



March 11, 2021 (final)

Agreement

Members of the mhcURGE pod are four Mount Holyoke College (MHC) faculty/staff and 6 alumni of our program. At our first pod meeting on January 29, 2021, we agreed to aim towards creating deliverables for MHC geology. We also agreed that these documents will be made up of shared language and text that any one of us in the pod can use for our own institutional ends.

We met with our institutional leadership on March 4, 2021 in order to gain institutional support for our project and to shape and share our pod goals. The four mhcURGE pod members who work at MHC attended this meeting (Olivia Aguilar, Steve Dunn, Michelle Markley, and Claire Pless) with:

- Tim Farnham, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies; Chair of Environmental Studies.
- Dorothy Mosby, Interim Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Mary E. Woolley Professor of Spanish.
- Liz Markovits, Associate Dean of Faculty; Professor of Politics; Director of the Teaching and Learning Initiative.

At this meeting, we discussed goals and institutional resources and support in the context of both: 1) the current geology curriculum and staffing, and 2) MHC's plans to merge the Department of Geology and Geography with the Department of Environmental Studies in 2022. With this merger, we plan to create a new Department of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability (EES). The EES curriculum will offer students a foundation for understanding Earth's natural systems and their interactions with political, economic, social, cultural, and historical factors from global to local scales. Inclusion and representation are primary goals for this new curriculum and department.

Here is a summary of our conversation:

- Our goal is a cultural shift in our department. We aim to create a department where a more diverse group of students and faculty will feel welcome and flourish. We are specifically concerned with attracting, supporting, and retaining BIPOC students and faculty because our demographic survey shows that we have not yet achieved this goal.
- To help assess our progress towards our goal for increased representation in terms of students (majors and minors), we volunteered to participate in a college pilot project. We hope to work with Institutional Research to assess past, current, and future representation in the Geology, Geography, and Environmental Studies curricula at all

levels of (intro-, intermediate-, upper-level undergraduate courses and independent studies). We expect also to benefit from this collaborative project as it becomes institutionalized. Although our ongoing curriculum redesign towards EES might complicate the collection and interpretation of these data on majors, minors, and course enrollments, we are excited to have the opportunity to assess our progress towards our specific goals for increasing inclusion and retention of BIPOC students. The pilot project is starting this current semester.

- Another mechanism for assessing and supporting our progress may be the college's participation in the new Liberal Arts Colleges Racial Equity Leadership Alliance (LACRELA). MHC's participation in this alliance starts Fall 2021, and through it we will gain access to new climate survey tools and anti-racist resources designed specifically for liberal arts colleges. The college's goal for joining this alliance is to move toward more concrete, less performative goals.
- In terms of goals for representation in geoscience faculty and staff, our work as the mhCURGE pod will prepare us better to recruit, support, retain, and ultimately promote a new tenure-track geoscience faculty with an interest in mentoring for diversity (we will begin this authorized search as soon as our pandemic-related institutional hiring freeze ends). This new colleague will participate in both building the new interdisciplinary EES curriculum and teaching and mentoring undergraduate students. URGE provides us with an opportunity to lay the groundwork for this new hire to succeed, specifically: shifting department culture by developing an anti-racist statement and ethos and supporting a new colleague by valuing their "invisible" labor, especially in terms of institutional expectations for promotion. We aim to build a community that welcomes and supports a new colleague.
- An institutional relationship that may be helpful to our faculty/staff goals is the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), whose annual Institute on Teaching and Mentoring is a national coming-together of BIPOC doctoral students.
- In terms of the geoscience and environmental science curriculum, we are interested in developing an inclusive field curriculum with a focus on field safety for women, people of color, queer people, and disabled students. Another goal is to acknowledge the history of harm in the historic and ongoing practices of the academic discipline of geology, and the natural sciences more broadly, and to incorporate this practice into our curriculum. Later this month, there will be two college-wide events that we will participate in (associated with MHC's BOOM day: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/diversity/boom>): a faculty-led session on "Decolonizing the Discipline," focused on shifting scholarship, research practices, and curriculum, and "Beyond the Pipeline," a session devoted to moving STEM thinking away from deficit frameworks and towards recruiting and supporting students in the discipline.