellectual, professional, and personal growth in a learning community that is safe from threats, inclusive, open, and supportive for everyone. While we have progressively improved our representativeness of ethnic groups and gender balance within the graduate student population, additional progress is still warranted to enhance the diversity of the faculty. We recognize that this is a long-term process, but we seek to address specific components each year. In the next 5 years we seek to increase the representation of persons of African and Hispanic descent and the number of women on our faculty, and also to increase the number of students of African descent in our graduate student body.

To achieve this goal, we outline a series of specific complementary priorities for the upcoming year.

Priority 1: University Requirements for all departments

The training of faculty forms the foundation for awareness of the value of diversity and overcoming the challenges of intrinsic bias. This priority consisting of STRIDE, Diversity Advocate, and Bystander Leadership training are required for all Departments

- a. STRIDE: *Metric- Number and percent of faculty who have taken training. Goal, 80% for Department by 2021, with all search committee members having attended*
- b. Diversity Advocate training if applicable in reporting year (for 2018-2019: *Metric: Number and percent of committees with trained Diversity advocate*
- c. Bystander Leadership training if applicable in reporting year (for 2018-2019, only STEM and Social and Behavioral Science faculty*): *Goal, 50% of faculty by 2021: Metric: Number and Percent of Faculty having taken the training*

Priority 2: Faculty Recruitment

We seek to recruit and maintain diversity within the faculty of our Department. We welcome and encourage talented individuals of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and physical abilities to participate in the Department's teaching, research, and service goals. To mirror the ethnic profile of our local community we need to add three to four faculty of African descent and four to five of Hispanic descent, especially women.

1. Recruitment

1. The Chair will ensure a trained diversity advocate is present on all search committees: *Goal 100%, Metric: number of search committees with Diversity Advocate.*
2. Search committees will include a statement about the Department seeking diversity in job ads such as: "We encourage applications from individuals who will contribute to diversity in higher education": *Goal 100%, Metric, number of ads with statement.*
3. Job ads will include a request for a broader impacts statement that would include a discussion of diversity, student and community engagement, and teaching and research ethics. *Metric, number of applications including broader impacts statement.*
4. Search committees will target job ads to job boards specifically aimed at reaching underrepresented groups. *Goal: at least one targeting of each for candidates of African and Hispanic descent per search. Metric, at least 10% increase in the number of applicants from underrepresented groups.*

5. Chair or designee will ensure that our web sites reflect our diversity and inclusiveness with at least our Diversity and Inclusion Plan Mission Statement. Goal: *Statement placed on website. Metric: Statement placed on website*
2. Selecting and Interviewing Candidates
 1. Departmental search committees will modify the desired characteristics of top candidates to include facilitating diversity goals of the Department. The selection of candidates for the Department should address both academic and diversity needs. We recognize that flexibility in research areas is necessary to ensure we can have a large pool of diverse candidates. Goal: Increase the number of members of underrepresented groups selected on Search Committee short lists; at least 50% of interview lists include at least one member of an underrepresented group by 2021. *Metric: short list composition.*
 2. Search Committee Chair provides Departmental Diversity and Inclusion Plan Mission Statement to all candidates on short list. Goal: Insure job candidates are fully aware of the importance that the Department places on diversity, both for majority and minority candidates. Minority candidates will be introduced to a local network of minority faculty. *Metric: Attitude of candidate about diversity culture at FIU during exit interview with Chairperson.*

Priority 3: Faculty retention, promotion and recognition

The Department strives to insure that all faculty have a fair opportunity for advancement and that there are no departmental practices or policies that act as a filter to limit advancement for members of a particular group.

- a) Department will form a standing diversity committee. The diversity committee will conduct a review of departmental advancement policies and procedures to be sure they are equitable for all faculty. Goal: form committee, review promotion procedures by 2020. *Metric: revised promotion process while remaining within CASE and University guidelines*
- b) Chairperson will insure that all new faculty at any level, non-tenure track, tenure-track, or visiting line, have a departmental mentor assigned to help them navigate the FIU environment. For junior faculty, mentorship will continue until they apply for promotion. For those hired at a senior

level the mentorship will continue up to 3 years. Goal: 100% new faculty assigned a mentor: *Metric: number of faculty assigned mentor.*

c) Associate Chair/course scheduler will minimize difficulties associated with cultural or religious traditions and family responsibilities, e.g. pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, eldercare, by optimizing teaching schedules and strengthening work–life balance systems such as supporting fill-in instructors during emergencies, assigning on-line classes, etc. Goal: Minimize conflicts between schedules and family responsibilities. *Metric: number of classes that need to be covered for unexpected absences, attendance at departmental governance activities by faculty with family responsibilities.*

Priority 4: Graduate student recruitment and retention

A culture of diversity among our faculty will engender recruitment of diversity; we will strive to increase the number of members of underrepresented groups in our graduate student population, specifically numbers of students of African and Hispanic descent.

a) A short document (no more than a page) will be prepared by the Biology Graduate Office with simple instructions for students of underrepresented groups interested in coming to FIU that are facing cultural and economic challenges. The document will state briefly the procedures to apply for FIU, but also lay out the multiple possibilities of funding and economic assistance available. Goal: develop document with a list of funding resources: *Metric: number and relevance of resources listed for funding and economic assistance.*

b) Department resources should be applied to support building pathways for FIU undergraduates of African and Hispanic descent to attend graduate school. Goal: support four federal work study students (two of each ethnicity) in research labs per semester. *Metric: Number of minority students trained in FIU research labs.*

c) Graduate office will target communications and e-brochures directly to institutions of predominantly underrepresented groups for recruiting (e.g., HBCU Florida A&M, Florida Memorial, Bethune Cookman, etc). Graduate Program will send recruiter to one HBCU-organized events per year such as football Classics. Goal: 25% of applicants from underrepresented

groups; *Metric: number and percent of all applicants of African and Hispanic descent.*

d) Faculty will be reminded by Graduate Program during recruiting season to recognize that we should be training students for roles that go beyond simply the best researcher, e.g., teachers, role models, mentors. Goal: conduct a workshop on student recruitment approaches and goals, *Metric: improvement in anonymous survey on what traits are associated with suitable candidates.*

e) Use RUGS seminar money for a lecture by an accomplished person from an underrepresented group, once a semester, in which the visitor gives not only a scientific talk, but also another talk about their educational experience and life journey. Faculty could take turns being in charge of this process for one year, like we have done in the past with the seminar series. In a visit of two days, they would also have informal meeting times to which graduates and undergraduates are invited to learn more about their life and experiences. Goal: two seminars per year by a member of an underrepresented group. *Metric: Number of seminars per year by a member of an underrepresented group and student attendance (graduate and undergraduate).*