



Evans Lab Anti-Racism Corrective Action Plan

I. Motivation

We develop this plan (and future plans) because

- 1) Neutrality is not an option and the only way to be anti-racist is to actively confront racial inequities. We call this a 'corrective' plan because racism contributed to the organizations and structures science operates in today, and thus we need to act against present and past barriers to people of color in science, which are pervasive, implicit and explicit, and unjust.
- 2) We want to form a commitment to concrete actions that we can take to fight racism. We will use the lab community to develop these actions and stay accountable to them.

The plan focuses on the *actions themselves* and how they can function as concrete tasks that combat racism and include accountability, rather than the motivation (beyond brief context), what we are already doing, or the long-term end result.

We do not expect reward for this work. We do it because it is needed, and we communicate it to educate others. We hope that many actions can initiate change at higher (e.g. institutional) levels.

II. Actions: 2020-2021

1. Create and maintain an inclusive environment

- A safe environment is in which:
 - Participants feel physically and emotionally safe in the lab, field, and in meetings.
 - Participants feel comfortable and able to participate in discussions
 - Participants are aware of 'white' culture and challenge it as the only culture (see [here](#)). Particularly relevant is safety to make mistakes, to have conflict, to express frustration
 - Communication is open – to this end, foster trust, applaud discomfort, acknowledge and encourage openness at lab meeting.
- Improve and emphasize quality mentoring at all levels
 - PI to develop meaningful mentor relationships with all students
 - Improve communication by taking MSU Dialogues Course (SE Fall 2020)
 - Facilitate ways for lab members to find and use *multiple* mentors
 - Continue to encourage lab members to lean on one another and be clear that helping more junior lab members is an expectation.
 - Identify multiple faculty mentors for postdoc and students.
 - Build co-mentor relationships for REUs (REU mentors make contact with REUs' home-institution-mentors). This has been shown to increase representation and retention in STEM, and could be formalized through KBS or LTER. See Beronda Montgomery's [excellent writing](#) about this!
- Complete bystander training as a lab group
 - Focus for 2020-2021: microaggressions and anti-racism (anti-xenophobia), including advice on how to maintain a culture of anti-micro-aggression

2. Improve recruitment and hiring plan to increase representation in the lab group

- Developed living document to guide hiring: [Reaching Broader Audiences for STEM recruitment](#).



- For each hire in the lab, the PI will share the steps achieved with the lab with the accountability sheet at the bottom of the google doc.
- Concrete tasks:
 - Fall 2020: maintain and strengthen connections to HBCUs and diversity programs (may be through efforts of LTER DEI plan). Advertise any available positions beyond typical paths and through networks
 - Research recruitment framework developed in Forestry and potentially to be adopted by KBS, used in Evans lab Fall 2021.

3. Uncover hidden curricula

- Uncovering hidden curricula in graduate admissions:
 - Increase transparency about expectations for getting into graduate school (specifically that you need a find a mentor for most programs; see [here](#))
 - With every perspective lab member, be explicit about funding and provide time with other lab members not in the presence of the advisor.
- Uncovering hidden curricula during graduate school
 - Revise Lab Expectations Document as a lab group in Fall 2020, which is reviewed by the PI during on-boarding. <https://saraheevanslab.weebly.com/lab-policies.html>
 - Conduct (bi-directional) annual reviews with written summaries, guided by an evaluation of whether expectations are aligned (including review of PI). This was performed in 2019 and 2020. Incorporate revised Expectations document for 2021.
 - Incorporate bi-directional feedback at REU--mentor level

4. Reward anti-racist, climate, and inclusion work

- Treat this work as part of lab and graduate school duties, rather than as extracurricular
 - To that end, explicitly evaluate 'academic citizen' in annual reviews (DEI work can be included in the 'is grad adjusting to part of the community' section on IBIO grad annual report).
 - Revise expectations document to include citizenship activities (outreach, DEI) and the expectation to treat others with respect.
- Discuss areas of interest within DEI or outreach with new students so they can see this is valued, and help them focus their efforts and strategize so that they can still achieve other aspects of research (e.g. experiments)
- Add explicit review of safety, inclusion, and positive culture on PI evaluation (by members)

5. Assure that seminar invitees include people of color (KBS & other organized symposia)

- Assess numbers annually as a group

6. Include discussion of science's inherent racism when discussing papers.

- Avoid thinking of science or scientists as purely objective, or occurring in a vacuum. Understand that science can and often is persuasive and consensus driven, many of its tenants are formed by whites, it cannot escape the system in which it operates, and ask how power dynamics might affect results and conclusions, and who the science serves. Specific discussion prompts:
 - Identify underlying values of the authors that would affect the science
 - What are the funding source? how did the paper/question come about?
 - What are pros and cons of citizens vs. scientists performing science?



