JEDI Committee Meeting Notes

Meeting Agenda - 2022 - 06 - 07

Attendance:

1. Employees: Luke, Cat
2. Board: Stien, Nik

1. 2022 WAI Diversity Assessment

Relevance:

Stien wrote and distributed a survey to assess WAI's diversity on various demographic axes based on Candid and CHANGE Philanthropy's surveys.

Discussion:

1. How was the response rate?
   a. All staff and board completed the survey.
2. Anonymity questions / concerns?
3. What suggestions did folks leave at the end?
4. What do we do with these data? Should we statistically compare them to frequencies in some reference population to check for enrichment / depletion of certain groups? What about group label intersects? Probably very underpowered here.
   a. SvdP: For now, just getting data for Candid's purposes. Not much we can do with it right now, but later we might find applications. And we collected feedback from staff/board on how to collect this info better, so we can improve next time.
   b. We could compare how things change in a few years. Maybe our leadership will become more or less diverse than it is now, and maybe that will say something about equity in our org.
   c. CK: 2 possible applications. 1. Can help us identify areas where we do or do not have much diversity, and focus on increasing diversity in those areas when we select job boards to pay for postings on. 2. Allowing staff to know what identities are represented in our org can help them feel less isolated. If anyone volunteers to talk about their identities, it could help form bonds and affinity groups for people who belong to minority groups.
     i. NV: If the goal is to evaluate diversity, then it's good to know what our benchmarks should be; how we compare with the diversity of orgs or populations we should be comparing ourselves with.
5. What plans do we have for these going forward? Should they be done once yearly? Every time a new employee joins (though see anonymity concerns)?
   a. Feedback from staff on the last question of the survey
      i. SvdP: One person hesitated to fill out the survey because they “didn’t think their presence represents diversity within the organization.” Maybe because of the capacity in which they contribute to the organization.
         1. We could add a question about full/part-time status next time.
         2. LH: Are there things we could do to help this person feel more involved and more like they belong?
      ii. CK: Diversity of education wouldn’t be a useful metric for us because we have certain jobs that require certain degrees, and other jobs that require no degree. So of course we will have a range of education levels represented.
         1. NV: If 2% of the “control” population has PhDs, then it wouldn’t be useful for us to try to use that population as a benchmark because of the much higher percentage of roles we have that require PhDs.
      iii. LH: We don’t necessarily want to measure every possible aspect of diversity.
      iv. SvdP: Interested in nationality and immigration status, but could be influenced by her own background; uncertain of relevance to our work, and especially because we hire staff in different countries.
         1. NV: Maybe there is a way to show diversity in the locations of staff. If the goal is to build an international research community, then it’s probably good to have an international presence and have people of different nationalities in leadership.
         2. SvdP: But this doesn’t indicate immigration status/country of origin

Other notes:

- SvdP: Meaning to do something like this for a long time, but we didn’t know how or what we would use it for. Thought about it again because Candid (formerly Guidestar) have transparency seals and they require transparency on diversity composition of ED and board for a gold seal. (We expanded it to include all staff.) There is no requirement for some level of diversity; only a requirement to report it.
- For future surveys: Should consider the usefulness of seeing sets of responses at the cost of anonymity. Google Form lets you see individual sets of responses, which makes it relatively easy to figure out which responses were from specific people, if you know some unique identifier of them.
- Age?
  - LH: Could help us provide childcare and other types of support relevant to different age groups.
○ CK: Will be interesting to watch this metric over time because if we have a lot of young people in leadership (which is fine), it’s possible they would show a bias for hiring people the same age as them or younger, if they will be overseeing those people.

● Disabilities?
  ○ Visible vs. invisible
  ○ Why would someone want to report their disability or not? Is our work culture the barrier or is there another issue?
  ○ There could be internalized stigma against disabled status.
  ○ LH: Would be useful to encourage people to specify whether their disability is visible or not; segment out physical, intellectual, mental, sensory, etc.
  ○ NV: Should disability status require medical diagnosis or is self-reported disability acceptable for the survey purposes?

2. Article shared with staff by Michelle

Relevance:

Michelle circulated an article that they suggested the JEDI committee read. Quoting their email:

“I just read an interesting paper: "What Can Professional Scientific Societies Do to Improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Case Study of the American Elasmobranch Society." It is kind of long but I wrote a 3 page bullet point summary (which also links to the paper itself).”

Discussion:

● LH: We fund labs that will hire students, and we don’t want any students to end up in an abusive lab environment. How much should it be our responsibility to make sure that doesn’t happen?
  ○ NV: Are there behavioral questions we could ask in a survey for the lab group that might indicate their likelihood to commit abuse?
● NV: Relevance increases with in-person events. Some kinds of abuse can happen online, but many more can happen in person. Some of our organizational goals in the strategic plan involve in-person events, like conferences.
  ○ SvdP: Would be good to provide guidelines to attendees on how they can report incidents that happen at our events.
  ■ NV: Incorporate safety and accountability by offering options at different hierarchical levels. (So no one's only option is to report to the same person who committed the offense.)