

Introduction

Maximizing excellence in research, mentoring, teaching, and service — MIT's core missions — requires diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in all of our processes. DEI comprises, but is not limited to, a diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and identities. An equitable and inclusive environment enables people to contribute their best work and ideas and to thrive in their vocation. This plan outlines action items that support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts in the Biology Department that will foster and further advance our core missions.

There has been tremendous work done in the DEI sphere in Biology thus far, and this plan builds on existing successes and initiatives within the department. This includes the Koch and Whitehead Institutes, in collaboration with their respective DEI officers and/or leads. This document is meant to be a beginning point for DEI initiatives in the department in collaboration with the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council](#) (DEIC), [Faculty Diversity Committee \(FDC\)](#), and [Biology Diversity Community](#) (BDC)¹. These groups, along with others in the department, have been spearheading this work for some time and, with the assistance of the DEI officer, these should become even more impactful. Some of these action items are ongoing, some can be started immediately, and others are more long-term and will take several years to complete. This plan is not all-encompassing or finite. This action plan will be led by the departmental DEI officer and supported by faculty, staff, and trainees in the department. There will be additional support provided from School of Science-level DEI administrators including the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the university-level Institute Community and Equity Officer (ICEO); this plan will work in alignment with the [ICEO strategic plan](#). For this plan to be successful, it will require department-wide commitment and collaboration across functional areas. The more that department members and the institute see DEI as a priority, the more it will be adopted into the culture. In the context of this report, “we” refers to the DEI officer and the DEI Council, with collaboration and input from the department head, graduate committee, the BDC (spell these out?), and the FDC (spell out). We envision that our initiatives could include graduate student or postdoc DEI fellows who work with the DEI officer to accomplish our broader mission.

It is proposed that this action plan will lead to a more long-term strategic 2–5-year action plan.

Methods used: Methods used to assess this impact of this plan include and will continue to include surveys, discussion groups, anonymous feedback forms, and town-hall-style feedback forums. This plan is likely to evolve based on work done by other DEI officers, the ICEO, and other entities at the Institute doing similar work.

¹ The committees and their functions are as follows: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Representatives of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council include students, postdocs, staff, and faculty. The goals of this council are to more broadly and comprehensively understand and address the needs of the Department. Council members gather information regarding the needs of community members, discuss and prioritize DEI-related issues, advise other entities in the department (e.g., Department Head, faculty DEI committee, Graduate Committee), and act on their own as appropriate. Faculty Diversity Committee (FDC) The Faculty DEI Committee was established in July 2020 and focuses on DEI issues of particular relevance to faculty including faculty hiring practices and faculty mentorship. The Biology Diversity Community (BDC) In 2018, Biology graduate students launched the Biology Diversity Community (BDC), a cross-disciplinary, student-driven group that fosters peer support for underrepresented students and unites a network of individuals throughout the Biology community. The BDC focuses on creating a space for individuals and groups to communicate their varying perspectives to the MIT community and beyond, and to discuss how to navigate barriers as graduate students.

Three main objectives

Objective 1: Training

Goal:

The goal of this objective is to ensure that everyone in the department has a base knowledge of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion standards of practice, support structures, reporting methods, and techniques to create and foster a more supportive, welcoming, and inclusive department. Training designed to achieve this goal will involve active, collaborative, participant-focused sessions that seek to build understanding both of DEI concepts and the participants' place within the DEI initiatives and culture of the department and Institute.

Overview:

Through discussions with students, post-docs, faculty, and staff, we found that there are few standard DEI trainings that everyone receives. Several groups within the department receive training on aspects of DEI and many more are actively involved in DEI work. Excellent work is already being done in the department, and new work proposed in this plan will be integrated with existing DEI initiatives and will build on them. For example, Professor Cathy Drennan, who has a dual appointment in Chemistry and Biology, has been working for years to integrate DEI material and bias threat training into her TA training and lab education. In addition, faculty received training about mentoring from the Center for Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (CIMER), and there are plans to continue mentorship training in the future. There are occasional opportunities, such as building retreats, that have DEI programming and are an opportunity for people on many levels within the department to be engaged in DEI material. All incoming students both undergrad and graduate complete a DEI training module. There has been a concerted effort to train and educate graduate students on these issues, but these efforts do not always extend to other levels of the department. It should also be noted that oftentimes graduate students receive the majority of training and education on DEI when all members of the department need to be engaged in fostering a diverse, welcoming, and inclusive environment. All incoming students both undergraduate and graduate also complete implicit bias training, and TAs receive some training on DEI. As emphasized, there has been a concerted effort for DEI programming and discussion in the department and further training and programming would be meant to enhance the value of hearing from and learning about the experience of those in our department. We want to emphasize learning from each other and the community, rather than top-down training.

