PROGRESS REPORT 2019–2020

A SUMMARY OF THE EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES IN THE PSD
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Letter from the Dean of the Physical Sciences Division

Dear PSD Community,

I believe that the great mandate of the twenty-first century is to elevate the status of all humanity. In our historic and dynamic Physical Sciences Division, scholars constantly redefine the boundaries of the physical and mathematical sciences. So, too, must we work together with our institution so it may evolve with the highest standards for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Over the last eighteen months, our Division has joined with partners across the University to energize a focused effort for improving the status of EDI on campus. As the first female PSD Dean, and a scientist from Brazil, my appointment signifies a willingness to embrace EDI principles from the top down. In 2018, I established an EDI Director position and brought Neli Fanning into the leadership team of the Division. Together with students, faculty, other academic appointees, and staff, she has driven progress throughout the Division. Newly formed EDI committees relay opportunities and challenges to the leadership team. We are on track to recruit more women and underrepresented minority students and faculty. Community members share their diverse ideas and perspectives at events, celebrations, and panels. Each department is working towards a more inclusive climate with defined goals and metrics. Our PSD communications highlight research breakthroughs and accolades alongside EDI initiatives. Our committees and groups are reaching out to undergraduates to promote STEM opportunities, mentoring one another, and strengthening the culture of the Division.

This past year we welcomed the University community to the Eckhardt Research Center for the exhibitions Out in the PSD & PME and Redefining the Landscape: Women in STEM, which beautifully celebrated the diversity of individuals teaching, learning, and working among us. Looking back in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis and national social unrest, gatherings like those are important markers for the position we will return to.

EDI initiatives will be crucial in the months to come as we reinvent our work at a grander scale than we previously imagined, capitalizing on the increased attention on EDI work in the last weeks and months. The PSD will champion wellness—physical and mental, at work and at home—and join our city and the South Side on continued recovery.

I am proud of what we have accomplished. The University of Chicago is a world-class university, and the mandate is clear. If we are to compete with peer institutions for talent and regard, and if we are to emerge from the two current crises with a brightly forged determination that people are the engines of groundbreaking scholarship, EDI is not an ideal but a necessity. Our scholars, students, and staff need to feel supported and valued. Sharing the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and points of view that we bring to the work of the Division strengthens our collaboration. Together we become better administrators, better advisors, and better intellectuals.

Dean of the Physical Sciences Division

Angela V. Olinto, Dean of the PSD

Letter from the Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Dear PSD Community,

From an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) standpoint, 2019–2020 has been a year of many firsts for the Physical Sciences Division. In addition to collecting input from stakeholders to formulate an EDI mission and vision, we began drafting a long-term strategy to guide our EDI efforts across the Division, keeping in mind the needs of our students, faculty, other academic appointees, staff, and postdoctoral scholars. When creating processes and programs to address the needs of our community, we focused on the pillars of the University’s Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit: Infrastructure, Climate, People, and Community.

Throughout the year, we relied on collaboration and solicited input from our constituents on their experiences and perception of EDI work within the PSD. To introduce the inaugural PSD EDI Office, we created and launched several inclusion programs, including two exhibits and a speaker series around topics of identity and belonging. We appreciate the contributions of EDI-focused committees and the zeal of individual EDI champions who act as an extension of our office and commit to promulgate this work despite the demands of their day-to-day responsibilities. We value all of our allies.

Under general circumstances, EDI work can sometimes feel like running under water—a lot of effort is deployed for what feels like marginal progress. When unexpected occurrences such as COVID-19 and national protests ignited by police brutality affect society as a whole, our efforts can feel waylaid and our optimism tested. However, we are confident in the foundations and infrastructure that the PSD established this year. With our leadership’s support, we look forward to building on the foundation of work accomplished, the alliances forged, the collaborations engaged in, and the trust formed.

