

To be tomorrow morning at 5-7am...

ATTN FACULTY: A call for unified action against racial injustice

To the faculty:

In response to the statement from BIOS leadership regarding racial injustice, we, the undersigned graduate students and postdoctoral researchers of this department, would like to continue this conversation. While the condemnation of overt violence and oppression against Black people and other persecuted groups is absolutely necessary, this is also a time to actively confront the systemic ways in which racism has structured our own community. We have taken the first steps of *reflection* and *evaluation* as advocated for in your letter and we now implore our department leadership to take the next actionable steps as outlined at the end of this letter.

**We would specifically like to address past and current efforts towards the hiring, retention, and promotion of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) at the faculty level.** Currently, the faculty in our department is composed of only 23% People of Color and 30% women, with no Black or Indigenous faculty representation. While this representation is unfortunately the *status quo* for biology departments across the US ([Li & Koedel 2017](#)), this does not reflect a department “deeply committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community”. Further, the visible record of recent hiring and promotion depicts an institution that, at best, does not recognize or support the talents of BIPOC and women faculty, and, at worst, actively penalizes the additional emotional and mental labor and service that BIPOC and women faculty often participate in. This visible record, and the message we are hearing from it, impedes the training and development of graduate students and postdoctoral researchers.

**A more diverse faculty body is beneficial to trainees in several ways.** First, diverse groups are more effective at problem solving than homogeneous groups, which could directly increase the productivity and scientific development of graduate students and postdoctoral researchers ([Phillips et al. 2014](#)). Second, as many graduate students and postdoctoral fellows identify as BIPOC or underrepresented minorities, our development as scientists is improved when the group of faculty responsible for our training represents diverse backgrounds with differing perspectives ([Yehia et al. 2014](#)). Third, given that BIPOC faculty, women faculty, and queer faculty are disproportionately underrepresented at the full professor level, a department that actively fights against this “[leaky pipeline](#)” phenomenon could have positive, downstream effects on graduate students pursuing academic careers. Overall, faculty representation is a direct signal of the attributes and traits of scientists valued by the department, and, without it, both current and prospective trainees hear a message unaligned with an appreciation of diversity and inclusion.

**To actively promote anti-racist recruitment and retention in the department, we are requesting department leadership and faculty take action in four specific ways:**

- 1) Develop a new statement on our departments’ stance on [Diversity](#) with actionable efforts to improve recruitment and retention of BIPOC faculty.
- 2) Initiate a Diversity and Inclusion committee, including graduate student representatives
- 3) Require all department members attend cultural sensitivity and implicit bias training, provided by an external source such as [SheGeeksOut](#) or the [Racial Equity Institute](#), annually

Commented [1]: only includes TT faculty, letter has been edited to indicate such

4) Participate and support June 10's [Shut Down Stem](#) Initiative, with the intention of using this day as a starting point for continued action at the level of the individual, lab, department, and wider community

The actions we are requesting are a starting point for what we hope will be joint-work towards long-term systematic efforts to combat racism and implicit bias in the department. **Next week, we would like to continue this conversation at the University level with Dean Mary Galvin, Associate Provost Laura Carlson, and Provost Marie Lynn Miranda.** We hope for your support in furthering this conversation.

Respectfully,

Specifically, it is important for graduate students and postdocs to have diverse faculty mentors so that we have role models, mentors, and [something about examples of success - of URMs making it through the leaky pipeline and succeeding].

Our goals in this statement are to 1) express our dissatisfaction in past and current faculty-level initiatives to include diverse voices in our community and 2) provide concrete objectives to promote actively anti-racist recruitment and improve diversity and inclusion at the faculty level.

**We have evaluated the state of diversity in our department and are unsatisfied with our current status.** Currently, the faculty in our department is composed of only 30% women and 23% People of Color, with no Black or Indigenous faculty representation. While this representation is unfortunately the *status quo* for biology departments across the US (Li & Koedel 2017), if we are truly striving to be an inclusive and diverse department we should have representation higher than the average. Unfortunately, as things stand, the diversity of our graduate student and postdoctoral population is not reflected in the diversity of our faculty.

