

**COSAM Accountability Committee Meeting Summary  
September 15, 2021**

**In Attendance-** Melinda Lanius, Ashley Williams, Beth Yarbrough, Step Shepherd, Vanessa Falcao, Veronica Morin, Melissa Halford, Kimberly Mulligan

- 1. Departmental Updates: What IED initiative are you most proud of from the 2020-21 academic year?**
  - a. Biological Sciences**
    - i. The OurSTEMStory initiative started by Ashley Williams in our department has been a huge success. This has become a college-wide event and been an enormous undertaking by Ashley and her team of faculty and students.
    - ii. We have developed two partnerships with University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and Georgia State University to eventually build a pipeline for students to enroll in our graduate program.
  - b. Chemistry**
    - i. The events of the past year created space for the lecturer committee to be created. Lecturers have broader roles in the department, particularly on committees and they are currently working to expand this role further.
    - ii. They have also created a broader search for the biochemist positions which will hopefully allow them to have a more diverse candidate pool.
  - c. Geosciences**
    - i. The department's participation in Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE)- the fact that much of the work was led by graduate students, Jr faculty, and lecturers helped with community-building and allowing these groups to have a voice and power within the department.
  - d. Math**
    - i. Graduate students served as the driving force behind the IED committee and have been given a larger voice in the department.
  - e. Physics**
    - i. Establishing the first graduate student focused association which helped to create a greater sense of belonging for the students in the department.
    - ii. Over the course of the year, the committee was not fully engaged in the American Physics Society Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Alliance. However, they have restructured the committee which has led to more consistency, and the inclusion of undergraduates.
  - f. Outreach**
    - i. The creation of the at-home STEM kits and getting them out to the community. Twenty-four of the kits were donated to Our House for their students to utilize during the summer.
    - ii. They were able to offer 20 scholarships for students to attend the Science Matters Camps. Additionally, the 7<sup>th</sup> graders who received the scholarship had the opportunity to take part in 2 camp experiences: a traditional Sciences Matter camp and the curator camp.
  - g. Student Services**
    - i. Every department now has an embedded advisor to help with projects/ideas to assist with retention and creating sense of belonging for the students. This semester the DBS advisor is planning movies in the arboretum which will consist of a panel and allow students the opportunity to interact with faculty outside of the classroom.
- 2. What are your departments top 3 IED goals for the 2021-22 academic year and how can OIED assist?**
  - a. Biological Sciences**
    - i. We have approved a document listing the DBS Core Values. We would like to have this implemented now as part of the annual review process for faculty, staff, and students.

- ii. Expand on existing partnerships to build a bridge program for admission of minoritized students to our graduate program.
  - iii. Expand our DEI in the classroom workshops and work (in coordination with the work being done by other is COSAM).
- b. Chemistry**
- i. Developing an IED webpage that provides information on all the available resources for students, faculty, and staff. They are utilizing the climate survey results to help guide the next action steps and the changes within the department.
  - ii. Establish an outreach program for high school students utilizing their graduate students. There is a particular interest in helping students understand the benefits/opportunities of being a chemistry major since the bulk of their undergraduates are biochemistry majors.
  - iii. Create more events that will continue to build community and sense of belonging in the department.
- c. Geosciences**
- i. Developing a bridge program to create pathways for students from historically excluded groups, particularly from HBCUs and MSIs to obtain their PhD.
  - ii. Creating 2 guides for the department: a safety plan for the field with a focus on BIPOC and individuals from the LGBTQ+ communities; and a resource map which will also focus on the needs of historically excluded populations.
    - 1. Would like OIED's help in creating the resource maps.
  - iii. Establishing an Environmental Justice Reading Group utilizing a syllabus created by Jamie Worms. They are planning to create a toolkit for participants (many of whom are graduate students interested in pursuing careers in academia) that they can utilize to create a course in the future.
- d. Math**
- i. Providing professional development opportunities for all members of the departments that will allow them to be supported in the next stages of their careers.
  - ii. Developing a climate study for the department to assess sense of belonging and ways they would like to be supported in meeting professional goals.
    - 1. Math would like input on best practices for development of a climate study.
  - iii. Creating rubrics that will establish more transparency in the process promotion/tenure/candidacy process and help to remove bias.
    - 1. This is a goal for COSAM as a whole with the understanding that it could look different for each department.
  - iv. Establish a webpage for the department to share their DEI initiatives and resources.
- e. Physics**
- i. Creating opportunities for everyone to feel welcomed and have a sense of belonging in their physical space.
  - ii. Student and faculty recruitment with a focus on having more diversity.
  - iii. Identifying resources for students (scholarships, opportunities, etc.).
  - iv. Allowing people who aren't faculty to have more of a voice in the department.
- f. Outreach**
- i. Creating opportunities to get STEM out to communities that don't always to participate in their programs.
    - 1. Would appreciate OIED helping to facilitate community connections and helping to find undergraduate/graduate mentors.<sup>55</sup>
  - ii. Developing new initiatives with middle schoolers by taking STEM programs to them, with particularly focus on programs that have 21<sup>st</sup> century grants.
    - 1. Ashley Williams shared American Association of University Women hosts a STEM camp for girls in middle school (Tech Trek) and would love to have it hosted at Auburn.
  - iii. Create a STEM on Wheels program.

- g. Student Services**
    - i. Continue to create opportunities for the advisors to get more integrated into the departments.
    - ii. Create a position for a career development advisor to assist students in achieving holistic academic success.
- 3. OurSTEMStory-** Ashley Williams shared the how and why OurSTEMStory was established.
  - a. This is a seminar series that was developed to promote DEI in STEM by ensuring the underrepresented are represented: <https://www.ourstemstoryau.com/>.
  - b. This is a DBS initiative, but the plan is for it to start rotating through COSAM departments each semester.
  - c. Next event will take place in November featuring Dr. Janina Jeff, “Why So Much Distrust? Understanding Hesitation in the Black Community”
  - d. We need to decide which department would like to host the event in spring 2022.
    - i. **Math will host spring 2022 and geoscience will host fall 2022.**
- 4. Additional Thoughts:**
  - a. We discussed the fact that there is no course in COSAM that focuses on research ethics education. This is something that would be important for students in all departments, and we should consider creating a college-wide course.
  - b. Each department would like help from the Communications Office getting their IED website up and running.

**Next Meeting: October 20th**