Earth Systems Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Anti-Racism
Updated 5.12.21

Statement of Intent:

During the summer 2020, the Earth Systems staff met together and with students to discuss ways to change aspects of our academic curriculum and improve program management. In response to the Movement for Black Lives, we discussed the goals of increasing transparency in decision-making, nurturing a climate of greater inclusivity and equity, and more directly engaging with environmental and racial justice.

As one of the most diverse communities within the School of Earth, the Earth Systems Program stands in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives, and seeks to advance anti-racist practices through our teaching, research, and community building. We must do what we can to bring about changes in the Earth Systems Program that will empower students to investigate and address the roots of social-environmental challenges more holistically, and better account for the problems of racial violence that are intertwined with environmental degradation. With the goal of creating an anti-racist community, and ensuring that Black Indigenous and People of Color BIPOC communities and other underrepresented groups can thrive as valued members of the Earth Systems Program, we put forth this action plan for diversity, equity and inclusion and anti-racism for consideration. We look forward to community feedback, especially from BIPOC students and others coming from underrepresented communities. We hope that this effort can contribute to the broader commitment to anti-racism that has been articulated at the highest level of leadership at Stanford.

The main goals of the Earth Systems Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism expanded on below, include:

1) **Anchor diversity, equity and inclusion and anti-racism as core priorities for the Earth Systems Program** and broader community, making explicit the connections between BIPOC community experiences, anti-racism, environmental science, and environmental movements.

2) **Engage Earth Systems students in a diverse set of perspectives** on social-environmental issues, which center the experiences of BIPOC and other underrepresented communities, in Earth Systems classes, events, internships, community-engaged learning projects, and capstone experiences.

3) **Create a culture within the Earth System Program that facilitates belonging, inclusivity, and respect** for all members of the Earth Systems community, especially for BIPOC and other underrepresented students that have historically been excluded from environmental science and mainstream environmental movements.
4) **Advance processes to increase procedural justice with Earth Systems Program operations**, in order to attend to key DEI and anti-racism concerns expressed by students, and enable more equitable and transparent allocation of resources.

**Actions the program has taken during summer and fall quarters:**

1. Reflect on program goals and needs, conversations among Earth Systems staff and student advisors.
2. Document program goals and actions (this document)
3. Facilitate a series of meetings between students and instructors of Earth Systems 112 to review course content and pedagogy, with the goal of revising the course to better serve educational program objectives and student interests.
4. Assign DEI responsibilities to all Student Advisors. In addition, one Student Advisor is responsible for coordinating and communicating on DEI-related issues to Advisory Council.
5. Expand the Earth Systems Executive Committee to include one member with expertise in EJ/Environmental Ethics/Environmental Human Rights (Dr. Sibyl Diver).
6. Create a new email list (escommunity@lists.stanford.edu) to provide opportunities for sharing information relevant to interests of Earth Systems community members but that is not otherwise directly related to curricular matters, program events and announcements, and job and internship opportunities. If you wish to be included, please register here [https://forms.gle/p6nHekoHAzpGLCa99](https://forms.gle/p6nHekoHAzpGLCa99).
7. Funded honoraria for invited speakers in Earth Systems courses with diverse perspectives.
8. Committed funding to support Earth Tones.
9. Committed partial funding to support Liberation through Land (EARTHSYS 95).

**Changes the Earth Systems Executive Committee approved for implementation in 2021-22:**

1. Abolish elective requirement.
2. Institute a new breadth requirement related to environmental ethics, social-environmental justice, and environmental human rights.
3. Create a new minor subplan with emphasis on environmental ethics, social-environmental justice, and environmental human rights.

**Actions the program plans to take during winter and spring quarters:**

1. Establish an Advisory Council: The purpose of the Advisory Council is to provide guidance to the Earth Systems leadership on matters relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion with the goal of fostering a more inclusive environment for all members of the Earth Systems community. The purview of the Advisory Council will include, but not be limited to, issues related to curriculum, program management, and grievances. The panel will include student, alumni, faculty, and staff representatives and will meet approximately once per quarter. If you are a student interested in joining the Advisory Council please respond to the poll at this link to be considered: [https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5dNR2DAms53vcWx](https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5dNR2DAms53vcWx)
2. Create a reporting process/conflict resolution for issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. Provide annual DEI and Anti-Racist training for staff and student advisors.
4. Publish rubrics for all student awards. (Note: Where pertinent, we should include explicit language in descriptions of awards that recognize student contributions to DEI outcomes relating to socio-environmental leadership, problem solving, and research.

5. Publish course sequencing roadmaps for students entering major during first and second year.

6. Publish selection criteria for teaching and course assistants.

7. Define roles, responsibilities, and functions of ES DEI Advisory Council (see description at the bottom of this document).

