

Charter for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee
Neurosciences (Interdepartmental) PhD Program
9/11/20, V1.10

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are major societal goals of the highest priority. Maximizing DEI is critical to the success of all people and organizations. DEI facilitates greater performance and innovation, and addressing DEI deficiencies head on is, quite simply, the right thing to do¹. Universities are chartered with serving society by educating young citizens and leaders, and doing so in a broad and well-rounded manner. STEM fields have struggled with DEI at all levels and DEI has actually decreased in some areas in recent decades. Neurosciences Ph.D. Programs around the country, including our own, must play a major role in advancing DEI. Our role in positively impacting society is not confined to scientific and technical teaching and research, but must include a persistent pursuit of advancing DEI in a meaningful and lasting manner.

Our DEI Committee goal is to implement lasting improvements in DEI within our Neurosciences Program. Although our program is among the leading graduate programs at Stanford in many respects, including DEI, our goal is to continue improving on ways in which our community culture maximizes DEI. Culture includes all environments with which our students, postdocs, staff and faculty interact. Including (1) student and postdoc recruitment and retention, (2) courses and bootcamp, (3) seminars, (4) rotations, quals and research, (5) professional events (e.g., journal clubs, Superfriends, Gender in Neuroscience) and (6) social-mixer events. As described below, this will require in-depth discussions with the Committee, Program, Department and Institute chairs and directors in order to balance various tradeoffs. Finally, we are guided by two phrases that are challenging to achieve in a meaningful and lasting way. (1) HHMI President Eric O’Shea, “One must resist the urge to be reactionary, because our success in DEI will be all about a deliberate and intentional approach.” (2) We must challenge the mentality, “Does this person have what it takes to be successful in our program?” and instead ask, upon recruitment, “Does our program have what it takes for this person to be successful?”²

Identifying and prioritizing opportunities for improvement is the central focus of the DEI Committee and its regular meetings. This will likely require ~50% of our committee time. All topics are open for discussion, and diversity of ideas, perspectives and thoughts within the boundaries of what can reasonably be implemented is highly encouraged. It is anticipated that we will need to further educate ourselves by requesting and assessing data and constraints, reading relevant literature and inviting speakers from the broader community. This will result in identified opportunities. Prioritizing these opportunities requires consensus (e.g., majority of votes) within the Committee in order for us to focus our efforts and actually “get things done,” in large part by speaking with a unified voice.

Affecting meaningful and lasting change will require prioritized opportunities to be discussed in a comprehensive way between, typically, a Committee sub-group (e.g., Co-Chair(s), Co-Chair(s) and a few Members) with the Chair of the relevant area. This will likely require the other ~50% of our committee time. Key Directors and Chairs include: Program Director Nirao Shah, Program Admissions Chair Jun Ding, Program Curriculum Chair Lisa Giocomo and Program Staff Marrium Fatima. Coordination with the broader University may also be necessary. Following this process, including speaking with a unified DEI Committee voice, is believed to be the most effective way to affect meaningful and lasting positive change.

DEI Committee membership was discussed and voted on by a group of students, Profs. Moore, Shenoy and Shah on 7/30/20. We decided to solicit the Neurosciences Program community for their interest in serving on the Committee, comprised of: 2 Co-Chairs (Moore, Shenoy), up to 2 additional faculty, up to 2 postdocs, up to 6 students (one per class; identified via the Student Program Committee (SPC)), and we will explicitly seek a diverse membership.

Responsibility and authority for a given domain, unless well defined, can become complex and paralyzing. Thus we must specify these in order to appropriately set and manage expectations. Through its regular meetings and discussions, the Committee’s major responsibility will be to generate prioritized action items and to advocate for their implementation. The Committee is advisory to the Director and to the Faculty Program Committee, and it will confer with the SPC and other Committee Chairs, but the DEI Committee itself has no resources or ability to directly implement changes.

The benefits of achieving greater DEI include: (1) recruiting the best students, postdocs, staff and faculty, (2) providing the best training Program possible¹, (3) helping motivate resource allocations from the School of Medicine and the University, (4) keeping DEI front and center and (5) improving DEI is the right thing to do.

DEI Committee. Students: Year 1 Javier Weddington, Year 2 Janelle Doyle Year 3 Victoria Hernandez, Year 4 Tucker Fisher, Year 5 None and Year 6+ Eddy Albarran. **Postdocs:** Dr. Laura Driscoll and Dr. Daniel Bayless. **Liaison to Wu Tsai Neurosciences Institute DEI Committee:** Avery Krieger. **Staff:** Marrium Fatima. **Faculty:** Prof. Tirin Moore (co-chair) and Prof. Krishna Shenoy (co-chair), with ability to add 1 or 2 additional faculty as indicated.

¹ Provost Persis Drell’s Statement on Diversity and Inclusion ([BLM](#), [Diversity Statement](#) and [IDEAL Homepage](#)).

² Manuel BA, Karloff DB (2020) [Recruit and retain a diverse workforce](#). Nature Reviews Chemistry:1–3.