

Subject: Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE) at LSU

Dear Dean Peterson, Associate Dean Wilson-Kennedy, Vice Provost Spencer, and Dr. Snow,

We, as representatives of the Department of Geology and Geophysics, invite you to join us in a nation-wide initiative against racism. “Unlearning Racism in the Geosciences”, or URGE (urgeoscience.org), is an NSF-sponsored project that supports and encourages groups of Geoscientists to form “pods” at participating universities with primary objectives to:

1. Deepen the community’s knowledge of the effects of racism on the participation and retention of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people in Geoscience,
2. Draw on existing literature, expert opinions, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies, and
3. Share, discuss, and modify anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage.

In the Department of Geology and Geophysics here at LSU, six faculty members have voluntarily committed to spending 16 weeks this semester discussing anti-racist literature and working toward developing, reforming, and implementing concrete anti-racist policies and practices here within G&G (following the URGE scheduled topics [linked here](#)). These efforts will be focused on our own department where our knowledge, expertise, and influence is greatest, but will also be synergistic with numerous groups working to dismantle racism across LSU.

We discussed our effort with Dr. Snow and the full G&G faculty at a recent faculty meeting, and agreed that the LSU G&G URGE pod would serve as an ad hoc committee. As such, we will present our findings and recommendations for changes to existing departmental policies and suggestions for potential new policies to the faculty by the end of the Spring 2021 semester. While we will report our progress regularly to Dr. Snow and to the G&G Executive Committee, we also anticipate that our findings will be relevant to the College of Science, the Graduate School, and the LSU community more broadly.

Accordingly, we invite each you to partner with us in these specific ways:

1. Join us sometime this semester for our weekly URGE conversation, to experience how the program works here at LSU. We meet Thursdays from 3-4:30 pm via LSU-Zoom and would welcome your presence any week.
2. Meet with a representative group of URGE pod members at the end of the semester (week of May 10-14) to discuss our findings, next steps for G&G, and possible lessons learned applicable to the wider LSU College of Science and to graduate education. This could be meetings with each of you individually or jointly.

We are excited for this opportunity to take tangible anti-racist action that will benefit our students, faculty, and staff, and we hope that you will join us in our commitment to unlearning racism in the Geosciences.

Sincerely,

The LSU G&G URGE Pod

Adam Forte (Assistant Professor and URGE pod coordinator)

Suniti Karunatilake (Associate Professor)

Karen Luttrell (Associate Professor and Associate Chair of Geology and Geophysics)

Carol Wicks (Professor and Associate Dean of Graduate School)

Carol Wilson (Assistant Professor)

Guangsheng Zhuang (Assistant Professor)