



URGE Policies for working with Communities of Color for University of Oklahoma

This is what was found by Geosciences POD at OU on policies for working with communities of color and plans for improving these interactions.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization**

Interactions via outreach activities at the University level (via OU Outreach) are evident on various websites and through partners such as the American Indian institute (purpose is Helping Indigenous Nations of North America strengthen their existing capacity to ensure sustainable, healthy, and culturally vibrant communities for the generations to come), NCORE, and the South West Center for Human Relations Studies. OU is also fairly active in recruiting with Diversity Enrichment Programs Recruitment Interns and recruiting events such as American Indian Visitation Day, Latinos Without Borders Fall camps, McLaurin & Lewis Leadership Weekend (although tracking that recruiting to retention was discussed in prior deliverables). OU also has a community engagement office which focuses on reciprocity, long-term partnerships and cultural humility, cultivating mutually beneficial partnerships between communities and the University. However, finding details of when, how, and which communities of color have been involved is more challenging at the University level.

Within the geosciences at OU (which spans two Colleges and multiple Centers), details are kept at the unit level. For example, specific communities and groups that tour the National Weather Center or participate in WeatherFest. Most of those interactions have been consistently through the South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center (SC CASC) at OU, which has 1–2 tribal liaisons and holds 4–5 workshops per year for tribal communities totaling over 50 workshops. Other interactions have primarily (but not exclusively) been limited to field experiments (including on Native Land) or showing off instrumentation or the program on visits to tribes (such as via college fairs). The School of Geoscience had a previous NSF grant to develop a bridge program with Tribal Nations. One outcome was the creation of the Native Science course that is still offered through SoG.

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

The SC CASC has an ArcGIS story map that outlines this information for tribal engagement:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=8195ffc5d3ec42fb8cb889b14b67dd>

5f. Key points:

- Multiyear strategy and relationship building
- Began with understanding their interests and needs
- Build capacity amongst tribal staff and youth
- Build research and adaptation capacity

The SC CASC has a Tribal Engagement Strategy developed from what has worked well and lessons learned: <https://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1396/>. Recently finished a document titled “Shifting Landscapes” that provide guidance to research teams wishing to engage with tribal communities on projects:

<https://southcentralclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ShiftingLandscapes2020.pdf>

Other SC CASC success stories on our website from engagements that worked really well:

<https://southcentralclimate.org/native-nations/native-nation-outcomes/>

For working with Hispanic and Latinx communities, having most if not all lead researchers speak Spanish and come from a variety of Spanish-speaking backgrounds, as well as expecting different dialects for different regions and incorporating those aspects into proposed solutions.

Working with local students as field assistants to bring local knowledge and provide opportunities for research experiences at OU.

Joint planning from the beginning of the project.

Involving participants/students in real research (leading to publications and/or presentations).

Providing funding for both participation costs, and salary/fellowship funds

Seeking proper permitting for working on native lands.



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- **What did not work well?**

Broadly speaking, many of the interactions, particularly in the research sense, are not true collaborations and interactions with communities of color are viewed as “broader impacts” and not collaborative research. We’ve had some faculty who have tried to work with tribes in our region, but it has gone poorly because the faculty do not have a proper understanding of how to work with tribes in an appropriate way. For example, face-to-face interactions and trust building are extremely important with tribes, but not all faculty understand or take the time to do this (and in many cases, faculty are not encouraged to take time to do this).

At one workshop focused on co-production of knowledge for extreme precipitation, tribal environmental professionals were a focus group, but due to holding the workshop in the summer and understaffing many of the professionals were not able to attend.

We still struggle with data issues on what is considered public versus private data when federal funding gets involved.

There is no required training prior to interactions with communities of color for anyone involved in interactions whether that is faculty engaging in research or students attending an outreach or event.

It can be difficult to engage students from tribal colleges in geosciences research involving fieldwork for a number of reasons: 1-- familial obligations that preclude being away for extended time periods; 2-- lack of geosciences as a recognized career option (and thus not valued); 3-- because students are not exposed to the subject matter.