In the coming years, we look forward to continuing to work with a focus on the people, climate, and community. We will assiduously do our part to not only promote a culture of inclusion but also build conditions that enable the underrepresented to increasingly feel a sense of belonging to our Division. We will lay out the challenges ahead and champion transparency. It is our hope that this first annual progress report aptly highlights the EDI progress to date and unveils the fruits of our collective commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion work in the Physical Sciences Division.

Letter from the Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Neli Fanning, PSD EDI Director
**Our Approach**
The Office of EDI in the Physical Sciences Division aims to help address diversity and climate-related challenges across faculty and other academic appointees (OAA), staff, postdoc, and student ranks. We strive to equip units with the tools and knowledge to create and sustain environments that instill a sense of belonging in all constituents. Guided by a five-year strategic plan, we collaborate with PSD units and partners to create and implement tailored plans, programs, and activities that promote equity, positively impact diversity, and engender belonging.

Supporting seven departments and three institutes, our work aligns with the PSD’s efforts to enable all people, regardless of identity, background, or institutional position, to thrive, realize their capabilities, engage meaningfully in institutional life, and contribute to the vibrant University community.

**Vision**
The PSD aspires to be at the forefront of equity, diversity, and inclusion practices in the physical and mathematical sciences.

**Mission**
We work with all PSD units to advance discovery, innovation, and impact by cultivating an environment where our diverse community feels supported and valued. Additionally, the PSD aims to create sustainable infrastructure for access and development for groups underrepresented in the mathematical and physical sciences; promote a climate where equity, diversity, and inclusion are foundational; and empower all constituents to achieve personal satisfaction and success.
PSD Demographics

The University of Chicago defines underrepresented minorities (URMs) as Black, Latinx, Native American, and Native Hawaiian and Alaskan. Increasing access and development for URMs is essential to our approach, vision, and mission.

While the UChicago undergraduate population has a gender distribution that is 49% female, the graduate population in the PSD is far more imbalanced.

**PSD Degree-Seeking Students 2019-2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Graduate Students:</th>
<th>1,110</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Graduate Students:</td>
<td>1,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Students:</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS Students:</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.9% International Students</td>
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**Domestic Degree-Seeking Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Indian/Alaska:</th>
<th>0.1%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian:</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American:</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino:</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander:</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White:</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi Racial:</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Specified:</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
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**Faculty & Instructors: 261**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Faculty &amp; Instructors:</th>
<th>17%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OAAS (Other Academic Appointees):</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff:</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postdocs:</td>
<td>193</td>
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While we recognize that gender identities span beyond man/woman binaries, demographic data on other gender identities is not currently available.
We strive to create the conditions and resources needed for sustained diversity and inclusion efforts within the PSD. Divisional and departmental committees provide the foundation for this work. These new or reinvigorated committees each crafted unique missions, visions, and strategies. To further crystallize plans, committees identified specific goals, determined tactics to reach stated goals, and forecasted timelines to measure progress.

**OUR PARTNERS**

**The PSD Divisional Committees Include:**

**EDI Coordination Team (EDICT)**

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Coordination Team (EDICT)

Composed of faculty representatives across departments and institutes, one of EDICT’s goals is to recommend methods of promoting inclusive environments in which all PSD constituents, with a focus on underrepresented minorities (URMs) and women, feel supported and valued. EDICT is a platform where departments and institutes can share successful practices for recruiting, retaining, and including faculty and students. Successful practices are communicated to the PSD Dean’s Office.

“This committee’s work is essential not only on a moral level, but also in ensuring that we perform our research and education at the highest level by pulling from the broadest possible pool of talent.”

John Anderson, Assistant Professor in Chemistry and EDICT Co-Chair
The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Staff Committee (EDISC) was chartered in March 2019 to help support, promote, and advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion on behalf of PSD staff members. EDISC’s goals include creating opportunities for staff recognition, ensuring transparency in leadership communications, and supporting equitable treatment and opportunities for staff members.

