

Botany 2020 Virtual Conference Chat

~M.Boney, Listening, Learning, and Leading: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Botany

The screenshot shows the Botany 2020 Virtual Conference website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Schedule, Exhibit Hall, People, Social, Conference Code of Conduct, and Account. Below the navigation bar, there are six profile cards for speakers: Mariama Boney, CEO of Achieve More LLC, LMSW, CAE; Heather Cacanindin from the Botanical Society of America; Linda Watson from Oklahoma State University; Ann Sakai from the University of California, Irvine; Chelsea Specht from Cornell University; and Johanne Stogran from the Botanical Society of America. A central text block titled "Listening, Learning, and Leading: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Botany" describes the session's focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and provides instructions for accessing the recording. A green button labeled "PLAY WEBINAR RECORDING" is visible, with the text "Recording of the session is now available" next to it. On the right side, a chat window is open, showing messages from Heather Cacanindin, Mariama Boney, Miranda Melen, Melanie Link-Perez, and Nathan Jud.



Heather Cacanindin

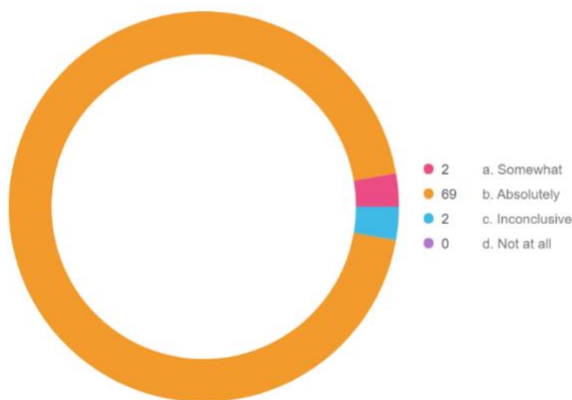
4 hours ago - Check out the Polls and the Files for this session. Please join us for reflection, learning, and sharing.



Mariama Boney

3 hours ago- Thank you for joining us! We look forward to the discussion. Please use the chat and raise your hand to share insights to the dialogue questions!

#4: Understanding potential unconscious biases and encouraging diversity can make all the difference in the workplace. Research shows that teams of diverse scientists produce better research.

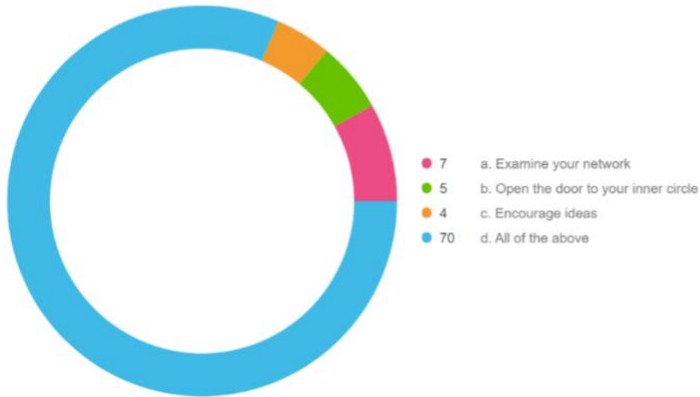


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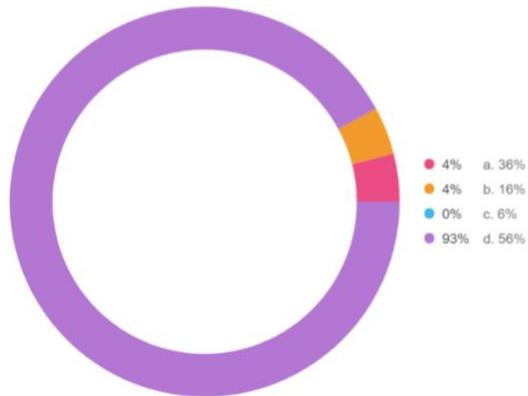
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#3: Acknowledging and understanding our unconscious biases are the first steps in overcoming them. What are some of the ways you can take action to overcome your own potential blind spots?



