

# Academic-Industry Career Events: Lessons Learned and Takeaways from a Successful DE&I Event

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## Event Summary

The Groundwater Resources Association's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) committee sponsored the Environmental Career Fair which was co-organized by Mr. Matt Pendleton (Hydrogeologist, EKI Environment & Water, Inc. and GRA DE&I Committee member) and UCLA's DE&I Committee of the Department of Earth, Planetary and Space Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The career building event was geared towards underrepresented student groups in the groundwater-related sciences and convened seven panelists from diverse ethnic and academic backgrounds and 16 students. The event was advertised to DE&I student groups and was held at the UCLA Luskin Conference Center.

The half-day event was held on March 12, 2022, and included panel discussions, group-focused interview exercises, and one-on-one mock interviews. The student participants came prepared with their resumes in-hand and were giddy with nervous excitement to meet the industry panelists. After an initial panel Q&A, students mingled with panelists over refreshments and snacks, and then got to work! The meat of the event consisted of focused, 20- to 40-minute-long mock interviews and hand-written interview exercises. Every student had face-time with multiple panelists. The exercises and mock interviews were designed to get students thinking about their path and future career.

The event was organized with the intent to create linkages between academia and the local participating industry organizations which benefit from employing recent graduates. According to Mr. Matt Pendleton, "there seems to be a lack of groundwater industry ties within the southern California universities and colleges, and that's why we organized this event: to show students a sampling of the career pathways that exist and which are not often discussed in the academic setting."

**As quoted from the post-event surveys, students "loved this experience" and "need these events to happen more often." Furthermore, they said, "This was a fantastic event! The advice given was exactly what I was looking for and tremendously increased my understanding of the environmental industry."**



## Event Details

- Half-day event targeted at DE&I groups
  - 7 Panelists from DE&I groups
  - Panel discussions
- Moderated Question & Answer Period
  - DE&I open mic
- One-on-one mock interviews
- Group interview hand-written exercises



## Interview Questions

1. What motivates you?
2. What are your greatest strengths? *Think about what strengths you bring to the party that would lend themselves to your success in a job.*
3. What are your greatest weaknesses? *What are some of the things you know about yourself that if you don't watch or manage them, they could get in the way of your success at work? What are some of the tactics/techniques you have used to compensate for them? Please provide one very clear example of how you manage this weakness.*
4. Describe a recent achievement you are most proud of. *What did you learn from this achievement that could be applied to your future job?*
5. Describe something that has gotten in the way of your success and how you overcame this struggle.

## Key Takeaways

- Students were very receptive to interview and group exercises with industry professionals and geoscience regulators
- Industry professionals from DE&I groups were enthusiastic about participation in career-oriented events
- Similar events are planned to engage students across California
- Career events bolster student engagement within their department and may reduce attrition

