Molecular & Cellular Biology in Seattle

GRADUATE PROGRAM

STUDENT SUCCESS EQUITY PLAN

ACTIONS TOWARD ACCESS, INCLUSION & EQUITY

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON | Fred Hutch Cancer Center

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE

The Molecular and Cellular Biology (MCB) graduate program is a joint program between the University of Washington and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center and is designed to empower students to explore the areas of biomedical and basic sciences that spark their curiosity and passions.

In Spring 2023, the MCB program initiated a strategic planning process to ensure that the program proactively responds to the emerging needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The program's approach was informed by student, faculty, and staff feedback and a call to be more responsive to the needs of underrepresented students, including Black, Indigenous, and other students of color (BIPOC), members of the LGBTQ community, and members of the faculty and staff. The program established a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of MCB faculty, students, and staff and partnered with Integrated Strategy, LLC, a higher education consulting firm, to advise the committee and support the development of the process and the plan.

The committee reviewed internal data, engaged with the MCB community through virtual and in-person focus groups, and instituted a program-wide survey to gather information about the desired future for the program. The Committee identified preliminary goals and objectives that aim to advance a vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion, support an increasingly diverse MCB community, and promote a culture of care that supports students and promotes student success.

The Committee explored critical questions about the program's overall goals, structure, curriculum, and administration, as well as aspects of the student and faculty experience. What emerged was an approach to "strategic planning through an equity lens" that elevated equity, inclusion, belonging, and student success and balanced structural, programmatic, and systemic changes.

MCB will advance a more equitable and inclusive vision for graduate science education and shift its culture to meet the needs of a diverse and changing demographic.

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GOAL 1: CURRICULAR & ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Create and sustain an intentionally inclusive MCB academic program that empowers all its constituents to thrive, achieve excellence in scientific training, and meet their highest creative potential.

OBJECTIVES

1. Create a system that supports an inclusive, supportive, and productive research training environment for both students and faculty:
   - Establish practices and protocols that ensure clear, consistent, and robust communication between and among students and faculty that promotes student success.
   - Develop and provide resources that contribute to mentoring, professional development, and academic enrichment of students and faculty.
2. Review of 1st-year course and existing curriculum to respond to the emerging needs, interests, and career aspirations of a diverse student population, and an evolving professional landscape.

GOAL 2: STUDENT SUPPORT

Strengthen, organize, and facilitate equitable access to core services that support well-being and success for all students.

OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen existing and develop and implement new data-gathering processes that identify the needs, skills, and priorities of current and incoming MCB students to inform the development of support and professional-development program offerings.
2. Establish communication strategies, partnerships, and outreach that connect students to essential health and support services that equitably and appropriately serve diverse populations.

GOAL 3: COMMUNITY & BELONGING

Establish training and engagement opportunities that support community building to equip students, faculty, and staff to engage meaningfully throughout the program.

OBJECTIVES

1. Collaborate with UW, Fred Hutch, and partner institutes to develop and increase access to a structured portfolio of training opportunities that build equity literacy among faculty, students, and staff.
2. Partner with identity-based and equity-minded Seattle organizations that provide support and promote community, connection, and belonging for members of the MCB community.
3. Develop opportunities to learn about and celebrate the MCB community to build a strong sense of belonging within and across the multiple campuses and institutions.

GOAL 4: PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Enhance the administrative structure to ensure that the MCB community is well-served.

OBJECTIVES

1. Conduct a needs assessment evaluating administrative and financial resources in support of MCB program operations.
2. Evaluate and revise the MCB advising structure to ensure that MCB advisors are able to meet the academic, social, and professional needs of a diverse student population.
3. Create a robust communications structure that guarantees current and accurate information to foster student and faculty engagement with the MCB program.

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