Northwestern's GeoEquity Policy for Working with Communities of Color

This is what was found by GeoEquity at Northwestern University on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

This deliverable, though not all-encompassing, summarizes relevant experiences and discussion of the researchers within the Northwestern Earth and Planetary Sciences URGE Pod. Follow-up actions or needed discussions are *signified by italics*.

Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:
On involving local collaborators:

- Research field work, including sample collection, in sites near Indigenous Peoples are a common form of involvement with research in communities of color. Multiple people mentioned that their work had little to no interaction with the local people during the work, but used the town as a "launch pad" for their field work.
- Research collaboration with members of local communities outside of field work was frequently limited.
- When local collaborators were included, they were typically not included in the early development of the project but were added to the team later.
- Local collaborators were sometimes included as coauthors, though this is dependent on the PI writing the grant.

On long-term relationships with local institutions:

- Some participants mentioned learning some of the local language or culture/history which could be illuminating (i.e. history on exploitation of a field site which was viewed sacred by the local indigenous people).
- Local students were typically not included in the project, but they were sometimes included in outreach efforts. Some suggested this may be due to liability (if performing field work with safety concerns, for example) or no support from NSF to do international (rather than local) outreach.

On sharing results and efforts with local communities:

- Multiple people in the pod discussed being involved with outreach programs, both locally and during field campaigns, that worked to involve people of color. This was often outside the designed scope of the research work. One person noted that it can be difficult to talk with the general public about unpublished work in particular during outreach due to the complexities of science culture and the peer-review process.

What worked well in these interactions?

- Many field-work projects would not be possible without multi-year collaborations and/or building a local network to understand the local cultures and customs.
- We have included local communities in broader impacts efforts through town hall meeting presentations, NSF grant proposals, etc.

- Local communities were involved and paid for their outreach/work. Many agreed that paying people fair wages for their time is a great step to creating a mutually beneficial relationship.
- Some have been involved in programs that included learning local languages and politics/culture prior to commencing research.

What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?

- We do not know if/how earlier negative interactions with researchers have been addressed.
- *If we work to include local collaborators earlier, we can make better efforts towards doing mutually beneficial work around community issues.*
- We discussed how a lack of immediate societal relevance does not mean that members of local communities are not inherently interested in some kind of outreach/community engagement. We think we can do better to include communities of color in geologic studies by 1) earlier engagement with communities (see above) and 2) self-education on related societal implication to seemingly more removed research topics (i.e., fertile soil and ancient seaways). *Some members expressed we should develop community contacts and ask them rather than not engage with the community.* This would also allow for us to build off of existing organizations.

Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?

- Most have not made results accessible to local communities (outside of media engagement). *Many feel we should start making our findings more accessible (both in English and other languages).*
- *Retroactively contact communities in past research areas and create contacts as part of repairing the past and setting a new precedent for future projects (potentially in the same area, as the case may be)*
- Also, ways to build community are often not covered on grants (gifts, etc.). *We will investigate the spending rules to try to determine a way around them or challenge them.*
- Local communities and Indigenous Peoples/Lands are not commonly referenced in acknowledgment sections of research papers/posters/talks. *Many agreed that we should begin this practice.*

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

- Many researchers do not formally include respecting and being educated about the local politics, culture, and history of colonialism in a code of conduct. Written codes of conduct are not common for field work and research in the department. *We will add a statement on researching and contacting the communities of color you are engaging with (through outreach and research) as early as possible to a code of conduct.*
- Given a lack of time and money, and that many US-based funding programs can often view foreign education/outreach unfavorably, *we will make a list of resources to apply for that would allow for more meaningful outreach work, giving honorariums, providing gifts to local communities, etc.*

- A field safety curriculum and liability documents that could be delivered to local students and/or communities could be helpful to decrease the burdens of involving local people in field initiatives. *We will look to see if such accessible training and paperwork exists.*