**EDI COORDINATION TEAM (EDICT)**

- **Bozhi Tian**
  - Associate Professor of Chemistry, Institute for Biophysical Dynamics, James Franck Institute

- **Rocky Kolb**
  - Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Enrico Fermi Institute, Kavli Institute for Cosmological Physics

- **Andrew Ferguson**
  - Associate Professor of Molecular Engineering, Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering

- **Neli Fanning**
  - Committee Administrator, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Directorate

- **Andrew Ferguson**
  - Associate Professor of Molecular Engineering, Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering

- **Rina Foygel Barber**
  - Associate Professor of Statistics

- **Stephan Meyer**
  - Professor Emeritus of Astronomy and Astrophysics and Physics, Enrico Fermi Institute

- **Adam Hammond**
  - Curriculum Director, Biophysical Sciences

- **Takis Souganidis**
  - Professor of Mathematics

- **Young-Kee Kim**
  - Chair
  - Professor of Physics

- **John Anderson**
  - Co-Chair
  - Assistant Professor of Chemistry

- **Maureen Coleman**
  - Assistant Professor of Geophysical Sciences

- **Tiffany Shaw**
  - Associate Professor of Geophysical Sciences

- **Dave Schmitz**
  - Associate Professor of Physics, Enrico Fermi Institute

- **David Mazziotti**
  - Professor of Chemistry

- **Hank Hoffman**
  - Associate Professor of Computer Science

- **Rina Foygel Barber**
  - Associate Professor of Statistics

- **Hank Hoffman**
  - Associate Professor of Computer Science

“Creating a deeply inclusive climate is a long-term project. But the EDI Staff Committee took important first steps this year—namely, in providing forums for more voices to be heard and in developing structures that honor and celebrate staff members (and the world of staff members) in the Division.”

Meg Bates, Senior Research and Evaluation Scientist and Director of Digital Teacher Learning Research and EDISC member

“The Staff EDI Committee has provided an opportunity to celebrate and recognize PSD staff members across the Division. Through organizing and hosting events, we also seek to build community and connection.”

Amy Keating, EDISC member

**EDI STAFF COMMITTEE (EDISC)**

**Vision:** To elevate and amplify staff voices across the PSD units, build community, and help cultivate a sense of belonging for staff and other PSD constituents.

**Mission:** To create long-lasting and sustainable infrastructure to address staff needs in the PSD that will exist and operate beyond the tenure of appointed PSD leadership.

- **Young-Kee Kim**
  - Chair
  - Professor of Physics

- **John Anderson**
  - Co-Chair
  - Assistant Professor of Chemistry

- **Stephan Meyer**
  - Professor Emeritus of Astronomy and Astrophysics and Physics, Enrico Fermi Institute

- **Adam Hammond**
  - Curriculum Director, Biophysical Sciences

- **Takis Souganidis**
  - Professor of Mathematics

- **Meg Bates**
  - Senior Research and Evaluation Scientist and Director of Digital Teacher Learning Research and EDISC member
The PSD EDI Student Committee is composed of student representatives across six departments. The goals of the student committee are to increase retention and create a climate of inclusion for graduate students.

Vision: To elevate and amplify student voices across the PSD units, build community, and instill a sense of belonging in all students and other PSD constituents.

Mission: To create long-lasting and sustainable EDI student-focused programs for the PSD that will exist and operate beyond the tenure of appointed committee members.

“For us it is important to increase diversity and improve quality of life of grad students regardless of background... Whenever we meet in the committee, we feel heard.”

María Hernández Limón, Geophysical Sciences Graduate Student and Student Committee Member
In 2019–2020, five out of seven departments had active departmental EDI Committees composed of faculty, student, and staff members who met regularly to discuss, plan, and execute steps to further advance EDI within their units.

A robust communication plan is used to disseminate information to the Division and to promote EDI values. Community members stay connected through EDI events, monthly newsletters, the EDI Office webpage, and virtual Zoom meetings.

