

**URGE Management Plan/Assessment for the University of Washington,
Quaternary Research Center (QRC) URGE Pod 1**

(May 14, 2021)

This Assessment summarizes and seeks to identify future actions from the draft “deliverables” of the QRC Pod 1 team’s participation in the Unlearning Racism in the Geosciences program. We will share these results with other UW URGE pods in a process designed to carry the work of our collective Unlearning Racism work forward into action at a range of levels within our institution.

Deliverable	Existing Policy or Resource?	Initial Point of Contact (s)	Where It Is or Will Be Posted	Review/Update Interval	Racial Risk Assessment?	Training Recommended?	Approval, Check, and/or Consequence	Level for Engagement
Complaints and Reporting Policy	QRC - No; Individual units - varies	QRC Pod Member (s)	On QRC website	Annual review by DEI committee (if in effect) or Director	Reduces risk of complaint retribution; Ensures complaints, inequities are addressed	Not planned	QRC membership vote; consequences to be established by DEI committee	QRC to post policy for QRC activities; Individual units will be encouraged through pod members to also develop and post policy.
Demographic Data	QRC no; Mostly no for units	QRC pod members as represent	Internal only	Annual review by QRC Director/DEI committee	Main risk is potential for personally identifiable information because	Not applicable	Not applicable	QRC with links to the home departments of members

		ntatives of units			QRC is a small group; risk of not collating is lack of transparency on diversity progress (or lack thereof)			
Policies for Working with Communities of Color	QRC - no; individual groups may	QRC pod members	Resources could be available on QRC website, or through other events, pending approval	Annual review by DEI committee?	Recommended	Recommended to be planned	?	QRC and individual research groups
Admissions and Hiring Policies	Yes	Pod Member (s)	Internal currently- We will share the cross-department survey to member units for inspiration	Recommended annually	Recommended	Yes - UW requires interrupting bias training for faculty search committees (at least chair). Recommended also for grad admissions committees	Recommend: Hiring plans should be reviewed by hiring faculty with specific oversight by the Diversity Committee of hiring units. Admissions plans as well.	Departments or programs should review admissions and hiring plans and policies annually v.v. promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. Chairs and Deans should be held accountable for oversight.

Safety Plan	Yes	Pod Member (s)	Will be posted to QRC website	Annually, but also after any major reported incidents or events	Recommended	Yes	Approval and Consequence	QRC and individual research groups
Resource Map	No	Pod Member (s)	Post on organization website	Additions on a rolling basis (but annual checks)	Not planned	No, not staff-wide but with HR during onboarding . Annual reminders recommended.	Approval	University wide; QRC; departments

- **Agreement** - Our QRC pod (1) will convene a UW “Superpod” meeting with our pod and 5 other UW pods to share and consolidate policy recommendations and develop action items as they may be best targeted for different levels of the University community (the interdisciplinary Quaternary Research Center, Geoscience and related departments, Colleges, the University and even professional organizations such as the Northwest Science Association). An additional concrete step is a planned meeting with the UW College of the Environment Dean’s URGE Pod, including the dean of the college and three associate deans, to discuss concrete next steps at the College administrative level. These meetings are both scheduled for late May, 2021. We anticipate the work continuing in the Summer and especially Autumn through re-organized working groups tackling and advancing recommendations at the various institutional levels.

- **Pod Guidelines** - While we can’t currently speak for other units in the college and university, we plan to use the URGE Pod guidelines and best practices to inform revised QRC mission and vision statements, a code of conduct, the workings of our committees, how we allocate small grants, establishment of a formal complaints reporting policy, and provision of safety guidelines and templates for research that explicitly incorporate new understandings about how research can better attract, support and encourage BIPOC participation. The QRC will advance QRC relevant actions through our Diversity Equity and Inclusion committee.

- **Complaints and Reporting Policy** - Our Session 2 Deliverable document was prepared as a DRAFT QRC policy that we plan to implement in the interdisciplinary QRC center and provides a pool of available resources in our member units. It is designed to provide a tool for complaints to be heard and responded to, and to reduce the risk of complaint retribution, and it seeks to ensure that complaints, inequities, and problem situations pertaining to racial issues are addressed. The draft policy provides points of contact and a plan for registering and handling

complaints/grievances, and outlines the outcomes and possible resources resulting from complaints. Before this policy is implemented and an anonymous webform for registering complaints is added to the QRC website, the outcomes and consequences need further development, and the path for complaint handling made explicit. Once completed, the complaint policy should be discussed at an upcoming QRC membership meeting and may need a vote of approval.

