

Creation and progress of the “Diversity in Physics” (D-PHY) committee at Université de Montréal*

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Summary

Our poster will describe the creation and recent achievements of the “Diversity in physics” committee in the Department of Physics at Université de Montreal. The goal of our committee is to help people from different ethnicity, sexual orientations, genders and family backgrounds to feel comfortable and accepted in the physics community.

1. Relevance

Considering that physical sciences were and still are one of the least diverse sciences with a predominance of white-male-bourgeois scientists, there is a need to improve the proportion of women and minority groups and to insure a positive studying-working climate.

2. Aims & Objectives

Our committee aims to improve organizational climate, to encourage women and minorities to see themselves as physicists, and to inform and build awareness on the underrepresentation of women and minorities in science. By relating the constitution and describing successful activities of our Diversity committee, we hope to stimulate other departments and organizations to take actions to improve organizational climate for women and minorities.

3. Methods

The composition of the “Diversity in physics” committee includes undergraduate students, graduate students and professors. To define the committee mandate, we gathered opinions from a departmental survey and multiples discussion groups. Examples of activities organized by the committee since its creation include: conferences and workshops by diversity-representative speakers, workshops about diversity, and contributions to outreach events.

4. Results

Activities about the underrepresentation of women and minorities generated interest mostly from relating groups. Activities that revolve around themes such as harassment and unconscious bias are attended by more diverse groups. Long-term impact is already generated such as having all entering students attend a mandatory workshop on harassment and unconscious bias. We also received university-wide recognition in being the first laureate of the Rector’s Diversity Prize as well as through the emulation of similar committees in other departments across campus.

5. Conclusions

We observed that including everyone (women, men and minorities) in the process of constituting and operating the committee is beneficial. Our committee is relatively new and is working on long-term issues. After only a year of being an official departmental committee, we are about to achieve a better organizational climate.

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