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## URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for Middlebury College

This is what was found by Middlebury URGE at Middlebury 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:**

- Past trips further afield
  - Pete & Kristina -> Costa Rica (two Costa Rican geologists helped a ton as guides for content and locations and field trip leaders for some exercises)
  - Dave & Jeff -> Hawaii
  - Jeff & Gabi -> Mammoth Cave (local Park service participation)
  - Will Amidon -> Niger/Sahara Expedition, 2020
  - Alexis -> Dominican Republic (partner with national museum there & NGO), Haiti, Puerto Rico, Trinidad & Tobago (local workshops for students, partner w/ local Geological Society, museum buy in, community listening events, public lectures, local press interviews to generate buzz)
- Faculty - student research abroad ...
  - Chile
  - Argentina
  - Costa Rica -- faculty and students have collaborated and co-authored with a Costa Rican geologist on soil/terrace and groundwater research, and met with other colleagues working on related projects. Also recruited two students from Univ of Costa Rica to serve as field assistants for a two-week excursion.
  - Ecuador -- soil/terrace field research with Ecuadorian colleague and students from Ecuador and our home institution.
  - Spain -- soil research with two colleagues and a student from the local university that became a senior thesis project

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

- Incorporating local place names and geoscience knowledge (Pete western US example re: glacial lake Missoula), Otter
- Hiring local Touareg guides, drivers, and military escort.
- Including local scientists on research team. We recognize the importance of speaking the local language, or at least trying, not assuming all speak English. For projects in Costa Rica, Spain and Ecuador, we have recruited Spanish speaking students.
- Recognizing that developing partnerships can take years, and first step is a “listening” field trip rather than jumping into research right away
- Asking for community needs then explicitly building in grant funding lines for those needs

- Partnering with local NGOs, geological/naturalist societies, museums → tap into existing infrastructure where possible so you are collaborating not competing
  - Add local field assistants and collaborators as authors on papers
  - Using local language
- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
    - Try to avoid "helicopter science"--whether working with indigenous communities and building on traditional knowledge, or simply involving local experts
    - Don't let community interactions stop at getting permission; build in time to connect with local communities
    - Past field trips have been very research focused, but moving forward should make sure to reach out to local communities
      - Developing stronger ties with park staff at Mammoth Cave and speaking with Park staff to incorporate human (Native American) history into theme of J-term program
    - Make sure the knowledge you are sharing is correct and situated! For example saying "this project took place on Navajo lands" without recognizing Hopi history before Navajo can be hurtful
    - Don't assume communities will always want to/be able to engage in the capacity we would like
    - Cultural competency training for students mandatory before field work - using example of Peace Corps training as a model
    - Learn local language (at least attempt)
- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
    - Incorporate Abenaki/indigenous knowledge into field labs/syllabi as another perspective or contextualization of the study area
    - Middlebury's stated commitment to incorporating indigenous knowledge into course elements
    - Lit review of previously documented indigenous knowledge
    - Keep respect at the core of all actions
    - Be humble and honest and say to partners, "I am trying to improve, do you have suggestions for change?"
- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**
    - Middlebury Geology department members who lead research or teaching trips should make an effort to connect with local residents and expertise, we recognize that the guidelines for these different kinds of interactions may be different as one focuses primarily on teaching students and the other would involve research but also including local communities in the research and making sure that they benefit from it
    - We would like to develop a department Best Practices document that lays out our intentions to follow the best practices, with sections focused on Vermont-centric engagement as well as research or teaching outside of our region.

- Local efforts
  - Invite the involvement of local communities of color (for example Abenaki scholars, experts, storytellers) in Middlebury Geology teaching of local landscapes
  - Intersection of Geology and local traditional knowledge -- e.g. Abenaki Chief Stevens or similar to give a dept talk or visit classes to discuss oral histories or understanding of the regional landscape.
  - Coordinate with departments who work with Vermont indigenous communities to ensure we are not making excessive demands
  - Encourage college-level learning requirements (including indigenous ways of knowing in science curricula) or recommended actions that go beyond the current Land Acknowledgement