8. Open student and alumni applications for ES DEI Advisory Council. Invite staff and faculty to become members.

Expanded description of goals, actions, and assessments

1. GOAL: **Anchor Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and anti-racism as core priorities for the Earth Systems Program** and broader community, making explicit the connections between BIPOC community experiences, anti-racism, environmental science, and environmental movements.

   ACTION 1: Establish an actionable plan with explicit time frames included with goals, to be implemented and refined as needed over the next 1-3 years (Current proposal). Establish co-leads for facilitating implementation of individual goals, which may include students, staff, and faculty, along with reasonable timelines and implementation steps. Create tools for effectively communicating and representing this action plan within the community. (DONE)

   ACTION 2: Ensure an open process for soliciting feedback from the Earth Systems community on both the action plan and Advisory Council, especially from BIPOC members of the Earth Systems community (Current action). Create space for the Earth Systems community to discuss this proposal and provide feedback from multiple perspectives. (Guiding questions may include how does this align with the ethics, values, and goals of our students, the program, the School? How do we want to engage at a personal level, at a professional level?) (IN PROGRESS)

   ACTION 3: Establish a DEI Advisory Council that provides guidance to Earth Systems leadership with the goal of fostering a more inclusive environment, and specifically attending to the needs of BIPOC community members, as well as other underrepresented groups in Earth Systems. The DEI Advisory Council will be the formal governance body tasked with ensuring program accountability to the action plan. In addition to program representatives, this Advisory Council should be formulated to include at least 50% of its members coming from BIPOC communities. Action plan review, by the Advisory Council will occur at 6 and 12 months following adoption. (IN PROGRESS)
ACTION 4: Build on the strengths of the Earth Systems program with community building by creating informal opportunities for the multiple communities within Earth Systems to reflect together on these goals, and build a common language for how we talk about these issues. This includes providing mutual support for learning about anti-racism practices, and nurturing the interpersonal relationships we need to sustain this work.

2. **GOAL: Engage Earth Systems students to a diverse set of perspectives** on social-environmental issues, which center the experiences of BIPOC and other underrepresented communities, in Earth Systems classes, events, internships, community-engaged learning projects, and capstone experiences.

   **ACTION 1:** Prioritize building relationships with and funding for BIPOC experts who can help mentor and advise Earth Systems students as they progress through our curriculum. An important part of this effort will be relationship building with BIPOC lecturers and speakers from diverse fields, so that we can consistently invite them to participate in ES classes and other events. Pursuing BIPOC guest lecturers should be considered as an interim strategy while the Program continues to advocate for building greater diversity among faculty and staff (Year 1-3). (ONGOING)

   **ASSESSMENT:** Perform budget analysis for spending on lecturers and guest speakers coming from more diverse communities, consistent with priorities established by the “who is teaching us” initiative. Also, conduct a comprehensive analysis of ES research, capstone, and internship opportunities to understand the current directions that students are taking to support diversity, equity, and inclusion within Earth Systems, and consider how we can expand this work to ensure deeper solidarity efforts for anti-racism in the environment with BIPOC colleagues. (DEI Advisory Council function.)

   **ACTION 2:** Engage with issues affecting BIPOC communities and other disadvantaged groups through directly centering community voices in ES classes.¹ Through working with the DEI Advisory Council and instructors for core classes, Earth Systems will review current syllabi in ES classes to help identify opportunities to include representation of BIPOC communities. BIPOC self-representation can be facilitated through multiple strategies, e.g., including inviting guest speakers from BIPOC communities and adding BIPOC scholars to class syllabi. This may also include adding curriculum materials from allied scholars who are working directly with BIPOC communities to collectively engage with structural forces that are shaping social and environmental inequities and

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¹ “ES Classes” refers to courses taught as part of the Earth Systems core requirements and courses taught by Earth Systems lecturers.
the social movements working towards restoration and reparations. (Year 1-3. Significant changes expected to 1 core class per year). *(ONGOING)*

**ASSESSMENT:** Review course syllabi and student evaluations, especially for core ES classes for stated DEI and anti-racism teaching elements. If specific courses are identified that need support, the DEI Advisory Council will provide a set of recommendations, and co-create an implementation plan with instructors. *(DEI Advisory Council function.)*

**ACTION 3:** Propose new curriculum requirements aligned with DEI and anti-racism priorities to the Earth Systems Executive Committee (Fall 2020). The proposal will recommend instituting a new breadth requirement related to environmental ethics, social-environmental justice, and environmental human rights, and the elimination of all or part of the elective requirement. Develop a new minor subplan with emphasis on environmental ethics, social-environmental justice, and environmental human rights (Spring 2021). Publish course sequencing roadmaps for students entering the major during the 2020/2021 academic year (Winter 2020). *(IN PROGRESS)*

**ASSESSMENT:** Yearly review of Earth Systems requirements. Check if sequencing of classes addressing DEI, anti-racism, and environmental justice concerns meets student needs. *(DEI Advisory Council function.)*

**ACTION 4:** Establish a set of student resources and guidelines to support intentional and respectful student engagement with BIPOC communities and other disadvantaged groups through capstone and masters seminar projects, as well as internship experiences and honors thesis research. When working on community-engaged projects, the Program encourages students to center community voices and leadership in their projects, in order to support co-learning opportunities—and direct students to the resources they will need to successfully do so. This may include directing students to trainings in anti-racism, and community-based research.

