

Partner Institutions Request for Proposals

1. INTRODUCTION

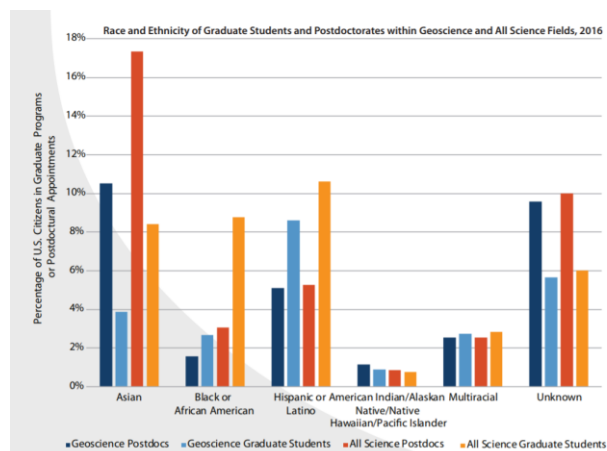
Underrepresented minority students (defined in this project as African American, Hispanic America, and Native American) make up a third of all college-age U.S. citizens, yet they earn only 12% of US geoscience Master's degrees and 8% of geoscience PhDs (American Geosciences Institute, 2016). The American Geophysical Union Bridge Program aims to strengthen geosciences in the United States by increasing the number of underrepresented ethnic and racial minority students who receive doctoral degrees in geoscience.

As part of a national effort funded by the National Science Foundation the [Inclusive Graduate Education Network \(IGEN\)](#), AGU is developing sustainable model bridge programs that improve the access to and culture of graduate education for *all* students, with emphasis on those underrepresented in doctoral programs in geoscience. A significant component of the program also includes developing a national network of doctoral granting institutions to provide substantial mentoring for students to successfully complete PhD programs.

The AGU Bridge Program incorporates practices from programs that have strong evidence of success in supporting underrepresented minority students. This program will also establish links between minority-serving undergraduate institutions and doctoral-granting institutions through research activities, collaboration, and personal contacts. Since many of today's doctoral students will become tomorrow's academic, industrial, and government leaders; educating more underrepresented minority PhDs will have a multiplicative effect in educating and inspiring students at all stages in the system and will help address persistent disparities. The AGU Bridge Program's mission is to strengthen the geosciences in the United States by increasing the number of underrepresented minority students who receive doctoral degrees in geosciences.

The project has the following goals:

1. Increase, within ten years, the fraction of geoscience PhDs awarded to underrepresented minority students to match the fraction of geoscience Bachelor's degrees granted to these groups
2. Develop, evaluate, and document sustainable model bridging experiences that improve the access to and culture of graduate education for *all* students, with emphasis on those underrepresented in doctoral programs in geosciences
3. Promote and disseminate successful program components to the geoscience community



Source: Carolyn E. Wilson for AGI, October 2018

More information about the program is available on the [AGU Bridge Program website](#).

2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The AGU Bridge Program invites your department to consider joining a network of “Partner Institutions” – institutions that will provide underrepresented minority students with a smooth transition into graduate programs. To ensure a supportive pairing between student and graduate program, we established Partner Institutions to vet programs for students, and to help departments committed to the principles underlying the Bridge Program recruit students to their programs.

This document provides guidelines by which institutions can apply to become Partner Institutions, and criteria we use to select these institutions. The procedure for becoming a Partner Institution will require institutions to submit a brief proposal detailing programs and practices that support students entering their doctoral program.

3. ELIGIBILITY

The Partner Institution must be a university or college that offers a Master and/or Doctoral degree in the geosciences and be located and accredited in the United States or Puerto Rico. The institution must have active research programs readily available to students throughout the academic year.

4. BENEFITS

Departments that become Partner Institutions will be able to take advantage of the following benefits

- Access to AGU Bridge Program Bachelor’s and Master’s student applicant database (an annual recruitment effort by the AGU to identify underrepresented minority students interested in pursuing doctoral studies in geoscience)
- Public recognition by the AGU Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee of the department’s commitment to diversity in geosciences
- Endorsement of the graduate program to underrepresented minority students in Bridge Programs and to others who contact AGU to inquire about possible recommendations for departments that have supportive post-baccalaureate educational environments
- Featured on AGU Bridge Program website
- Access to individuals in the project and at existing bridge sites who are knowledgeable about support strategies for underrepresented minority students in graduate studies
- Strengthening Broader Impacts statements in federal grant applications

5. APPROVAL PROCESS

Partner Institution applications will be reviewed by the AGU Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee and Bridge Program staff. Following a successful review, the Bridge Program management and members of the Advisory Committee will conduct either a video conference review or on-site review of the department.

5.1 Proposal Submission

Institutions that would like to be considered as a Partner Institution are required upload their 5-page proposal. Proposals that exceed the page limit will not be read beyond the stated page limit.

Institutions are encouraged to utilize the proposal template found on the faculty tab of the [Bridge Program website](#). Proposals will be reviewed on annually for approval. **The deadline for proposals is October 15 at 11:59 PM ET.**

Proposals must be sent as a single PDF document (as an email attachment, or for larger files to a “Dropbox” folder by prior arrangement) to Pranoti Asher at pasher@agu.org . (Subject: AGU Bridge Program Partner Institution Application). **Late proposals will not be accepted.**

5.2 Review of Proposals

All members or a subcommittee of the AGU Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, depending on the number of proposals, and the AGU Bridge Program team will review applications. The following considerations are used in evaluating proposals.

