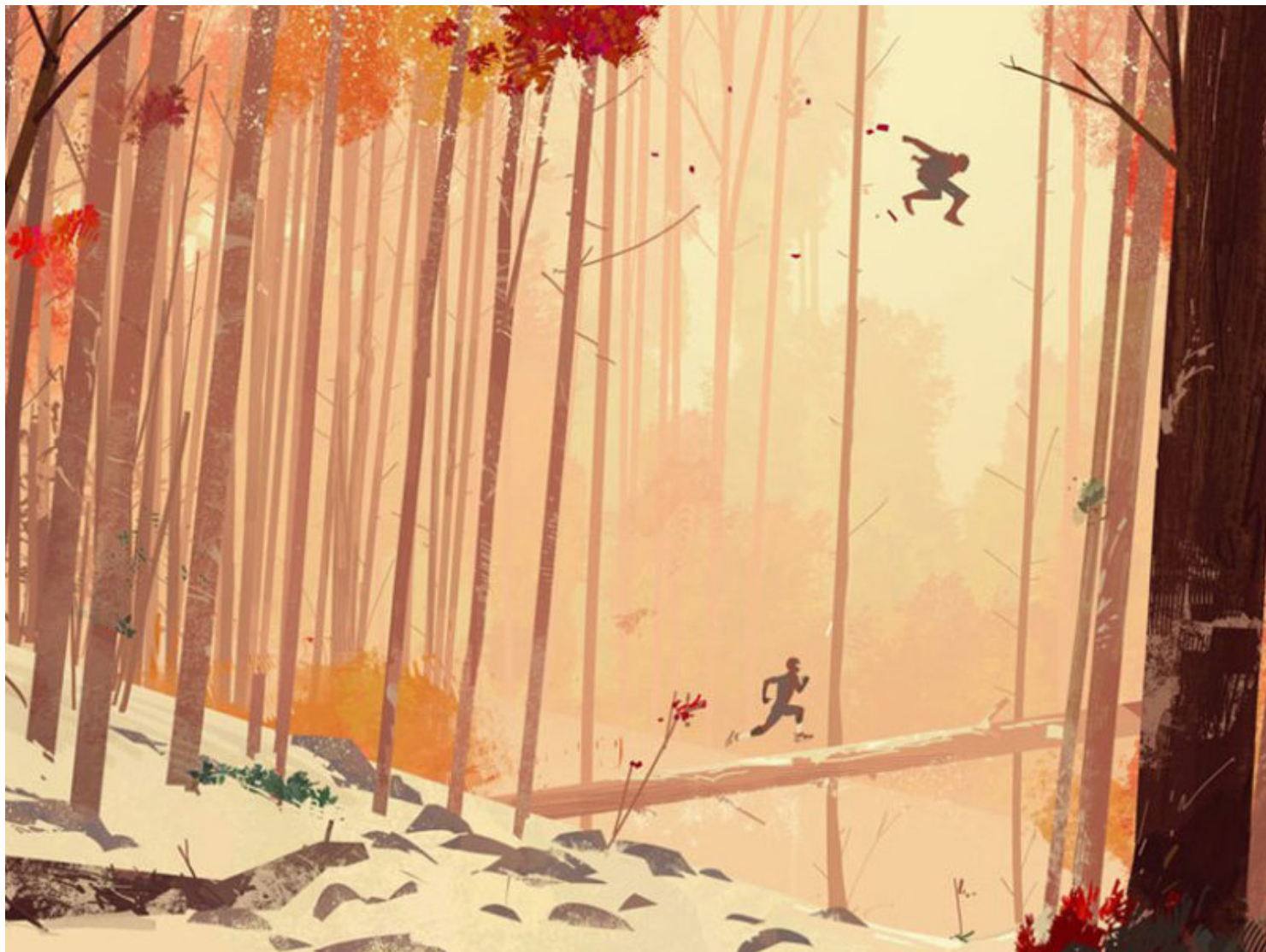


Why Diversity Matters to AGU



A new *Eos* series from diverse perspectives will show us how to lead our community into a vibrant, inclusive future.



Still from *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. Credit: Sony Pictures

By [Lisa White](#) and [Robin Bell](#) © 1 December 2019

This article introduces a series produced in collaboration with AGU's [Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee](#) (<https://www.agu.org/Learn-About-AGU/About-AGU/Governance/Committees/Diversity-Committee>) to highlight perspectives from underrepresented communities in the geosciences. Read [part 1](#)

(<https://eos.org/opinions/creating-spaces-for-geoscientists-with-disabilities-to-thrive>), *part 2*

(<https://eos.org/opinions/promoting-racial-diversity-in-geoscience-through-transparency>), *part 3*

(<https://eos.org/opinions/laying-proper-foundations-for-diversity-in-the-geosciences>), *and part 4*

(<https://eos.org/opinions/understanding-our-environment-requires-an-indigenous-worldview>). *Attendees of AGU's Fall Meeting 2019 can also use this field guide to Ethics, Diversity, and Inclusion events*

(<https://www.agu.org/Fall-Meeting/pages/ethics-diversity-and-inclusion-field-guide>).

As the largest international Earth and space science organization, AGU has a special responsibility to actively weave diversity and inclusion in its programs, membership, and practices. Reaching our Centennial is a good opportunity to reflect on that progress. We know that fostering diversity and inclusion for a scientific society of AGU's size—with a membership of 60,000 scientists representing 137 different countries—is complex and at times challenging. Changing our community requires bold action as well as nuanced responses, and it demands practices that can be implemented and strategically embedded in AGU policies and procedures.