**ASSESSMENT:** Yearly review of capstone, honors thesis, internship and masters seminar projects completed by students, including analysis of projects that received financial support through the program.

3. **GOAL:** Create a culture within the Earth System Program that facilitates belonging, inclusivity, and respect for all members of the Earth Systems community, especially for BIPOC and other underrepresented students that have historically been excluded from environmental science and mainstream environmental movements.

**ACTION 1:** Foster an office atmosphere where a broad range of students, especially BIPOC and underrepresented students, can see themselves in the
Earth Systems space. This may include images that value and celebrate BIPOC students, and others coming from underrepresented groups, as well as multiple modes of human-nature relationships that expand beyond representations of wilderness, or a nature that is detached from everyday life (e.g. urban nature, local neighborhood spaces, the built environment, or “the places where we live, work and play”). One key pedagogical practice is to enable and support students in organizing BIPOC-only spaces for learning and community building.

ASSESSMENT: Observations that the office is used by BIPOC students, and that events that center BIPOC issues are held in this space. Arrange check-ins with BIPOC students within the program and the DEI Advisory Council.

ACTION 2: Gather best pedagogical practices for creating an inclusive learning environment, and connecting environmental issues back to the experiences that students have in their daily lives. This includes identifying common frameworks and language that enable Earth Systems teachers and learners to reference systemic power hierarchies that perpetuate racialized violence in relation to the environment, and ongoing social movements working to dismantle these hierarchies. In order to facilitate belonging, welcoming, and respect for all students, especially for BIPOC students and those from underrepresented communities, these resources will be disseminated to all instructors and administrative staff in the Earth Systems Program, in part through Anti-Racist Trainings.

ASSESSMENT: Self-education resources are available, updated, and being accessed and used by Earth Systems instructors and community leaders.

ACTION 3: Create a community-driven process for developing a DEI Code of Conduct for the Earth Systems Program, as a living document that provides a roadmap for common norms that all members of the community can agree to upon entering the Program. This Code of Conduct will be a place for multiple communities within Earth Systems to explicitly discuss and examine the ethics and values that shape our community, our lives, and our work. The Code of Conduct will be viewed as a central element of a collective social contract advancing anti-racism and promoting broader principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in Earth Systems.

ASSESSMENT: Code of conduct posted in Earth Systems office, made available on Earth Systems website, and included in materials provided to prospective students, students hired to serve as advisors and teaching assistants, and faculty serving as advisors to students in our program.
Code incorporated into assessment of all staff and students employed by the Program.

ACTION 4: Budget and plan for annual DEI and Anti-Racism training, beginning with academic staff and student advisors, and the Earth Systems DEI Advisory Council, that is tailored to Earth Systems Program needs and aims to normalize anti-racism work within the program. This will be expanded over time and offered and recommended at the School of Earth level to all Earth Systems teaching staff and faculty.

ASSESSMENT: Anti-Racist training implemented for Earth Systems staff and student advisors in 2020-21.

ACTION 5: Create a new email list for the purpose of Earth Systems community building and information sharing regarding DEI, anti-racism and environmental justice, among other issues. This list will enable sharing of information on topics beyond curricular matters, program events and announcements, and job and internship opportunities that are currently disseminated via the ES majors and coterms lists. (COMPLETED)

ASSESSMENT: Earth Systems Community email distribution list established in Fall of 2020-21.

ACTION 6: Encourage and invite the participation of Earth Systems students, especially BIPOC and underrepresented students, in hiring conversations intended to increase the diversity of our Program. This includes DEI and anti-racism conversations that will affect the hiring of administrative staff, faculty, and academic staff. Diversity hires currently being recruited for through relevant departments and the School of Earth will bring significant co-benefits to the Earth Systems Program. As a community that will be substantially impacted by these decisions, we seek a formal role in decision-making processes shaping the recruitment and hiring of DEI faculty, who will be teaching Earth Systems students.

ASSESSMENT: Established role for Earth Systems in DEI recruitment and hiring processes at the school level.

4. **GOAL:** Advance processes to increase procedural justice with Earth Systems Program operations, in order to attend to key DEI and anti-racism concerns expressed by students, and enable more equitable and transparent allocation of resources.

   **ACTION 1:** Publish and disseminate rubrics for all student awards. (Note: Where pertinent, we should include explicit language in descriptions of awards that
recognize student contributions to DEI and anti-racism outcomes relating to socio-environmental leadership, problem solving, and research.

