

## Physics and Astronomy EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Committee Newsletter

July 2022

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### *EDI Committee and accomplishments*

The Department of Physics and Astronomy established an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee in summer 2020. The committee is made up of 4 professors, one staff member, and 4 members elected from the undergraduate, graduate, and postdoc members of the department. For 2021-2022, the membership of the committee was Chris Wilson (chair), Rob Cockcroft (vice-chair), Bafrin Ali, Alan Chen, Claude Cournoyer-Cloutier, Dan FitzGreen, Duncan O'Dell, Rachel Pillsworth, and Marta Reina-Campos. The committee maintains a web page ([linked here](#)) with EDI resources, news, and events.

The EDI committee has completed a number of tasks over the past 12 months. These include

- Organizing and hosting 2 colloquia on EDI-focused issues by Dr. Ninan Abraham (UBC) and Dr. Rodrigo Narro-Perez (McMaster) ([link to 2021/22 colloquium page](#)) as well as workshops on mental health and unconscious

bias aimed primarily at students in the department

- Working with the USRA reviewing committee to advertise the new Research Experience Award (see below), and provide context and guidelines for the review of candidates
- Carrying out a concerted push in December 2021 for donations to the Research Experience Award by contacting P&A faculty members
- Receiving approval to offer honoraria for up to 2 EDI speakers per year
- Working to co-ordinate and fundraise for a larger EDI talk with other departments and interested groups on campus for 2022/23
- Adding a staff representative to the committee
- Creating a Certificate of Participation letter for non-Faculty/Staff members of the committee
- The chair and vice-chair participating in the new Faculty of Science EDI Leads meetings to share experiences and practices

### *Research Experience Award*

The new Research Experience Award for undergraduate students was one of the top priorities in the December 2020 survey of department members carried out by the EDI committee. Open to any student in the Faculty of Science who self-identifies as racialized, Black, and/or Indigenous and who is interested in research, these awards will enable students to obtain a paid research experience working with a faculty member in the department. The award has been established with funding from an anonymous donor whose contribution was then matched by the

Office of the Dean within the Faculty of Science, as well as with generous contributions from members of the department and other interested persons. For summer 2022, three awards were made to students in their second and third year of undergraduate studies. Additional donations to the award [can be made online](#). Our goal for 2022/2023 is to raise an additional \$50,000 towards this award. We plan to reach out to McMaster alumni in the fall, as well as follow-up with P&A faculty members who indicated they would consider a second donation in 2022. For anyone interested in contributing to this effort, donations to the award [can be made online](#). We will invite all summer research students, including REA students, to share their experiences via the Physics and Astronomy website.

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*Mentorship Program for First Year Students*

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Also in 2021/22 the department established a mentorship program for first year students who identify as Black and/or Indigenous. Led by Kari Dalnoki-Veress and Sara Cormier, in this first year the program connected 13 students from four Level 1 physics courses with 3 upper-level mentors.

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*Looking Ahead to 2022 – 2023*

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Looking ahead to 2022-23, we will be continuing our series of EDI-focused colloquia (one per term) as well as organizing EDI-focused training sessions outside of the regular colloquium series. Any suggestions for colloquium speakers or training sessions may be sent to the committee chair (Rob Cockcroft). We will continue to provide support and fundraise for the REA. The faculty and staff representatives on the EDI committee for the 2022-2023 year are Rob Cockcroft (chair), Pat Clancy, Dan FitzGreen, Duncan O'Dell, and Chris Wilson – and they would like to extend their thanks to the student and postdoc participants this year for their work and contributions to the above efforts. New members from the students and postdocs will be elected in the fall. There will be a call for volunteers in early September; anyone who is interested is encouraged to contact Rob Cockcroft.