URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences (GES) at Appalachian State University (ASU).

This is what was found by Appalachian Geological and Environmental Sciences Pod at ASU on Policies for Working with Communities of Color, as well as plans for improved strategies and/or needed resources.

Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:
Many field research projects in GES are local, and therefore have not included meaningful interactions with communities of color, as nearly all local research projects (defined as <2 hours driving time) are constrained to the demographics of our surrounding communities, which are >90% white, rural, and working-class. Our university’s emphasis on local research projects means that we have few opportunities to work with communities of color.

- Examples of domestic research/outreach projects in the past decade that have included communities of color include:
  - Conducting geoarchaeological research on Lincoln Revolutionary War Mansion slave quarters by Dr. Ellen Cowan and GES student Neeshell Bradley-Lewis
  - Recording of unmarked Black graves in Boone, NC with geophysical surveying by Dr Scott Marshall and Keith Seruamur with GES undergraduate students
  - Running frequent geoscience outreach events and classes for BIPOC communities with an emphasis on Latinx and Black communities within 2-4 hours of ASU by the GES outreach coordinator, Marta Toran
  - Connecting GES faculty to community members with geoscience concerns with the ‘Ask a Geologist’ program (https://earth.appstate.edu/outreach/ask-geologist)

- International research projects in the last decade that include interactions with local communities of color include collaborative research led by Dr Sarah Carmichael and Dr Johnny Waters in Mongolia (co-led by local Mongolian geoscientists as part of the UNESCO International Geoscience Programme on paleontology and paleoclimate) and work on early human footprints by Dr. Cynthia Liutkus-Pierce in Tanzania.
- Future initiatives: We would like to increase our collaborations with communities of color, and wish to avoid doing performative work for the sake of checking a broader impact box, or work that tokenizes communities.

What has worked well in GES’s research and outreach relationships with communities of color (both locally and internationally):
Connecting with local community organizations and local teachers to identify outreach opportunities

- Including researchers from the host country/location as PIs or senior personnel on grants; paying local scientists for their time
- Translating outreach materials into Spanish
- Traveling to communities for outreach (versus them coming to us) with our mobile earth sciences ‘Geobago’ van
- Explicitly teach undergraduate students how to be respectful of local communities while performing fieldwork (urban vs. rural best practices)
- Publishing findings in newspapers (versus only academic papers)

What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans:

- Not including priorities of local communities of color when developing research proposals outside of our own community, especially in the Arctic. To address this in the future we will reach out to community organizers before proposal preparation and build their salary into our budgets.

Ways to improve the outcomes of ongoing projects and practices in engagement with local communities (regardless of demographic):

- Include land acknowledgments in talks and papers (study site figures, acknowledgments section)
- Revise GES 2745 (our departmental writing and research methods class) curriculum to include land acknowledgments in their semester-long project on local rocks and watersheds
- Identify support groups that BIPOC students can reach out to at ASU like the Native American Student Association (NASA) Club and Black Students Association, and present these options in group advising, so that students can develop networks and identity-based communities outside of our department.
- Translate local research results into interpretative signs to reach a broader audience associated with local tourism (ex: Virginia Creeper Trail, NC State Park system)
Specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color:

- Create a point of contact database for local communities - Outreach Coordinator Marta Toran is our best resource for this
- Send land acknowledgment resources to other GES faculty
- For funded projects in communities of color where human involvement and community building is part of the project (typically these would be projects involving environment/climate/water resources/geoarchaeology) encourage all GES research proposals to include funding for collaborations with community leaders or representatives (outreach or otherwise). Create agreements prior to beginning projects on data ownership and dissemination, as well as on timelines and ownership of deliverables.
- For funded projects where researchers will be working in field sites in communities of color, invite local researchers to be significantly involved in the project (co-authorship, lead authorship, salary/stipend when allowable by the funding organization, etc.). Create agreements prior to beginning projects on data ownership and dissemination, as well as on timelines and ownership of deliverables.