The DEIO will begin to work with other DEI officers and the ICEO to ensure that training is beneficial, topical, and are being implemented at all levels of the department. The DEIO is a part of an Institute Advisory board that is working to standardize the curriculum for DEI training across the institute. These trainings will be designed to be collaborative and non-repetitive.

Faculty are leaders in the department, so they must be included in conversations and training with students and staff about how to support and expand DEI in the department.

Trainings for postdocs, students, and staff should be highly encouraged by the department and supported with time to complete them from supervisors. We propose that those who have

completed the training be encouraged to list their completion as a micro-credential in their bio, email signature, or professional page on the Biology website. (*See Section 3 for more information on micro-credentialing*)

Format:

To achieve a base level of understanding among everyone in the department, we propose that standard training be instituted for all new and incoming members of the department as well as those who currently work for the department. For those who already work in the department, training would be offered in person, virtually, or using a hybrid model. To accommodate those that cannot attend in-person sessions, synchronous virtual training will be made available. While everyone needs to have some shared training, there can also be additional training in specific subject areas that affect faculty, staff, postdocs, and students individually.

The following activities were rolled out during the 21-22 school year, starting with pilot labs and expanding to all labs and faculty, staff and trainees throughout 2022. The DEIO will keep track of the percentage of the department members, including faculty, who have completed the training and work towards 100% participation for all labs. Those who do not participate or complete trainings will receive reminders from the DEIO that could escalate to a conversation with the department head if deemed necessary.

1. *Lab-based training:* We encourage each lab to engage in DEI-related discussions each year. If labs are small and/or would benefit from a larger group setting, we will combine labs to promote more productive dialogue. Labs will participate in a session led by the DEIO and another session led by a trained facilitator who is a lab member.
 - A. *Training 1* will consist of a 1.5-2-hour DEI-related training for each lab led by the DEIO. Topics will include power dynamics in lab structures, micro/ macro aggressions, anti-oppression teaching, and mentoring strategies, mentoring, fostering diversity in STEM, service/ distribution of labor and service positions in the department, professional development, imposter syndrome, and work/life balance among other topics that can be added as needed or wanted by each lab. To ensure that each session is relevant and helpful to the lab, a pre-survey will be conducted about specific topics the group would like to cover and anything the DEIO should know about ahead of time such as existing DEI initiatives, questions, etc.

These trainings will include an educational component but will leave plenty of room for discussion and brainstorming, so participants will be actively involved in the creation of an equitable and inclusive lab environment. These brainstorming sessions will be facilitated by the DEIO to ensure they are productive and create a welcoming environment.

DEIO-led trainings will be scheduled a semester in advance to ensure maximum participation and will be adapted to be virtual if needed. Additionally, as they will occur yearly, the sessions and material will progress and change over time according to feedback from participants and collaboration from the DEIC.

- B. *Training 2* will be a collaborative informational meeting facilitated by lab members; the DEIO will not typically attend. 1-2 Facilitators for each lab (depending on the size of the lab) will be trained on having difficult conversations on topics that could include racism, sexual harassment, gender bias, among others as needed.

Facilitators will be trained by the DEIO, in collaboration with the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response Office (IDHR), on diffusing conflict and conflict resolution. If labs are small, there could be 1-2 facilitators for a group of labs to allow for labor sharing. These facilitators could be faculty, staff, or trainees. If there is no one in the lab willing to be a facilitator, a facilitator from the department or institute will be provided. We propose that at minimum, once per year, people in the lab will present on DEI or social justice topics that are pertinent for the lab.

