

URGE Deliverable Session 4
Policies for Working with Communities of Color
Southern Methodist University

The Department of Earth Sciences does not have a formal policy for working with communities of color. Communities of color here defined is inclusive of international communities and indigenous and/or tribal communities.

To the knowledge of those in the SMU URGE pod, no Earth Sciences faculty member has active funding to study environmental issues relevant to communities of color in Dallas.

Outreach to the local communities in a field area is conducted on a person-to-person basis. Some faculty have stronger ties the regional professional groups in Dallas. Some faculty have a long history of working with local communities in their research field sites. A number of professional staff, students and faculty in the department are active participants in judging for the Dallas Regional Engineering and Science Fair, which is targeted at and attended by student communities of color. Peoples associated with department has participated in Earth Day activities in Dallas. Again, the department has no staff or faculty permanently assigned to coordinate outreach activities.

The only current externally funded, regional scale project in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex involves monitoring induced earthquakes using local seismic networks. All undergraduate and graduate students tied to the induced earthquake research were from Texas and/or from a community of color, but this was a function of the PIs research group and not specifically planned as part of the induced earthquake research. Outreach efforts associated with induced earthquakes included site visits to local elementary schools, talks to community groups and at libraries, upon request. In some cases this included schools that were major minority, as are many schools in the cities of Dallas and Irving, and for those schools particular care was taken so that students would see representation within the graduate students (and white female PI). But the outreach was not specifically targeted nor funded, and the PI, who is a member of the SMU URGE pod, acknowledges that no effort was made to seek out outreach opportunities. Materials were developed and placed at Dallas' Perot Museum of Nature and Science in order to reach a broader regional audience. No group that asked for a presentation was turned away.

The department faculty have a history of working on international projects and recruiting students from those countries to pursue graduate work tied to those projects at SMU. Examples include the paleontology work in Angola, Africa, which yield display in the Smithsonian Museum and will be taken back to Angola at the end of exhibit. Other examples include paleobotany work in Ethiopia, which served as the PhD dissertation of a student from Ethiopia. Geophysicists in the department regularly work with colleagues in South Korea, site of numerous collaborative experiments, and have a history of supporting PhD students from South Korea. Other faculty prioritize in-country expertise and over the last 10 years, all or most international field work includes one or more scientists or students from in-country (Jamaica, Argentina, Costa Rica, etc.). As a result, papers on that research do include our international collaborators.

Some teleseismic earthquake catalog, deep earth imaging and remote sensing work focused on subduction zones has not included in-country experts.

Some faculty members in the pod have taken the concept of colonialism in science seriously. Some recent proposal to fund international research have included more extensive outreach efforts to gain local ecological knowledge and directly collaborate with in-country scientists. The SMU URGE pod did not ask for information on all proposals submitted by faculty. Nor did the pod interview paleoscience faculty to better understand the scope of experiment design and local collaboration in Africa over the history of their projects.

SMU and the Department of Earth Sciences do not have a land acknowledgement statements for either the main campus in Dallas or the Taos campus in New Mexico. Within the structure of SMU, the Department of Earth Sciences does not have the authority to write such statements for the campuses, and only the PIs would have the authority to place such statements in the acknowledgements of peer-reviewed papers.