**We have evaluated the hiring and retention of Black people, People of Color, and members of other underrepresented groups and we are unsatisfied with this department's efforts.** Despite a diverse range of candidates, the last five hires for faculty positions in ecology have been white men. While graduate students are often asked to participate in the interviewing process (e.g., presenting graduate student feedback at faculty meetings), how our feedback on candidate's values of diversity, inclusivity, and mentoring is actually used in the hiring process is unclear. We also recognize that of the last six faculty that went up for tenure, the only two that were awarded their promotion were white men. Unfortunately, our understanding of the hiring and tenure process in our department is limited due to lack of transparency, leaving us to postulate why these decisions are made.

**Commented [2]:** I think this is the right idea, but I think it's also a repetitive and non-specific. This could be an area where we flesh out a bit more WHY we need diverse faculty.

**Commented [3]:** "Research has shown that diverse groups are more effective at problem solving than homogeneous groups, and policies that promote diversity and inclusion will enhance our ability to draw from the broadest possible pool of talent, solve our toughest challenges, maximize employee engagement and innovation, and lead by example by setting a high standard for providing access to opportunity to all segments of our society"

-obama (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/05/presidential-memorandum-promoting-diversity-and-inclusion-national>)

**Commented [4]:** Specifically, it is important for graduate students to have diverse faculty advisors, committee members, and mentors, as diverse groups "are more effective at problem solving than homogenous groups" ().

**Commented [5]:** I like this!!

**Commented [6]:** Ditto!

**Commented [7]:** can I quote Obama though lol

**Commented [8]:** Let me try to find who Obama was quoting, and we can quote them directly instead

**Commented [9]:** There's an article in Scientific American titled "How Diversity Works" (<https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.nd.edu/stable/pdf/26040399.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A3b9d1c08b04ea0212af553d650e65b2>)

"Decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists and demographers show that socially diverse groups (that is, those with a diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation) are more innovative than ... [1]

**Commented [10]:** Is this true? I know we at least had a few female candidates but also my brain is mush lately

**Commented [11]:** for the ID position that Koepfli was hired for there was 2 white men, 1 white woman. For the position that Ana was hired, 1 white woman, 1 ... [2]

**Commented [12]:** so idk if I'd say it was a super diverse range of candidates for the ecology positions in terms of BIPOC, but there was diversity in gender

**Commented [13]:** Including the names of the last 5 hires here might make this more personal. It might mean that this hits home harder or it might just make faculty ... [3]

**Commented [14]:** I think we should try to say something here getting the point across that they act like they want grad student feedback on hiring, but that wh ... [4]

**Commented [15]:** I think Zhang is in the last 6? So maybe reword.

**Diversity at all levels, from undergraduate students to faculty, is critical for fostering a department that champions diversity and inclusion.** As things stand, the diversity of our graduate student and postdoctoral population is not reflected in the diversity of our faculty.

As stated in your letter, you have asked for self-reflection and -evaluation.

- P2: the importance of diversity
  - Having diverse faculty to support a diverse grad student body as role models and mentors
  - ND biology has structured their department in a way that forces graduate students to see URM faculty as “tokens”. When there is 1 BIPOC or 1 LGBTQIA+ or 1 Black person or 1 etc. etc. etc. then that shows to graduate students that to be in a department you have to compete with all other people that look like you if you’re URM. There NEEDS to be more examples of BIPOC + in the department if they expect their BIPOC + graduate students to think that they can go on to be faculty somewhere.
    - Does this thought process make sense? I think I’m having a hard time getting the succinct message across
  - This also places an unfair weight on 1 or few representatives, requiring them to act as unofficial mentors for students who identify with them and want to seek guidance (not the fault of the students or anything). This can end up placing extra responsibility/time demands/emotional burden on minority faculty that others don’t see or experience.
    - <https://meliseedwards.com/2020/05/10/cognitive-reserve-in-stem-disproportionate-labor-and-outcomes-for-students-of-color/> - this describes this phenomenon as cognitive load and I think that’s a nice phrase we could use
- P3: On the retention and hiring of Black people, People of Color, and members of other underrepresented groups in academia, we are unsatisfied with this department’s efforts.
  - Current state of dept
    - 30% of research faculty in department are women
    - 22.6% of all faculty (including teaching) could be identified as POC, no Black or Indigenous scholars [23.2% of research faculty or 20% of teaching] [link to rough spreadsheet](#)
    - [Here is a PDF](#) I found on furthering inclusivity in academia (Look at Appendix C for faculty diversity)
    - A quick comparison to other university biology departments (Li & Koedel 2017): 23 public universities’ biology department faculty breakdown (2015-2016 academic year): 31.1% female, 16.7% POC (12.9% Asian, 0.7% Black, 3.0% Hispanic, 0.1% Other)
      - Li, D., & Koedel, C. (2017). Representation and salary gaps by race-ethnicity and gender at selective public universities. *Educational Researcher*, 46(7), 343-354.

