

## History

- September 2019 Dean of Science Christopher Stubbs is invited to the 2019 MCB Research Retreat in Hyannis, MA, to give a talk about his plans to make diversity, inclusion, and belonging (DIB) a priority. Chair Venki Murthy affirms his support of this priority at the departmental level. The [#consciousharvard](#) sounding boards are present throughout the 2-day retreat, allowing for participants to engage in action-focused dialogue on issues related to DIB at Harvard.
- September 2019 MCB administers the inaugural departmental “climate survey” to assess perceptions and experiences related to issues of inclusion, belonging, equity, and civility. 533 community members are invited to complete the survey, and 157 respond, yielding a 29.5% response rate.
- November 2019 MCB leadership holds a department-wide Town Hall Forum to present findings from the survey and announce the launch of a formal DIB program. Special guest, Dr. John Silvanus Wilson, Jr., Senior Advisor and Strategist to the President at Harvard University, begins the meeting with a talk about Harvard’s history around diversity and some of the key data points from the University-level “Pulse” survey on DIB. MCB Chair Venkatesh Murthy presides over the meeting. A [summary from this meeting](#) is emailed out to the community in the following weeks. Recruitment for the MCB Community Task Force on Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging begins.
- January 2020 MCB administrative leadership (Jessica Manning, Polina Kehayova, Michelle Cicerano) hosts a series of roundtable lunches with graduate students, postdocs, and staff to continue the conversation begun at the town hall. The immediate plans that are made as a result of these roundtables [is communicated via email](#) to the department in February. These include the creation of a Postdoc peer mentoring program and a departmental listserv that is constantly kept up to date, in order to streamline and ensure that all community members receive important communications.
- April 2020 The MCB Department listserv is created. This is the first time that all MCB community members have been included on one mailing list.
- April 2020 MCB Administration launches the MCB Slack workspace to keep the community connected. All community members are invited to join, and events and announcements are shared through this portal in addition to the departmental listserv.

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- June 2020 In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the protests that follow, both current Chair [Venki Murthy](#) and incoming Chair [Sean Eddy](#) release statements condemning the ongoing violence against Black Americans and vowing to do as much as they can to help address systemic racism in our own community.
- June 2020 MCB participates in [#ShutDownSTEM](#) in solidarity with our Black colleagues, to recognize and reflect on the effects of systemic racism and bias in our own scientific community. Labs and individuals engage in anti-racism reflection, education, and discussion. The MCO graduate program hosts a virtual town hall meeting with faculty and students, out of which several “community action initiatives” are launched by students. The community posts reflections from their experience and pledges on a [public message board](#).
- June 2020 The inaugural MCB Community Task Force on Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (CTF) begins meeting on a bi-weekly basis. In September, this changes to once monthly. The task force has 19 members, from diverse backgrounds, representing all stake holders in the department: undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, research and admin staff, and faculty. After brainstorming the most pressing issues, the group agrees to split up into smaller working groups to begin work immediately.
- June 2020 and ongoing A Communications working group is formed (Michelle Cicerano, Renate Hellmiss) and begins discussing a communications strategy, building a webpage, and designing a logo. The logo design is voted on by the full CTF. The external vendor that manages the MCB website is commissioned to build a customized page.
- June 2020 and ongoing A Seminars working group is formed (Paula Pelayo, Mustafa Talay) to bring DIB-related workshops and speakers to the MCB community. The goal of this working group is to re-imagine our departmental seminar series with the idea of incorporating periodic seminars and workshops on diversity and inclusion topics, hearing from more women and scientists of color in our field and engaging more of the community in the process of inviting speakers. This working group is planning to provide workshops to engage the MCB community in discussions surrounding identity, microaggressions, and bias.

