

# Genome Sciences DEI Committee Annual Report 2025-2026

The Department of Genome Sciences DEI committee consists of the following members: faculty members Hannah Jordt, Nasa Sinnott-Armstrong, Bill Noble, and Devin Schweppe; staff members Serena Newhall, Lara Muffley, Melinda Wheelock, and Skylar Thompson; postdocs Ryan Friedman and Tara Mack; and graduate students Abby McGee, Bria Metzger, Rachel Powell, Catherine Sniezek and Faaiz Quaisar. Bill Noble chaired the committee. The committee met eleven times, on the second Tuesday of each month, August, 2025, through June 2026. Meeting [minutes](#) are linked from the departmental website.

To set priorities, the committee solicited suggestions from department members at the annual retreat in September. Committee members volunteered to spearhead each activity, which are summarized below.

## Education and workshops

Each year, responses from the DEI Committee's survey at the annual retreat include requests to help provide mentorship training. We collaborated with COGS to organize two **EPIC (Empowering Prevention and Inclusive Communities) trainings** for graduate students and postdocs to give them the skills to mentor others and build a positive, welcoming community now and in future stages of their careers. The EPIC Program is jointly administered by the UW and UAW 4121 and provides a proactive, prevention-oriented focus instead of a reactive, compliance-oriented one. The EPIC 1.0 training, held in February, provides individual skills in bystander intervention, sexual harassment prevention, and more. The EPIC 2.0 training, held in May, provides group skills in identifying problems, suggesting solutions, and finding ways to work with key stakeholders to collaboratively enact meaningful change. Participants found both trainings to provide useful skills in community building, but noted that it would be more effective if more people came.

In response to suggestions at the retreat to create more learning groups and trainings related to DEI issues, we established the **DEI Journal Club**, which met once per month during winter and spring quarter (for a total of six meetings). Each attendee (which included faculty, staff, and graduate students) arrived with a journal article related to the month's theme and shared the main points and figures of the paper with the group. Themes were as follows: microaggressions in the lab/STEM settings; stereotype threat; equitable hiring and recruiting; implicit bias in hiring, grant review, and peer review; persistence through college/grad school; and equity interventions.

Two in-house, annual **workshops on inclusive teaching techniques** were again offered at the beginning of the school year. All graduate students TAing Genome 361

and 371 during the 25/26 academic year were required to attend both workshops, but the sessions were open to all department members, and a total of 18 graduate students, two faculty, and one postdoc attended. The content in both workshops was data-focused. The first workshop covered current thinking in evidence-based pedagogy. The second workshop focused on inclusive teaching practices, featuring data on how different groups of students (e.g., first generation college students, students from different cultural backgrounds, and students from minoritized groups) experience the classroom differently, and highlighting various classroom interventions that disproportionately benefit non-majority students and therefore reduce academic performance gaps caused by traditional classroom practices.

## Departmental and institutional policy

In response to feedback from the annual retreat, the DEI Committee **surveyed first-year students** to ask about their experience navigating the department's system for finding and assigning lab rotations. The results of this survey were conveyed to the administrators of the PhD program and largely confirmed that recent changes to the system have improved the clarity of this process.

In response to feedback at the retreat, we organized a series of **discussion groups** to mirror the Foundational Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training series offered by the UW Office of Healthcare Equity (OHCE). Completion of this series meets the EDI training requirements established by Washington State Senate Bill 5227, and is required biannually of all UW faculty and staff. To encourage completion of the series and enhance its value to department members, we arranged for OHCE staff to visit our department on an annual basis and conduct in-person discussion groups, following up on topics covered in the preceding training module (which participants would complete online prior to the discussion). This series was scheduled to run January through June, but had to be canceled at the last minute because OHCE's activities were paused in January for compliance review.

In June, the DEI Committee organized and led a **town hall discussion** to convey and discuss the results of the [UW Climate Survey](#).

## Community building

At the GS Department annual retreat in September, the DEI Committee organized a **circle activity**. The objectives were to get to know others in the department, facilitate an equitable and inclusive workplace through open communication around challenging subjects, and reflect on similarities and differences with others in the department. The 50-minute activity involved breaking up into small groups and answering provided questions with a buddy, speed-dating style.

We started holding **lunches for postdocs** to get to know each other, build community, and share skills and knowledge. The first lunch, held in October, was catered with

support from COGS and had 25 postdocs in attendance. Additional brown bag lunches were held in February and May, with other lunches scheduled in June and July. We have applied to the School of Medicine fund for Community Building Programs & Activities for Research Trainees to support catered meals in the future. While we are still waiting to hear back, we plan to continue the monthly lunch series regardless.

The **DEI book club** has had five hybrid meetings this year, discussing books that cover topics from disability to gender to race, with 5-10 attendees from the department each meeting. Melinda and Skylar regularly bring tea to aid in the discussions. We intend to apply for School of Medicine funding to support tea and some snacks in the coming year.

The DEI Committee has hosted **board gaming during social hour** approximately once per month in the past year, with between two and five attendees each session. The games are chosen to be light to put the focus on community building, particularly for people who might otherwise struggle during a loud event with drinking.

In order to provide more transparency about typical housing and commuting for GS postdocs and graduate students, we created a **housing and commuting survey** to anonymously collect information from current GS members. The survey includes questions about housing location, rent, commute type, and commute time. Responses will be aggregated into an infographic flyer that can be sent to new postdocs and graduate students when they accept offers. The goal is to help them get a sense of what is “normal” in terms of rent and commute, providing real examples of typical housing costs and commuting patterns within the GS community so new members can make more informed decisions as they plan their move.

## Morale

To promote community we organized **departmental intramural sports teams** during fall quarter (volleyball) and spring quarter (ultimate Frisbee). Games were played at the IMA weekly, and seasons ran between five and seven weeks. Participants included graduate students, postdocs, staff, and faculty.

To help boost morale and celebrate the lives of GS members outside of their research roles, we created a **pet of the month** competition. GS community members can nominate their pets, and the chosen winner is showcased in the department slide deck and pets slack channel.

To help create a sense of inclusion and belonging among LGBTQ+ individuals, we created a series of **slides showcasing four famous LGBTQ+ scientists**: Alan Turing, Ben Barres, Carolyn Bertozzi, and Svante Pääbo. These people span a range of LGBTQ+ identities and scientific disciplines. The slides are part of the front TV display at the entrance to South Foege and remind everyone of the diverse range of people who have contributed to the scientific enterprise.

With funding from COGS, the committee will co-organize another **ice cream social to celebrate Pride Month** this year, with the same choose-your-own-flavor format as last year, along with more pre-made ice cream to reduce the bottleneck on our ice cream makers. Last year's social had a large turnout, and we expect another success this year.