

Plant, Soil, and Microbial Sciences (PSM) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Statement and Resources

Dear PSM Faculty, Staff, and Students,

The Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences (PSM) stands in solidarity with our community members of color: we stand against racism, in all conscious and unconscious expressions. The sickening murders of our fellow Black citizens George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others have made very clear the need for deep societal and institutional change. It has brought to the surface the fear and anguish of injustice that people of color experience all too often.

PSM is committed to enacting Michigan State University's core values of quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity.

- With this in mind, our Department drafted and approved its first-ever **strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** in 2017-2018.
- The SSAFE Committee (Students, Staff, and Faculty Equity) made important contributions by meeting during 2018-2019 to lead development and initial implementation of **community norms for PSM.**
- The first **PSM DEI Committee** was part of the strategic plan, was formed in late 2019, and began meeting in January 2020 with representation from faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduates. The PSM DEI Committee is envisioned as a diverse strategic planning group (a “think tank” in the initial strategic plan) for implementing DEI-positive change in the culture, structure, and function of PSM. Our purpose is to fight for DEI in PSM.

We must all actively work together to support these values, and particularly to support our community members of color during this time as we all push for equity and inclusion. **Thank you for the work that is already ongoing.**

Our Department is well aware of the value of genetic diversity in supporting plant breeding and agricultural resilience, as well as the benefits of microbial and plant diversity in supporting ecosystem services, and with this in mind we must also embrace the value of DEI for departmental strength and resilience. Lack of diversity limits the effectiveness of institutions, just as it limits processes in nature:

- 1) Exclusion of any segments of society from our professional life costs the plant, soil, and microbial sciences immense talent and is also unjust and unsustainable.
- 2) Substantial evidence demonstrates the vital role that human social diversity plays in innovation, creative problem-solving, and higher-quality science, as measured by such metrics as the abilities of teams and high-impact publications (e.g., citation rates). Seeking diversity is thus not only an equity decision, but also a collective-intelligence decision to build a thriving professional community with expanded impact. Another, more negative, way of stating this is that an overly homogeneous department is wasteful and relatively ineffective.
- 3) Gender diversity has been a source of strength in our Department (although we still have plenty of room for improvement), and our substantial international diversity (in sociocultural background and ethnicity) has also greatly enriched PSM. However, our Departmental demographics do not yet reflect much of the diversity of the US, which is 18% Hispanic, 13% Black, and 2% Native American. The US public school system has been “majority-minority” for years in that >50% of pre-Kindergarten-to-High-School students are non-White as defined by the US Census. These are our PSM students, stakeholders, and scholars of the future. Thus, our DEI

Committee seeks to address recruitment of faculty, staff, and students from these groups, while building and drawing upon PSM strengths in gender- and international-diversity. Normalizing and encouraging DEI will make PSM a better place for all to work and study. In addition, inclusion and equity open new stakeholders, new sets of problems, and new resources to the research, teaching, and extension communities.

PSM is in line with the CANR DEI Committee statement that **diversity, equity, and inclusion are important, interdependent components of everyday life and are critical to our pursuit of academic excellence**. Our aim is to foster a culture where every member of PSM feels valued, supported, and inspired to achieve individual and common goals. This includes providing opportunity and access for all people across differences of race, age, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, national origin, migratory status, disability/abilities, political affiliation, veteran status and socioeconomic background, consistent with state and federal law. (SEE FULL CANR DEI STATEMENT HERE- <https://www.canr.msu.edu/diversity/dei-statement>).

ACTION ITEMS

Words are meaningless without action. Below are departmental action items and action items that individuals may take toward their own learning in order to foster a more inclusive environment in their spheres of influence.

DEPARTMENTAL ACTION ITEMS:

PSM will develop and implement its own DEI strategic plan to increase undergraduate and graduate student, staff, and faculty diversity and to create a welcoming and nurturing environment for all PSM community members. More departmental action items to come. Watch the “Weekly Beet” for resources our committee will share.

INDIVIDUAL ACTION ITEMS:

1. Seek out, Read about, Watch, and Learn from books, films, and videos on systemic racism, especially those from authors of color. This is not an exhaustive list and there are so many other resources for learning.
 - *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander (book)
 - *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F Saad (book)
 - *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo (book, Especially THIS!)
 - *White Like Me* by Tim Wise (book)
 - *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (book)
 - *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram X. Kendi (book)
 - “13th” by Ava DuVernay (Netflix)
 - “I Am Not Your Negro” directed by Raoul Peck (Amazon Prime)
 - “So You Want to Talk about Race” by Ijeoma Oluo (YouTube)
 - “TedxTalk by Anthony Peterson on race” (YouTube)
2. Be mindful of your impact over intentions. For more clarity on this see this article: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/psysociety/e2809cbut-i-didne28099t-mean-ite2809d-why-ite28099s-so-hard-to-prioritize-impacts-over-intents/>

3. Listen to and amplify the voices of your colleagues and collaborators of color.
4. Attend seminars, workshops and trainings hosted the CANR Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion : <https://www.canr.msu.edu/diversity/events/>
5. Take time to think through and reflect on your own implicit biases using various tests: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
6. Explore this document created by the DiversifyPlantSci group for additional resources and action items: <https://bit.ly/3cRfaRP>

Additional resources are linked below.

Thank you for your work in supporting our community.

PSM Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
Eunice Foster (Co-Chair)
Jessica Miesel (Co-Chair)
Adam Byrne
Gina Centeno
Celeste Dmytryszyn
Brian Horgan
Eli Huggis
Darryl Jackson
Brian Teppen
Madison Zimmer

A Sampling of Online Articles and Resource Lists Specifically Addressing Racism

Chronicle article: How higher ed can fight racism: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Higher-Ed-Can-Fight/248897>

75 things white people can do for racial justice: <https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234>

Anti-racism resources for all ages:

https://padlet.com/nicolethelibrarian/nbasekqoazt336co?fbclid=IwAR1Hz05_DIw4MGnKTCT3XHJu3iZSVs1Xhmk-o2t0Ns94aERyOi1fA4irUUQ

Anti-racism google document #1:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRIF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic

Anti-racism Google document #2:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hpub-jkm9cLzJWqZSsETqbE6tZ13Q0UbQz--vQ2avEc/edit>

Google document #3: [Scaffolding Anti-Racism Resources](#)

Resources or examples for embedding concepts of justice in research and teaching:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pW7MbGmx3lgFI_mLfNlsGTNBY1W92r-0r6sK5_YBLdg/mobilebasic

https://nagt.org/nagt/profdev/webinars/community_research/index.html

The following resources were compiled by the NSF-funded ADVANCEGeo Partnership, primarily to address workplace climate, although many are relevant to anti-racism actions:

A primer on diversity in STEM

https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/what_diversity.html

Resources on recognizing bias

<https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/bias.html>

Resources for bystander intervention, the 5Ds from the Hollaback model, and responding to hostile behaviors <https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/responding.html#bystander>

Resources for creating inclusive climates:

https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/inclusive_climates.html

Resources for conversations about safety, inclusivity, and accessibility in field environments:

https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html

Other training resources:

<https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/training.html>

And more on: <https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/index.html>