Mission
To use the community’s strengths to create a more inclusive working environment, and to increase the human diversity of students, researchers, and staff.

History
The Diversity and Inclusion Committee was formed in 2016 by a group of undergraduates, graduate students, and professors. In Summer 2016, there were multiple instances of police violence against people of color in the United States, but researchers were concerned about a lack of discussion about these issues in the RMBL community. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee was established to provide a space to discuss such issues, as well as to create a more inclusive environment at RMBL. Since then, 5-10 researchers across the RMBL community have served on the committee each year. We now organize and lead multiple social events and workshops to promote equity and inclusion every summer, and we are also hoping to increase diversity at RMBL through longer-term institutional changes.

2019 Active Members
Annika Nelson, PhD Student, UC Irvine, annikasn@uci.edu
Connor Morozumi, PhD Student, Emory University, connor.morozumi@emory.edu
Ben Blonder, Assistant Professor, Arizona State University, bblonder@asu.edu
Ian Breckheimer, Postdoctoral Researcher, Harvard, ibreckhe@gmail.com
Heather Briggs, Postdoctoral Researcher, UC Irvine, hbriggs@uci.edu
Jimmy Lee, Assistant Professor, East LA Community College, leejw3@laccd.edu
Jocelyn Navarro, Research Assistant, jnavarro@conncoll.edu

Summary of 2019 Actions

Events
In Summer 2019 the Diversity and Inclusion Committee worked to promote an inclusive culture and highlight human diversity at RMBL by organizing and hosting multiple events. These events included a Diversity Mixer, a “Working on Diverse Teams” workshop, and LGBTQ Pride Week. These events were very well attended (often 30-60 attendees) and well received by the RMBL community. The undergraduate students were particularly engaged in many of these events, and
they organized a Latinx Celebration Week on their own. We hope to continue to host many of these same events in future summers and to support undergraduate student leadership and engagement.

Prize winners at the Diversity Mixer. Students making paper flowers during Latinx Week

Over 40 people attended the Diversity Mixer!

Social Media
We have a RMBL Diversity and Inclusion Committee email account (diversity@rmbl.org), to which RMBL community members can send diversity-related questions and comments. Current committee members monitor this account. Each summer, we also provide an informational page about the committee in the cabin binders. Furthermore, the committee has a Facebook page called “RMBL Diversity Committee Events,” which we use to advertise events and information about other opportunities related to diversity in science and the outdoors.
Getting Outdoors
For several years, we have been working to provide students from underrepresented backgrounds with better access to the outdoors. Since many students are new to hiking in the mountains, we present an “Introduction to Hiking at RMBL” workshop at the beginning of each summer.

In addition, because hiking and field gear is not accessible to all students, the committee has assembled a “Gear Closet.” We received many donations from the community and supplemented some new and used gear with our budget but financial support and donations to the closet are still necessary to make the loan program useful for diverse students. This closet will open in Summer 2020, with gear available for RMBL community members to loan. We are also looking into additional ways of supporting students who struggle to afford field clothes (e.g. by reimbursing students for field clothes purchased via undergraduate research funds).

Recruitment
The committee assisted RMBL staff in adding additional questions to the RMBL housing application to better serve the needs of gender and sexual minority students. This resulted in better transparency of housing policies. Ongoing, our work will continue to address gendered housing standards to better meet the needs of all in our community.

Institutional change
The committee is beginning to discuss how to develop long-term goals to further promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at RMBL. During the summer, the committee led a discussion of “Leaking Talent: How People of Color are Pushed Out of Environmental Organizations,”¹ a report that provides a list of best practices to retain people of color in the environmental sector. The report shows that both whites and people of color show increased perceived fairness and intent to stay in environmental organizations when organizations create long-term diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice goals and metrics. Approximately 25 community members attended, including representatives of the RMBL staff. Board members were not able to attend but expressed interest in the event. We are actively working with RMBL staff, board, and community members to develop such long-term goals and metrics.

We also held two meetings with RMBL operations staff during Summer 2019 to discuss ways of achieving future institutional change.

---

Future Priorities

To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at RMBL in the future, our priorities are as follows:

1. **Work with RMBL staff, board, and community members to develop long-term diversity goals.** Ideally, these goals will be developed with input from all members of the RMBL community and integrated into the strategic plan.

2. **Develop metrics aligned with diversity goals and annually measure them / report progress.** These metrics should be measurable and specific (e.g., student and researcher demographics should be within 10% of the gender and racial composition of the general US population), and RMBL staff (along with the Committee) will annually report progress. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee will focus future efforts on helping the greater RMBL community achieve these goals.

3. **Propose specific low-cost, easily-implemented actions that are aligned with goals to make progress with metrics.** Example ideas being discussed include revising the structure of mentor biographies sent to students, adding additional safety/inclusion questions to the Research Plan review process, considering diversity when selecting seminar speakers, and restructuring the use of scholarship funds when recruiting community members.

4. **Increase the diversity of researchers at RMBL at the PI level.** While RMBL has done a great job with increasing the diversity of undergraduate students, RMBL is still lacking diversity at the graduate student, postdoc, and PI level. The committee believes that it is important to provide these students with role models and mentors from diverse backgrounds. It will be particularly important to develop goals and metrics (see Priorities 1 and 2 above) with this objective in mind.

5. **Build engagement and support across the RMBL community, particularly at the PI level.** In recent years, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee has consisted primarily of graduate students, postdocs, and early career faculty. We hope to seek out members from additional parts of the RMBL community (e.g. undergraduates, staff, and more established faculty) to join the committee. We also hope to increase faculty awareness of the value of the committee.
Ways to get involved

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee looks forward to continuing to work to highlight diverse perspectives and to promote an inclusive community at RMBL. We also look forward to continuing to work with RMBL administration to develop long-term diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. We always welcome your input.

1. **Participate in community visioning for long-term diversity goals, metrics, and actions.** We need members of the community interested in diversity and inclusion to commit to consistently showing up to town hall meetings and events. Bring your friends, colleagues and lab members and let them know why diversity and inclusion is important to you. Help us build a community standard for diversity and inclusion. Keep an eye out for emails from the committee to find out more about these events. (*Commitment 1-2 hours per month during the summer.*)

2. **Join the committee.** Involvement in the committee consists of attending 3-4 meetings per year, spearheading a larger project such as organizing a series of events, organizing community town halls, interfacing with RMBL administration, or running the gear exchange program. Moving forward, the 2020 committee membership will be open to all community members but capped at seven people. We will accept applications for new members to join the committee in Spring 2020. (*Commitment 1-2 hours per month in winter to prepare for summer, 2-3 meetings in summer, willingness and ability to spearhead a larger project.*)

3. **Volunteer to assist with events or individual projects.** We often need short term help to make our events or projects a success. Volunteers would get notified during the
summer if we require more hands and could opt in to helping on tasks that are quick and do not require sustained effort. (*Lower commitment, 1-2 hours for an event.*) Please contact connor.morozumi@emory if interested.

**Budget**

Of the $500 budget provided by RMBL for Summer 2019, we spent approximately $200 on first aid supplies, snacks, refreshments, and gift cards for our events. We spent the rest of the 2019 budget on new gear for the gear closet.

LGBTQ Pride-Themed Trivia Game  
Photo by Annika Nelson