URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for the Department of Geological Sciences, Ohio University

This is what was found by the Department of Geological Sciences at Ohio University on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

Pods may have members from a range of career stages and involvement in the development and execution of research projects, and pod members may have different experiences or different perspectives when responding to these questions. Consider this in the summary document and focus on capturing responses that are representative of the range in your pod.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**
  - 71.4% of department members have worked in regions with communities of color, 28.6% have not. To date, all of these field sites have been located outside of the United States.
  - Countries/regions: South Africa, Bahamas, Morocco, Namibia, New Caledonia, Panama, Bolivia, Colombia, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Spain
  - For projects that took place in regions with communities of color:
    - 83.3% involved a local guide, collaborator, and/or liason
    - 33.4% included local students
    - 50% included these local collaborators and/or students as co-authors on presentations and/or papers (33.3% were included on conference presentations, 16.7% were included on peer-reviewed manuscripts)
    - 57% of the local collaborators were compensated for their time/knowledge financially, 29% of these local collaborators were recognized as co-authors on papers and/or included as part of the research team on the grant, 14% were not compensated in any way
    - In 33.3% of the cases, the data and research findings were shared with the local/regional community but were not translated into local languages/made more accessible to the community.
    - In 60% of the cases, the local communities were acknowledged in the acknowledgements section of papers and/or presentations, and in 40% of the cases they were not acknowledged at all in the final research products.
    - In 50% of the cases, the project team members researched the local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge of the region prior to executing the project/fieldwork (although the extent of the research varied).

- In 83.3% of the cases, the needs and concerns of the local communities were not considered when devising the research agenda and broader impacts of the projects. Generally, the needs were only considered when the projects specifically had an environmental focus.

- **What worked well in these interactions?**
    - Asking locals permission for access to field sites
    - Working with local/native guides in the field
    - Having long-term, established working relationships rather than short, "one-off" field seasons
    - Participating in workshops, seminars, and short courses that involved the local community and/or University during the project
    - Co-advising the work of local university/research students

- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
    - Naivety about crime/violence/security in local communities
    - Language barriers
    - Trust issues with local people
    - Not including as many local collaborators/guides/students due to financial limitations

- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
    - Most of the projects described/discussed above were already completed, but we discussed ways to improve the outcomes of future projects involving communities of color, such as:
        - For short-term projects that only involve one field season, maintain contact with local collaborators/liasons/guides via email/Skype/Zoom where possible to share/discuss project data/results after the field season is completed.
        - Acknowledge all participants in the acknowledgments section of peer-reviewed publications and presentations. For local collaborators who have contributed in more substantial ways, such as performing analyses and/or helping to interpret the results, include them as co-authors.
        - Reach out to potential collaborators with shared research interests early in the process (i.e., as you are designing the project and planning the field campaign, rather than after the fact) so that you can develop project goals and broader impacts that align with the needs and interests of the local communities and include adequate compensation for local collaborators in the grant budget.

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**

    We do not currently have any specific policies or guidelines in place addressing working with communities of color locally or abroad, but are planning to develop a best practices document that will be shared with faculty and students in our department. The document will also be made publicly available on our department website as part of a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policies and Initiatives webpage we will develop over the summer.

    We also plan to incorporate discussions on the effects of environmental racism and colonialism on communities of color in several of our introductory and major level course offerings so that our students can work with communities of color more thoughtfully and effectively when they enter the workforce and/or graduate school.