

Report from Diversity and Inclusion Day

AFS 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting, September 15, 2020

Written and compiled by the Equal Opportunities Section (EOS)



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Speakers: Mamie Parker, Ambrose Jearld Jr., Brooke Penaluna, Christopher Schmitt, Zachary Penney, Mary Webb Banning, Larissa Lee, Lucas Johansen, Aaron Bunch, Deon Kerr, Ernest "Ernie" Muhammad, and Brian Murphy

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Diversity and Inclusion Day Summary

AFS members and the general public congregated to “**Learn, Engage, and Commit**” to increasing diversity and inclusion (DI) in our society. From morning talks, we **learned** about closing the distance for marginalized communities, the why and how of pronouns, and progress on DI efforts inside and outside of AFS. The Emmeline Moore Award was presented to Dr. Ivan Arismendi, whose acceptance speech reminded us every person can make a difference and uplift diverse talent. We **engaged** our “Unconscious Biases” with facilitator Darlene Floyd by examining how we’ve been socialized with biases and that it is our responsibility to understand, acknowledge, and challenge our biases. During afternoon group discussions, we started by sharing experiences that meeting attendees have experienced at AFS meetings that led to feelings of exclusion. Hearing personal stories raised our collective awareness of the challenges that AFS needs to address to be a more inclusive society. The groups also discussed our vision for a more diverse and inclusive AFS, and brainstormed action items for individuals and AFS leaders to **commit** to be a more diverse and inclusive society. We ended the day with a Happy Hour, including themed spaces for Women in Fisheries, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQ+, and Early Career. Throughout DI day, attendees learned and discussed action items that can be taken at all levels, collectively, individually and at the leadership level within AFS. Below we outline our compilation of collective vision and action items resulting from DI Day.

Our collective vision for AFS

In our breakout sessions during DI Day, we determined that to be a diverse, equitable, and inclusive society we must achieve the following:

- Everyone feels comfortable.
- Everyone is valued and listened to equally.
- We lift each other up and amplify marginalized voices.
- We create space to have discussions and foster a culture that supports justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion regularly.
- We have diverse leaders who are committed to self-education and making progress on justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in AFS.
- We learn from the successes and failures of other organizations to enact best practices.
- We regularly recognize and award work done on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- We have affinity spaces and support networks for marginalized communities.
- We expand outreach/education and recruitment to more diverse communities.
- We understand the humanity in our science, and that our science affects humans.
- We ask our membership how they are doing on a regular basis, respond to their needs, and report on progress made.

Collective Actions for AFS

From the DI Day breakout sessions and inclusivity survey, we have created lists of action items that can be taken by individuals and leaders within AFS. Check out the EOS site for more information and to download a template your unit, section, subsection, or division can use to outline your own action plans and timelines.

Individual Actions

Be a Model

- Share your pronouns so others feel safe to share theirs.
- Model behavior that we want to see/be. Example - during networking events, break out of your clique and meet new people.
- Wear stickers to identify mentors, safe place/people to talk to.
- Acknowledge we all are responsible for educating ourselves and making our society more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.
- Attend trainings and commit to self-education to be an ally for marginalized identities.

Be an Active Member and Ally

- If you are an educator, adapt inclusive teaching practices.
- Mentor BIPOC and other marginalized students/early career professionals.
- Cite, amplify, and work with colleagues from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Become more involved in AFS through workshops, reading *Fisheries*, presenting your work, as well as participating in various sections and chapters. Join the Equal Opportunities Section.

Leadership Actions

Governance

- Ensure each leadership team has a plan of work for diversity, equity, and inclusion and there is continuity during leadership transition. Develop metrics by which each team can measure their progress. The plan should be conveyed transparently and loudly to AFS membership.
- Edit Section 2 Strategy 12 of the annual governance report to reflect modern diversity, equity and inclusion goals.
- Create an AFS staff position for Diversity and Inclusion. Encourage AFS Sections/Divisions/Chapters to have Diversity and Inclusion Officers.
- Update mission statements to reflect our modern goals.

Membership

- Update membership page to allow people to choose more than just male/female.
- AFS Ambassadors - Develop and promote events which encourage member interactions and dialogues, subsequently increasing mentorship opportunities and diversity-visibility.
- Set expectations/protocols for local and international leadership on sharing and enforcing the Code of Conduct (COC). Be transparent about and amplify the COC, how past incidences have been handled, and how to anonymously report incidences (e.g. asking people to sign, reading the COC, etc).

- Regularly survey membership to ask about inclusion and experiences at local or national events.

Outreach and Recruitment

- Continue to fund and support the growth of the Hutton Scholars program.
- Broaden recruitment and outreach to more communities like Historically Black Colleges and Universities and community colleges. This includes Divisions collaborating to set up new collaborations or student subunits.
- Increase recruitment of underrepresented groups through an expanded and targeted outreach effort; for example leveraging conferences attendees for programs across host cities' institutions and public schools.