- Engaged & Committed Faculty
 - Active faculty participation is defined as a group that includes a minimum of 10-15% of tenured faculty in geoscience department. This group must include the chair and/or the Director of Graduate Studies or equivalent.
- Mentoring Activities
 - Mentoring and Mentor Training experience
 - Examples of departmental participation in mentor training experiences
 - Examples of previous success mentoring underrepresented minority students
 - In case there has been no previous experience mentoring underrepresented minority students:
 - Outline of a mentor/mentee training program that may include
 - Research and professional development programs
 - Ideas on how to identify and recruit students to serve as peer mentors for students brought in from the AGU Bridge Program
 - Examples of a mentor-mentee compact - a formal agreement that outlines the expectations and responsibilities of the mentor and mentee
- Admissions Practices and Beliefs
 - Use of multi-faceted admission criteria that, along with traditional measures of academic preparation, examine a broad range of indicators of a student's potential to conduct original research, and that specifically do not employ strict GRE cutoff metrics.
 - Description of how graduate admission decisions are made and what inputs are considered.
 - Financial support package and health benefits awarded to students.
- Advising & Induction
 - Evaluation and advising procedures for students who are accepted but lack some key undergraduate preparation (e.g. can students take upper-division undergraduate courses?).
 - Description of how students find an appropriate research advisor.
 - Department procedure for inducting students into graduate student academic and social cultures.
 - Description of department level relocation assistance, housing initiative, student handbook, etc.
 - If applicable, strategies for preparing students for applying to PhD programs (*GRE preparation, application coaching, etc.*).
 - Description of the departmental use of Individual Development Plans for the professional advancement of any graduate students.
- Student Progress & Monitoring Procedures
 - Describe how student progress is monitored in the first few semesters
 - Early intervention plans in case student is doing poorly, including tutoring assistance, considerations of add/drop dates, and having students enroll in different level courses
 - Exam structure for reaching candidacy
 - Comprehensive or qualifying exam (*include description of exam, passing rates, policy on retaking*)
 - PhD candidacy exam (*include description of exam, and passing rates if applicable*)
 - Long term progress monitoring plans for students

- Presence of an Ombudsman or procedure on how grievances are handled
- Data and Demographics
 - Retention rate of all students, and of any underrepresented minority students from admission to graduation.
 - Description of why students left the graduate program in the past five years if known.
 - Number of total students, and number of total underrepresented minority students
 - Applicants who applied in the previous year
 - Students who were accepted into the program
 - Students who are currently enrolled
- Equity and Inclusion
 - Description of how your department is actively working towards diversity, equity, or inclusion in your proposal, with special attention to highlighting explicitly what components of these efforts are focused on race and ethnicity.
 - Example evidence:
 - A department that committed to taking an intensive mentor training program that included a significant diversity element
 - A department that attended the Bridge Program conference and was spurred on to improve.
 - A department that noted explicit alignment with their university president’s statements around equity
 - A department that noted a longstanding commitment to racial equity, including work in diversifying their faculty
 - A department who noticed that first year grad students got “lost” and developed an extensive plan to ameliorate this issue

5.3 Review by AGU Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee

Committee members will review all submissions. Possible outcomes from the panel review are as follows:

1. Approved
 - Full approval: Comments and suggestions from the panel review will be made available.
 - Provisional approval: Proposals can be provisionally approved pending submission of a supplement that discusses concerns raised in the panel review. The response will be reviewed by project management as appropriate.
2. Denied
 - Proposals with significant issues will be contacted to help them address these concerns, and encouraged to resubmit as appropriate

5.4 Videoconference with Departments and AGU Bridge Program Management Team

Once the proposal has been reviewed and the committee has made a decision to move forward with the process, the project will schedule a 2-hour videoconference with the review committee to gather more information and establish a personal link with the institution’s leadership. A videoconference will include the following:

- Chair of the department and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)
- Institution liaison (if not the chair or DGS)
- A selection of graduate students

The videoconference provides the institution an opportunity to discuss specific efforts that support minority students. Details of how this is organized will be provided in advance. In cases where the project has already conducted an in-person site visit this step can be waived.

5.5 Report Prepared and Approval Issued

After review as described above, the Bridge Program Management Team and Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee will recommend the institution receive approval and begin receiving partner institution benefits. The team will also provide a brief evaluative feedback report to the department where appropriate, to outline specific actions they might consider to further improve their support for students.

6. Expectations of a Partner Institution

The following are expectations for continuing as a recognized Partner Institution:

1. Complete an annual survey on institutional diversity efforts and demographics
2. Identify and recruit students to serve as peer mentors to students brought in by the AGU-BP
3. Participate in collaborative discussions with other Partner Institutions and the AGU-BP on practices that improve all programs
4. Engage faculty/staff/students both internally and externally in discussions that improve the access to and culture of graduate education for all students
5. Inform AGU-BP of all offers and student acceptances from the AGU-BP application pool
6. Work with AGU-BP to track student progress
7. Renewal of certification should be completed every 5 years or with the change of the DGS, whichever happens first.

For institutions that accept Bridge Students, we will require ongoing communication with the local site leader for periodic updates on student progress. Where possible, we may ask the institution to provide information on students that participated in programs created for students from the AGU-BP applicant pool, but were independently recruited, for comparison reasons. This will be done with appropriate permissions and precautions.

More details about the AGU Bridge Program are available on the [AGU Bridge Program website](#).

Project management encourages inquiries and consultation during the proposal writing process. Inquiries can be directed to Pranoti Asher (202-777-7522, pasher@agu.org)

Please send an electronic copy of your completed application as a PDF to pasher@agu.org with the subject line: AGU Bridge Program Partner Institution Application