Bigelow | Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

Bigelow URGE Pod

FINAL Session 3 Deliverable

How can Bigelow properly and best use demographic data to evaluate progress towards goals of increasing diversity?

As part of the objectives of Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; www.urgeoscience.org), a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion in our discipline, this deliverable seeks to summarize and analyze demographic data for our institution (admissions/recruitment, hiring, invited speakers, current employee representation, service roles, awards etc.) so that we can understand our baseline and enable accountability and drive change.

For this deliverable, we considered the following questions based on URGE Session 3 guidelines:

- What demographic data are collected at our institution?
- Are data public? If not, who has access, and what is the reason for keeping data private?
- For data available, what do the numbers tell us? How do we compare to peer institutions?
- Are there stated and measurable goals for representation in our organization?
- What recommendations can be made to help the institution to improve the collection and reporting of demographic data?

Prior to beginning our conversation, DEI Liaison Beth Orcutt presented an overview to all Bigelow staff on the current gender and race/ethnicity demographics of recent degree earners in our field (ocean science) compared to other science fields and to the demographic make-up of the US and the State of Maine, based on ncses.nsf.gov resources and census data. This was to help all staff understand the diversity of the pool of applicants we recruit US scientists and staff from.

In our discussion, we acknowledged that no demographic data from our institution are publicly reported online, nor are they available internally for general employee knowledge. This is due, in part, to the small size of our institution making it easy to single individuals out for some demographic characteristics even in anonymized data, which would violate privacy rules. It may also be due to not previously requesting to do so, or why we would want to, so it has never been done. Thus, it is not currently possible to compare the demographics of our institution with other institutions in our field, to see how we compare to our peers.

We then briefly discussed some programs at our institution that do collect demographic data, and who collects them (as summarized in Table). We briefly discussed the various

ways that demographic data can be collected, and the type of demographic data that could be asked for (gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, etc.) and why, as this varies between programs. We also discussed some best practices that could be considered to ensure both data privacy as well as empowering self-identification instead of only allowing strict options that might exclude some people (for example, not just giving "male" and "female" and "choose not to disclose" options, but allowing everyone to write in how they identify).

Table 1. Summary of programs that might collect demographic data.

Program	**Who manages the data?**	**How are data collected?**	**Are there stated diversity goals?**	**Where are data reported?**
Employees	HR officer	Employee forms and Paylocity	No	US Equal Employment Opportunity Commision
Applicants for jobs	HR officer	Voluntary questionnaire emailed after applying	No	US Equal Employment Opportunity Commision
Applicants for and participants in REU intern program	REU program director	Voluntary questions on application form	Yes	NSF
Applicants for and participants in highschool BLOOM program(s)	BLOOM program director	Voluntary questions on application form and post programmatic surveys	No	Provided upon request, collected since 2018.
Applicants for and participants in Colby-at-Bigelow Sea Change semester for undergrads	Colby College?	unknown	unknown	unknown
Seminar speakers	No one, currently	n.a.	No	n.a.
Visitors	No one, currently	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Some of our programs do not currently collect demographic data. Only one of these programs has stated diversity goals, which is mandated by the funding agency.

A few recommendations result from our discussion:

1. We would like better guidance on best practices for requesting and using demographic information. The DEI Liaison will ask the HR team for guidance on this topic, with the goal of generating a “how to” guide to distribute to staff.
2. We would like a better understanding of the demographics of our programs.
    a. To start with, we could start tracking demographic data for programs that do not do this currently, for example, by asking the seminar coordinator to request this information from upcoming and past speakers, or working with Colby College partners to discuss a desire to do this moving forward for semester program, and maybe also doing a 10th anniversary retrospective request to program alumni?
    b. In addition, the DEI Liaison can work with HR to make sure that we are following best practices in how information might be reported publicly, to avoid data privacy violation rules.
3. It would be worth having a discussion about if and why the institution would want to set demographic diversity goals, and then how such goals could be implemented, monitored and achieved.