

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



 University of
Kentucky

This is a draft Resource Map for the Earth and Environmental Sciences department at the University of Kentucky. This was adapted from the “Sample Ph.D. Mentoring Plan” developed by Vashan Wright (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution) and Karin Block (City College of New York and CUNY Graduate Center), License: [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Resource Map ([link](#)):

A database of resources within the university and community exists at <https://www.uky.edu/diversityresources/>. This database offers things ranging from organizations and groups on campus POC and minorities can join to have a safe community, to off-campus businesses and communities to support. However, this is not yet easily accessible on the Earth and Environmental Sciences department web page, and students are not often made aware of its existence. It is important to make this database known and readily available to students in the EES department at UK and to discuss how to further foster an inclusive environment in our department.

New undergraduate and graduate students as well as newly-hired faculty members should be shown that this resource database exists upon starting at UK, as this list of resources provides individuals who may need a support group outside of the EES department many possible groups through which to build a support network.

External resources:

- [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) - discussion of how to practice self-care in the face of racism as a constant preventative process rather than a reactionary process.
- [Psychology Today](#) - recommends small acts of affirmation and radical self-care to ensure that we can continue to engage in healthy acts of empowerment.
- [How white people can engage in community care](#) - provides key recommendations that white allies can actively practice, especially if they are not sure how to engage because they are “not experts.”
- [Ending white racism is self-care](#) - how to lead fruitful conversations **without putting more stress and work on BIPOC people**.

- [Curriculum for white Americans to educate themselves on race and racism](#) - a discussion directed towards white people in America that outlines how and why the actions of white people are incredibly important in addressing and limiting racism.
- [The emotional toll of racism](#) - discusses how the everyday experience of racism leads to a constant feeling of exhaustion, which can lead to depression and less productivity compared to white people who don't face race-related problems among other things.

Mentoring plan:

- Mentors are individuals who pass on knowledge to those less experienced than themselves. Though mentors are often a student's research advisor or professor, this is not exclusively the case - for example, graduate students can serve as mentors to undergraduate students and experienced PhD candidates can act as mentors to new master's students. This could be managed through the existing departmental organizations SGE and G3 in cooperation with the DGS and DUS.
- Ideally, in the case of faculty research advisors, mentors should reach an agreement with their mentees early on in their relationship over what is necessary for them to succeed.
 - For example, how regularly would meeting as individuals or as a research group be useful/possible? How hands-on or hands-off would be best for the mentee, and how much of each is feasible for the mentor to offer? How much feedback does the mentee need to succeed, and how much feedback is reasonable to expect?
- Importantly, regardless of relationship (research advisor/master's student, graduate student/undergraduate student, etc.), a quality, supportive mentor's feedback and criticism should be constructive and certainly not accusational or demeaning.
- Faculty mentors at UK should have their research group at least twice per semester read articles about race and gender in STEM and in the geosciences, then discuss as a group how to use the information from those articles to shape a more inclusive, welcoming research group.
- The experiences of every individual in the geosciences is unique; faculty mentors at the EES department should not expect everyone to have the same familiarity with field skills such as setting up a tent, managing food and water/dehydration, and comfort levels in various situations, etc. Therefore, it is recommended that the EES faculty provide "crash courses" for the entire departmental student body in various topics such as field work basics. This reduces the potential for people with less or no experience in any skill taken for granted as being universally known to feel outcasted or judged.
- Publicly acknowledge that it's very common to feel inadequate. This might stem from unfamiliarity with labor-intensive or coding-intensive work that may make students seem unsuited and embarrassed to learn from scratch. Although this occurs for modeling and

coding, it's much less common to see this for fieldwork. People are anxious and "on edge" and many tend to overreact or assign more technical tasks only to those they trust, because there's not enough time or resources to mess up by trial and error. Necessary skills that are expected of everyone should be discussed beforehand, as many people may not have had traditional experiences with field work/field camp.

- Any incidents of racism, discrimination, or harassment may be reported to the University of Kentucky at one of the following links:
 - Bias incident reporting: <https://www.uky.edu/biss/report-bias-incident>
 - Discrimination or harassment reporting: <https://www.uky.edu/eo/discrimination-harassment>.
- The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences is committed to maintaining an inclusive environment for everyone. No instances of insensitive remarks or harassment shall be tolerated, whether by race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or less serious topics such as familiarity with field work, whether or not an individual drinks alcohol, or other differences in experiences.
- Normalize discussions about race in the department. Consider establishing a white allies group. An important step to addressing the race-related issues in the geosciences is to consider the role white people consciously and unconsciously play, so it would be useful to have a group for white allies to discuss the feelings of discomfort/defensiveness that may come up from acknowledging white privilege.

