Demographic data for LSU, College of Science, and G&G

The deliverable for session 3 is another scavenger hunt to figure out 1) what our organization’s current practices are, and 2) what improvements can be made or suggested. This week, the topic is the collection of demographic data, important for determining our current representation and tracking any improvement.

What demographic data are collected? What do the numbers tell us?

- The demographic data that are reported to the Department through the EIS system are the total number of majors (BS, MS, PhD), gender, race, ethnicity, domestic, non-resident alien, etc. The data are SELF reported by the student at the time of ADMISSION. So, LSU has a difficult time tracking changes in race, gender, ethnicity as a student progresses through a degree program. However, if a BS student becomes an MS or PhD student, the student must go through the admission process again, so the student can make changes then. (These are governed by the LSU Data Steward Committee, of which Pod-member Wicks is a part.)
- For employees (faculty, staff), demographic data are collected at the point of employment and are available from EIS to Department Chairs. Faculty by race and Faculty by gender. Faculty by Rank. But not simultaneously so specific individuals cannot be identified.

What do the recent demographic data tell us?

- Undergraduate students
  - Undergraduates are still not at gender equity (~27% averaged over 11 years); however, the past four years there has been improvement (~33%).
  - Race and ethnicity equity are still very low (lowest % white recorded over 11 years was 74.4% and %white was typically ~80% over 11 years).
- Graduate students
  - Graduates are not at gender equity either (35% over 15 years) and the percentage of Africans American students averaged 4% over that period.
  - According to the G&G demographics compiled in Fall 2020 as part of the GRExit discussion, African Americans are 6% of our department (compared with 33% of Louisiana), Hispanics are 5% of our department (compared with 2% of Louisiana), and Asians are 14% of our department (compared with 2% of Louisiana).
- GeoDE: The Geoscience Diversity Enhancement Program
  - GeoDE was a grad student RAship source funded by Marathon and Shell for the purpose of increasing the diversity of the graduate population. GeoDE began admitting students in Fall of 2010 and admitted the final student in Fall 2016
  - A brief review of graduate level departmental demographics during the period of GeoDE activity indicates a coincident increase in the number of female graduate students (which we are not sure is directly attributable to the GeoDE program), but no recognizable increase in the number of non-white, non-resident alien students.
Are the data public? Who has access? (e.g., chairs only?) If private, why?

- Demographic data that are publicly available are limited to the College level (not Departmental level). [https://www.lsu.edu/bgtplan/at_a_glance.php](https://www.lsu.edu/bgtplan/at_a_glance.php)
- Departmental data can be accessed by Chair under MyLSU/Planning Resources/Enterprise Information System. Data can be downloaded as spreadsheets for further data analysis.
- For good reasons, persons other than the chair can request access from the Office of Budget and Planning Assistant Director for Institutional Research.
- Data are not able to account for multiple attributes simultaneously (i.e., students are not identifiable, even anonymously)
- Data are updated once a year, in the fall semester.
- Demographic categories are determined by a combination of federal reporting requirements, Louisiana Board of Regents reporting requirements, and LSU categories of interest
- We recommend that demographic data be reported to the faculty annually and that we institute more formal review and evaluation of success or failure of initiatives or policies for increasing diversity on a regular, rolling basis (e.g. every 5 years).

Are there stated and measurable goals for representation in our organization?

- Not currently - ballpark targets are that students and faculty and staff represent the Louisiana demographics (2020: 62% White, 33% AA, 2% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1% Other). There is an ongoing effort at the university level (President’s Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity) that we expect will provide formal recommendations later during the Spring 2021 semester. Below we consider and make recommendations for changes that could help us increase diversity within several different aspects of our department.
  - Hiring of faculty
    - We recommend that LSU-level provost/president reinstitute committing funds to faculty hires that would increase the diversity of departments and colleges. We note that in the recent past such initiatives have helped G&G make tangible steps toward gender equity.
    - We are currently waiting to see what large-scale recommendations will be suggested by the aforementioned President’s Task Force, but will revisit recommendations for our department once it becomes clear how the university policies will change in the coming months.
  - Recruiting of undergraduate students...
    - We anticipate that recruiting of undergraduate students from under represented groups will be more fully addressed in later sessions on engaging with communities of color, and thus do not have formal recommendations for this aspect of our department make up at this time.
  - Recruiting of graduate students...
    - Consider incentivizing or otherwise encouraging faculty to attend scientific meetings with more diverse populations (e.g. SACNAS:
Admission of graduate students…

- How do we evaluate applications? How can we shift our evaluations to better value the assets and experiences of students of color?
- Is there some sort of implicit-bias-ish training for people evaluating applications? Could we recommend that our grad admissions committee take such a training? Some of these exist here: Workshops & Trainings | LSU Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and Associate Dean Carol Wicks will solicit the development of Grad Admissions specific trainings and/or inquire which menu of current training would be appropriate for this purpose.

We recommend that our faculty at large become aware of the experiences of students of color (e.g., more likely to work multiple jobs, less likely to have been able to focus exclusively on academics, and likely to have a somewhat lower GPA). For actionable items, we suggest:

- In keeping with our recent removal of the GRE as an application requirement, we advocate for the de-emphasis of simple metrics (e.g., GPA) in admissions and awarding of TA position decisions.
- We recommend implementing a system of holistic review of applications. We acknowledge the increase in workload entailed, and suggest this be addressed in a way that distributes the workload, possibly informed by NSF panel-style “one or two people deeply read each and then we discuss”.
- We also recognize this will take additional time and might result in later offer letters, and recommend delaying the sending of offer letters as needed to provide more time for the admissions committee to fully evaluate applications.
- Similarly, we also recommend the expansion of the admissions committee as needed (e.g., to 5 members) to further spread the workload.

- We recommend that in the awarding of department TAships, demographics of the applicants be taken into serious consideration, and should be given at least equal weight with other criteria, particularly with regard to under-represented minorities. Those considerations should be informed by the current department demographics.

Invitations for speakers…
- We recommend that seminar speaker invitations strive for gender parity and strive for a non-zero number of speakers from under-represented minorities each semester. These goals could be codified in the seminar committee handbook. These goals should also be reiterated to community members when soliciting suggestions for speakers (the latter can be done with a brief addition to the header of the google form we currently use to solicit speaker nominations).
- We recommend soliciting alumni donation funding to specifically support the expenses of speakers from under-represented minorities. This would allow us to draw from a wider geographic pool and provide an incentive to faculty to suggest speakers from under-represented groups.
- We recommend that the demographics of seminar speakers be tracked by the seminar committee year-to-year to enable the evaluation of progress in achieving demographic goals.

- Regular Assessment of Department goals and Priorities
  - When these recommendations are made/adopted, we recommend reviewing the demographic data annually and specifically in 3 years (2024) and 5 years (2026) to determine if any adopted policy/practice changes resulted in a more diverse G&G department, benchmarked against an average of the past 5 years.