



URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization

The following were findings made by **Dartmouth Earth Sciences** at **Dartmouth College** 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:**

Dartmouth EARS researchers have worked in a number of communities of color, both in the United States and internationally. Many of these activities have been concentrated in remote areas, such as the circum-Arctic, with community interactions limited to gaining permission to access First Nations lands and/or minor outreach activities. Some researchers have also worked in more urban settings, such as southern California, where the majority of the work has been related to hazard mitigation or water contamination issues. It appears as though a small percentage of these interactions have been truly “meaningful”; however, this result is not for lack of trying. Some of the field geologists in our community have tried to engage with local communities for decades, but for a wide variety of reasons these have not been successful. For example, many communities do not respond to inquiries about outreach activities or engaging local community members in research. We hypothesize that many of these negative interactions are due to a paucity of resources in those communities for facilitating outreach, in addition to the short timelines available in most research projects to establish long-term relationships.

- **What worked well in these interactions?**

In our experience, the most successful interactions that at least some of our researchers have experienced is through interactions with pre-existing outreach programs. As an example, one researcher’s only successful experience working with local communities in Alaska was through engagement in a long-standing outreach program organized through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Through interactions with local (though not of color) landowners, individuals have learned that questions about experiences (e.g., what did you experience during the last big hurricane) can both establish a rapport and help with science. In addition, long-term planning of research programs, as well as any outreach activities, is critical when working with local communities, at least those situated in remote settings. Finally, First Nations or Indigenous communities certainly appreciate the use of local names for landmarks, as well as an understanding that they work on different timelines than most researchers (i.e., long-term planning is critical when organizing activities with these communities).

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

Based on our preliminary discussions, most researchers in our community do not prioritize local communities of color when developing a proposal because their scientific objectives commonly do not directly impact or involve these local communities. We agree that this lack of prioritization is most likely short-sighted, as developing longer-term outreach programs is one of the major goals of working in many field settings. It appears that one of the most important aspects of engaging with these communities is to start doing the research and outreach years in advance. Not only does this enable time to build trust and relationships, but it also relieves the pressure on these communities to act immediately in various collaborations. We recognize this sort of engagement is very challenging on the timeline of most tenure-track faculty members, and we believe that access to a centralized outreach/community engaging platform could be useful. This is in addition to much more focused mentorship by faculty members with each other and postdocs, research associates, and students about how to develop these types of relationships. For example, an archive of knowledge about specific field sites and local communities that is shared among all faculty could help junior faculty members initiate the relationship-building process with the local communities.

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

We did not talk about improving outcomes of existing projects specifically, but it certainly seems like revisiting outreach materials from previous projects and/or on-going projects could be very useful for reinvigorating or establishing more long-term relationships.

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

We discussed a few things that we as a community would like to see developed further. First, we would like to establish better wording in our Code of Conduct about permitting and outreach activities related to field-based activities. Second, we would like to establish a department policy about land acknowledgement that is flexible for individual projects but also encourages Dartmouth researchers to provide proper acknowledgement when feasible. As part of this policy, we would like to see more discussions about the history of, environmental interactions with, and impacts to, people who have lived on the land we are studying. We would like to develop this policy through discussions between researchers, students, and experts from the Native American Studies program at Dartmouth. Third, we would like to re-emphasize to faculty members, both senior and junior, that it is important to communicate to students and collaborators information about permitting, sample collecting, permissions, land acknowledgement, etc. There is potential for communication breakdown that could perpetuate a culture of ignorance that we would like to actively address. Fourth, to build a better understanding of relationships between groups of people and lands, we would like to have courses on environmental justice, Indigenous histories, etc., cross-listed with Earth Sciences at Dartmouth.