Facilitators will work with the DEIO to brainstorm ideas and ensure that topics are not being repeated. Content could include discussions of videos, articles, or events on campus that would stimulate dialogue about DEI, how to create a more inclusive environment for all within labs, intersectionality, DEI in science, among other topics. The DEI council will create a curriculum guide to support lab groups in completing these DEI initiatives and the DEIO will be available for consultation to support this programming. The DEIO will also check in with facilitators and PIs regularly to ensure these sessions are happening. The DEIC and the DEIO will examine the curriculum annually and suggest pertinent material as needed.

2. *Facilitator training*: We propose two people per lab or group of small labs be trained to be Facilitators. This would entail a 2–3-hour training session on facilitation and leading group dialogue. This would ideally include faculty members and trainees (not undergraduate students), who will participate in a facilitator training² when the framework for department-wide training is introduced. It will be helpful if the Biology Resource for Easing Friction and Stress (BioREFs) program is involved in this initiative so they can receive formal training and continue to assist with conflict resolution in the department. Facilitator training will be offered annually to offer opportunities for new community members to be involved.

Facilitator training will be used to ensure that there is a group of people across the department who can effectively conduct, facilitate and diffuse conversations and can be called upon for trainings, discussions, and departmental support surrounding DEI. We believe providing facilitator training to as many department members as possible could promote better conflict resolution and communication across the department. This is

² Facilitator training would include: **What a Facilitator Is** — Defining the role of a facilitator. **Big Ideas of Facilitation** — Understanding what learners need, will lead to specific activities that will satisfy those needs in your participants. **Techniques of Facilitation** — Clarifying the goals of facilitation and the skills facilitators use when they interact with participants and lead the group through the learning experience. **How to Plan to Facilitate** — Filling out a facilitation guide outline (basically a lesson plan) to organize your thoughts and prepare you to run a session. (Adapted from <https://cmoe.com/blog/comprehensive-guide-for-facilitator-training/>) Facilitator training would also include training on how to report information, when reporting is mandated by the institute, and mandatory reporting along with conflict resolution.

helpful for smaller group discussions about DEI and how it functions in a lab/departmental environment.

3. *Micro credentialing*: There has been feedback from students and staff that they would like to see a more formalized training program that provides some sort of certification in DEI. The Brain and Cognitive Sciences program piloted a DEI micro-credentialing program for their graduate students in fall 2021 that was run through the University of Rhode Island (URI)³. Something like this could be developed in-house to provide structured training for Biology community members.

There is also interest from the ICEO and Deputy ICEO to create and launch a form of this internally at MIT, and the SPXCE Office at MIT is already piloting micro-credentialing for training on LGBTQ+ support. We also propose working with Blended and Online Learning to include a micro-credential on Inclusive Teaching Practices which they have already been providing in TA training for some time. Facilitators who participate in the training outlined in section 2 will also receive a micro-credential.

4. *Mentor Training and assessment for faculty*: In summer 2021, 80% of Biology faculty participated in the CIMER training, which focused on effective techniques for mentoring graduate students and other trainees. We recommend that this training or a similar training be provided by a CIMER trained faculty member and the DEIO and attended every year by faculty. If this is done yearly, the training will likely be approximately 2 hours per year. Additionally, we recommend a department-wide move towards examining means of assessment for faculty mentoring by the graduate committee and department head.

Mentoring of junior faculty by senior faculty is also important. To ensure that junior faculty, feel welcome and supported continued and increased mentoring is being implemented. In the summer of 2021, the guidelines for faculty mentorship were revised to stipulate that junior faculty members will have a meeting with the DEIO and/or the department head at the end of the first year of their mentorship pairing to assess how the relationship is progressing and whether they would benefit from an additional or different mentor. More information on [faculty mentoring](#) can be found on the Biology website. In addition, we recommend that more faculty across the department, as they become trained, step forward to mentor junior faculty. Currently, the mentorship of junior faculty is distributed among 23 faculty across the department. We recommend that all faculty be trained in mentorship and that those who engage in mentorship and DEI work are recognized for their commitment and service to the department. This could be through teaching relief, departmental recognition, or another method of reward.

