

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Andrew L. Miller
andrew.miller@nikhef.nl





Who am I?

- Born & raised in New Jersey
- Collaborate with scientists in China, Japan, US, and all over Europe
- Enjoy nature, travel, hiking and volleyball
- Actively involved in DEI efforts to make physics more inclusive and equitable, and supervising students at all levels



Academic history

2011-2015



Bachelor,
physics

2015-2019



Joint PhD, physics

Aug.-Nov.
2019



Visiting
researcher

2020-2022



Postdoc #1

2023-now



Postdoc #2

Elected DEI chair in early
May 2024

Joined LIGO/Virgo in 2015

What is DEI?

- *Diversity*: refers to the presence of people from different backgrounds, e.g. different races, ethnicities, genders, ages, sexualities, socioeconomic status, neurodivergence, etc.
- *Equity*: refers to allocation of resources accounting for the history of marginalized groups; it is NOT equality
- *Inclusion*: refers to activities that actively make people from diverse backgrounds feel welcome / have their opinions heard, and that allow people to do meaningful work regardless of backgrounds

Why is DEI important?

If you don't
have to think about it,
it's a privilege.

- Many people benefit from *privilege*
 - Straight/white/male privilege; nationality; non-disabled privilege
- Privilege implies that opportunities and power are skewed towards those that are “luckier” and against those that are “different”
- Racism is pervasive and exists in Europe, but is not often discussed
 - Racism is *structural* in academia

Why is collaboration-level DEI important?

- Collaboration membership is significant part of professional life & identity as a scientist
 - Constant across changing institutions, collaborators, advisers, career stage
- Can contribute to DEI by providing complementary mentors to those at one's institution, establishing policies to promote fair and representative practices
- Can accelerate the exchange of best practices between institutions or department
- Cannot easily affect hiring or other practices at individual institutions
 - But, can research about whether in different countries, that DEI hires can be done

What has Virgo done so far?

- Two Virgo LGBTQ+ STEM days
- Two mental-health surveys
- Organized DEI sessions at Virgo weeks
 - But may not be most effective... often at the end of day; too many Virgo weeks to find topics to discuss
- Posts on social media commenting certain days (women's day, etc.)
- But all-in-all, not too much... progress is hard

Visions for Virgo

- Extend “diversity” beyond gender, and to higher levels
 - Being “blind” to race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality is not enough — intersectionality of identities is very important
- Give DEI contributions equal status to science talks, including DEI plenaries, e.g. (<https://laac.docs.ligo.org/recognition/>)
- Obtain budget to invite DEI speakers to collaboration events, and also to attend DEI workshops [Stavros had informally approved one]
- Organize DEI “committee” with formal appointments by VSC that recommend actions
 - Members should come from speakers committee, outreach, early career scientists, etc.
- Prepare a white paper of actions for Virgo /GW collaborations to take

Concrete Actions: Survey and meeting locations

- Collect statistics about the diversity of Virgo members — LIGO is doing this
 - Set goals for advancement in to-be-defined DEI metrics
 - Both ‘in principle’ (e.g., match population) and practical – xx%/year increase in metric
- **Why:** it’s impossible to prove there is a problem with representation in Virgo if we cannot collect statistics
- Devise way of carefully choosing meeting locations; & enable good remote participation
- **Why:** people from marginalized groups may not be comfortable going to particular countries if they are at risk of being harassed or killed

Concrete Actions: Trainings

- Mandatory DEI training before people join collaboration (like lab training, within X months), maybe repeatable if we have resources for that
- Organize bystander trainings (liaison with GW allies)
- Trainings for people in positions of power (e.g. working group chairs) [taken from LSC DEI best practices]
 - How to promote constructive, respectful dialogue; how to gather input from all voices rather than the loudest; how to build a true consensus
 - Consider training on conflict resolution (or other issues) for working group chairs
 - Which holidays are recognized? ; how to set realistic schedules for papers, etc
- **Why:** scientists are not given any training in management, and arbitrary work and deadlines makes the life of all scientists, especially those from marginalized groups, more difficult than necessary

Conclusions

- We must find ways of better representing and including scientists that come from diverse backgrounds
- There is a lot of work to be done to truly make Virgo a diverse, equitable and inclusive place
- A DEI committee will be set up to address these issues and also to ensure that proper recognition is given to those that take on DEI responsibilities
- There is plenty of literature and people qualified about DEI that we can consult with and get ideas from — but we need a budget to do this