Commented [16]: putting this into bullet points just so we can organize an outline of the rest of the letter.

Commented [17]: but definitely feel free to reorganize!

Commented [18]: The observer just did a piece on obstacles to mental health treatment for minority ND students that might be relevant here <https://ndsmcobserver.com/2020/05/notre-dames-international-minority-students-face-obstacles-in-mental-health-care/>

- The point here being we are basically doing *just the average*. However, if we are striving to be known as a diverse and inclusive department, we should be far better than the average
- P4: Efforts mean nothing if they fail. - Can include that they can't hide behind the fact that they *try* to hire faculty of color but they don't come here - that's bc this is a terrible department for diversity and inclusion
  - If BIPOC are not coming (whether applying or accepting if they get offers) here, it likely indicates a failure of the dept to do enough to draw them here - if we're perceived to be non-diverse, non-inclusive environment (almost definitely true), we will continue to be
  - Also they interview BIPOC, but often times they don't actually make any offers to them. It's like their interviewing them is just a front.
  - Last 5 hires in ecology have been white men
    - Jones, Rocha, Perkins, Medvigy, Rohr
  - The department needs to actually PRIORITIZE diversity - it's evidently not enough to say IF they apply we will give them fair consideration. I don't know how this would come into play but something that says we are committed to increasing diversity as the goal.
  - Professors who have left/are leaving without tenure - sent an email asking Jenny they have a list of all the faculty that have gone up for tenure/promotion
    - Reggie Hill - never went up for tenure and left the department. Now current professor at USC. Example of bad retention record of excellent Black scientists.
    - Zain Syed - denied tenure
    - Athanasia - denied tenure and denied an extension of the tenure clock
    - Morales - denied tenure
    - That atheist guy that Kimbra was in his lab (Ridenhour maybe?)
    - McDowell (denied promotion)
    - Professors who have gotten tenure - literally somehow alex is the most diverse bc he's shorter?(L O L.....)- was talking to Alex about this and he said that of the last 6 people up for tenure, the only 2 that got it were white men
- P5: proposed goals: (maybe just have them numbered with 1-2 sentence description/motivation)
  - Is there a way to request that the Department / College be transparent about tenure and promotion? One thing that I think could be relevant in this discussion is where in the promotion timeline people are getting denied (i.e., department-wide vote, college-level, university-level)
    - So, for instance, if a lot of people are being denied tenure at the department-wide vote, then the department is actively preventing promotion of diverse faculty members
    - I believe at least 2 were denied at levels higher than department

**Commented [19]:** I'm not sure if there is a way to obtain this information, but how many people from URMs has the department tried to actively recruit?

**Commented [20]:** I feel like someone has that information - Jenny comes to mind as she organizes the lunches and tours and stuff? Though I guess that's just info on who we interview and not actively pursue

**Commented [21]:** Bridget would be a better bet - I tried emailing Jenny just for a list of who has gone up for tenure or promotion the last 5 years and she hasn't responded once I told her I was thinking of writing something. Bridget I think would understand + help and actually handles recruitment more specifically.

**Commented [22]:** Bridget is our queen

**Commented [23]:** It may not be relevant, but the campus did the Inclusive Campus Student Survey Report and it has a lot of information about whether students feel accepted and how often they experience "adverse treatment" due to personal characteristics.

