

What's going on with all the survey and focus group invitations about the Natural Science Division?

Why am I getting a survey about the science division? Why am I being asked to participate in focus groups?

Several faculty in the science division have collaborated on grant submissions to HHMI (Howard Hughes Medical Institute), NSF (National Science Foundation), and Clare Boothe Luce Program of the Henry Luce Foundation. Luckily, we've been awarded all three of these grants! While each of the grants will fund different programs, the shared overall goal is to increase inclusion and representation of historically underrepresented groups in the natural sciences. Research suggests that there are some effective ways of achieving this result, but we need to measure changes in behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge over the course of these programs to understand what is working and what can be improved. In the early years of the grants we'll be collecting baseline data about what's happening in the science division. Later in the grant cycle you will see some of the same survey instruments and evaluations again as well as new invitations to focus groups.

Is something wrong with the science division that's prompting all of this?

Not anything that isn't "wrong" with science in general. Kenyon's science division has not been immune to the troubling patterns that we see in regards to inclusivity in the sciences nationally. What is unique to Kenyon is that, as a small school, we can impact almost all science-interested students in ways that we hope will make a positive difference to them, their academic choices, and careers in deep and significant ways.

I feel like things are going just fine for me. Do I need to participate?

That's great to hear! We'd love for you to participate in all the assessments and evaluations so that we can understand what's working so well for you. Everyone's experience is going to be important to consider.

I'm not sure if I want to major in a science, but I've been invited to participate in a survey/focus group. Should I do it even if I'm not sure what I want my major to be?

Yes, definitely! It isn't just majors, minors, and concentrators that experience the natural sciences. Students from all types of majors may take courses in the division and understanding those experience is very important.

Who can I talk to about all of this?

There are several people working on these initiatives so it depends on what you'd like to discuss. If you'd like to speak about how these programs are being evaluated, the results of the surveys and focus groups, and privacy and confidentiality, you can contact Erika Farfan, Kenyon's Director of Institutional Research. If you'd like to speak about the HHMI programming, John Hofferberth is the main contact. For information about the NSF STEM Scholar program, Karen Hicks is the primary contact. The Clare Boothe Luce primary contact is Kerry Rouhier. However, many other faculty members are also involved in these efforts so you may find that your professor or faculty advisor can also speak about these programs.