Structural barriers to being able to adequately compensate collaborators for time/effort.

No guidelines on how to interact with local communities during our international/domestic field campaigns. We often go into the field without prior knowledge of the culture of local communities.

While interaction with communities of color is included in the OU Vice President for Research and Partnerships’ strategic plan, OU does not incentivize the building of these relationships when evaluating either faculty or researchers. OU has devoted limited resources to facilitating these relationships, evidenced clearly by leaving their tribal liaison position vacant since last fall.



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

For field work and field campaigns on Native lands, acknowledgement should be included in forthcoming publications and presentations (this is done to some extent already for geology based field work, but less so for atmospheric science). Research results should be shared and communicated with the communities they are acknowledging - through presentations, webinars, and data should be shared if funding sources allow.



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Proposals, Questions, and Goals Moving Forward:

- Tribal historical and cultural education for all students, staff, and faculty. Many from outside of Oklahoma are unaware of the historical context of tribal engagement in Oklahoma.
- Build the infrastructure to support early stages of communication and relationship building
 - Collate a database of interactions with communities of color at the department/unit level. Including names of contacts, research vs outreach. More broadly, OU should dedicate resources to keeping statistics on community involvement. These efforts would also strengthen research proposals of which broader impacts activities are increasingly important.
 - Work with OU Outreach, community engagement, and alumni to identify overlapping or neglected communities
 - Culturally sensitive and relevant training for faculty, staff, and students interacting with communities of color, whether this in field work, outreach or education.
 - Highlight and share resources across the geoscience community at OU, such as the Shifting Landscape guidance and Tribal Engagement Strategy.
 - Going even further, OU more broadly should create positions tasked with serving as liaisons to communities of color beyond the single individual at the university level in the Tribal Liaison position and advising on best practices for interacting with these communities. This could be through OU funded, full-time, diversity liaison positions in each College.
- Sending TRAINED department/unit representatives to conferences sponsored by communities of color to listen, learn, and build relationships
- In the proposal infosheet PRIOR to a proposal being submitted, one of the “checks” should be whether the proposal is working with indigenous populations. The PI would then be required to connect and work with the Tribal Liaison to ensure that engagement is being done in a culturally sensitive way at all stages. A similar process for working with any local, predominantly BIPOC communities could be implemented and be facilitated through diversity liaison positions.
- Funding to establish a collaboration liaison between our department(s) and the Native American Studies department for future field work, Mesonet work, etc.

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- Mechanisms to compensate local collaborators in meaningful ways from funded research grants - community members should not be asked to “volunteer” their time.
- Guidance for land acknowledgements for OU. Content, when to use, etc.
- Valuing relationship building with communities of colour in annual evaluations and tenure and promotion. Need evaluation mechanisms and training for how to do this.

Existing Resources at OU:

- Center for Faculty Excellence community engagement: <https://www.ou.edu/cfe/community-engagement>
- Native Nations Center: <https://www.ou.edu/nativenationscenter>
- NCORE (Biggest national conference on race and ethnicity in higher education) <https://www.ncore.ou.edu/en/>
- OU American Indian Institute: <https://outreach.ou.edu/community-services/health-human-services/american-indian-institute/>
- OU Admissions Diversity Enrichment Programs <https://www.ou.edu/admissions/diversity>
- Southwest Center for Human Relations: <https://outreach.ou.edu/educational-services/social-justice/southwest-center-human-relations-studies/>
- OU Community Engagement: <https://ou.edu/communityengagement/community-partners>
- Toolkit for community based research (but not specifically for communities of colour) <https://compact.org/trucen/research-university-engaged-scholarship-toolkit/>
- Norman Community Needs Network: <https://ou.edu/communityengagement/community-needs-network>

South Central CASC resources:

Tribal Engagement Strategy: <https://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1396/>

Shifting Landscapes: A Guide to Developing Academic and Research Relationships in Oklahoma Indian Country
<https://southcentralclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ShiftingLandscapes2020.pdf>

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