The Leaky Pipeline: Making Undergraduate Research Inclusive

October 2019
Diversity and Inclusion Focus Group
Purpose of DIFGs

Diversity & inclusion focus groups aim to provide a structured, recurring, neutral space for members of the chemistry community to:

- regularly explore and engage in challenging conversations about a variety of topics that have been identified as areas of concern within our community;
- become exposed to alternative viewpoints and experiences;
- learn from one another; and
- help begin shifting our community social norms together, to create lasting and effective change within our academic culture and climate.
2019 Theme: Networks

Experience shaped by connections—Who? In what context? How often?

Connections of many types:
- Professional
- Social
- Interdisciplinary

Today: How can we make pathways to undergraduate research experiences more inclusive, to train more, diverse scientists, and start addressing issues in the “leaky pipeline”?
Today: Undergraduate Research

- Undergraduate research is probably how you got to where you are!!
- At Berkeley:
  - Undergrads here cold “blast” email professors and grad students to find positions
  - How are research opportunities at LBNL found?
  - Undergrads also talk to professors or grad students who teach their classes
  - There are URAPs but they are competitive
  - Even formal applications are susceptible to bias!
  - Maybe research that can be done for credit to complete a major is less biased?
  - beehive.berkeley.edu has listings of research, but all positions are in EECS right now
- Students have different perceptions of the role/necessity that research plays in science, based on their background and experiences—can we make those more clear?
Readings

- Undergraduate research plays a very important role in scientific career choices after graduating!
- The leaky pipeline: academia is a complicated world, it’s not easy to navigate especially without guidance or mentors
- Little connection (sometimes) between introductory science courses and career paths

“In the past, undergraduates were perhaps better able to tolerate the apparent lack of relevance of demanding introductory science courses, and to take the answers to such questions on faith, because they were prepared for the rigours of scholarship by values absorbed from social class and family. But underrepresented students, new to college, may well lack the support imparted by these value systems. They are at risk of failing to persevere in the introductory courses.”
Community Values

- Step-up, step-back.
- Listen actively, respectfully and with an open mind.
- De-escalate; criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Be cautious about sharing specific, personal or targeted situations or people.
- Use “I” statements.
- Avoid judgement, blame and inflammatory language.
- Avoid assumptions about any member of the group.
- Take care of yourself.
Small Group Discussions!

Opening question:
What is a place in your life where something pretty small had an ultimately big impact on your life, especially how you ended up doing chemistry at Berkeley?

Then:
● What is the role that undergraduate research plays in guiding students towards their future career, possibly including graduate school?
● How did any research you did in undergrad get you where you are today? How did you get those opportunities?
● What uneven barriers do undergrads overcome to do research here?
● How do grad students find undergrads to do research with?
Thanks for coming!!