- Read papers by people of color and about diversity in science
- Dedicate one lab meeting to this topic. (2020-2021 proposed topic: How do we break down assumptions of what is innovative, how do we get outside of what is the scientific norm. Perhaps a paper about what we usually reward)

7. Set up protocols for ensuring safety in the field

- This [Relevant article](#) includes safety guidelines we will use as a guide
- Establish shared lab gear for enhanced labwork safety
 - Order MSU gear for use in the field, and require all personnel to wear when we are in the field. Idea for now is field vests with MSU logo so they can be more easily shared and are not hot.
 - Order MSU magnet for shared lab use when using our own car in the field.
 - Include an MSU letter in the lab that personnel can have in the car when they are in the field
- At field planning lab meeting (May), as we discuss fieldwork plans for the year, include a discussion of safety risks and protocols for minimizing risk.
 - Pay attention to folks doing work NOT working on LTER/GLBRC (managed by KBS), on private land, with invasive technology (e.g. drones), and in international work, all which may be higher risk
 - Communicate that there is always an option to work with someone else in the field if you feel unsafe

8. Develop a reporting structure for microaggressions, nonethical, and racist attitudes

- *Note there are specific protocols related to sexual misconduct that should be followed for RVSM-related issues. These points address other offenses*
- Problems with Sarah, or that you do not want to discuss with Sarah: discuss with the KBS Director (FJ); Director of Operations (AW); or Academic Support Specialist (SR). The director conducts Sarah's annual reviews. If these do not meet your needs, use MSUs hotline for reporting misconduct: <https://misconduct.msu.edu/>
- For problems in the lab group or that you feel comfortable discussing: Set up a meeting with Sarah. Sarah's approach will be first to listen and ask how you would like to address the issue. All will be completely confidential. Ways forward will be determined on a case by case basis. *If possible*, Sarah will encourage our lab to work out problems as a community and through facilitated conversation before going 'higher-up' to maintain a sense of trust in our community.
 - In this vein, develop a protocol for REUs and URAs reporting incidents to their direct mentee.

9. Teaching

- Model an anti-racist and inclusive teaching approach for students and postdocs. There is a large set of literature on this. Specific actions to be addressed this year include:
 - Revise slides describing examples to make sure the representation of 'scientists' includes all types of people, and especially underrepresented groups.
 - Continue to use as many teaching approaches as possible to appeal to many learning styles (slides, small group discussion, active learning, reading, writing, and presentation).
 - Continue to discuss classroom safety reporting structures and inclusive environment during the syllabus overview



- Add at least one example of how racism is intrinsic in science and discuss how to do good science through this lens

10. Assess whether all effort that contributes to products is fully acknowledged

- Include author contributions on all papers when possible, even when not required.
- Cite co-led papers as both authors instead of just the first (e.g. Evans and Dueker et al 2019!).
- Anyone that has contributed to data collection will continue to be listed in the acknowledgment section, as a way to develop a culture of appreciation (Authorship covered in [lab policy](#)).
- Include land acknowledgement in the acknowledgement section. Suggested verbage for local sites (LTER and GLBRC):
 - This work took place on occupied Anishinaabe land where Hickory Corners, Michigan and LTER and GLBRC sites are now located. We acknowledge legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that comes with our use of the land.
- Publish open access when possible, support open access journals
 - Incorporate this into lab Authorship Policy

III. Accountability structures

1. Review this document in December 2020 (on SE’s calendar)
2. Review this document as part of Lab meeting in May 2021 (scheduled)
3. Update document summer 2021, as a lab.

Concrete tasks summarized from above, for easy viewing:

- Revise expectations document, and review with lab (see #3, 4, also address advisor expectations related to #1)
- Revise Annual reviews documentation and include in discussion (see #4)
- End of year: check to make sure we are including underrepresented groups in invited speakers, papers read, and anything else (4,5)
- Pre-submission checklist doc – check all papers for author contribution
- Check on whether Teaching changes were made
- Assess field risks and take actions to minimize (7)
 - Order gear for fieldwork, plan pre-field season meeting to include safety discussion
- Bystander training as a lab group (8)

Other resources:

Anti-racism implementation/action/strategic plans

- <https://www.racialequitytools.org/plan/action-plan/action-plan-examples>
- <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/antiracism-initiative/docs/Antiracism+Implementation+Plan+FINALFinal.pdf>
- <https://psychology.illinois.edu/diversity/psychology-department-anti-racism-action-plan>

Please feel free to use this as a model but if it heavily influences your plan or you use our language, cite credit using name, MSU, and <web link>.