

GCE-LTER DEI Implementation plan

The GCE-LTER project wrote a diversity plan in 2012 that laid out broad goals for the project in terms of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). This implementation plan is a follow-up that describes what the project has already done, what specific actions we plan for the next 6 years, and what we hope to accomplish over the longer-term in the area of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for groups such as underrepresented minorities and female scientists who face barriers to participation in research. It also takes stock of our efforts to be thoughtful in our interactions with the local community and to respect the historical ties and knowledge that Native Americans, the Gullah-Geechee community, and others have with our study site. We will assess progress annually, and we welcome your input.

Barriers to participation in GCE research include lack of previous research experience, lack of familiarity with GCE and the UGA Marine Institute (UGAMI), concern over field and travel expenses, harassment and discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Some groups may also face barriers associated with poor English skills, lack of trust, or disabilities that limit access. Below we list what we have done to-date to address these barriers, along with both our short-term goals and long-term aims.

What we have done to-date

We wrote a GCE diversity plan (2012), conducted a diversity survey of past and active GCE personnel (2020), and wrote the first iteration of this implementation plan (2022).

We adopted a GCE code of conduct (2021), which prohibits harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct, and provides mechanisms for reporting violations. We provide this information to undergraduates, graduate students, technicians, post-docs and faculty who work in the GCE program.

We wrote a GCE field safety plan (2022), which provides guidance on minimizing risk of harassment from co-workers or the public. This is again provided to all who work in the program.

We added a question about overcoming obstacles to the summer intern application (2021) so that it wouldn't just emphasize experience, but also motivation. We also invite applicants to provide information on disabilities so that we can facilitate reasonable accommodations. Rephrase this so students don't over-share.

We continue to expand promotion of the summer intern program, including through Savannah State University and minority-serving programs at UGA and UH. We have also hosted a visit by the Savannah State University REU program to UGAMI (2021) and will explore hosting repeat visits in future years.

We started (2021) an annual pre-summer orientation for interns and incoming graduate students to help address questions about what to expect at the field site.

We include residents of the Hog Hammock Community in our summer seminar series and provide opportunities for GCE participants to engage in community-based agricultural programs.

We work with Native American tribes to help design and vet archaeological research.

We make field vests available through the GCE technicians' office to help identify researchers working in the field (2022).

We routinely cover travel expenses for interns to the field site (2022).

We started a GCE twitter account as one way to improve communication within the group (as well as outside) and celebrate our achievements (2023).

Action items for 2023, and responsible person

Rephrase the question about overcoming obstacles on the summer intern program so that applicants don't feel required to over-share (Steve).

Put a recording of the 2023 summer orientation on the GCE web site for future reference (Adam).

Add the GCE code of conduct to the orientation materials for the Schoolyard program (Venetia).

Emphasize respect and consideration for the Hog Hammock community in summer orientation (Steve).

Distribute the climate survey developed by the network-wide graduate student committee (Matt, late summer or fall 2023).

Promote the 2024 intern program to Native American colleges and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Steve, Iona).

Explore a visit by the Savannah State REU program to UGAMI in summer 2023 (Steve).

Suggestions for GCE-V proposal

Add DEI or mentor training to each annual meeting (with funding in the GCE-V proposal).

Possible actions in the next six years

We will make polo shirts with the GCE logo available to help identify researchers working in the field. These will be an alternative to the field vests, depending on the situation.

We will make essential field gear available to reduce out of pocket expenses for undergraduate and graduate students (perhaps a locker of shared boots, work gloves, bug spray, etc.).

We will establish an on-island buddy system for international scientists (and others who are interested) while they are in residence at UGAMI.

We will work with GCE researchers and the Schoolyard program to expand the “meet the scientist” video series on the GCE education web page.

We will emphasize the importance of mentoring to intern sponsors and graduate advisers, and provide access to mentoring resources.

We will work to improve group cohesion through social events, training events, and other community building events, both in the summer at UGAMI and at other GCE events.

More career training for interns and graduate students.

We will develop regular avenues for graduate student interactions to improve inclusion.

We will work to improve diversity at all ranks by: a) meeting each fall to discuss whether we want to recruit successful undergraduate interns to apply to graduate school; b) identifying and recruiting diverse faculty to give seminars, participate in GCE meetings, and visit UGAMI; c) providing seminars and recruiting at HBCU institutions; d) inviting tribal members for tours of UGAMI and to GCE meetings.

We will make it clear that we can provide remote research opportunities for those who face barriers to field work.

We will partner with UGAMI to sponsor an open house for Hog Hammock (and perhaps McIntosh County) residents. Jointly with SOLO?

We will continue to partner with members of the Gullah/Geechee community to conduct research on traditional ecological knowledge.

Long-term aims

Partner with the Gullah-Geechee corridor organization.

Pursue joint grant applications with URM faculty with interests in GCE work.

Webinars for GCE membership (maybe we can get or promote the CERF webinars).

Provide access to culturally-aware mentoring and DEI training for interns, graduate students, and schoolyard teachers.

Identify mechanisms to provide childcare for researchers while at Sapelo Island.

Build partnerships with additional faculty who have worked in the Gullah-Geechee corridor. .

Provide access to English-language training as part of the GCE experience for international students and faculty.

Evaluate obstacles that might prevent disabled scientists from participating in GCE research, and identify where the GCE can make reasonable accommodations to facilitate participation.

Documenting progress

We will establish a standing GCE DEI committee to oversee and promote DEI actions.

The committee will update the existing diversity plan and revise the current implementation plan, as needed.

We will include a DEI working group in every GCE annual meeting to assess annual progress and set priorities for the coming year.

During the fourth or fifth year of each grant cycle, we will identify actions needing funding in the next grant cycle.

We will conduct a demographic survey of GCE participants in the fifth year of every grant cycle to document progress and inform grant proposals (we conducted a baseline survey in 2020).

Updated on 4/12/2023