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- June 2020 and ongoing
- An Undergraduate Engagement working group is formed (Maya Anjur-Dietrich, Hopi Hoekstra, Elizabeth May, Aba Sam, Taylor Shirliff-Hinds) to create avenues for undergraduates who are part of our concentrations (MCB, CPB, and Neuro) to be better engaged with and incorporated into our community. Goals include: a close examination of undergraduate mentoring programs (on-going), a new concentrator pamphlet (completed), and creating a central hub of research and mentorship information for undergraduates (on-going).
- June 2020 and ongoing
- A Faculty Engagement working group is formed (Polina Kehayova, Jessica Manning, Elizabeth May, Alix Weisman) to explore the ways in which we can expand faculty participation in DIB and lab management initiatives. Discussions with Chair Sean Eddy focus efforts toward maintaining a net-neutral load for faculty. Carl Cohen, President of [Science Management Associates](#) and former Postdoc of Dan Branton's lab presents at faculty meeting on November 20, 2020 on the Importance of Management Skills in STEM (for a broad overview see his article "[Management skills for scientists: A new institutional responsibility](#)"). The working group also met with Reba Rosenberg, Director of [The Advising Project](#) (GSAS) to discuss the professional opportunities and resources they host that may be available to our faculty and students. In the future our working group plans to engage with faculty to explore what other opportunities and resources would be beneficial. They will also explore the possibility of adding a section to faculty profiles on the MCB website detailing their participation in community action (seminars/workshops on mentoring underrepresented minorities, personnel management, outreach).
- June 2020
- A Mission and Values Statements working group (Maya Anjur-Dietrich, Michelle Cicerano, Elizabeth May) is formed. The aim of the group is to draft a new mission statement and set of values for the department that centers our commitment to community values alongside our commitment to science and teaching, and affirms the importance of inclusive excellence to the pursuit of scientific excellence. This group also drafts the mission statement for Community Task Force (CTF) that will appear on the [CTF webpage](#).
- June 2020 and ongoing
- MCB administration begins reviewing and revising internal departmental forms to include fields such as "government documented sex," "gender identity," and "pronouns."

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- July 2020 Sean Eddy assumes the role of Chair of MCB and holds a department-wide town hall meeting on Zoom to outline his priorities as Chair. At the top of the list is a commitment to inclusive excellence and ongoing support of the DIB efforts that are underway. Sean's first message to the community as Chair is a [statement of solidarity](#) and commitment to "make substantial and lasting changes in our department's culture."
- July 2020 and ongoing A Governance working group is formed (Michelle Cicerano, Jack Rizutko, Paula Pelayo, Mustafa Talay, Alexandra Weisman) to create a governance structure for the CTF that is non-hierarchical, ensures that all voices are heard, and diffuses the natural power dynamics that exist in the academy. This group is also responsible for ensuring continuity from year to year, setting membership goals and sustainability, and helping to focus efforts and direction for the CTF.
- July 2020 and ongoing Sean Eddy invites members of the CTF to join a working group called Renaming Lectures, Buildings and Plaques (Maya Anjur-Dietrich, Sean Eddy, Renate Hellmiss, Paula Pelayo, Alexandra Weisman). The group's mission: the task force believes that the shared walls in our spaces should inspire and represent the values and ideals of the community. Following discussion between Community Task Force members representing a cross-section of stakeholder groups and lived experiences, our sense is that the two plaques honoring James Watson fail to do this and should be removed. A proposal is generated, and input is sought from the full MCB community through a Slack channel and a virtual town hall meeting in September of 2020. In December of 2020, the plaques are taken down. A [comprehensive narrative](#) of the process was sent to the department listserv in January 2021 and posted on Slack.
- September 2020 MCB launches an [anonymous feedback mechanism](#) for community members to report "things that you think are going well and things that need improvement:"
- September 2020 With input from the Governance group and nominations from the full CTF, Chair Sean Eddy installs a non-faculty CTF member on the major departmental committees within MCB, to help facilitate equitable practices in all that we do. Formerly all faculty and staff committees, these are the rooms in which important planning is being done on our seminar series, curriculum, public relations, graduate admissions, and annual retreat, and it is important for the conversations around these tables to have broader representation from the community. The role of the CTF delegate is 1.) to speak on behalf of the CTF and

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bring CTF goals into the departmental committees and 2.) to be an essential conduit of information between the two bodies, enhancing transparency.