5. *Training for Undergraduate majors*: Training for undergrad students will require concerted collaboration between MIT-wide programs and be focused specifically on their stage in their education journey. Our support for undergraduates will be Biology

³ The URI Micro-credentialing program includes workshops such as *Fundamentals of Diversity: Power, Identity and Privilege* workshop, topics will include *Creating Inclusive Spaces in Scientific Research*, *Recognizing and Valuing Disability as Diversity*, *Understanding the Unique Needs and Strengths of Trans and Nonbinary College Students*, *White Accountability Conversations*

specific. The DEIO is currently researching what this can look like and will work with the education office to better understand what would fit well with what is currently offered. This could include welcoming events for newly declared majors with DEIO, BDC, and DEIC, training for potential Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) participants, and an expectation that UROPs will participate in their lab's DEI trainings outlined in part 1 of this section.

6. *Training for staff and non-lab members:* We recognize that not everyone in the Biology department works in a lab so the DEIO will provide yearly trainings in other meetings and groups to accommodate the DEI training needs of other department members. This may come in the form of DEI training in staff meetings, one-off trainings for those interested, etc.
7. *Incorporation of DEI training into Intro to Biology Courses:* This is a longer-term objective. The history of biological sciences is fraught with practices that have abused and taken advantage of historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. We have had conversations with instructors who are willing to discuss and work on these curriculum models to create more space for DEI content. The Biology department will work with the MIT Office of Undergraduate Education and others in the department to co-create and edit curriculum modules in the Introduction to Biology courses, which all undergraduate students take, that teach history and why that history is important to DEI initiatives and the institutional climate of DEI at MIT. We believe in starting with the Intro to Biology course because every undergraduate student at MIT is required to take this course and it is a start in incorporating DEI training and understanding into the curriculum. We would like to see an expansion of these modules into other departments and courses in the future and to be taken as a directive for the Institute to examine how DEI is included in academic curricula.

Benchmarks:

Implementation of lab trainings will begin in Spring-Summer 2022 with pilot labs. We aim to have training rolled out to all levels of the department by Fall 2022. The DEIO will keep track of what percentage of labs and individuals have completed the training and who still needs to engage with training material. These numbers will be shared with the DEIC and the department in the annual report. It will be highly encouraged for all to attend and we would like to see it incentivized for faculty to attend. If there are scheduling delays, the DEIO will work with the labs and/ or individuals to ensure they are rescheduled within 1 month and this will be supported by the AO and/or the department head. If department members are hesitant about this initiative, the Administrative Officer (AO) and/or Department Head will help ensure that the trainings are being adopted.

Assessment:

After each lab-level training, participants will be asked to complete a survey as an assessment to examine what is being received from the training and how the material, format, and execution can improve. After facilitator-led lab discussions, a similar survey will be sent out that will be reviewed by the DEIO for feedback regarding frequency, material, facilitation style, etc.

These assessments will be analyzed for content and patterns and the trainings will be adapted accordingly.

Needs/ Asks:

Department Head, Headquarters (HQ), and Administrative Officer (AO) support will be needed for the vast majority of these training initiatives. To ensure the training is adopted across the department, there will need to be strong communication from department leadership that participation in the training is important, valid work that is supported by the department. This acknowledgment signifies that DEI work is worthwhile to work and that time can be taken away from lab/ assigned jobs to attend and participate in these trainings.

We would like to see DEI work formally recognized as service work in performance evaluations for trainees, staff, and faculty. We also would like to see service work in DEI emphasized as valuable to work and leadership experience and as an important contribution to our community.

Objective 2: Direct Support and Community Building

Goals:

The goal of this objective is to build support and culture surrounding DEI in the department. This goes beyond training and knowledge-building and moves towards cross and intercultural understanding, intending to build a department that understands and internalizes the support that is needed to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community. Elements of this section target both specific groups and the department as a whole and are meant to provide resources, support, education, and personal development for department members.

