

# Diversity & Inclusion Focus Groups

College of Chemistry Graduate Diversity Program (GDP)

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## Origin Story

The Diversity and Inclusion Focus Groups (DIFG) series began due to demand from the Chemistry community, expressed in the 2018 climate survey and corresponding town hall, for dedicated spaces to discuss cultural and climate issues more frequently than once a year.

## Mission Statement

The DIFG series aims to provide a structured, recurring, neutral space for members of the College of Chemistry community to:

- regularly explore and engage in challenging conversations about a variety of topics that have been identified as areas of concern within our community;
- become exposed to alternative viewpoints and experiences;
- learn from one another; and
- help begin shifting our community social norms together, to create lasting and effective change within our academic culture and climate.

### 2018-19

- Topics covered were relatively commonly encountered by graduate students.
- Required minimal prerequisite work by attendees.
- Frequently drew from **articles and data**.

### 2019-20

- DIFG took on a model following RPR training, emphasizing **small group discussions** to facilitate open conversation.
- The Chemistry Graduate Life Committee introduced an elected DIFG Chair position to take the lead on organizing the series.
- Increased emphasis on **scientific studies**.

### 2020-21

- DIFG discussed a cycle of repeated topics: LGBTQ+, BLM, mental health, communication.
- Introduced the idea of **inviting speakers** to inform our discussions and bring in broader perspectives.
- Provided important community contact and outlets during COVID and BLM protests.

### 2021-2022: GDP

- Having already covered a wide range of topics, DIFG organizers encountered a **stagnancy**.
- Participating in the GDP allowed organizers to use structured time, resources, and support to build a **more advanced DIFG 201** series.
- Herein, attendees are expected to put in some prerequisite work and topics discussed are **broader impact, systemic challenges**. Since these topics draw on experiences beyond those of the organizers, speakers are invited.
- Despite these changes, the overall conversational aspect of DIFG remains unchanged.
- Some topics covered in this year's series include **police brutality and abolition, Indigenous rights and land grab universities, and a history of US social justice movements**.

## Successes

- Challenging level of topics has led to increased enthusiasm towards DIFG discussions.
- Clear benefit of community building.
- Effective way of surfacing systemic problems within the chemistry department.

## Challenges

- Uncertain role that DIFG plays in the department's efforts towards cultural improvement.
- Has the department outgrown DIFG?
- Exhausting to organize: keeping the enthusiasm levels up is difficult.
- Hard to find speakers: it takes time and money.

