

Report on Unlearning Racism in Geoscience from the NAGT Traveling Workshop Program Pod



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Overview

The Unlearning Racism in Geoscience program (URGE; <https://urge-science.org>) was a 16-week curriculum in Spring 2021 of interviews, articles, and deliverables (i.e., anti-racism policies and strategies) for discussion in pods. Twelve facilitators from the NAGT Traveling Workshop Program (TWP; <https://nagt.org/nagt/profdev/twp>) had a discussion pod.

The TWP pod identified that

- The TWP plays a critical role in advancing racial equity in geoscience and environmental science programs through facilitating high-impact action planning and providing anti-racism resources.
- The TWP can produce more anti-racist outcomes by improving resource sharing, providing facilitators with content knowledge and training, and improving anti-racism policies.

About the Traveling Workshop Program

The TWP structure:

- A pool of ~40 facilitators who conduct workshops in pairs for departments or faculty groups
- Topics include *Building Stronger Geoscience and Environmental Science Programs*, *Making Your Course More Effective and Societally Relevant*, and *Supporting the Success of All Students*.
- Typically ~10 workshops are conducted each year, generally in person but now virtual too as an adaptation to COVID.
- Four application deadlines each year; next is October 15 (contact catherine.riihimaki@gmail.com for more info)

Many programs that host workshops articulate wanting to attract more students and/or ensure success for all.

Lessons for our workshops

URGE topics were relevant for potential issues facilitators face during workshops, especially

- Helping departments strategize policies and practices for **collaborating successfully with minoritized communities**,
- Identifying and **changing policies and practices** that might lead to exclusion of students based on their race or ethnicity, and
- **Developing mentoring practices** that can help all students succeed in curricular and co-curricular efforts.

URGE materials and new materials created by facilitators will be used to help host programs become fully anti-racist.

Lessons for our program

Although URGE was structured around academic programs, our pod adapted some topics for our own operations:

- How can we ensure that our **facilitator pool** is diverse and thriving?
- How can we ensure that our workshops are effective and accessible to programs at **different types of institutions**?
- What **professional development** do our facilitators need to be successful in leading workshops?
- How can we leverage TWP to encourage **synergies across institutions** that benefit marginalized students and faculty?

Additional work

The TWP partnered with facilitators from other NAGT programs for a two-day virtual workshop on facilitating workshop discussions on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Two foci were

- Content knowledge for facilitators, and
- Role-playing how to handle in-workshop discussions.

Facilitators recognized that more training in both areas are needed.

Reviewing URGE deliverables created by other pods will help inform how TWP might support change in departments and programs.

Some existing NAGT policies (i.e., the NAGT Activities Code of Conduct) satisfied the URGE deliverables for the TWP pod, but the pod also identified gaps, particularly in two acute areas:

1. A strategy to equitably and inclusively identify and train new facilitators, and
2. Policies to sustainably share TWP leadership across the diverse group of facilitators.

The TWP welcomes community input to make the TWP a full agent for helping the geosciences become anti-racist.

