Anya L Brown: Contributions to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

I am a biracial woman: my father is black, and my mother is white. Growing up in a mixed-race family taught me to celebrate the differences and identify the similarities that bring people together. My upbringing has shaped my experience and perspective and has instilled in me a desire to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity. One of the barriers to increasing diversity in the sciences is the narrow view of what a scientist is/needs to look like, which can be combated by including people from a variety of backgrounds that have one thing in common: their love of science. Creating a culture of equity and inclusion is a large task, and nearly insurmountable as an individual, especially as many biases (e.g., gender, race) are institutionalized. Nonetheless, I aim to embody diversity through inclusion as an instructor, mentor and scientist by providing opportunities to help marginalized groups succeed in the sciences.

Throughout graduate school I was involved in campus groups that focused on supporting underrepresented groups in the sciences. At UGA, I co-founded a Women in Science group, called WiSci[1]. One of the goals of this group is to bring together people of different genders at UGA to support women in science. This reflects my personal goal to celebrate our similarities (e.g., scientists who support women in science) and differences (e.g., gender) as we strive towards a common goal of inclusion. The events and discussions that WiSci hosts are not limited to women and provide support for other, intersecting, marginalized groups. I helped plan and implement panels and workshops aimed at networking, negotiating and interviewing, with the goal of increasing diversity and inclusion in the STEM workforce. These activities are meant to de-mystify the job seeking process for women and peoples from marginalized groups and prevent leaks in the pipeline from graduate to full-time scientific positions. By bringing together people from different genders, backgrounds, and disciplines, these activities appeal broadly to aspiring scientists across the university. As part of my commitment to diversity and inclusion, I co-wrote a Working Life piece in *Science* to encourage others to find their community.

Campus groups provide extracurricular opportunities to increase diversity in the sciences, but diversity, equity and inclusion needs to start in the classroom or in the lab. As a mentor, I mentor students of different backgrounds and bolster female scientists. At this point, I have mentored 14 students, 12 of whom are women and have continued onto scientific positions. My classes and the students I mentor are also exposed to ideas and concepts central to ecology. I seek to increase the representation of women and marginalized groups in the articles and stories we provide to undergraduates, as well as the importance of examining questions through multiple lenses. At UC Davis, in the courses I will teach I plan on incorporating classic papers as well as contemporary ones that highlight the researchers and as well as will examine issues from multiple lenses. For example, when teaching competition, I will provide the historical and theoretical context and early experimental examples (e.g, Lotka-Volterra models, and Connell 1961), as well as modern explorations of the mechanisms of competition (e.g., microbial, chemical, physical). By emphasizing the diversity of scientists as well as the importance of looking at questions from multiple lenses, this approach instills the importance of diversity and inclusion in classroom settings.

[1]https://wisciuga.weebly.com/about-us.html

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Among the barriers to science are good role models for what a scientist looks like/acts like to the public (and future scientists). I participate in outreach activities in part to help erase these stereotypes. In graduate school and during my post doc, I have been involved in various outreach activities that showcase stories of what it is like to be a scientist (through the Guts and Glory Gainesville storytelling event); reaching out to schools (SkypeAScientist, Florida and Georgia Science Fairs), and in the field giving lectures to local groups or featured on regional TV programs (Central Caribbean Marine Institute Lecture Series in Little and Grand Cayman, Voices of the Sea TV episode, aired across the Pacific). Currently, I am involved in a group, SciAll.org, which seeks to de-mystify science, counteract scientist stereotypes and capture the attention of the public to encourage entry into the sciences and highlight the importance of science. Through YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, we use online videos to reach K-12 aged children, particularly aspiring female scientists.

Over the past few months, I have been part of the organizing committee for the 2020 Unity in Diversity ISME virtual meeting. Here, I am working to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in science at a global scale. We are amplifying diverse microbial ecologists across the world, while making the meeting accessible to any region in the world, and for any interested scientist. The two-day event will feature microbial ecologists keynote speakers from North America, Asia and Africa and speakers from 7 regions of the world. We kept registration intentionally low (free!), and times of talks are designed to provide access across time zones.

Accessibility is critical to increasing diversity in science. Among the barriers to science for students is financial: some students struggle to balance a job and research. During my post doc, I used some of my research funds to pay my female undergrad assistant, so she did not need to find a second job. As a faculty member, I will incorporate student funding in grants so students, regardless of socio-economic status can take advantage of research opportunities. For example, I will participate in the Bodega Bay Marine Lab REU program and via the UC Leads program. With these programs, I will also recruit diverse undergraduates and future grad students.

At BML, I can champion diversity, equity and inclusion as a mentor, teacher, and faculty member. I seek to continue to increase representation in the sciences by women and minoritized groups by de-mystifying science, participating in the culture of belonging at BML and taking advantage of the on-campus Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. I will continue to reach out to the public through outreach, to communicate science and cultivate the next generation of scientists, and science enthusiasts during the Bodega Bay Marine Lab seminar series as well provide research updates at my field sites. I will also add to a culture of belonging by engaging with campus groups like Women in STEM and Women in Life Sciences at UC Davis. The Office of DEI is a great resource, and the courses, seminars and certificate programs will be incorporated into both my training to be a better faculty member and mentor, as well as my graduate student's training. I will then provide a collegial, respectful and supportive lab environment. We are at a critical point in science and society, and I plan on helping to build the tools for a better, more inclusive future.