

RMBL community committee on diversity, equity, and inclusion

Report to the community - Summer 2021

Overview

The community committee had a second unusual year due to the ongoing pandemic. Contributors participated both virtually and in person; impact similarly occurred both virtually and in person. As a consequence, our impact may have been somewhat lower than in previous years due to these additional barriers to participation. The year was also marked by increased dialog with RMBL administration and board, and the possibility of additional partnerships with the lab and with organizations in the community.

Membership of the committee was dominated primarily by graduate students, though there was also some involvement by postdoctoral researchers and undergraduate students, and by RMBL staffers. Notably there has been nearly no participation to date from faculty or other more senior scientists associated with the lab.

We want to recognize that the undergraduate student community played an active role in the community around diversity, equity, and inclusion themes. Many of their efforts have been wholly independent from those of this committee, and thus are not reported here. In future years we look forward to more active collaboration and support of the undergraduate community.

Progress

Land acknowledgments

We assembled a working group of PIs, grad students, and undergrad students interested in furthering conversations about Land Acknowledgements. Discussions are underway to implement a number of different initiatives over the coming summers. These include creating a centralized resource (in hard-copy and electronic formats) on the topic of land acknowledgements, educational signage, seminars and workshops, and establishing relationships with Indigenous communities in the RMBL area. This work is ongoing and has involved several community stakeholders. Independent efforts are also being led by the undergraduate student community.

Safety planning documents for PIs

We requested that the lab make PIs include field safety plans as part of the research approval process, in order to set high standards around acceptable behavior and emergency response procedures. After extensive dialog we compromised on developing a set of safety planning template documents and assembling a set of extant resources around field safety planning which the lab will make available to PIs before they submit a research proposal. PIs will also be given the opportunity to screen a safety database if one is developed. We are contributing to larger efforts around safety planning for PIs that RMBL may soon be supporting.

Community safety incident database

We explored the possibility of creating a community supported database of safety incidents affecting community members, as a tool to identify and mitigate common risks. A survey of the RMBL PI community indicated nearly unanimous support for such a database, though the response rate was low (suggestive of some sampling bias). After consultation with the lab it was determined that such a database would be most acceptable if it was restricted to incidents occurring off RMBL property. The lab has agreed to provide a link to this database if it is created. We are actively considering how to best implement this database.

Events, workshops, and socials

We hosted several events for the community in Gothic, and on Zoom. We celebrated Pride month in June with Pride trivia - human history, Pride trivia - nature edition and a Pride dance. We also conducted a diversity mixer in June that included discussions on addressing issues with labels and stereotypes. The committee conducted an anti-racism workshop on 6/28 with guest speaker Toi Thibodeaux from UC Riverside and a responsible conduct of research workshop on identity-based risks. In July, we hosted a student panel discussion between the undergrads and researchers in different career stages to help undergraduate students navigate life in academia. We hosted a session on alternate careers in the sciences to help people interested in careers beyond academia. We also conducted a session connecting the undergraduates with an early career researcher - Dr. William Petry to provide information on navigating different stages in academia. We also screened a movie about women in STEM titled *Picture a Scientist* (<https://www.pictureascientist.com/>) for the community at the end of July.

Diversity survey

We assisted the board in analyzing the results of the 2020 diversity/identity survey that was offered to all community members. We are contributing to analyses and supporting ongoing efforts to use this survey for planning purposes.

Public outreach

One of us wrote an editorial for the *Crested Butte News* (http://www.benjaminblonder.org/papers/2021_CBN.pdf) calling for greater recognition of the histories, stories, and contributions of non-white people within the broader community.

Gear closet

We advertised the gear closet to undergraduates during the hiking safety talk, and after taking a detailed inventory of items we purchased additional essential items for the community to check out. An updated inventory of gear closet items has been [completed](#).

Mentoring program

We started an informal mentoring program during 2020 to connect undergraduates with graduate students to facilitate discussions about navigating summer research and to help undergraduates in finding their path in academia. This year, we had 14 graduate mentors and 20 undergraduate students participating in the program. The mentoring program served as a platform for graduate students to hone their skills of mentoring students and for undergraduates

to navigate summer research and to prepare them for a career in academia. The mentoring program was for a duration of 8 weeks where undergraduates met their graduate mentors once a week to discuss a chosen topic. The topics discussed included preparing a CV, advice on choosing graduate advisors, critical thinking, choosing schools/programs and preparing applications for graduate school.

Budget usage

The committee was given access to a generous budget from the RMBL administration. The majority of these funds were unspent in 2021. Some funds were used to:

- Purchase essential items for the gear closet, including bear canisters that are required in the surrounding wilderness areas.
- Support the participation of external speakers.

The remainder of funds will be rolled over to 2022. We hope to use resources to support additional speakers, signage, and events in the coming year.

Future actions

- We will seek increased participation from RMBL staff and from faculty/senior scientists on this committee.
- We will work to develop additional mental health resources to share with the community in future years.
- We will work with the RMBL administration to host an in-person, summer 2021 visioning exercise to explore how the lab can transform its mission and services to become a more inclusive place for groups that are currently underrepresented, especially Black and Native people.
- We plan to improve our webpage with videos and resources for incoming or prospective community members, and post regularly to improve the climate for the broader RMBL community
- We will work with the RMBL board to formulate diversity and inclusion goals in the strategic plan, and also identify metrics and actions that can measure or contribute to these goals.
- We are planning to offer assistance with the traveling exhibit highlighting Ute STEM and with the tentatively planned visit and seminar by Ute Indian Museum director, CJ Brafford.
- We would like to work together on the 2022 summer education program diversity staffer to coordinate efforts.

Joining the committee

The committee is open to all interested community members who are able to make a time commitment to these issues (staff, students, RAs, PIs, etc.). Please contact diversity@rmbll.org to join. We welcome new voices.

Current membership (alphabetical by last name)

Kaysee Arrowsmith

billy barr

April Bermudez

Benjamin Blonder (liaison to the Board)

Julie Byle

Jimmy Lee

Amelia Litz

Valerie Martin

Jocelyn Navarro

Conner Philson

Nitin Ravikanthachari

Xochitl Ortiz Ross

Rina Talaba

Lydia Wong