<https://botany2020.pathable.co/survey-instances/f6CjQzGmvTtsoZfQ5/results>

#2: Studies have shown we are likely to seek out information confirming our beliefs, disregarding opposing information. One study found that people spend how much more time reading articles in accordance with their beliefs, rather than in opposition?

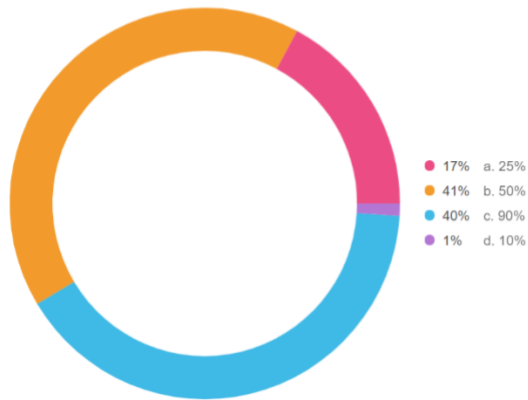


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#1 Unconscious bias - or implicit bias - happens without us even knowing it. Experts believe that approximately ___% of our decisions are made by our unconscious minds.



<https://botany2020.pathable.co/survey-instances/k8EtkzRotjrxqzkjd/results>

Understanding potential unconscious biases and encouraging diversity can make all the difference in the workplace. Research shows diverse teams perform better and companies with the highest level of diversity brought in nearly ___ times more revenue than those with the lowest levels. [Pre-Dialogue Poll. Ans 15%!]



<https://botany2020.pathable.co/survey-instances/dACGKXAo4QXkDfwBd/results>

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7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. EDT on July 29, 2020

Listening, Learning, and Leading: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Botany
Participant Dialogue Guide

Engage and share your insights!

Dive deeper into topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. intersectionality, and one's own personal identity. Come together to explore critical topics regarding bias, culture, gender, multiple identities, multiculturalism, race, stereotypes, etc. in our community and around the world. Participants will have the opportunity to learn, promote understanding and awareness, plus contribute to the dialogue via interactive chat, polling, reflection and sharing. It is time we #ListenLearnLeadforDEI.

Access the session 1 minute prior to the session start time.

7:00 p.m. – Welcome, Introductions, and Appreciation by BSA President – Linda Watson:

- ⇒ Executive Facilitator: Mariama Boney, CEO, Achieve More LLC, LMSW, CAE
- ⇒ BSA President - Linda Watson, linda.watson10@okstate.edu
- ⇒ BSA President-Elect - Cynthia Jones, cynthia.s.jones@uconn.edu
- ⇒ BSA Board member and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Chair – Ann Sakai, aksakai@uci.edu
- ⇒ Incoming BSA Board member and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Chair – Chelsea Specht – cdspecht@cornell.edu
- ⇒ BSA Executive Director and BSA staff team – Heather Cacanindin

- BSA/Botany Successes and Opportunities – BSA President - Linda Watson
- Welcome, Appreciation, and Guidelines for Dialogue – Mariama Boney, CEO, Achieve More, LLC
- Let's get started with a Polling Question!

Topic: Learning | Polling Question | Reflection & Dialogue Questions

- ⇒ **Learning about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** What does diversity, equity, and inclusion look like, sound like, or feel like within our community?
- ⇒ How do we create pathways to learn more about the dynamics of acts of exclusion (e.g. microaggressions), privilege, racism, oppression, and harassment?
- ⇒ Where are we stuck or struggling in these areas? Where are we seeing and feeling movement?

Topic: Listening | Polling Question | Reflection & Dialogue Questions

- ⇒ **Listening for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** What conversation is it time to have regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- ⇒ What questions and issues do we need to be exploring?
- ⇒ What steps forward should we take and by when?