**NOTABLE PROGRESS:**

- Chartered the EDI Staff Committee (committee service is considered a contribution to job duties for staff members)
- Effectively recruited and retained committee members and achieved consistent attendance at meetings
- Created the EDI Bulletin, an important tool for disseminating information (averages a 50% open rate)
- Highlighted 44 members in the PSD Monthly Spotlight and Meet the Students initiatives, shared across divisional and departmental news, bulletins, and social media
- Promoted campus-wide EDI opportunities through PSD channels, including events from the Center for Identity+Inclusion and the Biological Sciences Division

**PSD MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT:**

The PSD Monthly Spotlight was created for our community to learn more about the interesting and diverse individuals on the PSD staff whose dedication, commitment, hard work, and energy keep the Division running. Staff members nominate each other to be featured in these spotlights, which display a portrait, a brief biography, and an interview about interests and what EDI means to them. These spotlights increase the visibility of staff who frequently work behind the scenes, increasing staff appreciation and inclusion. They are shared on the PSD website and newsletter. Beginning in May 2020, the series featured individuals who were nominated for the PSD EDI Awards.

**LOOKING AHEAD:**

In the coming year we plan on reviewing our current infrastructure to identify opportunities to strengthen and add to our EDI communication mechanisms. We are also working towards deploying a new divisional Climate Survey in 2021.
We strive to build a culture of full participation and high engagement for all members of the PSD campus community. In 2019–2020 the PSD significantly expanded its offerings of inclusion-centered programs and events. From our heritage month series to our visual exhibits and speaker series, our programs were developed and executed with identity as a thematic backdrop.

**Heritage Months** (Latinx - LGBTQ+ - Native American - Black History - Women’s History - Asian American) were celebrated with events, including luncheons and month-long speaker series featuring relevant and inspirational sharing of the lived experience.

To advance inclusion goals, PSD members shared their perspectives on identity-based topics by volunteering for moderated panels, interviews, and talks in October 2019 (National Coming Out Month), February 2020 (Black History Month), and March 2020 (Women’s Heritage Month).

We strive to build a culture of full participation and high engagement for all members of the PSD campus community. In 2019–2020 the PSD significantly expanded its offerings of inclusion-centered programs and events. From our heritage month series to our visual exhibits and speaker series, our programs were developed and executed with identity as a thematic backdrop.

High-profile public events, including two exhibitions installed in the main atrium of the Eckhardt Research Center (ERC) celebrating LGBTQ+ members and women in STEM, are examples of activities that cultivate an environment where our diverse community feels supported and valued.

**OUT in the PSD & PME Exhibit and Speaker Series** celebrated the voices of LGBTQ+ people and allies in STEM. An exhibit featured portraits of Physical Sciences Division and Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering community members with narratives about the process of coming out and their experience of it. The opening reception attracted over 100 attendees and the exhibit remained on view for a month.
Redefining the Landscape: Women in STEM Exhibit and Speaker Series highlighted several women learning, teaching, and researching at the University of Chicago. The exhibit displayed portraits and profiles of female scientists who span generations and represent diverse programs and interests. They recounted pivotal moments, challenges overcome, and proudest accomplishments. Embedded in their narratives were paths forged through persistence and determination. The opening lecture of the speaker series featured Provost Ka Yee Lee recounting “My Journey Through STEM” before a full auditorium. The exhibit opening attracted around 200 members of the PSD and PME. The online flipbook of the exhibit had over 550 views and was used for divisional outreach in Spring 2020.

