

**GBCB (Genetics, Biotechnology, and Computational
Biology)**
Graduate Program

GBCB PHD INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY PLAN

Guided by our mission and principles of providing holistic interdisciplinary trainings that encompass computing life sciences and technologies, GBCB maintains the forward-looking and ever-evolving momentum in training well-rounded next-generation innovators well-equipped with computing life science principles as well as emerging technologies urgently needed by the society as a whole. Our strategic priorities will include improved wellbeing of the diverse GBCB training community with authenticity and integrity, positivity and vision, as well as inclusiveness and flexibility; customized/individualized development planning (IDP); enhanced synergistic partnerships with campus-wide Computing Life Science & Technology research and learning initiatives; as well as refined and updated integrated training curriculum. The *Inclusion and Diversity Plan* of GBCB will organically utilize resources provided by the University, the Graduate School, online seminars, webinars and additional online resources offered by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and other relevant resources.

Required topics for resolution and plan of action:

1. *The Virginia Tech Principles of Community as they apply to the valuing of human diversity and inclusion.*
2. The impact that personal actions and words have on self, others, and the communities—university, national, and global—in which we live; issues of privilege, bias, power, prejudice, and discrimination; concepts of multiple personal, social, and cultural identities.

Orientation week: Virginia Tech Principles of Community will be discussed in an in-person workshop during orientation week. GBCB prides itself in its long-standing tradition of providing holistic and nurturing environment for our trainees with diverse background and will continue this tradition starting from the very beginning of orientation.

Continuing education: examples for semester activities include taking part in online workshops, webinars or in person learning events, additionally, the Virginia Tech Principles of Community will be included in each course syllabus.

GBCB hold regular seminar series that value the active participation and input from students with diverse background. To further strengthen our principle of community, GBCB will attend at least 3 seminars during their time of studies focusing on the integrated issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in GBCB research.

GBCB students will take GRAD 5214 which will cover topics related to diversity and inclusion.

Required topics for resolution and plan of action:

3. *Available avenues of redress and our shared responsibilities as active by-standers.*
4. *The process of individual introspection required both to understand one's own forms of implicit or unconscious bias and to create inclusive environments.*

Plan of Action:

Orientation week: In person orientation with Graduate Student Ombudsperson.

Continuing education: examples for semester activities include taking part in online workshops, webinars or in person learning events. Examples include:

GBCB students will take GRAD 5214 which will cover topics related to diversity and inclusion.

Additional steps to revolve potential issues:

1. Informal Resolution

The university strongly encourages students to explore all available informal avenues for resolving concerns before filing a formal complaint/appeal. First, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with university, Graduate-School, and department-level policies that may affect or involve issues of concern. Graduate students may consult with the Graduate Dean, who has an open-door policy, the [Graduate School Ombudsperson](#), and other offices for advice on policies and on resolving their concerns and communicating with other involved parties. Informal Steps and Resources Graduate students may use one or a combination of these resources at any point in the resolution process.

Discussions with involved parties

Whenever possible, graduate students are encouraged to discuss concerns directly with the person(s) involved. The university recognizes that these conversations can be difficult and, therefore, provides resources, such as the [Graduate Student Ombudsperson](#) and other offices to help students learn how to handle these situations.

Discussions with advisor, department head, or graduate program director Students who feel they need help finding resolution or believe that departmental policy or practice is contributing to the issue of concern may discuss the matter with their advisor, department head and/or graduate program director.

Confidential Discussion with Graduate Student Ombudsperson

The Graduate Student Ombudsperson, with an office in the Graduate Life Center, is an advocate for fairness for graduate students who acts as a source of information and referral, aids in answering individual's questions, and provides an impartial "safe place" for graduate students' voices to be heard. Confidentiality, neutrality, informality, and independence are the core principles of the ombudsperson's practice. The ombudsperson will not disclose names or other information about visitors without permission. However, the office does provide information on visitor statistics and issue trends to university

administrators to foster improvements in policy, practice, and climate for graduate students. [The Office of the Graduate Student Ombudsperson](#) offers support for graduate students who want help developing options for addressing concerns or who may wish to consider learning how to deal with problems on their own. The ombudsperson does not accept formal complaints or notice on behalf of the university but can provide information on how to submit them.

Discussion with Graduate School

The Graduate School, including staff, associate deans, and the dean, is a resource for graduate students for discussing any and all concerns. The graduate dean has an open-door policy and welcomes students to visit her to discuss their concerns, questions, and experiences. The dean will maintain confidentiality whenever possible.

2. Formal Resolution

If, after attempting to resolve a concern through informal avenues, the matter remains unreconciled, students have the option to file a formal complaint/appeal. For this process, a complaint/appeal is defined as a concern brought forward by a graduate student alleging a violation, misinterpretation, or incorrect application of a policy, procedure, or practice of the university that directly affects the student.

1. Active Bystander Responsibilities

The Virginia Tech Graduate School and the GBCB PhD program encourages graduate students to be active bystanders.

For more information on how to 'get involved' and be an active bystander visit VT's '[Get Involved](#)' website.

2. Academic Bullying

The Virginia Tech Graduate School and the GBCB PhD program encourage graduate students to be active bystanders and to report academic bullying when they witness it.

Through the Disrupting Academic Bullying Initiative, the Graduate School has created resources to help members of the VT community identify academic bullying and to report it through the [Disrupting Academic Bullying Reporting Form](#).