**ASSESSMENT:** Rubrics are available on the Earth Systems website.

**ACTION 2:** Publish selection and hiring criteria for teaching and course assistants and student advisors. ES staff will include student financial need as an important hiring criteria for students taking on paid positions within the Program.

**ASSESSMENT:** Information about selection and hiring criteria is available on the Earth Systems website. (IN PROGRESS)

**ACTION 3:** Discuss, co-create and assign DEI and anti-racism responsibilities to all Student Advisors. One Student Advisor will act as a designated liaison for ensuring regular coordination and communication on DEI and anti-racism action plan implementation progress to the Advisory Council. (IN PROGRESS)

**ASSESSMENT:** DEI and anti-racism responsibilities incorporated into performance assessments of students serving as SAs in 2020-21 and included in job description circulated to prospective candidates for Student Advisor positions in the 2021-22 academic year.

**ACTION 4:** Expand the Earth Systems Executive Committee, which serves in an advisory capacity to the Earth Systems Director on curricular and other matters relevant to the operation of the Earth Systems Program, to include one member with expertise in EJ/Environmental Ethics/Environmental Human Rights. This member will have equal standing with other faculty members of the Executive Committee. (COMPLETED)

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**The Earth Systems DEI Advisory Council**

Revised 4.28.21

**Overview**

The Earth Systems DEI Advisory Council is a group of faculty, staff, students, and alumni charged with advising the Earth Systems Program on matters of curriculum, management, and culture as they relate to issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. The Council serves as an independent advisory body charged with soliciting input from the Earth Systems community and providing recommendations to program leadership relevant to reforming any issue relevant to program operation, curriculum, and culture related to DEI and anti-racism.

The Council does not serve as a conflict-resolution body. We encourage Earth Systems community members to report concerns or grievances regarding suspected violations of
Stanford’s Code of Conduct to Earth Systems staff members and/or the School of Earth’s Respectful Community Committee.

Council composition

The Council consists of nine deliberative members, including

- 4 student representatives (on member of the ES MS cohort; one member of the ES MA cohort; and two ES undergraduates, at least one of whom should be an ES student advisor)
- 2 Earth Systems alumni
- 2 members of the Academic Council
- 1 SE3 staff member

Two additional members of the Earth Systems leadership serve in an ex-officio capacity. One Earth Systems staff member will chair the Advisory Council during the first year of its establishment with the intention of passing leadership on to one of the two Academic Council faculty members in subsequent years. The SE3 staff member should represent the School’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Meetings

The Council will meet during the sixth week of each academic quarter (autumn, winter, spring) for approximately 90 minutes, potentially during a weekday evening slot to accommodate the schedules of alumni council members. In addition to concerns brought forward by the Earth Systems program, Members of the council are expected to raise their own questions and/or solicit input (with assistance from ES staff as necessary) from members of the Earth Systems community regarding issues, concerns, and topics for discussion. Prior to each meeting, the agenda will be shared with the Earth Systems community through the Earth Systems Weekly Digest. Subsequently, meeting notes will be made available to the Earth Systems community through announcements on weekly digest and quarterly newsletters. Agendas and notes of the Council will be archived on the Earth Systems Infosphere portal on Canvas.

Council member selection

Student and alumni advisory council members will be selected on the basis of several criteria:

- knowledge of the Earth Systems program
- engagement in the broader Stanford community
- prior engagement with DEI efforts in the Earth Systems program
- interest in and experience with advocating for DEI efforts more broadly

Applicants need not satisfy every selection criterion to be considered; rather the program seeks a cohort of representatives who collectively embodies these characteristics. ES staff members will publicize application information broadly to the ES student and alumni community, and may
invite particular community members to apply on the basis of prior DEI and anti-racism related advocacy work. Applicants will be reviewed and selected by a committee of Earth Systems staff and student advisors.

Prospective faculty and staff advisory council members will be identified by a committee of Earth Systems staff and student advisors and invited to serve by the Earth Systems Director.

Term
Council members will be invited to serve a two- to three-year term, corresponding to 6 and 9 meetings, respectively, with the possibility of renewal.

Some potential areas of Council effort
The role of the Council will necessarily be dynamic as the needs of the Earth Systems Program and community evolve. Initially, however, the Council might initially consider a number of areas of need identified by the ES community, such as

- A need for increasing transparency around selection and hiring processes for course and teaching assistants
- A need for creating community spaces and events that are more welcoming and inclusive
- A need for addressing (mis)perceptions in the broader Stanford community (and in the ES community itself) about the racial, class, ethnic, and gender makeup of students in the program
- A need for help setting priorities for action in the ES DEI and Anti-Racism Plan, and holding program leaders accountable for their commitment to implementing the plan