Topic: Leading | Polling Question | Reflection & Dialogue Questions

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- ⇒ **Leadership in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** How do we expand involvement of members, colleagues, and volunteers in a way that honors diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Topic: Transparency| Polling Question |Reflection & Dialogue

- ⇒ **Transparency:** How can opportunities for leadership, engagement, and involvement be more widely communicated and intentional?
- ⇒ Where should communication about opportunities exist?
- ⇒ In what areas should there be clarification or shifts to policies and procedures that allow or help us grow?

Guidelines for Dialogue

- Sharing and feedback is a gift. Look for common ground and acknowledge the uniqueness of each person's experience.
- Speak for yourself and use "I" statements.
- Our primary commitment is to learn from each other. We acknowledge differences in backgrounds, skills, interests, values, scholarly aspirations, and experience.
- Be open and listen to others. When you disagree, try not to rush to judgment. Please ask clarifying questions.
- Search for your own assumptions and emotions. Speak your discomfort. We will trust that people are doing the best they can.
- Share briefly to allow space for all voices and perspectives to be heard.
- Face and share your own emotions. Own feeling happy, sad, uncomfortable, or empowered.
- We each have an obligation to actively combat the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls that prohibit individual development, group progress and cooperation plus group gain.

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Key Themes

Representation vs. Tokenism vs. Fatigue

- “Changing biased hiring and evaluation processes”
- “How we can be more inclusive in academic spaces, rather than just increasing diversity in the sciences, and understanding the needs of BIPOC students/faculty”
- “Address institutionalized racism and other isms”
- “...about burden of responsibility. It becomes very exhausting to help out more visible minorities and receive the shade from others who are not aware of what the invisibility is hiding”
- “I understand the necessity of the protagonism of the minorities in the groups and leaderships. However, I'm as a black woman doing science and thinking about diversity for years fell overwhelmed sometimes with the amount of activities about diversity bc I'm the only one many times. The question is: how engage the allies to do not create the problem to have a lot of work only for the minorities to do?!”
- “I can only speak for myself, but because my partner and I are visible minorities, we are both unwilling to live and work in huge portions of the country because of the racial demographics that exist there and fear we have of being racialized in those places”

Access to research opportunities by faculty

- “...better broadcasting of research experience availability! And money to pay would be great too!”
- It would be great if more faculty were willing to take on students who have no research experience/from less recognized institutions. A lot of times students need experience to get experience, and it doesn't make sense for beginners in research.

Access to learning about the social dynamics of STEM; a mentoring and program opportunity for BSA

- Negotiating the power dynamics between faculty and students
- “Advising is so key and so often not done well!”
- I think also giving more identifiable role models for younger people would be good. It is one thing to want to be a "scientist" but I think that can lead a younger person to think "I can't be that" . Giving actually examples of people they can latch onto an can identify with makes the huge mountain of a Ph.D seem a little more in reach.

Impact of DE&I on the research, promotion, and tenure process

- “An important step is for university administrators to recognize that effort & success in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion is worthy of being taken into consideration for promotion & tenure.”
- “how can we change the publication process to keep from privileging certain authors based on reviewers biases?”
- “...Wondering how to make research something that all students feel like they could do and not feel intimidated by.”
- “...administrators need to foreground DEI in every decision they make, ESPECIALLY the difficult ones.”

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The role of faculty to serve as change agents - press for change, and lead change in the academy.

- “How can we work to incorporate positive change in the context of our own jobs/positions and how can we help others?”
- “they have a lot of power to change the culture and policies of their individual departments. Students from my department just sent a letter to our faculty asking for some institutional changes, and the faculty have responded well. A joint faculty-student committee is now being formed to make the department more explicitly inclusive and anti-racist. This can happen at any institution. If you're a student, start organizing with your fellow students. If you're a faculty member, be open and prepared to work with your students to make your department better.”
- “For "aspirational careers", I believe having minoritized individuals in leadership positions may inspire broader participation”
- "how to make institutions anti-racist and not just bring diverse students into racist spaces"
- “Consistently highlighting BiPOC research in our courses”
- “I am starting very micro - ordering safety vests for my lab members so that they can look official and stay safe doing field work.”
- “how to make institutions anti-racist and not just bring diverse students into racist spaces”
- “Knowing the difference between empowering people and teaching ourselves to simply get out of the way so they can empower themselves: ie getting better ears to listen!”
- “And how as botanists to be inclusive of our colleagues worldwide who have less access to science and research.”
- “Ensuring we are considering intersectionality issues”

