URGE Management Plan for Rice University Department of Earth, Environmental and Planetary Sciences

This plan outlines how we will incorporate deliverables into our organization as we continue to develop, assess, and finalize policies and resources.

Leadership and participation: Going forward, we will implement a shared leadership model, elected by lottery. Our elections will be in early June, and our new leadership will be responsible for completing this table as appropriate by setting guidelines and nominating points of contact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Existing Policy or Resource?</th>
<th>Initial Point of Contact(s)</th>
<th>Where It Is or Will Be Posted</th>
<th>Review/Update Interval</th>
<th>Racial Risk Assessment?</th>
<th>Training Recommended?</th>
<th>Approval, Check, and/or Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reform as URGE Action Group!</td>
<td>See text below</td>
<td>Jeanine Ash</td>
<td>Public ceremony June 2021</td>
<td>annual</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints and Reporting Policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies for Working with Communities of Color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Agreement** – We will update our agreement as a pod and with university leadership to reflect what we have learned and our new leadership plan moving forward. We have developed allyship at the Dean and Vice Provost level, but we have not yet determined how to interact with our department’s DEI committee. Our new agreement will address this. We note that we had difficulty in getting higher administration to sign our pod agreement due to internal Rice University policies. Moving forward, we will circulate our agreement but not ask for signatures.

• **Pod Guidelines** – Moving forward, our URGE members will re-form as an “URGE Action Group.” To strive for equity, our leadership will rotate annually and be decided by lottery ([https://democracyinpractice.org/](https://democracyinpractice.org/)). Those wishing to serve each year will self-nominate. Our first election will be held in June, 2021. To ensure representation, separate lotteries will be held for BIPOC and white leaders to form one leadership group that will review and set the interaction guidelines and agreement each year. Leaders of no less than three members will be chosen, with additional members selected as necessary to ensure a mixed career stage group. The leadership committee will recruit URGE Action Group members to pursue changes and additions to anti-racist policies and resources and can nominate points of contact for action items, advisors, reading circles, etc. To be effective, these action items will have deadlines for initiation and a review calendar set up in advance.

• **Complaints and Reporting Policy** – We found many avenues for reporting at Rice University, and in this discovery process, determined that there was no singular place to turn to that outlined all of these resources. Therefore, our first objective is to create and maintain (via annual review) a resource map for complaints and reporting specific to our department. A particularly good example of this is the document created by the Dartmouth pod ([https://twitter.com/DrVasshe/status/1385965417185878017](https://twitter.com/DrVasshe/status/1385965417185878017)) and we will take the text of our Deliverable #2 and create such a map for our own department. We would like to advocate that department and college-level ombudpersons are required to have training in handling the complaints they may encounter, and that the “chain of events” (i.e. mandatory reporting) that may occur when a conversation with an ombudsperson is initiated is clear from the outset. We also note that ombudspersons
who are not full faculty may be conflicted, and this topic merits further exploration.

- **Demographic Data** – We found that some data was publicly available to us, but other data was not accessible – particularly at the granular, departmental level and when it relates to an applicant pool during the hiring process. We will continue to work with HR to access these data in a way consistent with a racial risk assessment necessary for using these data to inform our desired policy changes. Our current understanding is that contacting HR well before a search begins and working with them to ensure we follow laws and respect the privacy of applicants may be one way to approach this. Understanding the demographics of our undergraduate majors, graduate students, faculty and staff is an important indicator of how we are doing at creating a study and workplace where BIPOC feel welcome and reviewing these data to assess changes will be an important part of that process. We also think of demographics in terms of who we are honoring and memorializing. The department has several named awards and chairs. We will research these and will advocate for changes as appropriate. We will suggest that the faculty member in charge of soliciting and scheduling speakers for our seminar series does so in an equitable, just, diverse and inclusive manner.

- **Policies for Working with Communities of Color** - Interactions between the EEPS department and communities of color occur in fieldwork settings, both domestically and internationally. We are aware that the history of fieldwork in the geosciences has been dominated by parachute/colonialist scholarship which did not meaningfully include local communities, and we recognize the problematic nature of this approach. To address this, we propose that the EEPS department develop guidelines for field work that encourages EEPS scholars to assess their field campaigns from the perspective of the local community, starting with the assumptions that we intend to be good guests, to recognize the knowledge of local communities, and that we will do our best to generate scholarship that is engaged with, and serves the needs of the local people. In addition, labor from enslaved people and land taken from Native people have played a central role in generating the money that supports our scholarship. We recommend that the department develop templates for land and labor acknowledgements to be used by EEPS department members when presenting our work.

- **Admissions and Hiring Policies** – For both graduate admissions and faculty hiring, we suggest that a blind review of applications may decrease bias in reviewing and selecting applicants. We also recommend bias training for both the graduate admissions chair and any hiring panel convened. For both processes, we suggest establishing rubrics and equity checks at various points in the process. Our Equal Opportunity Employment text is not advertised consistently in job solicitations. We suggest that it should be, and we also suggest that this text should be revised. Our department’s hiring and admissions
policies have never (to our knowledge) been reviewed to determine how our policies may either positively or negatively impact the diversity of our faculty, staff and student populations. We recommend regular, external review of these processes.  