- **Demographic Data** - This is an acknowledged challenging area for new policy because the collection of demographic information is subject to a range of legal and privacy concerns at every level. For example, demographic data on the staff and students of individual departments are not published owing to such concerns, and in faculty searches, demographic information is not shared with search committees by law. QRC is a small interdepartmental group and our determination is that it is inappropriate to report such data at this level, due to the likelihood of personally identifiable information even in aggregate form. Even at the level of departments, this may be a barrier. However, we recognize the value that quantitative reporting of deficiencies in diversity, and outcomes of new initiatives to improve them, would afford. We conclude that QRC should advocate for more explicit reporting of demographics at the level of the College of the Environment or potentially of departments when permissible and appropriate. Our home departments each have specific initiatives on this topic based primarily on voluntary self-reporting of race and ethnicity (e.g., programs to sharply increase the diversity of our invited speakers and add honoraria); we encourage this approach and the greater transparency it can allow. Student (and applicant to graduate study) demographic information is available internally and should be analyzed to understand admission and degree-program outcomes. Public reporting of such results needs further study and may be best aggregated at much higher levels. We intend to continue to work with leadership of departments, college, university, and (e.g.) AGU to expand reporting of such data.

- **Policies for Working with Communities of Color** - QRC has conducted a preliminary survey of members about their experiences working with communities of color. Among the diverse projects undertaken by QRC members, many included interaction with communities of color. While a few individual members may have stated policies, the QRC has not prepared one, and many members expressed a desire for more resources: education, community, support, and funding. The QRC could aspire to holding workshops or provisioning some of these resources. Moving forward, we commit to holding a DEI working group meeting to strategize which and how best QRC can start to implement policies, and bring recommendations to the QRC membership for a vote. Suggestions to consider include: hosting a workshop series for QRC members, including a template policy on the QRC website, and setting aside funding for projects that engage with communities.

- **Admissions and Hiring Policies** - For our Session 5 Deliverable, we pooled the hiring and admissions practices and policies of four QRC-related departments (Anthropology/Archaeology, Biology, Oceanography and Earth & Space Sciences) and the University of Washington's institution-wide expectations, constraints and guidelines. The goals of these existing policies are to increase the representation of underrepresented communities.

Hiring: Across these units, we see growing attention paid to diversity in hiring practices and policies. Much of this follows the guidance of a University-wide [Handbook of Best Practices in Hiring](#), which advocates for interrupting bias training (required of most or all search committees), building relationships with minority serving institutions and colleagues well ahead of searches, defining searches broadly or even developing hiring priorities that might attract

underrepresented applicants, including a diversity committee or liaison in the search, requesting diversity statements and using rubrics throughout that include record on and vision for diversity as an expectation for high ranking, holistic screening, transparency and consistency in interviews. Even so faculty have been slow in some cases to adopt best-practices. We see room for more faculty education, perhaps driven by college or provost level mandates, to ensure best practices are followed by search committees in practice. The perception and experience of many pod members (those of us who have faculty positions in units around the university) is that UW often struggles at the stage of recruitment and retention negotiations. In several instances, we have lost competitive scholars when the administration was unable to act quickly enough or to come up with attractive counter-offers when a candidate is courted by another institution. We have no insight into why this is the case, but see it as a significant challenge to the widely-acknowledged goal of diversifying our ranks. **ACTIONS:** 1) develop protocols for identifying promising future faculty of color through seminar invitations, paying attention to promising scholars at conferences etc. before they are on the job market... and inviting them to apply when jobs come open. 2) We plan to raise the issues of recruitment negotiations and retention responses as action items when we meet with the College of Environment deans in two weeks and in any other opportunity we have to push URGE findings to university decision-makers. 3) We will seek assistance from the deans for reaching other colleges (our home units are not all in the College of the Environment) with this call for improvement.

Graduate Student Admissions: Across our sample of graduate programs, it appears that all are in the process of transformation following the revelations that GREs are inappropriate and ethnically biased measures of ability, that under-privileged applicants often need more guidance on how to prepare applications (e.g., what review committees look for in statements of purpose and how to select letter writers). Many of our programs have reduced enrollments to better support admitted students and are working harder to put together more substantial support packages. Many of these strategies are highlighted in the UW Graduate School's [Holistic Admissions](#) guidelines and result from intentional efforts by the Grad School to educate faculty on best practices for more inclusive admissions and recruitment. Even so, there is much room for improvement and it is too early to measure the success of many of these changes. **ACTIONS:** More attention is needed to see if application fees are disproportionately discouraging URM applicants. The UW Graduate School has a fee-waiver program, but more research is needed to discover how well used (or known) it is. International students have no opportunity to waive application fees and have higher financial requirements to get visas. This must certainly discourage applicants from less affluent countries and minoritized communities around the world. More research is needed on what strategies are working to support and retain URM students in our cognate disciplines.

