

Biology Departmental Retreat for Community and DEI

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The department of Biology proposes to hold a 1.5-day retreat in the Spring of 2023 for faculty, research scientists, postdocs, and graduate students, preferably at the Estes Park YMCA. The goals of this retreat are:

Goal	Closest IE Area of Focus
1. Group work to design 1-3 SMART goals for multiple DEIJ Objectives.	Enhance effectiveness of curriculum, educational programs, and research, with regard to diversity and inclusion.
2. Create a departmental DEI statement	Improve the university climate of inclusion.
3. Renew/revise our faculty hiring plan	Increase recruitment, retention, and promotion of faculty, staff and students from historically marginalized and underrepresented populations.
4. Host a graduate student-led poster symposium and a professional development activity	Improve the university climate of inclusion.
5. Enjoy social interaction and build community	Improve the university climate of inclusion.

Rationale:

The department of biology is a large community, encompassing 23 tenure-track faculty, 8 continuing faculty, ~8 research scientists, 12 postdoctoral fellows, and ~70 graduate students. We take pride in being a highly productive department. From July 2021- July 2022, researchers brought in \$4.6M in grant funding. We instruct a community of ~1800 undergraduate majors. In the past two years, we've focused on improving the undergraduate curriculum by removing logistical barriers, enhancing skill-building in courses, forging connections among coursework as students move through the major, and starting new courses. While we plan to continue these efforts, we are ready now to tackle some new challenges. This year, I would like to concentrate on community, research, and DEI.

One major obstacle to progress on the five goals listed above is being able to define blocks of time when we are all together and able to devote attention and discussion to our collective community. A retreat will provide this opportunity. Ideally, we would meet in the afternoon of a Friday, stay overnight (e.g. at the YMCA in Estes Park), then spend most of Saturday in small working groups and discussions.

Proposed Activities and Outcomes:

1. *Group work to design 1-3 SMART goals for multiple DEIJ Objectives.* From meetings so far this year, the Departmental DEI committee has expressed a specific desire to take actionable steps rather than engaging in additional surveys or trainings. Before the retreat we will vote on a short list of Objectives to work on. At the retreat, we will create small groups (~5 people) with a mix of faculty, graduate students, postdocs, etc. Each group will address a separate DEI Objective and design 1-3 SMART goals around it. After 30-45 minutes of discussion, small groups will share out to the general audience and discussion will ensue.



Example Objectives:

- How can our community enhance the experience of female graduate students and women in STEM? (This objective is a follow-up to a planned 1-hr workshop/conversation for faculty led by researcher Dr. Erin Winterrowd of U. Regis in Denver. She will share findings on a study on CNS/Biology women)
- What needs to be done in our department to embrace equity and inclusion for CCA faculty? (Code updates? Clarification of promotion pathways? Recognition and inclusion?)
- Explore the idea of multiple mentors for junior faculty (one for research, one for teaching, one for lived experiences in Fort Collins, etc.). Create a program? (This is a follow-up to a program shared by Dr. Gregg Dean in the CHIEE that used multiple mentors.)
- Outcome: 1-3 SMART goals articulated for each Objective addressed.
- Outcome: Opportunities for grad students, faculty, postdocs, etc to co-create SMART goals.
- Outcome: Invest in the principles of DEI by spending time and effort considering how our culture and practices really could change.

2. *Create a departmental DEI statement that will be posted on our website.* We have created material for a DEI tab on the Biology website. We'd like to share a welcoming philosophy too.

- Outcome: a well-thought-out, welcoming DEI statement that reflects our community

3. *Renew/revise our faculty hiring plan.* Since 2020, six of our tenure track faculty have retired. By chance, all of them had a research focus on plants. We've since hired one new plant-focused faculty, but our hiring plan needs revision considering these changes.

- Outcome: Faculty consensus on the rank order for the next ~5 tenure track hires

4. *Host a graduate student – led poster symposium and a professional development activity.* Graduate students who have joined our department since 2020 have had a much more isolated experience than is typical. The inherent challenges of graduate school, combined with mental health challenges common in these times, means we should take extra care to nurture these students professionally and personally. In fact, the graduate students requested a retreat in which they could interact with faculty and others.

- Outcome: Graduate students create and share a poster (skill-building), interact with faculty
- Outcome: Graduate students choose and engage in a professional devt. opportunity
- Outcome: Relationship- and community-building

5. *Enjoy social interaction and build community.* We will provide meals and leave time for fun activities. Social interaction is a healthy goal much needed as we emerge from COVID isolation. Friendships help us to be resilient. Finally, people know each other are better able to share ideas and solve challenges.

- Outcome: Faculty, Postdocs, and Graduate students share time together

Sustainability:

The sustainable (or continuing) impacts of the retreat will include:

- Prioritization and implementation of DEI SMART goals over time
- Ability for faculty to move cohesively with our next faculty hires
- Better articulation of our DEI purpose as a department
- Relationship and community building spurred to grow
- Potential to host similar retreats in the future

TIMELINE

Dec/Jan	Feb	March (late)	April
Logistical planning and reservations at YMCA	Host 'Women in Biology' workshop (Erin Winterrowd)	RETREAT!	De-brief with DEI committee
DEI committee creates list of ~10 potential Objectives to discuss	Dept members vote to choose top objectives	SMART goals and other take-homes collected	DEI committee prioritizes next steps for SMART goals
Grad students meet to choose a professional development option	Arrange leaders of professional development		SUSTAINABILITY: begin implementing SMART goals
Advertise!	Finalize details		Consider next year's retreat!

Retreat – Rough Outline

Friday	3-5pm	Arrival at YMCA, check in
	4-5pm	Poster set-up
	5-7pm	Poster session with dinner (taco bar)
	7-7:30pm	Poster Awards
	8-late	Socializing
Saturday	7:30-9am	Breakfast (YMCA cafeteria)
	9-10:30	DEI Objectives work
	10:30-12	YMCA activities / Social break
	Noon-1	Lunch (YMCA cafeteria)
	1-2:30pm	Faculty: hiring plan revisions Others: professional development
	3pm	Closing remarks

BUDGET

Source	Amount	Plan
EIN award	\$10,000	Covers lodging, food, event space, office supplies*
Bio dept	<u>\$10,000</u>	(Matching funds)
	\$20,000	

A similar event in BMS cost \$12,000 for 65 people. We expect 100-125 if attendance is good.

