

This is what was found by the Wash U EPSC pod at Washington University in St Louis on policies for working with communities of color, as well as ideas for improved policies and best practices

### **Pod members' experiences working with communities/international collaborators**

There are several ongoing collaborations between scientists in EPS and community groups in the St Louis area. These are mostly (or all?) related to environmental monitoring, eg flooding and flood mitigation in Centreville on the Illinois side of the river. The PIs who set up and work on these projects have used resources available at Wash U, such as consultations with the Gephardt Institute, to try and make sure they're engaging respectfully and meaningfully with community members. One key aspect of these collaborations is clear and frequent communication. From a scientific perspective, we're looking for evidence and data, and that takes time to collect and analyze; from the perspective of someone who lives in the area that floods, it's already obvious when and where floods occur since they've been happening for years. Building a successful collaboration depends on being able to communicate the kind of timeline the research follows and, equally importantly, listening to the community partners and making sure that input informs the data collection.

Most of our pod members do not have experience working with communities of color, or really with any community groups – we have a lot of lab scientists, planetary scientists, etc. These pod members instead offered some reflections on collecting data or samples outside the US, and on international collaboration.

#### *International data collection:*

- One pod member is working with seismic data recently collected in Patagonia. The project involves several scientific collaborators from Chile and Argentina, but no engagement with local non-scientists (beyond some conversations related to siting broadband during deployment). In general, this project does ok at avoiding "parachute science," though there is always a power dynamic when the US scientists have all the funding and equipment and resources. We note that much of the general public is uninterested in things like mantle shear velocities at 100km depth, but conversations in this session were a reminder that (a) we collect data on other peoples' land, and (b) that data needs to be shared with local people in some form that's relevant to them, like earthquake catalogs/measurements of seismicity rates, even if we personally don't study earthquake hazards.

- Another pod member studies the noble gas isotopic composition of subaerially erupted basalts erupted at ocean island settings around Earth. One such setting is the Azores, a group of islands straddling the mid-Atlantic ridge at ~39°N. They are currently in the process of establishing a working relationship with a local scientist at the University of the Azores on the island of São Miguel who will help with the gathering of data on amples and will likely be a co-author on a future publication. There are many ocean island locations across Earth that geoscientists love to study for a variety of reasons; some are independent island nations, while others are partly or fully occupied by Western countries like the US, UK, and France. Indigenous persons should be included in work in these settings when it comes to data curation, sample analysis, and results reporting wherever possible. Even those of us who don't generally think about our work in the context of environmental change are responsible for finding ways to communicate our results in a way that is meaningful to everyone, not just those in our own fields.

#### *International collaboration:*

Many of us are involved in international collaborations (and several of our pod members are scholars from outside the US). Working in multinational research environments poses challenges that are different from but in some ways related to those we face in working with other communities. The skills needed to navigate multicultural environments, honor cultural diversity, and handle data in this context are ones that we often learn as we go, without training or even much guidance. One of the lessons from this session's readings and interviews is that research data handling requires careful thought, particularly when working in collaborations with community groups (or different scientific institutions). Data management plans (DMP) should be thoughtfully written in the early stages of planning any project to ensure group/community buy-in on how data will be used, how research will be disseminated, how access will or will not be limited, etc. This is important not only at the level of individual projects, but also in the longer term for building trust between scientists, minority groups, and the general population.

### **Ideas/policies/resources for working with communities of color:**

The first thing to note here is that we don't have specific policies in the department on how to do community engagement properly; this is probably not uncommon, and since the people who seek out opportunities to work with local communities are generally invested in doing it well (and have their own policies, of sorts) it's not necessarily something that needs standardization within the department? But having blueprints for setting up projects with community partners would be helpful to give people a starting point and promote sharing of knowledge and experiences so that we can continually improve our practices.

One topic our group discussed was finding ways to get members of our department to engage more directly with the history (and the present) of the city of St Louis. The history of St Louis is one of systemic racism and inequity, from land appropriation to slavery to redlining to police brutality, and many of us know only the basic outlines of this history. Our URGE pod meetings are occurring (albeit virtually) on Kickapoo land, but land acknowledgements are basically never included in any of our department talks. In our discussion, we came to the conclusion that hosting seminars or similar targeted educational efforts in the department would likely not be effective; with limited time during workdays, most people (even those of us in the pod) are unlikely to attend. However, we suggest publicizing events held in other departments (like talks on St Louis history or bus tours that are apparently sometimes conducted by Wash U history faculty) as ways for department members to learn, and maybe setting up outings for grad students with a social element could help get people out of the immediate Wash U neighborhood and into other parts of the city. (The MO historical society also offers walking tours: <https://mohistory.org/events?series=See%20STL%20Tours>)

The Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (<https://gephardtinstitute.wustl.edu/>) and the Buder Center for Native American Studies (<https://sites.wustl.edu/budercenter/>) are both excellent resources on campus. The Gephardt Institute offers consultations for faculty and staff on community engagement and best practices, and also has information on community engaged teaching.