Overview:

Through the DEIO's conversations with stakeholders in the department, an overall theme of lack of knowledge about resources was expressed. This included both not knowing what resources exist or where to look for them in times of need. This included information on MIT Medical, IDHR, Ombud's office, graduate student support resources, HR information, among other topics. Trainees, staff, and faculty expressed a need to know where to find relevant offices and staff, how to access programs and services, and whom to talk to about specific topics. There also needs to be a delineation about when to seek department resources and when to seek institute-level resources. Removing barriers to information and increasing channels of communication about existing resources can help create a more open and inclusive department. We want to clarify where to find these resources and provide a low threshold for seeking these resources. Though there are many places where resources are compiled, such as [this list](#) compiled by the institute and [this list](#) from the department we aim to create low-barrier mechanisms for finding the right people to talk to through one on one support from the DEIO and easily accessible information in accessible places.

This objective also involves creating social and educational opportunities to discuss DEI, such as social events open to all that recognize the individual challenges and identities of postdocs, first-generation students, and historically excluded groups, as well as educational seminars and

more informal knowledge gaining opportunities. This programming also includes faculty support and outreach.

Programs/ Objectives:

These programs have started, or can start immediately and will occur on an as-needed basis unless indicated otherwise.

1. *Graduate Student Support:* Conversations with graduate students and graduate program administrators have indicated a need for a neutral and/ or non-research involved party that can listen to and discuss concerns of graduate students and elevate those concerns anonymously to administration and department leadership. This can involve direct conversations between the DEIO and individual graduate students or groups of graduate students, town halls with graduate students, climate surveys for graduate students, anonymous feedback forms, etc.

The DEIO could also serve as a neutral party for facilitating conversations, including potentially challenging conversations, between graduate students and PI's or other faculty and staff members. The DEIO can be accessed for this support through a referral from a staff or faculty member, another graduate student, or from the student directly reaching out to the DEIO. Additionally, the DEIO will continue to hold regular office hours, which are an additional point of access. Finally, the DEIO will be working with graduate students on the Bio Refs, Bio Pals, Application Assistance, and Fellowship application review programs that will further support graduate student success and inclusion.

2. *Postdoc Support:* Postdocs expressed that they often feel isolated and have limited people to turn to for resources and support besides their PI. To alleviate some of this isolation and support the inclusion and success of postdocs, we will plan to have a similar support structure for postdocs as we do for graduate students (detailed above), with additions to recognize the unique positionality of postdocs.

Additionally, the Postdoc Buddy Program will be administered through HR and the DEIO to ensure that postdocs are paired with more senior postdoc mentors when they arrive in the department. Over time, this could develop to connect generations of postdocs as they cycle through the department. There is also currently an ongoing mentorship program that supports current postdocs who are applying to fellowships and pairs them with existing postdocs who have applied to the same fellowships to provide additional support with applications.

The structures for Whitehead and Koch postdocs are slightly different, but we hope to ensure that postdocs in those institutes also have access to a mentoring support structure. Conversations with HR staff (Dilly Wilson, WI; Terry Clewly, KI) will be ongoing to coordinate with the postdocs in those units.

3. *Staff Support:* Staff have expressed that while they are connected with the general resources they need, a sense of belonging and inclusion is lacking. To enhance welcoming and inclusion for staff, we propose two initiatives. The first is to offer a DEI

coffee hour twice a semester that is led by the DEI Council staff representatives and aims to provide both education and connection for staff members. These coffee hours will include presentations from resource providing departments (e.g., the [ICEO](#), [Human Resources](#), [Ombuds Office](#), [Work-Life and Wellbeing](#), among others) and units within the institute or other DEI related speakers and will also serve as a platform for staff to meet each other and seek connection. The goal of this is for staff to feel more welcomed, included, and informed of DEI programming in the department and to build community.

Secondly, we propose a buddy program that pairs new staff members with more senior staff members. These buddies would meet with the new staff members during the first 2 weeks, then meet again 6 weeks later to ensure that the new staff member feels welcomed. The new mentee can also reach out to the senior mentor for support if needed. There will be an effort to pair staff with similar jobs together to provide additional support.

In addition to these initiatives, the DEIO will provide general support and connect staff to resources as needed with the assistance and guidance of Human Resources (HR) and the AO. Finally, in conjunction with the HR Officer, the DEIO plans to present at staff meetings at least twice a year about DEI topics, which will also include resource and support information.

