



Research OVCRGE Equity and Diversity Committee

WIPAC / IceCube Diversity Blurb

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WIPAC group embarks on second year of equity initiatives

The Wisconsin IceCube Particle Astrophysics Center (WIPAC) Racial Justice and Equity Working Group formed in the summer of 2020 amid the resurgence of public debate about police violence against Black people and other long-standing and pervasive forms of racial injustice in the United States. Formed as a way to collectively take action towards dismantling systemic racism in science and the workplace, the group is open to anyone who works at or is affiliated with WIPAC. Around a dozen people have participated in the monthly meetings, which provide a recurring framework to share anti-racist ideas and coordinate efforts.

We used the [American Institute of Physics \(AIP\) TEAM-UP \(Task Force to Elevate the Representation of African Americans in Undergraduate Physics & Astronomy\)](#) report as a guide for our initial meetings and efforts in 2020. Referencing the chapter on culture change titled “A Call to Action,” we implemented a backwards-by-design approach to develop outcomes for five subgroups. The subgroups focused on (1) recruitment, hiring, and retention; (2) education, outreach, and communication; (3) climate; (4) education and training; and (5) emerging ideas and actions.

Over the course of the first year, each subgroup developed an outcome map, and some subgroups have achieved their initial goal. For example, the education, outreach, and communications subgroup set a goal to achieve gender parity for the IceCube after-school program. This 10-week program for high schoolers has been held annually since 2013, but was held virtually for the first time in 2021. After reworking the language and graphics in recruitment materials to be more inclusive, the 2021 program achieved gender parity for 38 high school students. We also reached out to community partners, like the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County, to better understand how we can serve students in the future.

Reflecting on our progress after one year, we felt we could take more action if we collectively focused our efforts on the goal of a single subgroup. In the 2021-2022 academic year, we are focusing on providing opportunities for education and training around anti-racism and equity in the workplace and science for WIPAC staff, faculty, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and visitors. This fall we promoted two opportunities for WIPAC colleagues to attend an equity-focused talk on campus and one week later, follow-up with a small group discussion facilitated by the WIPAC Racial Justice and Equity group.

We leveraged two talks hosted by UW–Madison — one by Dr. Jennifer Ho and another by Karen Catlin. Several members of the Racial Justice and Equity group attended the talks and the follow-up discussions. These provided an opportunity to share personal experiences and perspectives, and discuss actions mentioned in the talks that could be applied at WIPAC. Overall, these were productive sessions that merit increasing our recruiting efforts for future endeavors to increase participation.

In her talk about anti-racism, Dr. Ho acknowledged that the scope and size of the issue requires a never-ending commitment to counteract racist structures and behaviors. With an eye toward sustaining and building our own group effort for the long term, we have moved towards a shared-leadership structure with greater involvement and input from all group members to raise agenda items, lead discussions, and maintain communication between meetings, primarily through a Slack channel. The discussions include ideas for future focus for the group as that approach has been very constructive. In addition to attending talks and follow-up discussions, group members have individually delved into anti-racist readings. Their descriptions and personal reactions have prompted dynamic conversations, with others in the group sharing their own perspectives and ideas.

WIPAC is a leading particle astrophysics research center and champions diversity in the scientific community. As part of this, WIPAC is the managing host of the Multimessenger Diversity Network and is the hub of diversity efforts for the IceCube Collaboration. The [Multimessenger Diversity Network](#) is a community of representatives from 11 multimessenger research collaborations focused on increasing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the field. The [IceCube Collaboration](#), over 300 people from 56 institutions in 14 countries, has a working group dedicated to equity, diversity, and inclusion.