

February 5, 2021  
Committee Report  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report

**Interim Diversity Committee (2020):** Janet Buckner, Tracy Heath, Alexandra Hernandez, Hervé Sauquet, Jessica Ware, Kelly Zamudio

**SSB Diversity Committee (2021-onward):** Janet Buckner, Tim Colston, Alonso Delgado, Anahí Espíndola, Manpreet Kohli, Luca Pozzi, Jessica Ware

The interim committee developed a list of goals in 2020 and worked to expand the committee mid year. In preparation for the DEI standing committee, the interim committee produced a planning document for the next three years. Below we discuss the work undertaken by the interim committee, the modified interim committee, and the new diversity committee, respectively.

### **Creation of a standing committee**

During the Spring of 2020, the SSB interim committee continued their work to establish a standing DEI committee recognized by the executive council. The interim committee was expanded to include Jessica Ware and Janet Buckner in Summer 2020. Throughout 2020, the interim committee worked towards enhancing diversity efforts and solidifying plans for future DEI efforts by the SSB, interfacing with the ASN and SSE diversity committees.

The interim committee created the position of Diversity Director, and the modified interim committee solicited applications for the new SSB Diversity Committee. Several applications were reviewed by the Diversity Director and 3 additional members of the executive council. The new DEI committee is now a standing committee, and language was added to the constitution to this effect. The interim committee met with the newly appointed committee members in December to discuss the DEI goals of SSB and to impart institutional wisdom about DEI initiatives that were already in motion. The new DEI committee was officially constituted January 1, 2021 and has begun regular meetings to plan the year's events.

### **Visibility and Communication**

Tracy Heath, a member of the interim committee, established a Slack channel for the tri-society DEI committee members and an official Diversity Director email address; she also made a dedicated DEI page on the SSB website profiling the interim committee members. The new committee is presently working on a communications strategy for social media platforms.

### **Collaborative work**

Over the summer, Janet and Jessica worked with representatives from the tri-society DEI committees, led by Louise Mead, to develop an NSF proposal to fund a mentoring program for Evolutionary Biology. This work is ongoing. Jessica collaborated with others from the Tri-societies to write and publish a paper on the demographics of the Evolution meeting

(Rushworth, Catherine A., Regina S. Baucom, Benjamin K. Blackman, Maurine Neiman, Maria E. Orive, Arun Sethuraman, Jessica Ware, and Daniel R. Matute. (2021). Who are we now? A demographic assessment of three evolution societies. *Evolution*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/evo.14168>). The new DEI committee will propose DEI focused symposia and events for the 2022 Evolution meeting, to highlight best practices in DEI and the work of BIPOC/LGBTQAI+ evolutionary biologists.

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Diversity Statement, written by interim committee, to be reviewed and finalized in 2021.

The Society of Systematic Biologists (SSB) is dedicated to promoting a broader understanding of the relationships among all living beings, both past and present. The society focuses on theory, principles, and methods of systematics as well as phylogenetics, evolution, morphology, biogeography, paleontology, genetics, and the classification of biodiversity. We encourage the professional development of our members and support increasing participation and access. At the scientific core of our fields are value for, and appreciation of, biological diversity and, reflective of this, we welcome, support, and celebrate the diversity of our members. We are sensitive to the ways that diversity changes and grows in modern society and acknowledge that it is the responsibility of all members of the society, independent of their demographic status, to be part of the process. As a professional society, we promote equity, inclusion, and diversity at all levels, and we encourage participation by individuals of all groups. We encourage an inclusive, supportive, and impartial work space free from sexual harassment, bigotry, bullying or violence of any kind. We aim to promote ethical and inclusive practices during the conduct of research, with special attention to the use of cultural resources and professional and safe conduct during field work. Finally, we will work as a society to eliminate the barriers that make achieving success in scientific careers more difficult for members of underrepresented groups.

Suggested Bylaws, to be reviewed and finalized during 2021.

1. The diversity committee's agenda will be set by the diversity committee on a yearly basis and in consultation with the approval of the acting SSB president and Executive council.
2. The diversity committee chair will solicit applications for members, which will be reviewed in consultation with the President; there will be a mix of career stages on the committee including at least one graduate student nominated member.
3. The diversity committee will meet in person or via videoconferencing regularly (no less than twice yearly) to discuss goals and progress.
4. The diversity committee shall be empowered to assess the society's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and will be granted access to appropriate society data for these endeavors--e.g., membership lists, awards etc.
5. The officers of the diversity committee shall be appointed for terms of three years unless they are a graduate student in which case the term is two years long.
6. Incoming chairs will be elected. The terms of all officers shall begin on the first of January following their nomination and acceptance of the position.