Community support and mental health resources:

- Resources are available at <https://www.uky.edu/diversityresources/> for finding mental health and community resources both on campus and off campus, including minority-owned businesses, grocery stores, and restaurants, churches that are primarily Black, or Asian-American, and low-income housing options.
 - A few important highlights are:
 - [The UK Academic Ombud](#)
 - [The Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching \(CELT\)](#)
 - [The Martin Luther King Center](#)
 - [The UK Counseling Center](#)
 - [Bias Incident Support Services](#)
 - [The Center for Graduate and Professional Diversity Initiatives](#)
 - [Disability Resource Center](#)
 - [Graduate Student Congress](#)
 - [Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity \(OIEEO\)](#)
 - [Office for Institutional Diversity](#)
 - [Office of LGBTQ* Resources](#)
 - [UK International Center](#)

- Additionally, the UK Counseling Center has [further resources](#) available both within the university and at a national level as support and healing for those who have experienced racial trauma or race-related stress, including recommended readings and therapy led by minorities who have experience coping with race-related trauma.
- Check the [list of fellowships and opportunities](#) curated from the last 7 years since Dr. Audrey Sawyer (now at OSU) and Dr. Cara Peterman (now at USGS) started it.
- Seminars, presentation opportunities, and opportunities to meet with speakers
 - Rast-Holbrook, Kentucky Geological Survey, ReSEES (local)
 - Section meetings of the Geological Society of America (GSA)
 - Discipline-specific associations (Seismological Society of America; AGU Chapman; GSA Penrose; International Association of Sedimentologists; etc.)
 - The [National Council on Undergraduate Research](#) annual conference
 - Geoscience Alliance, SACNAS, NABG, AISES, GeoLatinas, NAGT
- One other important resource outside of those listed above and found on the UK Diversity Resources page is mentoring through the Geological Society of America's [Mentoring365 program](#), which provides various online career and academic mentoring options. Both 1-on-1 and group mentoring sessions are available.
- When graduate students need support for GIS, statistics and R, or programming with Python, they are encouraged to go to other departments, but sometimes, these needs could be more effectively addressed in-house.

Professional development resources:

- The University of Kentucky offers a number of different on-demand courses for professional development focused towards university employees at <https://www.uky.edu/hr/professional-development#on-demand>, including courses on effective business writing, time management, and remote working.
- Faculty and graduate students can find support with grant proposal writing at <https://www.research.uky.edu/proposal-development-office>, which hosts various workshops from general grant writing to NSF proposal writing tips to workshops focusing on individual sections of a grant proposal.
- Faculty and TAs seeking help with effective teaching methods, ideas on integrating technology into the classroom, and any other form of support with teaching will find a plethora of resources through UK's [CELT initiative](#). CELT offers help with all aspects of

teaching, including course planning, inclusive teaching, engaging students in the classroom, and many, many other topics.

- For PhD students and others interested, show how to organize conference sessions and how to work with reviewing other people's papers because some students may be less familiar with these processes and expectations.

Outreach Resources:

- At the annual awards ceremony in April, establish a new department award for recognizing a faculty, staff, or student who has shown exemplary leadership in belonging, accessibility, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (Be A JEDI) initiatives. This tangible benefit will be an important part of recognizing this work beyond merely another "service to the academy" contribution.
- Participation in Be A JEDI initiatives is vital to the diversification of the geosciences. However, such participation may be time consuming, allowing individuals not participating in any Be A JEDI initiatives to progress further, comparatively, in research and/or teaching efforts. Therefore, participation in Be A JEDI initiatives (especially by people of color or members of minority groups) should be compensated by contributing towards teaching release or a similar form of compensation for faculty, contributing towards the decision of funding extensions for graduate students, and perhaps extra credit for undergraduate students.
- Recognition for service as a GSC department representative and graduate student representative to the faculty meetings would be appreciated. Now that we have a head TA and more expectations for G3, at a MINIMUM they should be featured on a separate student leaders page on our website and social media.
- In the interest of self-preservation, student leaders may need to abandon or temporarily step back from their service commitments to the department. However, they may feel that such a request could damage their credibility. Some guidance should be offered in the graduate student handbook for how individuals can make this choice, even when the decision to step is clear because research and TA duties come first.
- Honorariums (speaker fees) are acknowledged, but people give talks and seminars for free in some organizations. If students and others are invited to speak, how do they negotiate an honorarium, when funds are available?
- Show how the GSC, SGA, SGE, and G3 collectively benefit the department's students. Collaborate with these organizations, who have financial resources or can leverage their collective efforts to advocate for policies and changes.