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Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization - Example Deliverable

This is what was found by TAMU at College of Geosciences on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

Pods may have members from a range of career stages and involvement in the development and execution of research projects, and pod members may have different experiences or different perspectives when responding to these questions. Consider this in the summary document and focus on capturing responses that are representative of the range in your pod.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**
  - K-12 school visits from students from underrepresented communities.
  - GEO-X 4-day outreach program consists of a geoscience workshop which introduces high school students to various college programs.
  - The Geography Department regularly interacts with communities of color.
  - A faculty member of our sub-pod has conducted research in the Amazon, Indonesia, and other regions with communities of color. Another faculty member in our sub-pod has collaborated on some research with a faculty member at Prairie View A&M, which is known to be a minority serving institution. The grad student members of our pod have not yet conducted research focusing on areas with communities of color or worked with communities of color specifically in our short careers as researchers. Concerning the rest of the Atmospheric Sciences department, we were unsure of the interactions other research groups have had with communities of color either across the US or internationally.
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- **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - Leaders from major community organizations were collaborators on past projects.
  - Our faculty member in our pod who has worked internationally with communities of color discussed how these communities were generally friendly and welcoming to them as researchers. She did note that the process was rather slow in working toward including the communities in the work and receiving both their approval and the institutions' approval back home with the proposals, etc. During her time spent in these countries, she did have the opportunity to learn more about their culture as well.

- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
  - We are not sure how successful or unsuccessful these projects were in terms of collaboration.
  - There were areas where speed bumps occurred in developing the relationships and learning how to interact together as researchers and people with different world views.

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For example, the faculty member who worked internationally had to find resources about the cultures on her own. There were none provided to her, so she had to learn on the fly also. Furthermore, we discussed the issue of how we as scientists trained in the typical western and well-known style of science are trained to not trust anecdotal knowledge. This can make it challenging to work with communities of color, particularly native communities who have those different ways of knowing. Another example that was discussed in our sub-pod meeting was that of the National Climate Assessment. One of our faculty members was an author on that report and he worked with a Native American member on that assessment. However, there is still no published research on how climate change is affecting those communities. As a scientific community as a whole, we need to find a way to incorporate these different knowledge sources into our understanding and policies.
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- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
  - ○ Include local researchers in the early stages of project design.

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**
  - ○ Inclusion of communities during initial planning stages, which is open and flexible, and willing to incorporate community ideas
  - ○ Iterative research design (adaptive process to address and incorporate community needs
    - ○ Discuss with community about data ownership, and be willing to share data
- Having representation and contacts from communities of color within departments would improve interactions with those communities for research and outreach. We are unsure as to what resources A&M has available for reaching underrepresented people nationally and locally. Recruiting people of color into college is one way we can improve as a department and as a college. For those communities that value family units and togetherness, perhaps there is a way to offer hybrid classes so that those who wish to attend college can do so without feeling like they are no longer assisting with familial affairs. However, access to computers and internet can be challenging, particularly for poorer communities.
- Another area of improvement for these interactions would be training. Is there training at the college level for interacting with native communities or other international communities of color? Perhaps the college could provide resources like the state department sometimes does for international travel. Providing cultural information for a region would better serve us as researchers in order to interact with these communities in a respectful way. Other possible options we discussed as a pod include:
- Collaborating with faculty and students at other minority serving institutions to improve interactions and allow for more interactions with communities of color and include them in the scientific process

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- Finding out what native lands we work on as an institution in the state of Texas and acknowledging those land rights in the future
- University wide offering of racial/cultural training to acquire different perspectives from and about various peoples of color
    - Racism, fear of the unknown, and preconceived notions about communities of color is embedded within research and the scientific community. Finding more ways to combat this is what we feel is the first step toward including these communities better in our research and our interactions as scientists.
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