A Division-Wide Virtual Meeting swiftly addressed the need to provide space for sharing and dialogue in the Division when violence against Black people ignited strong feelings across the nation. On May 30, 2020, Dean Olinto sent a message to all members that addressed the tragic death of George Floyd in Minnesota; stated the PSD’s categorical rejection of discrimination and racism in any form; and invited all members to a virtual meeting to safely discuss current realities, which included protests and a surge of civil unrest in Chicago during that time. On Monday, June 1, over 100 people attended the virtual meeting led by Neli Fanning, indicating the appetite in the Division for discussions on race and social justice. Provost Ka Yee Lee, Dean Angela Olinto, and many Chairs participated and voiced their ideas alongside faculty, staff, and students. This gathering fostered an inclusive environment that promotes diversity of thought and a culture of respect, inclusion, and wellness. Afterward, PSD community members were invited to a virtual platform to continue the discussion and sharing of resources.
NOTABLE PROGRESS:

- Worked to create a Division where people feel supported, valued, and respected as individuals with diverse beliefs and perspectives
- Fostered full participation and cross-sectional engagement in EDI programs
- Trained self-identified allies on how to create LGBTQ+ Safe Spaces
- Sponsored Affinity Lunches with the EDI Student Committee - lively, relaxed gatherings featuring local catering that have become important for boosting community and climate
- Established quarterly Staff Coffee Hours that facilitated connections among staff members
- Established the first all-staff, division-wide holiday lunch, contributing to community building among staff across units
- Inaugurated the annual Staff Awards ceremony and program to recognize outstanding and valuable contributions to EDI by PSD staff. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ceremony previously scheduled for April 2020 had to be postponed to 2021
- Created several wellness initiatives during the Spring 2020 stay-at-home orders: staff and student wellness check-ins, Zoom social hours, blog posts for wellness strategies, phone check-ins between staff and students, and advocacy for compassionate leadership on campus and the South Side
- Assembled an EDI Learning Materials webpage of suggested materials that address topics of race, identity, and equity to promote self-education on the importance of understanding different voices and points of view
- Launched a PSD Inclusive Climate Grant program and funded four proposals across units
- Established the PSD Peer Mentoring Program, in which incoming PhD and Master’s students are matched with existing graduate students based on common experiences and identities to facilitate a successful transition to the PSD
- Created the online PSD OutList, an initiative to support LGBTQ+ members and allies within the PSD. This public document provides more visibility for LGBTQ+ members and allies in the Division and creates additional pathways for inclusion
- In the coming year, we plan to build on our newly established inclusion programs and will continue to creatively engage all PSD constituents with the goal of instilling a sense of belonging in spaces where inclusion has taken root.

LOOKING AHEAD:

We also have plans for targeted inclusion campaigns. Some short term plans include launching a campaign to educate, inform, and provide resources to the community to prevent sexual harassment in the PSD.
We strive to increase the diversity of our faculty, other academic appointees, postdoctoral researchers, student body, professional staff, and senior leadership. We prioritized efforts to recruit URM students and worked with the Graduate Recruitment Initiative Team to diversify efforts, personalize approaches, and be more proactive with how we recruit the next generation of PSD students.

Laid the foundation for relationships with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) to proactively connect with and attract URM candidates to our STEM programs.

Collaborated with some faculty search committees upon request. Efforts included sharing best practices and, on invitation, meeting candidates when they interview on campus.

Responded to highest ever student demand for peer mentoring among Fall 2020 incoming students and scaled mentor recruiting efforts.

Co-Sponsored travel for the UChicago SACNAS chapter leadership team to be recognized at the 2019 National SACNAS conference. SACNAS is an inclusive organization dedicated to fostering the success of Chicano/Hispanics and Native Americans, from college students to professionals, in attaining advanced degrees, careers, and positions of leadership in STEM.

Co-Sponsored PSD GRIT students to attend the 2019 SACNAS conference in Hawaii to recruit prospective students.

LOOKING AHEAD:

In the coming year we plan to continue solidifying our nascent relationships with HBCUs and HSIs to establish long-lasting relationships with their student populations, thereby familiarizing that audience with our programs and putting the PSD on the radar of academically prepared prospective students.
WHAT IS GRIT?

Student-led organization aimed at increasing the recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM

Started by and still largely led by URM graduate students – so that EDI conversations maintain an intersectional framework with racial/ethnic minoritization

Functions as a resource bridge between departments

Currently has student membership across 30 departments in three divisions (BSD, PSD, PME) and has a multi-tiered multi-year leadership structure

HOW HAS GRIT BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PSD?

