Adam V. Subhas, MC&G

asubhas@whoi.edu

508-289-2399

**Guidelines for Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Seminar Series**

This guide is to help seminar organizers to create a diverse and inclusive seminar series, using strategies developed by myself and others at WHOI and LDEO. This guide is a work in progress, and represents a waypoint in my own learning on this process and in JEDI work more generally. Please give me feedback if you would like something added or changed!

**Some helpful tips on inviting speakers:**

* **Invite a diverse set of external speakers.** WHOI itself is skewed White and male. You are going to have a hard time creating a diverse seminar series through internal speakers. This means that you should make an extra effort to invite a diverse set of external speakers.
* **Diversify your own research network.** The most valuable (but hardest) approach here is to diversify your own colleague network. Think about who your collaborators are, and how you can incorporate more diverse perspectives into your research program.
* **Consider inviting younger scientists.** Representation is heavily skewed towards younger scientists: tenured faculty are predominantly White and male. If you’re interested in someone’s research program, consider inviting one of their postdocs or graduate students instead.
* **Solicit speaker suggestions.** Ask your department for speaker suggestions, and specifically solicit suggestions for speakers from minoritized/underrepresented backgrounds.
* **Look further afield than Boston/New England.** Talk to your department chair or APO about travel funding for bringing in diverse speakers from further away. Virtual seminars are also a great opportunity to bring in speakers who otherwise couldn’t make the trip (think senior women who often can’t spend the time to travel to WHOI).
* **Consider allocating one or two seminar slots to talks dedicated to DEI issues themselves.** You could invite a diversity coordinator from a colleagues’ university, someone who is implementing a program that you really want to know more about, or an author of a DEI-focused paper that you recently read.
* **Reach outside of your network.** If you’re unsure about where to start, you can browse departmental faculty pages at universities that are not as well-known to us. For instance HBCUs like Savannah State, UMES, and Hampton University all have Marine Science programs. Check out where PEP (NOAA) and POLARIS (Woodwell) students are coming from as a place to start. This is more of a cold call approach, but if you’re OK with doing it, could be successful. Just don’t expect a guaranteed response – people are busy and many of these scientists are already overburdened with service duties.
* **Do your research.** Especially if you are considering inviting a speaker for a named or special lecture, do your research. Google the person and make sure that they do not have any public scandals or issues.

**Some helpful tips on running the series:**

* **Do away with titles on talk advertisements.** Usage of titles can be one way to introduce gender and racial bias to a seminar series, and are many times perceived as elitist ([see this Nature article](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41564-018-0320-6)). We suggest doing away with titles entirely when advertising the speaker and introducing them. Instead, you could give their position, or even just their institutional affiliation, when introducing them either in text or verbally.
* **Keep track of your progress.** Keep a spreadsheet of invited speakers, including columns for your best guess on their gender identity and race/ethnicity. This will help you stay on track in terms of maintaining representation as you start filling out the schedule. These records often exist further back in time – ask your department administrator if they keep a list of previously invited speakers.
* [**Use the self-reported demographic survey**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSddwCanXMpxj8EQ28b7sTjhc9nyPqUc4mguVqRtZ4WeImU8FQ/viewform?usp=sf_link), and keep track of who you’ve sent the survey to (and their results, when they get back to you). Right now the “best practice” for this is to send a stock email to the past ~month or two’s worth of speakers, bcc’ed. See below for an example survey request. Remember – people are busy! You can re-send the survey request once (or even twice) if you didn’t get a response the first time.
* **Maintain space and time for questions from younger scientists** (students, postdocs, and younger faculty). If the series has a moderator, make sure you call on younger scientists, or reserve time at the beginning or end of the Q&A for students/postdocs only. On Zoom, try to amplify comments left by younger scientists. Usually, a Q&A session dominated by a single, older scientist and the speaker is not productive (or fun!). Don’t shy away from cutting off a unilateral discussion to get some other questions in.
* **Make your speakers feel welcomed.** [See this EoS article](https://eos.org/opinions/whats-in-a-seminar) about fostering an inclusive atmosphere for seminar speakers.
* **Consider establishing a code of conduct**. See this [OCB code of conduct](-%09https%3A/www.us-ocb.org/about/ocb-program-code-of-conduct#:~:text=The%20OCB%20Program%20Code%20of,in%20other%20meetings%20and%20activities.) for inspiration.

**Text for the survey request:**

**Subject:** Demographic Survey for WHOI Seminar Speakers

**Body:**

Hello,
Thank you for taking the time to join us for a seminar at WHOI! We enjoyed your talk and getting to learn about your research.
If you are interested in participating, we are gathering demographic information from speakers in our department seminar series. This is just a brief survey that will only take a few minutes of your time. You can find the survey [here](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fforms.gle%2FnyPvDdimN3qwsgCZ6&data=04%7C01%7Casubhas%40whoi.edu%7Caa600ef6ae5a4812460108d8d3821bda%7Cd44c5cc6d18c46cc8abd4fdf5b6e5944%7C0%7C0%7C637491903046202405%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=guZHyzxiPjZEYFwlunLlc8jJGbP8%2BaJPOF26GbmdvAw%3D&reserved=0). Participation is voluntary, but we would greatly appreciate it.
Cheers,