Affinity and Support

- Launch Out in the Field Initiative for fisheries
- Amplify the efforts of the Standing Committee on Diversity, Equal Opportunities Section and other AFS groups working to increase diversity, equity and inclusion by sharing links to their websites or programming within your unit.
- Create a welcoming corner focused on underrepresented groups at conferences which visibly encourages folks to interact with each other.
- Create affinity groups for identifying support and/or networking within underrepresented groups. This can also translate into online support groups through Facebook, Slack, or email listservs (e.g., Women in Fisheries).
- Engage with younger generations and be an advocate for them within AFS.

Education and Training

- Host/develop annual trainings for members (e.g., Unconscious Bias), as well as opportunities for ally education.
- AFS Officers and other leaders should take Unconscious Bias or other appropriate trainings and commit to self-education prior to and while in office.
- Acknowledge we all are responsible for educating ourselves and making our society more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. People from majority backgrounds need to lead the movement to stand up against those making underrepresented groups uncomfortable.

Equity and Access

- Create fellowship/grant/internship opportunities specific to BIPOC and other marginalized groups. This could also include partial travel awards (e.g. housing during conference).
- Maintain accessibility to our science and networking through free or minimal cost virtual opportunities.

Representation

- Relentlessly invite diverse plenary and panel speakers for conferences and webinars. Track the numbers of featured speakers from marginalized groups each year to track progress.
- Diversify who is given awards and leadership positions to include those from marginalized and early-career backgrounds. Track the demographics of awardees to track progress.

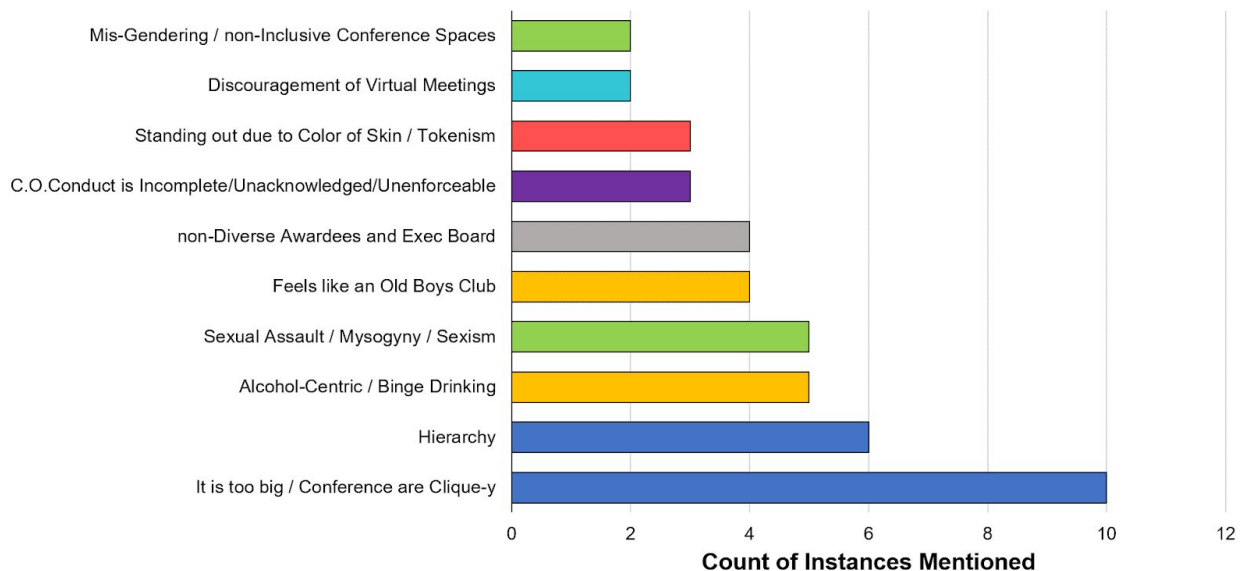
Conferences

- Commit to gender neutral bathrooms at conferences/events.
- Ask for pronouns in registration and include them on name badges.
- Create/supply stickers to identify mentors, safe place/people to talk to.
- Create events and ways to welcome first-time or sporadic meeting attendees (e.g., sticker on badge, welcome event, networking event with seasoned AFS folks, etc).
- Design social events to reduce cliques and help everyone meet new people.
- Breakout sessions/rooms at larger meetings for identifying support and/or networking, creating space for underrepresented groups. Facilitate spontaneous meet-ups and self-selecting groups on conference app or other platform. This can also be expanded to non-traditional ways of grouping people: hikers, photographers, etc.
- Be transparent about and amplify the Code of Conduct, how past incidences have been handled, and how to anonymously report incidences (e.g. asking people to sign, reading the COC, etc).
- Encourage increased non-alcohol centric socials as well as enforce appropriate behavior when alcohol is involved.
- Select conference locations which will be safe for all attendees and send out guidelines and precautions at meetings. Devise ways for members to report misconduct, let others know about problems areas, ask for help, etc. - perhaps through the conference app.

