

A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan for the Department of Physics

11/27/23

The OSU Physics DEI Strategic Plan: The Origin Story

This is a short description of the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan (DEI-SP) of the OSU Department of Physics. The DEI-SP is a living entity and it can and will be revised, but we describe it as it currently stands.

One of the charges from the Chair of the Department of Physics, Prof. Michael Poirier, to the Climate and Diversity (C&D) Committee for the 2022-2023 academic year was to develop a DEI-SP. A recommendation was made and accepted by the Chair and it falls to the 2023-2024 Committee to begin the first year of operation. This year, the C&D Committee will collect feedback from community members to develop specific goals for the DEI-SP. The goals will be handed off to next year's C&D Committee to continue the cycle of implementation.

The DEI-SP will take a systematic approach towards building a more inclusive and equitable community where all feel welcome. It includes work to recruit, retain, and support a more diverse community; to promote and support inclusive teaching, scholarship and professional development. The guiding question for the plan is: What kind of department do we want to be five years? Identifying concrete goals is the first step in the process, to design the projects and tasks (on a variety of timescales) that will lead us to our goals.

This Year

The goal for this year is to define a set of long-range goals for the department for the DEI-SP. In order to achieve this, the C&D is soliciting community feedback. In December 2023 and January 2024, we'll be holding a number of town hall meetings to hear your voices regarding what you think our five-year goals should be, and how we should get there. The C&D committee will use your feedback to articulate a vision for the department, and start planning the pathway to achieving the goals. We plan to come back to the department at the end of the academic year with our recommendations based on the December/January town halls and solicit feedback from you on the plan.

Implementation

Once the long-range goals have been articulated via this year's process, the implementation of the DEI-SP will run in a 3-step, yearly cycle. The reason for this cycle has to do with how our department is organized – we operate one academic year at a time, and changes to how things operate in the department run through the committee structure. The cycle is structured to provide continuity from year to year, and to propagate changes through the existing structures, to make sure we are “keeping our eye on the prize” and coordinating effort. We envision partnering with other structures and organizations within the department (e.g., student organizations, APS-IDEA) on goal-setting and prioritization of projects.

- 1) Near the beginning of the academic school year, the department Chair convenes a meeting of the Vice-Chairs and Departmental Committee Chairs.
 - a) Progress towards the current projects and goals of the DEI-SP is assessed using input gathered by the committees and the department as a whole.
 - b) Recommendations for new goals and directives from the C&D committee are considered and assessed.
 - c) A public report on current progress and on goals and plans for the next year is posted.
- 2) The C&D committee, working with other relevant committees and interested groups in the department, collects information on the status of DEI in the department and listens to the many department communities on their assessment of the climate they experience and the current status of the DEI-SP. This effort will include, but not be limited to:
 - a) Surveys, either continuing or *ad hoc*, are performed and reported publicly, as needed.
 - b) Townhalls focused on various groups in the department are held, as needed. C&D will collaborate with existing organizations (including student organizations) to run the town halls, to make sure that it is reaching constituent groups for feedback effectively.
- 3) Near the end of the school year, the C&D committee will issue a public report on the status of progress towards the goals of the DEI-SP and its recommendations for projects, tasks, and actions for the following academic year to help us achieve the five-year goals of the DEI-SP.
 - a) As much as possible, recommendations should include metrics by which progress towards goals can be assessed.
 - b) Making things public allows us to celebrate victories in addition to holding department leadership, committees, and broader community accountable to the work we need to do to achieve our goals for the department.

Holistic issues

The DEI-SP plays an important role in coordinating effort to achieve our community-driven goals for the department, and holding us accountable for the work. There are many good things going on in the department. There are groups working to make this a better department, such as [Polaris](#), [APS-IDEA](#), [PSAC](#), [PGSC](#), and [SPS](#). Recently, there have been several advances in DEI in our department such as new hiring protocols for faculty, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) program, the Race, Inclusion, and Social Equity (RAISE) initiative. A DEI-SP should support the ongoing efforts in the department and coordinate new efforts, helping us work together, to get us to our goal of what we want the department to look like in the near term. As an example, the 2022-2023 C&D committee recommended that the physics department commit to ongoing funding of Polaris, the student-run near-peer mentoring program. Together, we will make the department a better place for our OSU physics community.