



Resource Map for Students in Geology – Amherst College

The following reports the initiatives the Amherst College Geology Department is discussing with the goal of improving how BIPOC students are introduced to resources within the institution and broader community that will promote their well-being, their confidence, and their success. These discussions centered around:

- The need to better introduce ourselves and our department pedagogy to the campus-wide community in order to open doors to students for whom earth sciences may be unfamiliar.
- The need to better integrate new geology students and new majors (potential and declared) to college and departmental policies and resources that will support their activities within the discipline.

One initiative that is now underway is the development of a departmental student handbook. While this handbook will be written for all students interested in the department, the faculty members agreed it is particularly important to clearly and transparently lay out departmental and discipline-specific expectations and resources for BIPOC and first-gen students who may not know how to navigate these aspects of academic culture. For example, ensuring that students are aware of opportunities to connect with affinity groups both within and outside of the department and College will be explicit in this handbook.

This handbook is presently being populated with information on the following subjects:

- Geology People (students, faculty, staff – including the Beneski Museum).
- The Many Ways to be a Geology Major
- Geology Community Events (regularly scheduled, seasonal, social, speakers)
- Campus Resources (affinity groups, academic support, counseling and health centers)
- Campus Reporting (identity-based harm)
- Geology Communities Beyond Amherst
- Attending and Participating in Conferences
- Resources for Field Trips and Fieldwork
- Resources for taking a hike or a student-led field trip
- Summer Field Camp and Research Opportunities
- Safety in the Field/on Fieldtrips
- Safety in the Lab
- Study Abroad
- Senior Year (comprehensive exam; senior seminar; senior honors thesis)
- After Graduation (graduate schools, employment)

Our discussions also included brainstorming that resulted in the following ideas that we will be exploring over the coming academic year:

- Undertake regular formal (anonymous) and informal polling of our students (including polling non-major students in our introductory courses), asking:

What do you wish you had known?

What confuses you at this time?

What would it take for you to feel comfortable with your faculty and in your courses?

- Forge liaisons with campus affinity groups, the Multicultural Resource Center, the Counselling center, etc. and provide them with a time to introduce themselves to our students (such as during TGiRx).
- Develop an annual alumni panel discussion on Geo-Careers that would appeal across campus, demonstrating that the geology major/geology courses are a pathway to a very diverse range of careers. Possible panels: Government agencies; Environmental consulting; Environmental law.
- Institute a required half-credit course for Geology seniors on “What geologists do” – the format being a once-weekly alumni speaker, with a written student response. Participation in such a senior seminar might be substituted for the exam presently used to fulfill the comprehensive requirement for the major.
- Humanize the geology faculty by: holding non-course office hours; by mounting annual group departmental photos (including students) on our web-page; by replacing our “wall of dudes” with (1) photos of present faculty; (2) photos and blurbs on what/where recent grads are, and what they are doing now; or (3) a big screen monitor, such as those already in place in other campus locations, with pictures of geology activities, news and events, etc.
- Invite students on a one-night “training” camping trip to de-mystify fieldwork and field trips. This idea has already been favorably received by several undergraduate students of color within the department.