If you want to build an argument that the environment is not inclusive, this may be a place to start. I included a folder with all of the information.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aK610Bt9MDOQU6emewGIVkpWJ-0NOabJ?usp=sharing>

**Commented [24]:** Under the race and ethnicity section of why some student's don't report adverse treatment it says "Some respondents who identified as racial/ethnic minorities did not report instances of adverse treatment based upon their race/ethnicity because they indicated it is part of the culture both at Notre Dame and outside the University." That students feel that racism is a part of the culture of Notre Dame and the surrounding community is deeply disturbing.

**Commented [25]:** St. Mary's alumnae are also calling for some pretty systemic changes, which might be a good place to find ideas/language. But also, they make the very deliberate point that they (and ND) are a predominantly-white institution, which probably plays into the perceived culture of racism by minority students

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSduQvnxKQDEEzP7csGDs0sl6oPokjRjzobcLM-MDrXHaME-A/viewform>

**Commented [26]:** from the BSA statement: "After speaking with several professors, we have found that there is also a retention issue for what little Black professors we manage to hire. Many Black professors are leaving the university because they are finding little to no avenues for tenure. Black professors have varied bodies of knowledge that are not only reflected in their research but the way that they structure their classes. Even if they are not teaching subjects about race, ... [5]

**Commented [27]:** demands: create a diversity and inclusion committee, a day of reflection + sustained reading groups

- Support for URM faculty in dept: If it's going on at higher levels, that may point towards a bigger issue in the University, but also suggests that the department is not setting up our faculty members to succeed
  - Unnecessary service requirements (as was mentioned with Athanasia), etc.
  - Or that diverse faculty end up doing a lot more unrewarded service mentoring students that aren't their own
- Other ideas: - larger grad student/postdoc wellness
  - what is the breakdown of graduate students (maybe just stick with ecology?) compared to ecology faculty. For example, is the ecology faculty representative of the ecology grad students? (OBVIOUSLY no, but it would be good to show a statistic)
  - Issues: we could get the breakdown of demography from the website, but not sure how we could do that for graduate students, unless we asked ppl to declare it own their own (which in itself may be bad)
  - Shut Down Academia - <https://www.shutdownstem.com/> - it would be good if the entire bio department could get together and take part in this shut down on June 10th ("no research, no meetings, no classes, no business as usual").
- Diversity Statement [\[source\]](#)
  - Crislyn linked the department's diversity page in her email, and I personally find it incredibly underwhelming? There's maybe two or three generic sentences about valuing diversity and then a pithy metaphor about biological diversity. I'd like one of our proposed goals to be to see an updated diversity statement/page from the department that actually outlines concrete actions taken towards fostering/appreciating diversity. The foundation of a Diversity Committee (in agreement with the below suggestion) with members clearly listed, resources for education for non-minority faculty/staff/students, resources for members of the community who feel they have been subjected to discrimination?
- The institution of a Diversity and Inclusion committee is key in ensuring that our department is continually making an effort to provide equity within our department. The first step would be to **assess access** to equitable opportunities (i.e. what are the barriers currently in place in our department for BIPOC and what have we done thus far to close the gap?).
  - One that annually reports - breakdown, efforts, etc. We don't want reports to be quotas though, rather we need cultural change in recruitment and retainment efforts. Rethinking tenure conditions?
- Conclusion: Diversity begets diversity.
  - Fostering an environment of transparency will foster an environment of inclusivity
    - (Eg no one knowing why Syed was denied tenure and rumors about his religion playing apart)
  - Taking actions to actively diversify faculty in the department will have an immediate impact, but will also make the department more desirable for other

**Commented [28]:** Since I'm a postdoc... would it be a good idea to also get the demographics of postdocs?

**Commented [29]:** The BSA statement says the following about the university counseling center: "The University Counseling Center has a total of 34 counselors, seven of which are multicultural counselors. Only one of the multicultural counselors is a person of color. Although these numbers are also a reflection of the lack of Black professors on campus, it is a necessity that the University hire Black professionals that are well versed in Black culture and the mental health of Black students on campus."

