URGE
Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
College of MARINE SCIENCE

URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for USF College of Marine Science

The following describes what was found by the USF-CMS Pod and is based on their experiences in working with Communities of Color, as thoughts for improved policies and/or access to resources to be betting informed in how to effectively and respectfully engage these communities.

Our pod has members from a range of career stages and involvement in the development and execution of research projects, and therefore different experiences and perspectives as related to the questions. This summary document is focused on capturing responses that are representative of the range in our pod and does not reflect or encompass our College as a whole. The "Direct Feedback from Pod Members" was collected via an anonymous form submission process and the questions asked are indicated above the responses.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**
  - On a whole, interactions with communities of color within our pod has been minimal. In the case of PIs and Research Staff, this largely appears to be because of not knowing the best way to approach these communities and/or that it felt intimidating to do so. Some feedback also indicates that engaging communities of color does not appear to be applicable. However, these reasons for not engaging doesn't seem to be out of a lack of interest or understanding the importance of doing so, but certain research projects don't have immediate, obvious ways for why or how to engage communities of color. For example, for someone doing seafloor mapping work offshore, how and why to engage communities of color may not seem like an obvious priority vs. someone who may be traveling somewhere to take physical rock samples that are located on an indigenous land. There also appears to be added difficulty when research is in a very remote and/or foreign location and people don't know where to start to engage with the local community(ies).
  - *Direct feedback from pod members:*
    - Q: Have you actively sought out local collaborators / liaisons / guides? Why or why not?
      - "No. Research area in a different geographic location."
      - "No, I haven't been sure how to approach this. "
      - "No, Making the initial connections might be intimidating."
      - "Nothing outside of local outreach events."
      - "In my previous career in consulting, yes. Since coming to USF in 2015, not really. There are multiple reasons why not at USF, and I have come to

appreciate that they mostly stem from holding too narrow a view of what "pure" science looks like and how it should be conducted."

- ■ "Yes, for an outreach program with underserved youth; local liaisons and collaborators were sought because they knew and understood the needs of the youth best and could help us to know whether our programming met those needs or not."
- ■ "Yes. I have tried to avoid parachute science, but mostly internationally. I have also benefited greatly from local knowledge in some studies. I do not know if local collaborators have benefited equally well from interactions with my studies, and I would like to find out tangible ways to improve upon that."
- ■ "I only have one proposed project and the broader impacts involve developing a lab lesson plan for OCG." Note: *OCG=Oceanography Camp for Girls, which does actively recruit and engage with communities of color.*

- ● **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - ⊄ Engaging with collaborators in project development stages to ensure the project would best serve the needs of communities of color
  - ⊄ *Direct feedback from pod members:*
  - ⊄ Q: "Have you sought to build trust and form long-term connections and collaborations with local institutions if your project is multi-year / ongoing? Why or why not?"
    - ■ "Yes because we want our program to be impactful and not a one-off to check a box that says "Ok, we did outreach with underserved youth." For our outreach/education work, we know that we have to get buy-in and allow the community to provide input if there's going to be any chance of our program being helpful to our students."

- ● **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
  - ⊄ Several pod members note that their projects include community engagement, but these initiatives do not necessarily target communities of color. Utilizing existing connections with community collaborators and discussing community needs before applying for research funding could improve engagement between CMS and local communities of color.

- ● **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
  - ⊄ Existing projects would like to bring on more local students, but funding uncertainty/ desire to focus on training current personnel prevents this from happening. A solution could be to increase funding requests but only once program is well-established.
  - ⊄ *Direct feedback from pod members:*
  - ⊄ Q: Have you actively sought to include local students in your research? Why or why not?

- "“yes, through OCG. Not through other avenues. I am still building up my own workflow and hope to bring in more local students after my own students and staff are trained.”
- "Not yet but I hope to - with funding being uncertain, we hesitate to involve too many people at this stage when it's unclear if we'll be able to support them or not.”
- "Would love to employ USFSP students as summer interns, but might need more money to pay them".
- "Not really... Most of our projects are done through graduate students currently enrolled in our program.”
- "Yes! From middle schoolers to graduate students, it is more enriching this way. We are only researchers, but teachers. What good is research with no audience? Local students are some of the most interested in your research. They also possess local knowledge that can help research. In international coastal research, it can also give a chance to work aboard state of the art research vessels. It is mutually beneficial.”

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**
    - ⊄ On a fundamental level, educating our immediate community on Indigenous knowledge and historic racism associated with our science could be achieved by incorporating a reading class for graduate students. On a more basic level, we discussed providing resources to the CMS community via email/ on the website.
    - ⊄ The pod has little experience engaging with communities of color, which is likely representative of CMS. Pooling of resources and initiating a community survey to take stock of and assess the current projects intentionally involving communities of color may be useful. Concerns are expressed that engaging with our own college members and communities of color needs to be done intentionally and incrementally.