4. *Faculty Support:* In addition to the mentorship and training mentioned in the previous section, the DEIO will be available for faculty who wish to learn more about DEI, need assistance with difficult situations/ conversations, need a confidential source, or need a referral to resources. The DEIO will also actively provide faculty with reminders about DEI resources for themselves and trainees including summaries of support services, flow charts of how and where to direct inquiries, and information about training, events, etc. This function will be supported by HR in the department for non-DEI-related support services. Additional faculty support could include spreading out who serves on DEI committees and in other service positions so faculty are not overburdened. Additionally, it is recommended that DEI work is formally recognized when evaluating tenure, promotion, etc. and that DEI work should be considered when evaluating requests for teaching relief.
5. *DEI Seminar Curriculum Evaluation:* We advise that the graduate training curriculum include topics related to the intersection of research and society. In 2022, the DEIO and the graduate directors introduced lectures by experts on these topics that addressed values, bias, ideologies, and assumptions in research cultures during the independent research term in January. We propose that these January seminars continue annually and address topics such as DEI in research, values and ethics in science, and intersections of science, technology, and society. These seminars will be open to all, with special additional required discussion sessions for first-year graduate students.
6. *Facilitating student-advisor feedback and communication mechanisms:* Through conversations, there has been feedback that mechanisms for trainees and staff to give and receive feedback regarding mentorship should be examined. Feedback from

students has indicated that they do not feel there is a good mechanism for giving feedback about their mentorship and relationship with their PI. They also believe the process of giving feedback should be normalized within the department. By changing how we gather feedback on mentorship and providing guidance on how to have these mentorship conversations with PIs, support could be more beneficial for both mentees and faculty. The annual IDP, which currently undergoing a revision guided by student input, could be part of this initiative. This initiative will be guided and led by the graduate committee with advice from the DEIO regarding the promotion of equity and inclusion.

With input from the graduate committee, we recommend moving more towards a coaching model, where ideas for growth and improvement on both sides are discussed by the PI and mentees while they are building their relationship. We recognize that giving honest feedback to a PI could potentially be difficult for mentees and thus we also suggest developing a process for collecting anonymous feedback and communicating aggregated findings to each PI and possibly the department head, potentially through a neutral party. Before moving forward with this, we recognize that both students and faculty would have to agree to a plan of what is done with anonymized feedback and how it is handled. This is an initiative that would require department-wide collaboration and design on how to proceed.

7. *Outreach collaboration:* the DEIO will work with Mandana Sassanfar on outreach efforts in the department. Mandana does outstanding work on [outreach](#) and recruitment. The DEIO will support her in this work as needed and collaborate to continue to see that students brought into the department are welcomed, supported, and retained. Mandana and Kuheli Dutt (Assistant Dean for DEI, School of Science) are working on this as a model for other departments in the School of Science and across MIT. School-level guidance will help shape our recruitment efforts for postdocs, staff, and faculty. The DEIO may also provide support, as needed, to the outreach initiatives such as the Biology Application Assistance Program ([BAAP](#)), The Bernard S. and Sophie G. Gould MIT Summer Research Program in Biology ([BSG-MSRP-Bio](#)), and the [Leah Knox](#) Scholars program.
8. *Reporting:* The DEIO would like to create a structure and documentation process for receiving complaints and grievances within the department. This could be an informal documentation process (simply keeping an anonymized spreadsheet) or adopting more formal software used for case management to keep track of the types of grievances being reported.

All grievances and complaints surrounding DEI that are brought to the department head should be documented so we can understand trends, how they are handled, and how to best respond in the future. Secondly, we propose either an anonymous reporting form or an anonymous question box to facilitate sharing of grievances within the department without making community members feel unsafe. This could be done in collaboration with the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response (IDHR) office or separately with the DEIO.

Benchmarks:

Climate Surveys: Working with the Institute Institutional Research office, the DEIO will complete a climate survey, based on previous climate surveys to assess progress surrounding DEI in the department and how to improve.

Anonymous feedback forms: There should be an anonymous feedback form on the website that is forwarded directly to the DEIO to ensure that any feedback or issues are being received and handled correctly, so changes can be made to improve initiatives and projects.

Town halls: Town halls and forums for feedback should be conducted at least once a semester as a place for feedback and general discourse about DEI in the department and how to improve. The DEIO will host these with leaders from each area (faculty, staff, grad students, etc.)