Hiring

- “I just want to say that hiring of BIPOC because they may provide more productivity to an institution is same to having BIPOC be the individual who champion DEI initiative. This should not be the goal. The success of BIPOC as researcher, academic and botanist should be the goal.”

Acknowledgement and celebration of indigenous people as well as land acknowledgement

- We need to recognize and give the credit to local people

Socioeconomic barriers that produce gaps

- “requirements to even apply to graduate school require liquid funds that not all students have access to.”
- “Another issue I see for underrepresented students is the inability to take advantage of unpaid opportunities because of socioeconomic barriers, so offering more funded internship or mentorship programs”
- “How do we address gaps in equity that are made even worse by covid?”
- “I think that we need to. encourage [minority] undergraduate students to go to graduate school. For this, we might have to help them sometimes with our own resources.”
- “YES! Passion and action in this realm need to be acknowledged and rewarded ... this means carving out COMPENSATED workspace for students, staff, faculty, etc. to bring their diverse and creative actions to the table.”

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- “Owning up to the cost of conferences for early career minorities - maybe a sponsorship program?”
- “COMPLETELY agree about paying people: essential - otherwise only well-off students will ever be able to have such enriching experiences as participation in research. Also unpaid internship programs are to be avoided - we've got to do better!”
- “I have virtually no budget and volunteers are so important, but I do not want to give opportunities to only those students who can 'afford' to volunteer/intern without pay, and perpetuate that privilege and division.”
- “yes, pay students! But that might not be equitable for all institutions - not all programs/schools/etc have the money for that”
- “\$ is very important in both recruitment and retention!”

Networking and Building Community

- “Several people have mentioned networking, and this is so important, esp when modeled/led by advisers. How can we make sure that people don't feel alone when they don't see themselves represented or when they don't feel valued in their labs or departments.”
- “Are the needs of a diverse academic and professional body as important as pressing social, political, and environmental challenges (police violence, etc.)?”
- “I wonder if we (I) need to do better at showing (and creating) aspirational careers in botany that could attract a broader audience to the field”
- “How do we help underrepresented students participate in networking and research experiences that they don't have the personal resources for when we or our institution also don't have the resources to help them?”
- “One problem is how to give urgent attention to the most urgent needs (trans people of color at present) without leaving other needs unattended.”
- “How do we avoid our classic forms of networking that exclude underrepresented groups?”
- “How to hold individual PIs who manage students and postdocs accountable?”
- “In a perfect world, what would our community and our working process look like?”
- “I followed a experienced professional at SPNHC conference years ago and it was an amazing experience and was funded by idigbio”

Creating and Facilitating Dialogue

- “It is crucial for leaders to have these conversations and make real and lasting changes in response”
- “My students say we should change our curriculum. Show how racism has pervaded science (including botany).”
- “Expanding and correcting the language of our lessons/conversations, especially to combat the sense of a "default" in subjects like sexual reproduction, botanical history, etc!”
- “Starting and engaging in conversations about IDEA, even if (and frankly, because) they make us uncomfortable”
- “Students and faculty are having these conversations, but the administrators not so much. Just hiring and bringing diverse people into racist spaces is at the heart of many other questions here - we need to be proactive about being anti-racist”
- “I agree. We should try to focus the conversation!”
- I love that idea about listening forums! Who has set these up in a way that works well?”