**Commented [30]:** This resource (pulled from the email Rachel forwarded) is exactly the kind of thing I'd love to see included on our diversity page:

<https://diversity.colostate.edu/education/educate-yourself/>

**Commented [31]:** It is worth mentioning that they are/have done this, but that it's only applicable to professors moving forward, re: Athanasia not getting an extension on her clock, despite the department/University suggesting that 6 years isn't enough time.

potential future URM candidates. It could reduce feelings of isolation and create a more inclusive community. It may help recruit diverse graduate students and postdocs (and help retain them). (Logic here: <https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/best-practices-improving-faculty-diversity-recruitment-and-retention>)

- We must do the painful work to dismantle the biases, conscious and unconscious, that allow for systematic exclusion of diverse voices from our community.

Reasons we've heard from other graduate students and faculty regarding why some candidates "aren't good candidates" for TT positions at ND:

- Voice is too high, wouldn't be taken seriously
- Mentorship and inclusivity of a candidate is good, but research isn't strong enough
- Too "intense" (in reference to female candidates)
- (re Athanasia) too much service

Commented [32]: wtf

#### **BIOS GOALS** [\[source\]](#)

End of department mission statement: "We commit to ensuring diversity of all forms in the pursuit of excellence in learning and discovery."

"Finally, it is imperative that our department, across all levels, reflect the diversity of our multicultural society and that we expand our reach in educating and preparing the next generation of students"

Under promote a departmental culture that embraces inclusive excellence

- Encourage hiring of faculty that significantly diversifies our faculty demographics.  
Develop a set of practices for faculty searches that promote increasing diversity and hiring the best as compatible goals

Future goals: students, faculty members, and staff who reflect the diverse populations of our multicultural society and serve as positive role models for future generations of biologists.

Commented [33]: ALSO THIS FUCKING IMPLIES THAT DIVERSE FACULTY ARE NOT THE BEST?

Page 2: [1] Commented [9] Emily Nonnamaker 6/6/20 10:13:00 PM

There's an article in Scientific American titled "How Diversity Works" (<https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.nd.edu/stable/pdf/26040399.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A3b9d1c08b04ea0212af553d650e65bb2>)

"Decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists and demographers show that socially diverse groups (that is, those with a diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation) are more innovative than homogeneous groups."..."This is not only because people with different backgrounds bring new information. Simply interacting with individuals who are different forces group members to prepare better, to anticipate alternative viewpoints and to expect that reaching consensus will take effort."

Page 2: [2] Commented [11] Rachel Oidtman 6/6/20 7:55:00 PM

for the ID position that Koepfli was hired for there was 2 white men, 1 white woman. For the position that Ana was hired, 1 white woman, 1 hispanic woman, and 1 black woman were interviewed. For the past ecology positions, there were at least one person of color (from UW) and several women, but mostly men.

Page 2: [3] Commented [13] Chloe Ramsay 6/6/20 6:39:00 PM

Including the names of the last 5 hires here might make this more personal. It might mean that this hits home harder or it might just make faculty more mad? Just a thought.

Page 2: [4] Commented [14] Rachel Oidtman 6/6/20 7:52:00 PM

I think we should try to say something here getting the point across that they act like they want grad student feedback on hiring, but that when we weight diversity, inclusion, mentoring ability in our feedback, it isn't clear how that weighs on their hiring process. [it doesn't actually appear to make any difference what we say]

Page 4: [5] Commented [26] Emily Nonnamaker 6/5/20 9:28:00 PM

from the BSA statement: "After speaking with several professors, we have found that there is also a retention issue for what little Black professors we manage to hire. Many Black professors are leaving the university because they are finding little to no avenues for tenure. Black professors have varied bodies of knowledge that are not only reflected in their research but the way that they structure their classes. Even if they are not teaching subjects about race, Black students will still feel more comfortable contributing in class and going to office hours if their professors look like them. As a result of the skills, both technical and personal, Black professors have to offer the University, they're an asset that should be provided with a better track for tenure. However, there are few Black professors with tenure across the board. "