Creating and Preserving a Welcoming Environment

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Today’s Speakers

Kehinde Ross  Suja Jagannathan  Ivan Martinez  Mingyi Xie  Jessi Effinger-Morris  Neena Grover

Two Questions to Facilitate Discussion

• What has made you feel welcome at the RNA Society?
• What questions would you like to ask us?

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RNA Society Research Presentation Fellowship

• Launched in 2022
• aims to increase inclusion and participation at the RNA Society Annual Meeting
• provides meeting registration waivers for researchers who would otherwise be unable to attend due to financial considerations.
• Typically covers registration fees for ~75 junior/under-represented members of the RNA Society to attend the Annual Meeting
Inclusion Initiative

- RNA researchers who might not otherwise have the financial resources to subscribe to the Digital Content Library (DCL) are encouraged to check their eligibility for the RNA Society Inclusion Initiative.

- waives the subscription fee for scientists who are first-time RNA Society meeting attendees (in-person or on-line) or who affiliate with a broad group of under-represented scientists.

- The DCL will be live from June 5th to July 5th, 2024.
Biennial RNA Society Membership Survey on DEI

- Survey every 2 years so we can gather **the evidence** and **respond** to DEI matters aligned to **member interests** and the **broader DEI landscape**.
  
  A. Perceptions of the DEI climate within the RNA Society within the last 3 years
  
  B. Member Experience in the RNA Society within the last 3 years
  
  C. Interest in RNA Society DEI programming
  
  D. Suggestions and/or experiences to further DEI in the RNA Society
  
  E. Special Needs and Disability

- **Subject to approval** by the RNA Society Board
- High levels of participation needed for the data to be meaningful!
“Building on our **evidence base** of under-representation in specific areas, we will address underrepresentation of (i) **black researchers** and (ii) **disabled researchers** in Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council programmes, peer review and policy groups”.

“We have two clear, measurable aims: to increase the representation of underrepresented groups both entering and progressing in chemistry. Our evidence shows under-representation in chemistry of women at senior levels, Black chemists retained at postgraduate level, people from deprived socio-economic backgrounds entering chemistry, LGBT+ people, disabled people, and more”.

https://www.rsc.org/policy-evidence-campaigns/inclusion-diversity/strategy/
People with disabilities are still underrepresented in the scientific research landscape, especially in science jobs. We want to change that!

The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft and Max Planck Society have launched the “Inclusion Initiative” to identify development potential and strategic measures to promote sustainable inclusion and improve career opportunities and inclusive work environments in science and research for people with disabilities.

Making STEM More Inclusive of People with Disabilities

As she grew up navigating life in a wheelchair, Anjali Foster-Pratt encountered obstacles both in the physical world and in other people’s minds.

“As a young child going through public schools and so forth, I was constantly faced not only with physical inaccessibility, in terms of accessing spaces, but also attitudinal inaccessibility,” she said.

Foster-Pratt recalled people questioning her decision to take an honors English class because they assumed that she would not be going to college. When she was drawn to an applied technology class that included a wind tunnel, she wasn’t allowed to enroll, and was informed that she wasn’t interested in science.


New Recommendations for Enhancing Disability Inclusion

December 30, 2022 By Marie A. Bernard

It is my pleasure to start 2022 by reporting on the Disabilities Subgroup Report of the Advisory Committee to the Director’s (ACD) Working Group on Diversity (WGD) that was first presented at the ACD meeting on December 9, 2022.

https://diversity.nih.gov/disseminate/blog/2022-12-30-new-recommendations-enhancing-disability-inclusion
• The participation of people with disabilities in higher education in STEM fields in Japan is significantly lower than the proportion of the general population.
  • Shigehiro Namiki
  • https://www.nature.com/articles/s41570-023-00553-3

https://www.nature.com/collections/egefbfbjj
Summary

- RNA Society is supporting DEI activities
- DEI central to strategies in other learned societies, funding agencies
- Culture change takes time
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What is our role as scientists?

Suja Jagannathan
RNA Bioscience Initiative | Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus
www.jagannathan-lab.org
As scientists...

- We train the next generation of scientists
- We are stewards of our scientific community
- We shape the future of science

"With great power comes great responsibility"
~Voltaire
What is our responsibility as scientists?

• To recruit future scientists from the widest swath of talent that our society has to offer

  ‘Talent is equally distributed; opportunity is not’

• Provide opportunities to those historically underserved by the scientific enterprise
Engaging our local communities

• Ideas for engagement
  • Local schools
  • Places of worship
  • Libraries

• Disseminate resources through the RNA society
What is our responsibility as scientists?

• To cultivate an environment that allows everyone to thrive
Gatekeeping Vs. Groundskeeping

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My Journey as a Latino

Ivan Martinez, PhD

West Virginia University
I grew up in Mexico City
PhD at University of Pittsburgh

Postdoc at Yale University

Associate Professor at West Virginia University
Hispanic Americans less likely to see Hispanic achievement in science relative to other professions

% of Hispanic adults who say Hispanic people have reached the highest levels of success in the following professional groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional musicians</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional athletes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical doctors</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business executives</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers in the military</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientists</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 12, 2021
“Hispanic Americans’ Trust in and Engagement With Science”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Hispanic Americans see range of reasons that young people don’t pursue STEM degrees

% of Hispanic adults who say each of the following is a reason many young people do not pursue college degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Hispanic adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They think these subjects are too hard</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do not have access to quality education to prepare them for these fields</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do not have a mentor or other adult encouraging them to pursue these degrees</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are just not interested in these subjects</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They think these subjects are not useful for their careers</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All U.S. adults “Major reason”

52

Plot twist:
Maybe eating tacos wasn't cheating on my diet. Maybe going on a diet was cheating on my tacos.

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 12, 2021
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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PASSES RULE TO PERMANENTLY PROHIBIT DEI IN THE FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM

January 17, 2024
My Perspective
The Rise and Fall of DEI
Jessi Effinger-Morris
What I liked
Why I stayed

What changed?
Why I feel different?

BANNED
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