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Partnership with Graduate Students

- “I certainly see graduate student efforts leading change in academia, but this work should really come from the institution. Students are not compensated for this work, and with little to no power we often have to work much harder to push forward”
- “Grad students collectively have a lot of power to change the culture and policies of their individual departments. Students from my department just sent a letter to our faculty asking for some institutional changes, and the faculty have responded well. A joint faculty-student committee is now being formed to make the department more explicitly inclusive and anti-racist.”
- “This can happen at any institution. If you're a student, start organizing with your fellow students. If you're a faculty member, be open and prepared to work with your students to make your department better”

Considerations for BSA

- **Hire a staff member (FT/PT, or a consultant) to focus on DEI**
 - “BSA specifically, the Board members could create a paid position(s) to make lasting change on these issues so that it's not always relegated to volunteer committee work; hiring a DEI permanent position as part of the BSA staff.”
- **Expand representation**
 - “To focus on what BSA can do, continue to expand representation and provide marginalized people uninterrupted space to share their perspective. And really encourage active listening from others.”
 - “Are there ways that the Botany meetings can become more international in its approach and support to and amplify the voices of underrepresented.”
 - “BSA needs to do more to have a diverse board and committee members so it better represents our whole community.”
 - “I think it would be important to focus on what BSA can do to be an anti-racist society and provide support for BIPOC students to enter the field and feel safe.”
- **Transparency in BSA Board communication and operations**
 - “Communication about opportunities: should be dedicated space for this on the BSA webpage.”
 - “We need to be transparent about how this board functions and what different committees/board roles do so it is accessible to those who don't already know a board member.”
 - “I have heard a lot of people throughout the conference state what they're doing right or how much better they think it is than before, but I think we really need to focus on what we can do better and how much further we have to go. Botany is not new and we [didn't] discover anything. indigenous people are at the forefront of our field and we need to recognize that and give credit where credit is due”
 - “Reviewing how society committee assignments and officer nominations are governed is important. Open calls for nominations / self-nominations can help enhance diversity and foster inclusion.”

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Suggested Resources

- There was a great blog post from Dr. Swanne Gordon about her experience applying for faculty jobs as a Black person and scientist <http://ecoevoeco.blogspot.com/2020/05/new-profs-in-age-of-covid19-swannegordon.html>
- Books: Superior: The Return of Race Science by Angela Saini
- Books: Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race by Reni Eddo-Lodge
- Coalition for a Diverse Harvard and the Kennedy School have suggested some valuable readings.

Closing Comments



Mariama Boney

Thanks everyone for sharing!



Vinita Gowda

Thank you for starting the conversation and the openness to discuss and reach out.



Ya Min

Just FYI that we have a diversity_inclusion slack channel for Botany2020 as well and we can also carry the conversation there - <https://app.slack.com/client/T015XH73EAJ>



Marian Chau

Thank you Mariama & all! So many great comments. Maybe we can also keep this going on the BIPOC slack channel?



Michelle Pham

Thank you for the great discussion!



Verónica Di Stilio

Great session, thanks everyone!



Diego Paredes-Burneo

Loved all the ideas from y'all! Thanks



J. Chris Pires

Great event - thanks for organizing 1



Chantal Bussiere

Thank you so much for the important talk!



Evangeline Ballerini

Thanks all!



Clarice Guan

an hour ago
Thanks everyone!



Lauren M. Gardiner

an hour ago
Thank you all, organisers and participants!



Alina Freire-Fierro

Thank you. very much!



Jesus Martienz-Gomez

Thanks to those who helped organized and run the session. Glad to see so many participants.



Megan King

Thank you everyone, great conversation, and would be further interested in growing more



Lucinda McDade

Thank to Mariama and to everyone who is here and participated!



Vanessa Soares

Thank you so much!!!!



Barbara Thiers

Thanks so much, Mariama!



Lauren Whitehurst

Thank you for having this! I hope we keep talking!



Catherine Borer

Thank you for holding this session!



Tanya Renner

Really great, thank you! Let's keep the conversations going!



Susan Pell

Huge thanks to Mariama for facilitating this discussion!