

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



URGE Demographic Data for Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

This is what was found by the Woods Hole Interdisciplinary Pod at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) on demographic data (public and internal facing) as well as stated goals for representation, and/or proposals to collect and report demographic data.

Responses to deliverable prompts that were apparent from publicly facing information is shown in *orange italics*.

Responses that required follow-up with anyone internal (HR, our pod members, academic programs, etc.) are in *purple italics*.

- **The link(s) to demographic data at our organization are here:**
 - *We were not able to find any publicly available demographic information about WHOI or the MIT/WHOI joint program.*
 - *The only publicly available demographic data available from WHOI were reports from the Partnership Education Program (PEP), which is a multi-institutional program in Woods Hole for undergraduates interested in marine sciences from underrepresented groups. Demographic information was found in the [program reports](#) (note: have to download word document and scroll to page 11).*
 - *No seminar speaker demographic information is publically available.*
 - *We contacted administrators in Academic Programs and the Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (CDI) to request current and historical demographic data regarding race in the WHOI community.*
 - *All contacts were responsive, though we have yet to receive any data despite several weeks having passed since the initial request.*
 - *We exchanged roughly 12-15 emails with different WHOI representatives. Ultimately we were passed along to HR to get the relevant data, but are still waiting.*
 - *HR is very hesitant to provide demographic information. The main reason cited is that it is “an issue of small numbers” in that with such a small number of total people, it is not possible to release demographic information without compromising anonymity.*



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- *It seemed that we could have gotten data more easily, and possibly sooner, if we were using the data for our own purposes (within WHOI and not public). The sticking point is that URGE will post this deliverable online, thus making any data included publicly available.*
 - *Perhaps Pods should have the option of making their deliverables public or not?*
- *Multiple requests to the same administrators by all the different pods seemed to serve different functions...*
 - *First, they were extra annoyed by receiving the same request from so many people, and potentially less likely to go out of their way to help us get the necessary data*
 - *Second, the number of emails hopefully demonstrates the need*
 - *In the future, it may be more effective to coordinate this among different groups within an institution*
- *We were able to find demographic data from non-public sources but note that it is always unclear exactly where and when and how data were collected.*
 - *From a WHOI employee in another pod - reporting on academic programs: "From 1981 - 1995, nine Asian-American students graduated (7 doctoral, 2 master's); in 1995, one African-American student graduated (master's), between 1995 and 1996, three more Asian-American students graduated (all doctoral); and three Latinx students graduated with doctoral degrees in 9/96, 6/97, and 6/98. Our first Native-American student graduated in 9/2003 (doctoral). Oh yes, there have been three African-American students who've received PhDs, and we have two on track now."*
- *We believe that demographic information is collected, but it is not totally clear how. Also, there are potentially issues with how data is collected (e.g., not allowed to select multiple options or no option to describe self identification).*
- *For seminar series, several pod members had heard of or seen a survey that is now being sent to all speakers to collect demographic information. There is also a spreadsheet of potential speakers that are from underrepresented minority groups (we flagged this as an issue of tokenizing or having the same few people go to all universities to give seminars because they are underrepresented).*
- **How does your organization compare to others, or to the field as a whole?**
 - *From the limited information we have access to from 2016, it appears that WHOI had a higher percentage of the community that identified as non-white/European American (~19%) relative to the broader field (~10%)*

URGEO

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- In 2016, ~10% of geoscientists (environmental scientists and geoscientists) were underrepresented minorities. Source: AGI, data from US Census Bureau
 - In 2016, ~18.6% of the WHOI community (unclear who that includes) identified as non-white/European American. Source: Data from WCC executive summary of 2016 climate survey
- **Public goals on demographics or increasing representation:**
 - *General goals:*
 - *WHOI's homepage has a [page](#) dedicated to "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" that has the following statement: "Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) recognizes that increasing representation and advancing inclusion is critical to our core mission of exploration and discovery in a diverse and connected world. It is not enough to state that we believe in diversity, equity, and inclusion. We need to take action to create a culture in which the voices of all people are fully heard and fully included, because it is the right thing to do. There are many barriers facing people from traditionally marginalized groups. At WHOI, we are committed to identifying and removing those barriers for richer academic discussion and a healthier research community."*
 - *The MIT/WHOI Joint Program also has a [tab](#) on DEI that links to this page and has the exact same text.*
 - *The Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) has its own [webpage](#) and the following mission statement: "In August 2019, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution announced the formation of a new Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI), to foster a culture of inclusion in our pursuit of scientific excellence. WHOI recognizes the need for leadership in this area, and to this end we invite the participation of our colleagues as we move forward. The CDI will coordinate with existing committees and structures, within WHOI and the Woods Hole community, in this work."*
 - *There is also a [Women's Committee](#), a [Workplace Climate Committee](#), and an [International Committee](#).*
 - *WHOI is part of the [Woods Hole Diversity Advisory Committee](#), which posts on their homepage: "In 2004, the leaders of six Woods Hole science institutions signed a memorandum committing their institutions to work together to attract and retain a more diverse workforce. That memorandum established the Woods Hole Scientific Community Diversity Initiative (WHDI). The Diversity Initiative in turn established an advisory committee to make recommendations as to how the institutions can make*

URGEO

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- the village a more diverse, more inclusive community - the Woods Hole Diversity Advisory Committee.”*
- *WHOI just publicly announced a job opening for the first ever [Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer](#) that will report directly to the President and Director.*
 - *Measurable goals:*
 - *As far as we can tell there are no measurable goals stated anywhere for achieving representation.*
 - *Suggested goals:*
 - *The CDI has a well curated [resources page](#).*
 - *The [Livingston Report](#) is technically public although hard to find and not easy to access and includes several recommendations, which are importantly specific to Woods Hole and WHOI.*
 - *Though this is technically publicly facing, a report on the MIT/WHOI Joint Program is [buried on a website](#) and also you must download a [PDF](#) and go to page 15 to read about recommendations to increase the diversity of graduate students.*
 - *See MIT page: <https://commitments.mit.edu/july-2020-progress>*
- **Policy or proposed policy for collecting demographic data at your organization:**
 - *We haven't been able to find a formal policy for collection of demographic data at the institution. Through word of mouth we've found that the institution collects these data for NSF, but there are some issues with the categories used.*
 - *Based on the inability to share data with us, it seems that there is some aspect of data collection that is private.*
 - *Another WHOI pod member (not in our pod) Gwyneth met with a friend who consults for diversity officers to discuss options for collecting demographic data given concerns of anonymity and other concerns (avoiding reporting in a way that looks like metrics are designed to mask poor historical diversity).*
 - **What did you learn about other organizations (or in general) while investigating demographic data?**
 - *WHOI does not make demographic data publicly available, and the policies for collecting information/reporting are also difficult to find.*
 - *We found other institutions to have more transparency regarding demographics in their communities, but this is inconsistent across institutions.*
 - *In short, WHOI and other institutions can (and should?) make data on demographics within their communities publicly available and easy to access, such as via a dashboard on the institution's website. This is not a straightforward issue though*



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

because race, and other identity-related data are personal, and people do have their right to privacy. The best solution may be a clear data collection policy that specifies information may be publicly available so individuals are aware when they respond, paired with public access to that data. This is impossible to fix retroactively, but could be included in initiatives moving forward.