URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for Susquehanna University

The Susquehanna University URGE Pod discussed Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources. Included below is information from our discussion and suggestions for improved practices and policies.

Previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:
- MP has worked in archeological sites in Mexico that created wealth inequalities and tension within a community. These did not include collective communal rights to data or other approvals above individual property owners (part of the structure that allowed for wealth inequalities to develop from the work).
- MW has worked with Yavapai-Apache Nation, Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, and Gila River Indian Community. None of the MOU's involving these communities included any provision for data ownership and tribal rights beyond 'do no harm' clauses. Data were ecological for threatened and endangered species protection. Native plant propagation included rights over the plant material for the tribe; yet these rights were often ignored by other organizations and caused tension/distrust.
- No other communities of color were mentioned from pod members.

What worked well in these interactions?
- Treating the relationship like a friendship – build trust by doing the worst tasks rather than delegating.
- Respecting tribal sovereignty – never enter tribal lands without permission, collect data without permission, etc.
- Respect tribal interests and ideas – avoid contradiction of historical knowledge (discussion ok once trust is built); integrate your ideas into their self-identified needs without imposing.
- Consider perspective not of "giving them rights" but avoid "taking away rights".

What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?
- Projects that were imposed on communities always failed. Only a handful of past projects still exist; all of which started with full engagement of tribal agencies/council from the beginning.

How were local contributions recognized and data ownership?
- Labor was generally recognized.
- Intellectual and data contributions generally were not.

Were local students actively sought to participate in your research? Why or why not?
- MW worked with tribal field crews to provide trainings and those crews chose how to approach restoration on their lands. Also provided funding for tribal members (Yavapai-Apache) to attend workshops and tours of other tribal restoration projects and methods in AZ and NM.

Have you shared data locally with the community before? How?
- In training workshops for the field crews; but not in a larger community setting.

How have you built trust over time?
- The barriers are significantly lower if trust has not already been eroded by your institution (or a similar institution).

Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?
- If existing projects are not equitable, a simple acknowledgement can be the first step to correction.
- Allow community to dictate the terms of reparation and do not challenge them.

Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?
- A larger systemic challenge in academia was identified by the group. Because of the time required to build trust, there is a strong disincentive for pre-tenure faculty to engage communities of color. If they do engage, there is subsequent pressure to publish as quickly as possible, which will damage institutional trust and any opportunities for future collaboration. To deal with this, we discussed several options:
  - Place higher value on service for tenure and promotion
  - Consider grant writing in professional development instead of service
  - Create supports within the university that make research through service more feasible
  - Begin to use a direct land acknowledgement in a meaningful way (i.e. not tokenizing)
  - Many changes would need to be (and could be) enacted by the faculty, would need serious consideration of what and how first
  - Reward pre-tenure research that involves long-term trust-building
  - Service under-valued in promotion and tenure

URGE
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Do you have a land acknowledgement for your institution?

History:
- https://native-land.ca/
- Susquehannock
- At war with other Iroquois tribes in 1600s (perhaps Oneida?)
- Epidemics from colonists
- Remaining members massacred in 1763.
- Some members of Iroquois and Lenape tribes have Susquehannock ancestors.

How to create a land acknowledgement?

https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/
http://landacknowledgements.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Acknowledgement-Guide-finalfinal.pdf

Land acknowledgement for Susquehanna University, written by SU URGE Pod member Matt Wilson:

"I am speaking to you today from the unsurrendered land of the Susquehannock people (the Sas-k-we-an-og - those who live in a place where water is heard grating on the shore) known as the river people because they lived in harmony and balance with the river and land. I ask you to join me in acknowledging their past community and elders; as well as their present and eternal existence as they may live in the memories and communities of the Munsee, Unami, Unalachtigo [three distinct cultures and languages within the Lenni-Lenape]; Onöndowa'ga:' (Seneca), Odǫhwęja:deˀ (Cayuga), Onʌyote'a•ka (Oneida), and Onundagaonoga (Onondaga) [four distinct tribes who spoke Iroquoian languages – as did the Susquehannock]."