

From: UBC Department of Botany Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee
To: UBC Department of Botany Seminars Committee
Subject: Recommendations from EDI Committee to Seminars Committee

In June 2021 the Botany Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee contacted the Botany Seminars Committee to explore how the seminar series and their surrounding activities could actionably improve EDI in our Department. Members of the Seminars Committee took a survey (ISAT) and discussed their responses and reflections with members of the EDI Committee. From these conversations, the EDI Committee developed a list of recommendations that could be implemented immediately, along with several that could be implemented over time. Several of these recommendations were inspired by reading Hagan et al. (2020).¹

Small and short-term opportunities (possible in ~1 academic year)

- **Consider drafting terms of reference and a working set of procedures** that outline how/when the Committee meets and makes decisions (especially if there are more nominations than nominees). Make these documents available to the Department for the benefit of Committee members, hosts, and *all speakers*². Make Committee roles clear to promote accountability and allow for sustained change; if individuals are able to see what procedures are in place, they can identify areas for improvement
- **Clearly communicate expectations** for hosts and speakers. Consider making template documents for important actions and events, including soliciting nominations, host duties, speaker expectations. Hosts should be able to easily learn what they need to accomplish and how. Speakers should receive ample communication from hosts about their schedules, and speakers should be provided opportunities to request meetings with faculty, student groups, administrators who share similar interests
- Encourage members of the Botany Department to **consider multiple axes of human and career diversity** when the Committee solicits speaker nominations. For example, members could be encouraged to consider aspects of gender, race, subdiscipline, and career stage/path before they put forth a speaker nomination
- **Solicit additional nominations** for invited seminars. Encourage a diverse pool of nominators (faculty, staff, postdocs, students) and nominees (consider using lists like [DiversifyEEB](#), [DiversifyPlantSci](#), [Gage](#)). Encouraging nomination of scientists outside of research-focused universities, outside of research (e.g., education specialists), and outside of academia (e.g., industry leaders), who can highlight different scientific approaches/applications and different career paths for trainees within the Department
- **Add a grad student or postdoc to the committee** who can learn and document procedures, liaise with colleagues and peers, and facilitate hosts, with the ultimate goal

¹ Hagan, Ada K., Rebecca M. Pollet, and Josie Libertucci. "Suggestions for Improving Invited Speaker Diversity To Reflect Trainee Diversity." *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education* 21, no. 1 (April 10, 2020): 21.1.22. <https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.v21i1.2105>.

² *all speakers* includes those inside and outside of UBC, as well students giving exit seminars

of leveraging seminars to help build community. Ideally, this person would be involved in the organisation of the Botany Graduate Student Association (BGSA) invited speaker

- **Invite all speakers to talk about themselves and their career journey.** Speakers could be invited to spend a few moments describing their personal story arc during seminar or student lunches
- Encourage all speakers to **provide high-level context and content** to better engage the audience within and outside of the Botany Department

Bigger and long-term opportunities

- Draft **Vision and Mission Statements**. There appears to be some disagreement within the Committee about the purpose of seminars and the way to go about filling available slots. A Vision/Mission will help ensure a steady future for this seminar series, and it will help reinforce the efficacy of a Department that does much more than “plants”
- **Create metrics** and methods to allow the Seminars Committee reflect on its recent past
- **Keep records** of seminar speakers, and gather data about speaker career stage, gender, ethnicity, country of origin, country of residence, research focus, and other axes
- Design a **sustainable hybrid Seminar Series** that encourages people who can travel to present in person, but creates opportunities for others who (for whatever reason) cannot travel to Vancouver/UBC/Canada

We understand that addressing these recommendations will take time and that there are larger issues at play within the Botany Department. However, we recommend that the Committee review these recommendations and contact the EDI Committee with any questions, concerns, and feedback. The EDI Committee can play a supporting role for EDI-related endeavors the Seminars Committee would like to make, and this role is flexible. We would be happy to discuss additional ideas and ways that the EDI Committee can support the Seminars Committee. Please let us know how we can help. This document will be made freely accessible to the Department.

Sincerely,

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