Assessment:

Participants in all programming run by the DEIO will be asked to complete a survey as an assessment to examine what is being received from interactions and how the material, format, and execution can improve. There will also be an anonymous feedback form for the DEIO and the DEI committee so they can assess how things are being received in the department. These assessments will be analyzed for content and patterns and the trainings will be adapted accordingly if feedback necessitates it.

Objective 3: Transparency and Communication

Goals:

The goals of this objective are to increase transparency and trust across the department through continued and frequent communication and dialogue, through multiple channels.

Overview:

Across the board, there have been requests for more communication and transparency regarding DEI initiatives in the department and how they are being reported. Many efforts are already in place and these initiatives build on those that already exist. One such example is the Biology communications team, who have produced a podcast that highlights underrepresented voices in the department called [Biogenesis](#). Often there is a request for DEI initiatives that are already in place, but the other party doesn't know about it. To create an atmosphere of trust, understanding, and openness, there needs to be open communication across multiple levels of the department.

Programs/ Objectives

1. *Annual diversity report/ letter:* This year, the Department head wrote a letter, in consultation with the DEIO, that reported on DEI initiatives that the department has

undertaken over the past year⁴. This highlights accomplishments but also challenges and goals for the next year. In the future, the DEIO will likely produce a report that highlights benchmarks, accomplishments, programs, and quantitative and qualitative data on DEI in the department so there is concrete documentation of the progress being made. This report would be available to the public on the Biology department website.

2. *Graduate Diversity report*: written by Graduate Officers Amy Keating and Mary Gehring, a report focused on the graduate program has been released for the past two years and will continue to be produced to ensure transparency of the programming, initiatives, and progress being made or worked towards for graduate students and the graduate program. This report informs graduate students about what is currently being done and can serve as a reference point for discussing needs and ideas for future improvements. As the DEI report and the Graduate Diversity report will cover similar information, the graduate directors and the DEIO will collaborate to avoid redundancy.
3. *Newsletter*: the DEIO and the DEIC will continue to make contributions to the Biology internal newsletter so department members can know what initiatives are happening and what work is being done.
4. *Social media*: the DEIO would like the DEIC to have its own social media channels to promote individual events, programming, articles, or ideas that are not directly affiliated with the department. We will establish specific guidelines for posting to ensure accordance with department guidelines and messaging goals.
5. *DEIC, FDEIC, and BDC reporting*: It is recommended that the Biology Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, the Faculty DEI Committee, and the Biology Diversity Committee be asked to submit regular summaries and meeting notes of their progress so everyone is aware of projects and progress being made. These could be posted on the internal Biology website and be included in a composite DEI report for the department annually. The minutes from the DEIC meetings will continue to be posted on the DEIC page on the Biology website.

Benchmarks:

It is the hope that through the regular communications outlined above, transparency will be continued and communication throughout the department will be improved. If there are concerns about a lack of transparency or communication related to DEI issues, department members should immediately reach out to the DEIO.

Assessment:

The annual reports can be compared to other departments that are issuing similar reports and can be adapted from there. There are 6 other DEI Officers - 3 in Engineering, 1 in the School of Computing, and 2 in the School of Science - who are piloting programs and reports. We are all

⁴ 2021 Biology Diversity report can be found here: <https://biology.mit.edu/about/diversity/2021-biology-diversity-report-and-overview/>

working together to streamline our work and support each other. Examples of their reports and communication strategies will be used to inform our efforts. If there is perceived to be a lack of transparency, conversations can be had with the DEIO, AO, or department head, depending on where the issue is.

Overall needs and asks:

To support these programming and initiatives, there will need to be continued budgetary support. Budget line items will include training materials and books, student workers or part-time staff support that could include DEI fellows (mentioned in the introduction), funds for speakers and training consultants, conference fees/ expenses for the DEIO for professional development, and programmatic support.

Additionally, commitment from faculty and departmental staff will be required for these initiatives to be successful. We expect faculty and staff to attend trainings, participate in conversations about DEI in the department, and to actively support DEI in their interactions with students, post-docs, and other staff and faculty.