- September 2020 MCB hosts the “2020 BioPalooza,” an entirely virtual community-wide retreat. All community members are invited to participate. To kick off the event, participants are given special access to screen the documentary film [Picture a Scientist](#), followed by an engaging [keynote panel discussion](#) on the inequities faced by women and minorities in the STEM enterprise. Panelists include film protagonist, Professor Nancy Hopkins (Amgen Professor of Biology Emerita, MIT), Professor Evelyn Hammonds (Chair, Department of History of Science and Professor of African American studies, Harvard), Sarah Richardson (Harvard Professor of the History of Science and Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality), and Tessa Charlesworth (Harvard graduate student, Banaji Lab). The panel is moderated by CTF member and MCO graduate student Paula Pelayo along with Sheila Thomas (Dean for Academic Programs and Diversity, GSAS).
- October 2020 The [MCB homepage](#) (“about us”) is updated with new mission and values statements.
- October 2020 and ongoing A Recruitment and Retention working group is formed (Michelle Cicerano, Polina Kehayova, Kumaresh Krishnan, Holly Martz, Dominic Mao, Jack Rizutko) and begins meeting. The goal of this working group is to research best practices and develop a framework and recommendations for recruiting and retaining more women, people of color, and individuals from other backgrounds that are traditionally underrepresented in STEM at all levels – student, staff, postdoc, and faculty. The group will be looking at our current systems and practices with a critical eye, to ensure equity in all our operations in this area.
- October 2020 and ongoing An [MCB New Concentrator Welcome Package](#) is created by the Undergraduate Engagement working group (Maya Anjur-Dietrich, Elizabeth May, Aba Sam, Taylor Shirtliff-Hinds) This welcome package is designed for new MCB department concentrators (which includes MCB, CPB, and Neuroscience concentrators), to provide them with information about MCB and welcome them into the departmental community. It includes information about MCB department events, support resources, mentorship opportunities, and research opportunities. The package is sent out to the new sophomore concentrators in November and will be modified according to student feedback in the New Year.

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- January 2021 Polina Kehayova attends the virtual [Intersections Science Fellows Symposium](#), the goal of which is “to showcase the outstanding research contributions of postdocs in the biological sciences, including those from backgrounds historically underrepresented in academia, and to support the scientific and professional development of the next generation of academic faculty.” Polina makes many connections here with talented postdocs of color and invites them to present during the MCB seminar series in spring 2021. Those invited include Dr. Melanie McReynolds (Princeton University), Dr. Daniel Abebayehu (University of Virginia), Dr. Gamze Gurzoy (Yale University), Dr. Irina Leonardi (Cornell University), Dr. Priyanka Verma (UPenn), Dr. Nicole Martinez (Yale University), and Dr. Flora Rutaganira (UC Berkeley).
- February 2021 The [DIB webpage](#) goes live, in conjunction with the [first in a series of news articles](#), emailed to the MCB listserv and posted in MCB News, social media, and Slack, about the work the CTF has been engaged in.
- March 2021 MCB launches the 2021 Climate Survey, in collaboration with Harvard College Institutional Research (HCIR).
- April 2021 A news article is posted on the MCB website profiling some of the work of the CTF Governance group.
- April 2021 The seminars working group (Paula Pelayo and Mustafa Talay) organizes a workshop in collaboration with the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Equity and Inclusion Fellows entitled “[Building Community: A Collective Exploration of Relationship and Identity](#).” During this 90-minute workshop, participants explore the ways in which our community and our personal identity are intertwined then work together to develop stronger relationships built on trust and understanding. The goal is for participants to leave with a better grasp of how our personal narratives and power affect how we perceive and are perceived by others, and how this in turn shapes the environments in which we work, study, teach and learn.
- May 2021 MCB releases the report on the 2021 MCB Climate Survey to the community. Harvard College Institutional Research (HCIR) administered the survey, analyzed the data, and generated the report. Following the distribution of the report, MCB holds a “Community Town Hall on 2021 MCB Climate Survey” over Zoom to discuss some of the themes that emerged in the report and action items to address them. The 4 themes that are focused

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on in breakout rooms at the meeting are: Community engagement, Transparency, Mentoring, and Civility and Psychological Safety.

- May 2021 The MCB Community Task Force on DIB holds its first annual [Spring Open House](#) for prospective new members, inviting all members of the community to attend a meeting via Zoom to learn how the CTF operates, what our strategic priorities are, and what membership entails.
- June 2021 The seminars working group (Paula Pelayo and Mustafa Talay) organizes a workshop in collaboration with the Title IX office, Office for Faculty Affairs and FAS Human Resources. The workshop is entitled “[Creating a Safe & Healthy Work and Learning Environment: Civility and Bystander Workshop](#)” and is facilitated by Moriah Silver, Program Officer for Title IX and Professional Conduct. This session is geared towards MCB staff, and future workshops for faculty and mentees are planned for the Fall.

*Updated June 28, 2021*