Results from Survey on Inclusivity in AFS

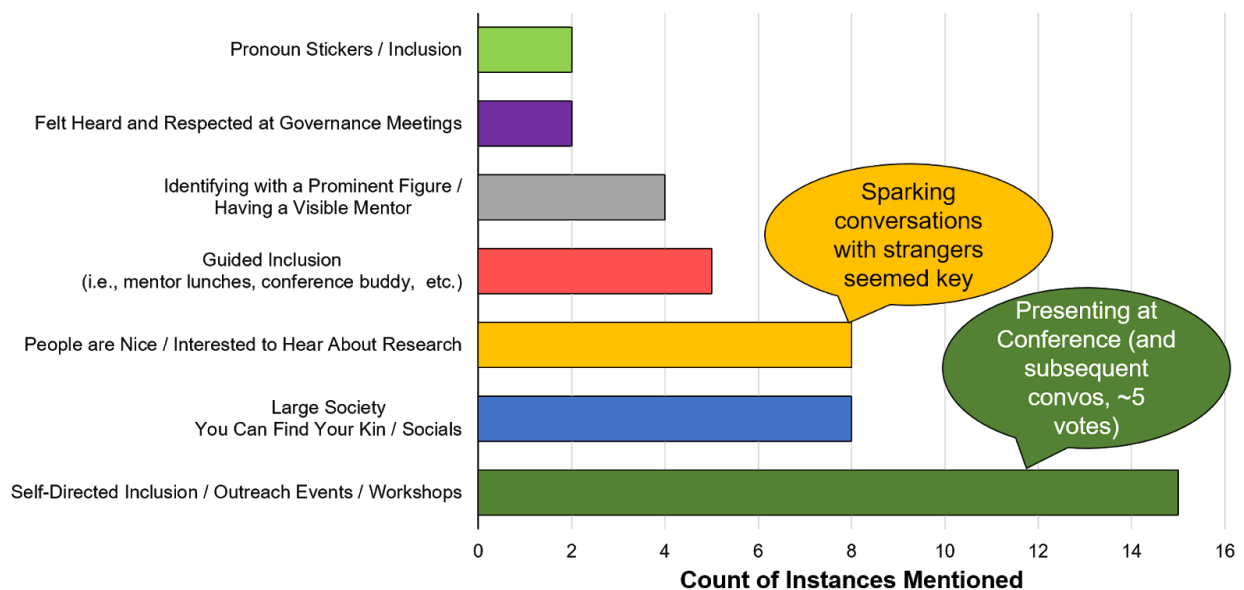
The Equal Opportunities Section sent out a survey to its membership as well as the Education Section to ask members who identify as an underrepresented group within the fisheries profession (including but not limited to women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+) about their experiences with instances of exclusion or like they did not belong as a member of the American Fisheries Society. We received responses from 38 people, whose experiences have been grouped and coded into key words to help summarize the survey responses, some experiences include more than one topic. Experiences that were often listed together share a color, these colors only coordinate within graphs and do not coordinate among graphs. The most common feelings of exclusion referenced that conferences were large and that groups or cliques of people are intimidating to attempt to break into. Often mentioned along with these feelings were that certain research topics, labs, or employers had higher esteem leading to a social hierarchy within the AFS. The second most common experiences described alcohol consumption and feelings of conference spaces being similar to an old boys club often simultaneously. The third most common exclusion experiences related to gender whether sexual assaults, sexism, or instances of misogyny or mis-gendering.

What experiences have you had within AFS that made you feel excluded, or like you don't belong?



We summarized responses to our question about what people think has made them feel most included within the American Fisheries Society (colors do not coordinate with other graphs). Most commonly, feelings of inclusion centered around people taking the initiative to become involved in the society through outreach events, workshops, presenting their research, and attending society-directed events like mentor-matching luncheons or socials. Highlighting the need to reduce barriers to involvement in society sponsored events as well as making existing diversity more visible.

What experiences have you had within AFS that made you feel included, or like you belong?



When asked how the American Fisheries Society can better support its diverse membership, responses can be summarized as a) increase visibility of diverse groups through various avenues including greater mentorship opportunities, b) use the power of being a large international society to inflict change by offering trainings and being more selective in conference host sites and cities, and c) increase awareness and enforcement of code of conducts both from the society as well from the individual members to better foster constructive dialogues and greater involvement in societal events.

How could AFS better support you to increase feelings of safety and belonging?

