

Throughout my professional career, I've worked to create an environment that fosters diversity. Diversity is important because it leads to higher quality, more creative, and more enjoyable work. During my research on neuron diversity, I have regularly turned to analogous research from social sciences on the value of diversity among groups of people trying to solve a common task. The broad consensus is that in most situations, ethnically diverse groups outperform homogenous groups, and further, groups that contain a mix of men and women tend to be better than groups of men only.

One of the primary factors limiting the ethnic diversity of incoming graduate students is the inherent inequality of which students can take advantage of available research experiences for undergraduates (REUs). I'm lucky to have had REUs in 3 research labs prior to my PhD, as these were seminal in my decision to go to graduate school. However, I could only pursue these opportunities because my family was relatively well-off and I could afford to volunteer my free time in research labs, as opposed to having to take a part-time job to support my education.

As a post-doc, I've worked to create equal-opportunity, well-paying REUs. By developing an REU centered around biocuration (i.e., reading scientific papers and then entering information into an online database), I've found that this is an accessible REU because it can largely be performed at home in students' spare time. This is an excellent opportunity for giving research-curious students a taste of academic research that differs from the typical volunteer-based laboratory REU. Students seem to genuinely enjoy the experience and especially appreciate that it pays well (15-20\$/hour). Since starting this REU over 3 years ago, many of my students have since gone on to perform research in other labs at the University of British Columbia and apply to graduate school.

Second, I've tried to increase gender equality through actively seeking to hire women and to set an example for the respectful treatment of women. The demographics of university professors and researchers, and my field of computational biology especially, tends to skew male; if not unchecked, this can lead to a toxic alpha-male "bro" culture that can be uncomfortable and even abusive for women and LBGQT individuals.

To the best of my abilities, I encourage my colleagues and advisees to be respectful of all genders. For example, I've reprimanded my male advisees for publically discussing the attractiveness of our female colleagues. Similarly, I've strongly discouraged male colleagues from asking out women while in professional settings, for example, to not ask out women at their conference poster presentations. While these acts are admittedly minor and cost me little, I feel that it is the duty of those in power to set positive examples for acceptable behavior and to not let bad acts go unchecked.