- **Safety Plan** - In this deliverable, rather than provide a specific safety plan, we provide a list of topics that need to be addressed in a field/lab/ship safety plan designed by QRC members for their specific needs. The list is organized with a focus on field/ship work and safety, but can be adapted for lab work as well. The list will live as a resource on the QRC website and includes general topics/framework paired with a folder of examples with more specific topics and language that our members can use when writing their own handbook or safety plan. Examples range from articles about making fieldwork accessible for BIPOC to a UW Lab Safety Manual. Before finalizing and publishing this, we should make sure that anti-racism specific policies are clear in all safety policies/plans. We should also direct to possible training (beyond first aid/CPR but that includes consideration of participant mental health and well-being, especially for those coming from a historically discriminated group) that could be paired with the implementation of the safety

plan and field work. Leaders need to be aware of particular risks that those from historically discriminated groups face in the field, thus racial risk assessment is recommended.

- **Resource Map** - There is no current resource map (although pieces are available on UW-wide sites, e.g., [here](#)). We created one that could be part of onboarding and/or orientation for faculty, postdocs, graduate students and staff, and incorporated into the employee handbook. The approval can be incorporated along with the admissions and hiring policy, as part of a proposal to hire a staff member or admit a student then HR would check that the person they report to has a plan to go through the resource map with them. All members of leadership and relevant staff (e.g., Chair of Diversity Committee, Graduate Program Manager) could be responsible for adding to the resource map on a continual basis or at least once a year.

Summary of overall goals and plans after URGE

The QRC URGE Pod 1 found the URGE Program/Curriculum enlightening and plans to carry forward the effort to identify areas for improvement in the QRC, member home departments/units, at the level of the University overall, and in our national and international professional organizations. Several of the deliverable exercises facilitated development of draft policies that we plan to implement in the QRC (e.g., complaints/reporting policy and mechanisms; templates and examples of field and lab safety plans). The QRC is in a somewhat unique position within the several (six?) URGE pods from the University of Washington because we are an interdisciplinary research center that spans the university, straddling several departments, three colleges in the Seattle campus, and multiple campuses (we also have a small number of members from around the world). While some of the URGE sessions focused on issues, like hiring and admissions, that we do not directly control in the QRC (we do not have faculty appointments or graduate programs), we have the advantage of being able to share experiences from multiple units and academic cultures. QRC Pod 1 is composed of members from departments of Anthropology (archaeology), Biology, Earth and Space Sciences, and Oceanography. We are taking advantage of our transdisciplinary make-up to promote the spread of innovative solutions and to share information about what is working or being tried in the different units and to share approaches to units that may not yet be adopting the most effective practices. That is we are hoping to serve as a conduit and catalyst for the diffusion of policy guidelines grounded in the actions promoted by the URGE program. In addition to the many insights gained from the excellent URGE programming (readings, interviews, deliverable prompts), the URGE program serves as a convenient excuse for promoting anti-racist policies already established to one degree or another in some units but not yet in others.

Expanding on our interdisciplinary foundations and “DNA”, we have reached out to the other UW URGE Pods (UW Applied Physics Lab; UW School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, UW ESS Graduate Students and Post-docs) to share assessments and deliverables and explore ways to synthesize our discoveries and recommendations. We have scheduled a “SuperPod” meeting for May 21, to discuss the overlaps and additions and make a forward looking plan. Ultimately, we want to refine and bring the best and most comprehensive results together to bring forward to appropriate levels of university administration and communities of practice. We don’t yet know the shape of those synthesis or the pace needed to achieve them, but we also have a scheduled meeting to report draft policy recommendations (from the Superpod) to the College of the Environment URGE Dean pod, which includes the current Dean (Lisa Graumlich) and three other college associate deans/school directors. We hope to come out of that meeting having provided priority recommendations from the URGE Superpod, and learning from the members of the Deans pod what strategies will be most effective to achieve progressive change most effectively at the college and provost levels.