AGU convened its [Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee](https://www.agu.org/Learn-About-AGU/About-AGU/Governance/Committees/Diversity-Committee) (<https://www.agu.org/Learn-About-AGU/About-AGU/Governance/Committees/Diversity-Committee>) for the first time in October. The committee's goal is to find practical ways for our organization to strengthen a culture that incorporates viewpoints of members that draw from their ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, and ability. AGU first articulated a plan for diversity in 2002. Although we have implemented many recommendations outlined in that plan, barriers to full participation in the Earth and space sciences remain.

Solutions are complicated. Discussions of race, ethnicity, and the experiences of other cultural minorities are uncomfortable because they inevitably lead to the recognition of core structural issues in a global society that remain unjust. Experiences shared through the stories of underrepresented scientists are

Perspectives on Diversity

- [Why Diversity Matters to AGU](https://eos.org/agu-news/why-diversity-matters-to-agu)

(<https://eos.org/agu-news/why-diversity-matters-to-agu>)

- [Creating Spaces for Geoscientists with Disabilities to Thrive](https://eos.org/opinions/creating-spaces-for-geoscientists-with-disabilities-to-thrive)

(<https://eos.org/opinions/creating-spaces-for-geoscientists-with-disabilities-to-thrive>)

- [Promoting Racial Diversity in Geoscience Through Transparency](https://eos.org/opinions/promoting-racial-diversity-in-geoscience-through-transparency)

(<https://eos.org/opinions/promoting-racial-diversity-in-geoscience-through-transparency>)

- [Laying Proper Foundations for Diversity in the Geosciences](https://eos.org/opinions/laying-proper-foundations-for-diversity-in-the-geosciences) (<https://eos.org/opinions/laying-proper-foundations-for-diversity-in-the-geosciences>)

- [Understanding Our Environment Requires an Indigenous Worldview](https://eos.org/opinions/understanding-our-environment-requires-an-indigenous-worldview)

(<https://eos.org/opinions/understanding-our-environment-requires-an-indigenous-worldview>)

- [Transcending Science: Can Artists Help Scientists Save the World?](https://eos.org/opinions/transcending-science-can-artists-help-scientists-save-the-world)

(<https://eos.org/opinions/transcending-science-can-artists-help-scientists-save-the-world>)

- [Shining a Spotlight on LGBTQ+ Visibility in STEM](https://eos.org/articles/shining-a-spotlight-on-lgbtq-visibility-in-stem) (<https://eos.org/articles/shining-a-spotlight-on-lgbtq-visibility-in-stem>)

personal and real and often produce responses that speak to the fragile nature of race relations and other sensitivities and the need to navigate the world differently.

Talking candidly about what diversity and inclusivity mean to a large international professional science society in the 21st century strikes uncomfortable chords. Changing the mores, traditions, and exclusive practices in a 100-year-old global scientific society requires vision, commitment, and the direct involvement of a cross section of members. Issues will arise that challenge us as a community. We will have to consider how we address these issues in a way that reflects different world views.

As part of moving toward that goal, we are pleased to introduce a new series of *Eos* articles highlighting a range of perspectives and experiences of those in the community of Earth and space sciences who are leading the charge in broadening participation. We hope these articles provoke thought and generate action that further develops the diversity of our community within AGU and more broadly across member institutions and educational systems that recruit and train future geoscientists. Look out for the first in the series tomorrow.

Leadership by listening will be essential to promote and encourage greater diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity.

Many groups continue to be underrepresented within the geosciences community, including historically underrepresented ethnic and cultural minorities in the United States, people from developing countries, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and persons with disabilities. The [AGU Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan](https://www.agu.org/learn-about-agu/about-agu/diversity-and-inclusion) (<https://www.agu.org/learn-about-agu/about-agu/diversity-and-inclusion>) documents that members of these groups are available in the talent pool and participating in other scientific disciplines. We must remove a range of physical, social, and psychological barriers to full participation in Earth and space science in a way that leads to permanent change within academic culture. Leadership by listening will be essential to promote and encourage greater diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity. We will change the professional landscape of geosciences together. If you are attending AGU's Fall Meeting this December in San Francisco, consider attending one of the many [panels, receptions, and other events focused on this diversity effort in our community](https://www.agu.org/Fall-Meeting/pages/ethics-diversity-and-inclusion-field-guide) (<https://www.agu.org/Fall-Meeting/pages/ethics-diversity-and-inclusion-field-guide>).

We are excited to present the experiences of student members who are first generation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), stories about the intersectional experiences of women of color in the Earth and space sciences, and the perspectives of indigenous scientists who are sharing local knowledge with wide global impacts. These stories illustrate how a scientific organization can practice and promote inclusivity.

We dream of the day we move beyond the concept that an AGU hero must resemble Indiana Jones. Instead, AGU should be the Spider-Verse of science.

We both attended our first AGU meeting in the early 1980s. Today, we are proud to represent and be ambassadors for a professional society that is ever more awake and willing to actively promote and practice more inclusive policies. We dream of the day we move beyond the concept that an AGU hero must resemble Indiana Jones. Instead, AGU should be the Spider-Verse of science, where anyone can discover new wonders and connect our science to the needs of our communities.

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