Began bridging into the PSD during the 2018-2019 academic year. In 2019, PSD EDI Director Neli Fanning became the advisor for PSD GRIT

Currently has leadership in the biophysics program and five PSD departments: chemistry, physics, geophysical sciences, mathematics, and computer science

Has built strong relationships with faculty in many of these departments and with PSD administrators – in hopes that we can work alongside faculty and administrators to proactively increase recruitment and retention of underrepresented students

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment at conferences: five PSD students traveled to the SACNAS conference – two PSD students attended the Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics at UChicago – GRIT recruited at ABRCMS conference

Assisted in adding diversity- and community-oriented activities for weekend visits by accepted students

RETENTION

Consists of four teams: LGBTQ+ Team, Underrepresented Minorities Team, Women’s Team, Disabilities Team

Plans events throughout the year aimed at: 1) developing community among underrepresented students in different departments and 2) centering the broad experiences of marginalized identities and how they pertain to scientific environments

INFRASTRUCTURE, CLIMATE, PEOPLE, COMMUNITY

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL AND GLOBAL PARTNERS. OUR UNIVERSITY, OUR CITY, AND OUR NETWORKS WILL ACHIEVE MORE BY LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER.
Highlights of EDI engagement PSD JAN 2019 – JUN 2020

552 VIEWS ONLINE WOMEN IN STEM BOOKLET

COMMITTEE MEETINGS
FIFTY-ONE

Committee-led events
7

EDI EVENTS AND PROGRAMS
11

10,383 E-newsletter circulation

Average event attendance at PSD Speaker Series:
20 PER EVENT

PARTICIPANTS IN ONLINE OUTLIST: 49
We strive to create opportunities for meaningful scholarly, professional, and personal engagement in our community and with neighboring communities in a context of partnership, education, and collaboration.

NOTABLE PROGRESS:

- Began an inventory of our PSD outreach efforts and gained clarity on the breadth and depth of our reach and effect in our neighboring communities
- Partnered with South Side services and local businesses on events and programs (caterers, carpenters, photographers, restaurants)
- Highlighted partnership, education, and collaboration stories arising from the University’s response to COVID-19, amplifying EDI-related topics across all PSD channels

LOOKING AHEAD:

In the coming year we plan and hope to build on existing outreach efforts and will provide resources to PSD units who are developing sustainable and impactful relationships with our neighboring communities.
Barriers

Current and potential challenges to the work of EDI have been identified through committees, surveys, focus groups, and dialogues across the Division with the involvement of the PSD EDI Office.

Increasing the number of URMs in the Division among faculty, students, and staff in leadership positions is indeed a continuous challenge. According to the 2020 National Science Board’s Science and Engineering indicators:

“In 2017, underrepresented minority women earned more than half of their racial or ethnic group’s S&E bachelor’s degrees, whereas white and Asian women earned slightly less than half. Similarly, women earned more than half of the S&E doctorates across all groups except whites, where they earned 49%.

Within fields, differences between men and women appear to hold across racial and ethnic groups.

At the request of the Dean, all faculty who are engaged in searches must attend a search and bias training run through the Office of the Provost. Regularly scheduled events, panels, and lectures reinforce EDI values and educate the community on the value of diversity and the long-lasting effects of inclusion.

The divisional committees that further this work have active representation across departments. Members gather monthly on campus and virtually and are passionate about attaining goals they crafted within the four pillars. Among their ranks are women and men, non-binary individuals, people of color, queer identifying people, OAAs, staff, and members ranging in age from young adults to emeritus.

