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

This is what was found by Georgetown Pod at Georgetown University 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:
  - When looking at these questions, we decided to focus on actions taken by our lab and within our department because we felt that we could develop action plans and protocols that were directly implementable by us, as opposed to tackling the larger and much more complex framework of the university at large. However, we do want to note Georgetown’s complicated and often harmful past interactions with communities of color and the ongoing work by many groups at Georgetown in tackling this history:
    - Slavery at Georgetown
      - Georgetown has, since 2015, been working to address its history of slavery, particularly the 1838 sale of 272 enslaved people. The enslaved people were sold by the Maryland Province of Jesuits, and part of the money from the sale was used to pay off debts owed by Georgetown. The GU272 were not the only people enslaved by the Jesuits whose labor and sale were exploited by the university, but much of the university’s work to make its own archives and history accessible to the public and to collaborate with the Descendant community has centered on this sale. The university’s Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation was convened in 2015, and their report and ongoing work are available here. This work has included renaming buildings on campus, outreach to the Descendant community,
particularly regarding admission to Georgetown, the establishment of the Georgetown Slavery Archive, and, most recently, Georgetown’s involvement in/support of The Descendants Truth & Reconciliation Foundation, a charitable organization whose board contains representatives from the Descendant and Jesuit communities, as well as from Georgetown and from Southern University. According to the press release linked above, “Georgetown provided $1 million in funding over the past year to support the planning and technical work necessary to formally establish the foundation… Georgetown also has committed to contributing $400,000 a year – based on the amount proposed by a student referendum in 2019 – for a reconciliation fund to support work to benefit the Descendant community.” The student referendum referenced here would have established a reparations fund through a fee of $27.20 paid each semester by students, and it was passed by a vote of the student body, though Georgetown’s Board of Trustees chose not to enact it.

- **Indigenous displacement past and ongoing**
  - Georgetown is located on the traditional homelands of the Piscataway and Nacotchtank (Anacostan) people (from https://native-land.ca). Student activists from Georgetown’s Native American Student Council, in conversation with the Piscataway, petitioned the university to begin a formal practice of land acknowledgement, to establish an Indigenous studies program, and to hire Indigenous faculty, in 2019. Also in 2019, the Maryland Department of the Environment denied an application for a solar installation proposed by the university that would have clear-cut 200 acres of Piscataway land in Maryland. The university does support the Indigenous Studies Working Group, whose reports date back to at least 2015, but there remains much work to be done for the university in reckoning with its historic and current displacement of Indigenous people.

- In terms of our lab’s previous engagement with communities of color:
  - Our lab focuses heavily on fieldwork and we often travel internationally to accomplish this. Some locations we have visited in the past include Antarctica, Western Australia, New Zealand, the Atacama Desert in Chile, and Iceland. We have always strived to obtain the appropriate sampling permissions and permits from groups who manage the lands we are
interested in, Indigenous or otherwise. However, in the past we have neglected to include Indigenous perspectives in a more active role in our research, particularly in terms of shaping research proposals, data management, and sharing our findings. We are hoping to engage in further discussions and planning on how to change this through some of the suggestions outlined below.

● What worked well in these interactions?
  ○ Personal experience from a member of our lab found that regulation of fieldwork practices in New Zealand were very respectful of Indigenous communities and often included these perspectives in decision-making. We hope some of these practices could be adapted for our own approach to fieldwork. Some of our lab's field expeditions with collaborators who had established relationships with local communities, as in the Atacama Desert in Chile and in New Zealand, allowed us to ensure our practices were in compliance with local regulations and the terms of the Indigenous communities at those sites, and we hope to expand this practice into all of our field expeditions to areas with Indigenous communities (though some of our field sites, i.e. those in Antarctica, do not have local or Indigenous communities).

● What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?
  ○ In the past, our lab has failed to ensure that the considerations of relevant communities of color are included in the early stage of planning & proposing a new fieldwork project. Moving forward, we hope to better establish relationships with local communities at our field sites in advance of our expeditions, work with them to shape our projects, and ensure that the findings of our work are made available and accessible to them.
  ○ Additionally, our lab will also develop practices for researching which Indigenous communities were originally sovereign on land that no longer belongs to them & acknowledging them in publications (e.g. land acknowledgement for work in National Parks). We aim to establish a guideline (similar to a Standard Operating Procedure) for what steps to take when we seek to establish research in a new field site, and for that guideline to be shared with our current and future members of the lab.

● Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?
  ○ Include land acknowledgements in future publications and presentations
  ○ Ensure that we include local names for landmarks or fieldwork locations
Understand the provenance of samples we received from collaborators and making sure they were collected ethically and with permission of communities who steward that land.

Develop principles/questions to ask about incoming samples or fieldwork to ensure it is planned properly.

Ensure that we work with the Indigenous community with regards to data sovereignty and assure that results from data collected on Indigenous land is accessible for those communities.

- Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?
  - Providing guidelines for grad students and early career researchers on what to be aware of when planning fieldwork/proposals.
  - Include a module in our ‘Intro to Grad School/Bio 505’ class on respectful interactions w/ communities of color in research to make sure this awareness is present early on.
  - Host department-wide workshop on interactions with communities of color including and beyond fieldwork (e.g. use of HeLa cells, management and data ownership of human samples).