School of Physical Sciences partners with School of Humanities to address STEM inequalities

Starting with a survey that’s open now, the collaboration will help Physical Sciences better implement its DEI initiatives.

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Changing a culture for the better means listening to the people who make and create that culture.

Picture Credit:
Tiffany Kuo

The UCI School of Physical Sciences is partnering with the UCI School of Humanities to better understand how to implement initiatives in the realm of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The people leading the partnership are Professor Mu-Chun Chen of the Department of Physics & Astronomy, who's also the Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Physical Sciences, and Department of Philosophy Ph.D. candidate Rena Goldstein, who researches bias and who constructed a survey called the "Student Experience Survey for the School of Physical Sciences" that's available now for Physical Sciences students to take. "We want to consider all of the aspects that could serve the students," said Chen, who added that inspiration for the project came from the so-called "TEAM-UP" Report from the American Institute of Physics, which described several reasons where there are so few Black undergradaute students studying physics in the U.S. "The report inspires us to perform a similar and expanded study in the local context of our School to learn about our own students' experiences," Chen said. The survey runs to the end of the calendar year, and it aims to provide valuable insights into the specific ways each of the four departments at Physical Sciences can best implement its own DEI initiatives. "This is the first time the School of Humanities has done something like this," said Goldstein, who explained that the trickiest thing about designing the survey was understanding how to tailor it to each department, as each department has its own unique culture and, thus, needs to approach DEI initiative from slightly different angles. Support for the collaboration comes from a $1.5 million grant to Humanities in 2020 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to foster cross-field collaborations like this one.

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