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Barriers

Women in all racial and ethnic groups earned most bachelor’s degrees awarded in social and behavioral sciences and about half of bachelor’s degrees awarded in natural sciences (ranging from 45% for whites to 53% for blacks). However, the difference in the number of bachelor’s degree awards between women and men is especially high in engineering across all racial and ethnic groups. Among blacks, the proportion of bachelor’s degree awards in engineering that went to women declined from 36% to 25% between 2000 and 2017; in natural sciences, it declined from nearly 60% in 2000 to 53% in 2017 (in both cases, however, absolute numbers of women earning doctorates increased).

While there has been some progress over the years, women and URMs nationally make up a small fraction of science and engineering degree recipients. The proliferation of new EDI officers within academia suggests that EDI efforts are indeed poised to positively impact diversity and inclusion within higher education institutions. Studies on the composition and staffing of EDI offices nationally are not readily available. Anecdotally, there tends to be a lean staff fully dedicated to such efforts, resulting in slower progress on that front. Academia is decentralized, and meaningful change requires departments to prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion in recruitment and admissions, especially with regards to women and URMs who can mentor within affinity groups, thereby improving retention.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are important notions and values in the PSD and regarded as priorities by many units, however the EDI Office has identified some challenges. It will take systemic change and strategic efforts across all departments to effect change, yet there is currently no clear incentive in the current infrastructure. In a STEM-focused division, the need for concepts to be quantifiable is rightfully the norm and expected. Furthermore, the need for concepts to be quantifiable is rightfully the norm and expected. However, conveying that EDI is often an exercise in self-reflection and is highly interpersonal—and thus not easily measured scientifically—is a challenge.

Service, teaching, and mentoring, while viewed as important by many, are not always prioritized at the same level as research or grants, which has the effect of slowing down EDI progress. A holistic lens for faculty hiring and student admission may not be understood or appreciated in traditional research environments, and the need for inclusion programs and practices remains unclear to some. A goal of the EDICT faculty representatives is to consistently communicate EDI progress and recommendations to their individual departments and routinely disseminate EDI resources, updates, and findings to PSD faculty broadly.

Despite a strategic effort across the PSD to make admissions and hiring offers to qualified women and URMs, the Division still struggles to make a statistically meaningful impact on yield. When it comes to recruiting URM faculty and student candidates to our community, the promise of academic rigor and Chicago as a world-class city is not enough. Other tangible incentives like mentoring opportunities and a culture of respect and inclusion need to be created and effectively communicated.

Students have also identified the current communication infrastructure as a barrier. Graduate students would like more channels of communication to the leadership, citing town halls as one way forward. While they believe that the establishment of the PSD EDI Office is progressive and positive, they are also highly aware of the gaps in mentorship from faculty with similar backgrounds and identities. This challenge would be less burdensome with the addition of more women and URM faculty.

Ambitions

The PSD plans to positively impact the number of URM members in the Division. Work will focus on activating plans to attract and recruit URMs and continue partnering with student groups such as GRIT. We would like to consistently engage with faculty to provide additional resources for holistic admissions. EDI is a continuous process and some of our long term goals include:

- Generating departmental improvements to advising and mentoring strategies that promote inclusion, retention, and wellness
- Improving pathways for recruiting young and talented scientists
- Formalizing recruiting with HBCUs, HSIs, and STEM bridge programs from peer institutions
- Coming to a better understanding of the PSD staff composition and specific needs so that we can provide relevant support where needed

In future years, our support, PSD units will produce local EDI reports reflecting their self-identified goals and corresponding progress on matters of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our strategy will result in a PSD in which all members of the Division’s community—teachers, researchers, staff, and students—take part in EDI work. The most obvious manifestation of this will be the diversification of each department and institute. The intangibles, however, will be just as valuable: a pervasive feeling of inclusion and respect.

Designing a fundraising plan for EDI work that allows alumni to engage directly in funding elements of these efforts

Publishing an online guide for how to make PSD events accessible. It will include a map of gathering spaces in ERC with audio equipment and pull down screens for captioning; a map of unisex washrooms; tips for having an accessible web presence; and strategies for inclusive programming, language, and catering