Graduate admissions: Our department did a test run of admissions without GRE’s in 2020/2021; we will advocate for its permanent removal moving forward. We will provide updated resources for applying to graduate school by linking to www.geogradapp.com on our website. We recommend directly recruiting students through outreach to minority-serving listserves, institutions and conferences such as SACNAS. There is currently no statement on our graduate application website that explicitly states we value applications from diverse groups; we will advocate for this. We will advocate that all graduate application fees are waived, or that the waivers are more accessible. We will advocate for changes to the written portion of the graduate application so that what we are asking for is clear and useful (following the tip seen during this session). We will advocate for equity checks and rubrics in the admissions process. We note that after an initial HR check, all applications are forwarded to the graduate admissions chair (GAC) who then forwards them on to individual faculty members where the GAC notes research overlap. This means the GAC has immense sway in advocating for students who may otherwise fall through the cracks if a research match is not obvious. Ensuring the GAC is enacting this process in a way that is JEDI is key to our goals; therefore, we advocate that this process 1) be documented, 2) have built-in equity checks, and 3) be assessed annually. We will advocate that the department pursue participation in the AGU Bridge Program to build on the groundwork we are laying for having a diverse, inclusive, equitable and just geoscience department. Finally, we will explore the feasibility of a “matching model” for students who may not have an obvious research match within our department, similar to rotation models in chemistry and biology programs.  

Faculty hiring: We note that a diversity statement has not been required for faculty candidates to this point, and that requiring one would allow us to include the JEDI work of candidates as part of the evaluation process. We would like to incorporate research that shows that having diverse committees result in diverse hires, but in a way that does not place an extra burden of labor on our BIPOC faculty and staff. Our department chair is responsible for convening these committees so we will advocate for a commitment from our chair to this effect. To our knowledge, Rice has no written policy for dual couple hires, and each instance is handled on a case-by-case basis. This can introduce bias into the hiring process that may disproportionately affect BIPOC, and we advocate for a more transparent university-level policy on this matter.  

- **Safety Plan** - We found that no codes of conduct are publicly available for faculty or staff, and that these should exist and be a part of onboarding new employees. Our department’s DIJ committee is working on a departmental code of conduct, and we will help with this effort as appropriate. Lab or PI-specific codes of conduct are not mandatory at Rice or in the department,
but we will advocate for them. Our department has recently completed a safety guide for field trips, but we found it lacking in some areas, notably 1) no racial risk assessment; 2) no consideration of LGTBQ+ risks in travel and 3) accessibility assessments. We will advocate that our departmental field trip guidelines are updated.

- **Resource Map** – We currently do not have a resource map available for supporting BIPOC students, faculty and staff, so our first action item will be to complete our drafted resource map and make it available during onboarding, as a resource on our website and part of new student orientation. While exploring resources to be included on our map, we found some areas for improvement at Rice, and we will advocate for changes in these areas: 1) BIPOC members (especially incoming graduate students) and also first-generation graduate students can benefit from explicit mention of available academic resources: e.g. types of journals to subscribe for paper alerts, external funding opportunities, course/workshops opportunities. We will continue to research and add these resources to our map. 2) Increasing the visibility of BIPOC members by hosting/facilitating networking events, mentorship on how to navigate collaborations external to Rice, bringing in speakers that are diverse, making targeted faculty hires that will contribute to DEI in our department. 3) We found that improving the access to resources for coding was something many students found lacking in our current academic/technical skills resources. Implementing coding skills across a variety of current DEEPS courses or having coding classes centered on geoscience topics to address this is something we will advocate for. 4) Lab group codes of conduct are not widely used in our department; we will advocate for this so that students and faculty are aware of expectations. 5) Field trip codes of conduct are in need of updating particularly where racial and LGBTQ+ risk assessments are concerned. 6) We will advocate for more transparency in how graduate students’ qualifying exams are implemented, perhaps through the creation of a rubric. 7) We currently do not have a writing skills class for graduate students from an Earth Science perspective. “How to write a scientific paper” courses exist in the College of Natural Sciences, but we think our students would benefit from one that is more Earth Science focused. We will advocate for this. 8) Although Rice has many university-wide affinity groups, we currently do not have any departmental discipline-focused affinity group chapters (i.e. GeoLatinas, etc.). We would like to establish these so that incoming BIPOC have a built-in community with peers for support and social activities.
1) Other things we want to address for our department/university
   a. safety plan or resources: bathroom map of gender neutral bathrooms at Rice; we have so many bathrooms in EEPS: can one or more be gender neutral?
   b. How to activate the unwilling?
   c. Doing exit interviews (with DEI in mind) with graduating students.

2) Perhaps continuing a structured reading group
   a. may be addressed in the continuation of URGE? DEI seminars either as speaker series or reading group. We could ask for honoraria for speakers on DEI topics. Overlapping interest with the DIJ committee- have it on the Thursday seminar rather than GIESS to give it the same weight and importance as other geoscience topics.

3) How to/should we formalize this in our curriculum?
   a. A FWIS that meets a D3 requirement acted as an incentive against selecting science majors (Carrie Masiello – pers. comm.).
   b. Balancing meeting the needs of majors to receive an anti-racist education with recruiting with having the right person to do the work (a DEI officer for the department/college?).
   c. Department commitment to meeting new course requirements for undergraduates “Courses in which the nature and quality of the assignments, a clear majority of the course content, and whose student learning objectives specifically address the principal characteristics related to Social and Cultural Analysis, Systemic Inequities and their Redress, and/or Equity, Knowledge and the University will be eligible for approval” Natural Hazards, Environmental Justice, EEPS 110 – this can get around the idea that adding course as requirements acts as a disincentive
   d. How to make a part of this (i.e. the parts not specific to geosciences necessarily, but the more general part of the curriculum we engaged with as part of orientation
   e. Required course for geoscience majors based in part on the URGE curriculum? 50/50 ethics and anti racism in the geosciences.

4) Is there a need to continue some of our work with funding i.e. NSF GOLD-EN, or asking for resources from the department or dean?

5) Can we use authentic research experiences for freshmen as a recruitment/retention tool?

6) The 8th lecture was an amazing peek inside how UCSD has changed the landscape of their university in JEDI space – how do we get our administrators to watch this?