URGE Policy for Working with Communities of Color for USD's EOSC Department

This is what was found by USD's Environmental and Ocean Science URGE Pod at the University of San Diego on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**
  - Drew Talley in Bahía de los Ángeles, Baja California (1996-present) and in the underserved community of City Heights, San Diego (2002-present).
  - Relationships with local fishermen in projects
  - Sarah Gray with long-term project in the U.S. Virgin Islands
  - Sarah Gray in Pacific Islands
  - EOSC 415: Urban Corps and The New Americans Museum projects
  - Student project mentored by Suzanne Walther with K. Gurung and KRMEF in Nepal
  - Michel Boudrias working in Baja California Sur from 1996-2011 in collaboration with the School for Field Studies. Relationships with fishermen, cannery operators, and mentor to local chapter of WaterKeeper.
  - Michel Boudrias and Steve Searcy teaching an integrated course in Jamaica with connections to local fisherman & to Sociology and English majors.
  - Michel Boudrias and Nilmini Silva-Send working with local tribe leaders on climate change education

- **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - When planning a facility in City Heights, worked with the local community for ~3 years, having numerous meetings with families, teachers, and other community groups to present options, discuss needs, and get feedback that was transparently factored into the final siting decision, as well as what facilities would be available. This was facilitated by years of existing connections within the community.
  - In Bahía de los Ángeles, integrating into the community brought both concrete and intangible benefits to all parties. For example, attending community events (quinceañeras, ejido meetings), meeting with the local Park Rangers, purchasing local products wherever possible, using local boat captains, and most importantly spending time socializing without an agenda and showing respect for local culture (i.e. not being a Gringo) created lasting relationships that allowed me to do better science, but also to use that science to answer questions relevant to the local community. We also invited local community members to join us (when possible) at conferences in the U.S. This should be much easier post-pandemic, with so many virtual attendees. It is worth noting that a few of the community members at this location have become some of my dearest friends.

○ For both Bahía de los Ángeles and City Heights, bringing my daughter (a toddler when I started that work) brought so many benefits, in that it helped the community to see me as a dad/person, and provided some really deep community interaction (and was a great experience for her and me!).
○ Previous training relating to cultural sensitivity and awareness
○ Investing time to develop personal relationships first
○ Asking what community needs are and working together to determine how to develop a project to meet those needs
○ Back and forth on determining needs
○ Time spent within the community/site
○ Reverse exchange with community member coming to USD to present their work
○ Including collaborative colleagues in products/papers, etc.
○ Boudrias' work in Bahia Magadelena (BCS) included years of collaboration with local fishermen, local educators, and education NGOs. Established long-term relationships that led to major operational changes at the cannery reducing pollution, support for long-term ecological and chemical analysis of pollution including with Mexican students, helped established Vigilantes Bahia Magdalena (Water Keeper), and collaborated on Packard Foundation grants over 5 years. Committed to work in Mexico by living in La Paz (BCS) for my sabbatical.

● **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
○ Keeping in mind how long it takes to develop relationships to account for that time when planning these interactions. This may be challenging in a semester-long or other short-term project; on idea to address this is to nest shorter-term projects into longer-term relationships
○ Important to be adaptable and willing to shift plans
○ So many tourists in some field locations (example, U.S. Virgin Islands), and bringing students to these research locations can result in them relating to the tourists and not considering the local communities; so it is very important to set expectations and communicate with students ahead of time.
○ Provide guidance for scientists/students about local standards for dress, cultural norms, etc. to respectively work within local communities.
○ Merely reporting back to the community the findings is not enough! It should be considered mandatory, but with full recognition that you need to engage and empower the local community as much as possible, since you are extracting value from their home – merely reporting back should be a given.
○ Adding some place-based history BEFORE beginning the project/interactions.
○ Lesson from work in Baja California Sur: Needed to report out, in Spanish, to the whole community and should have continued a more robust partnership with the cannery operators.

- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
  - Provide training/data storage so community can continue to add to and/or use the data in the future. For data sharing: if the community does not speak/read English, translate data webpage to their native language. Technology accessibility: since not every community will have access to technology, could tech transfer be included in grants?
  - Request funding for a team member as a dedicated interpreter or expert focusing on culture.
  - Continue the tradition of having recently graduated undergraduate students become in-country research assistants. This worked well in Bahia Magdalena and in U.S. Virgin Islands and could be a way to engage our students for a longer time.

- **USD's EOSC Department Specific Proposed Policies or Actions to Implement**
  - When writing a proposal (internal or external), have PIs describe their ideas and prior work in including community members. This could be a departmental requirement to start, but could possibly ask for this as a university requirement going forward.
  - Plan to specifically include funding in grant proposals to pay community partners and include cultural liaisons when working with Communities of Color.
  - Plan to add place-based learning and history BEFORE beginning a project begins or any interactions with Communities of Color.
  - Scaffold place-based learning into our curriculum structure (particularly local experiences and knowledge). Towards this goal, we propose to work with USD's Tribal Liaison and potentially host workshops with speakers from the Kumeyaay tribe and perhaps other local tribes (who would be provided honoraria) to figure out best ways to incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing into our courses. We want to especially include Indigenous Ways of Knowing into field courses to enhance everyone's connection to Nature. One example would be to partner with local tribes to use their information (stories, logs, written records) on crops, water, temperature and integrate that knowledge into science data sets; creation of Story Maps would be a great way to highlight the exchange of knowledge.