Timeline for DEI Rollout in the Biology Department

Strategic Goal	Description of Initiative	Start Date	Target date for full implementation
Training			
	Lab-Based Training: Lab-based DEI training will be developed and rolled out to labs beginning Spring 2022. This will begin with trainings facilitated by the DEIO and progress to lab facilitator-led trainings. This includes all Biology Faculty labs in 68, KI, and Whitehead. Some labs may be combined for training, depending on the size of the lab.	Spring 2022	2022-2023
	Facilitator Training/ Lab meetings: Facilitator training will be provided for department members who are interested in being facilitators for DEI training in the future. We aim to train a small group of facilitators and slowly expand.	Beginning January 2022	2023
	Incorporation of DEI training into Intro to Biology Courses: Conversations for this will begin in Spring 2022 with hopes to launch during the following school year	Spring 2022	Fall 2023
	Training for Undergrad Majors: training will be developed for undergraduate majors based on feedback from department undergraduate officers	Spring 2022	Fall 2022
	Micro credentialing- DEIO is in institute-wide conversations about this currently and will be expanded as more information is available	Spring 2022	Launch Fall 2022 likely
Direct Support and Community Building			
	Graduate Student Support and Mentoring: BioPals program will continue in Fall 2021 and additional graduate student support will be added this fall and into the future	Began Fall 2021	2022

	Postdoc Support and Mentoring: Postdoc mentoring is being launched in August and will be expanded throughout the 21–22-year academic year	Began Summer 2021	Ongoing
	Faculty Support and Mentoring: Mentoring within the department has existed and will be reinvigorated with newly created guidelines and programming for faculty starting July 2021. Participation will be extended to current junior faculty in the department. Faculty support mentoring begins immediately upon hiring and will continue through their pre-tenure. This will apply to all junior faculty.	Began Summer/ Fall 2021	Ongoing
	Diversity in Research Seminar: Throughout the fall, the graduate officers and the DEIO will create a curriculum for expanded DEI programming surrounding research for the January term. This will be required for first-year students in 2022 and will be required for first-year classes moving forward. This will be optional but highly recommended for Post Docs. Based on the success and feedback of sessions in January, programming will be adjusted in the future.	Began Fall 2021	January 2022 and ongoing annually
	1:1 meetings and support: Meetings are happening and will continue; department members may reach out directly to the DEIO to set these up	Began Summer 2021	Ongoing as needed
	Facilitating student-advisor feedback and communication mechanisms: In Fall 2021, Graduate Officers and the DEIO started a discussion of how mentoring processes in the department could be more inclusive of trainee feedback. We would like to incorporate reverse feedback into mentoring so students feel empowered to provide suggestions to PI's and the department. We are willing to think about ways to provide anonymized feedback if students do not	Began Fall 2021	Fall 2022

	want to give feedback directly to PI's or members of the graduate committee. The goal is to make mentoring as effective as possible and to encourage both graduate students and faculty to be introspective about how to best support students in their training.		
	Outreach collaboration: Working with Mandana to collaborate and enhance DEI efforts with outreach efforts	Began Fall 2021	Ongoing
	Reporting and anonymous reporting form: the DEIO will be working with Alan and IDHR to look at what reporting should look like moving forward to increase transparency	Spring 2022	Ongoing
Communication			
	Annual diversity report/ letter: Department Head and DEIO are committed to producing a letter in Summer 2021 that will be distributed to the department and on the website. Subsequent reports and letters will be produced annually in the summer by the DEIO. This is an effort to provide transparency about progress.	Summer 2021	Annually moving forward
	Graduate diversity report: This report has been produced annually in 2020 and 2021 by faculty graduate officers and will continue to be published annually	Summer 2020	Annually moving forward
	Departmental Communication: Communication about DEI will be distributed to the department through several channels. Biomatters newsletters will contain DEI news. The DEIO is working with Raleigh and Vivian to incorporate DEI into the department's communication strategy, social media, podcast, and other channels.	Summer 2021	Biweekly moving forward
	DEIC, FDEIC, and BDC reporting: It will be encouraged for the DEIC, FDEIC, and BDC to create annual reports to expand on the progress of each unit, the suggestion is for this to be produced in the spring/ summer annually	To be determined	