

NCEAS Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion *August 2020*

The renewed urgency to address systemic racism and discrimination inspired by the growing Black Lives Matter movement in Spring 2020, along with the global demand for change, requires action with concrete steps towards meaningful outcomes. This strategic plan is a response to that call. It is not enough, but it is a start, and is intended to be a living document, reviewed and revised regularly, to help maintain momentum and progress towards the ultimate goal of a truly diverse, equitable and inclusive place of work.

NCEAS is committed to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in science. We value diversity in expertise, backgrounds, needs and experiences, and aim to see diversity reflected among our residents and visitors. We are committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for everyone in our community. This plan outlines the concrete actions that NCEAS will take to achieve our vision of a more diverse and inclusive research center.

Goal 1: Foster an informed, welcoming, and inclusive culture at NCEAS

- **Strategy 1.1: Center DEI in all NCEAS activities and leadership decisions**
 - *Rationale:* Diversity and inclusion goals are intrinsically linked to all institutional activities, and should not just entail standalone initiatives
 - *Action:* Invite Diversity Committee chairs to NCEAS Executive Team meetings on quarterly basis to provide updates on strategic plan activities
 - *Action:* Consider formally recognizing Juneteenth at NCEAS (ex. through office celebrations, engagement with DEI activities, encouragement to participate in SB holiday activities)

- **Strategy 1.2: Ensure that everybody at NCEAS has a forum to provide feedback and engage in DEI issues**
 - *Rationale:* It is critical that everybody in the community feel comfortable sharing issues and concerns, and be empowered to create change
 - *Action:* Hold annual DEI roundtables to provide updates on the strategic plan, hosted by Diversity Committee and Director
 - *Action:* Create an anonymous form and/or survey for feedback on DEI issues, and ensure that all new and current NCEAS residents are aware of this avenue for feedback

- *Action:* Set aside days or time periods for dedicated DEI work towards the strategic plan goals, and encourage community members to take on specific action items
- **Strategy 1.3: Clarify our public commitment to DEI**
 - *Rationale:* Public statements help set the tone of an organization, recruit diverse candidates, guide behavior of community members, and provide a foundation for change.
 - *Action:* Revisit [NCEAS diversity statement](#) and [Code of Conduct](#). Consider requiring NCEAS residents to sign a form confirming they've read and understand the Code of Conduct during onboarding process
- **Strategy 1.4: Provide required DEI training for all NCEAS residents**
 - *Rationale:* Everybody is coming from a different background, and may have different perspectives and experiences on DEI. It is important to get people on the same page, to facilitate respectful dialogue and deepen understanding of our unique experiences
 - *Action:* Short-term: build a cohort of residents to participate in a virtual training
 - *Action:* Long-term: reschedule the postponed in-person DEI training
- **Strategy 1.5: Provide centralized resources for NCEAS residents interested in learning more and engaging in actions around anti-racism**
 - *Rationale:* Many individuals in the community have resources and thoughts to share, and providing a centralized place for these resources will promote our institutional values of inclusion while building community
 - *Action:* Continue to support and promote #action-for-justice Slack channel, and update NCEAS DEI Resources Google Drive folder
- **Strategy 1.6: Identify new funding streams for special DEI programs**
 - *Rationale:* Some effective and game-changing efforts to build a truly equitable organization may require providing candidates from underrepresented groups (URG) with funds to participate in NCEAS activities at all levels, including for participation in trainings, fellowships, and various levels of residency or employment
 - *Action:* Secure new funds to launch DEI programs (ex. To support strategy 3.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3)
- **Strategy 1.7: Research tools and strategies for DEI in other institutions and organizations.**
 - *Rationale:* Given that many similar research institutes have been considering these same issues, we can draw on their knowledge and experiences as we refine and act on our Strategic Plan

- *Action:* Review publicly-available resources and/or schedule conversations with EDSIN (Environmental Data Science Inclusion Network), UCSB Office of Equal Opportunity & Discrimination Prevention, other synthesis centers, and other relevant organizations/institutions

Goal 2: Support more diverse and inclusive working groups (WGs) at NCEAS.

- **Strategy 2.1: Require a short diversity statement with all WG proposals**
 - *Rationale:* By requiring these statements from applicants, review panels can assess each application's proposed contributions to diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, the requirement of a statement may encourage PIs to consider diversity and inclusion more than they would have otherwise
 - *Action:* Craft prompt for a required diversity statement, to be included in future WG Requests for Proposals (RFPs)
 - *Action:* Require all working group selection committees to formalize a Selection Plan, which ensures equal opportunity and equity throughout the process for all potential applicants
- **Strategy 2.2: Provide training and resources to WG Principal Investigators (PIs)**
 - *Rationale:* As WG leaders (and often meeting facilitators), PIs set the tone for the collaboration
 - *Action:* Review current materials used by NCEAS programs to support WG collaboration & facilitation, and ID potential improvements for diversity outcomes.
 - *Action:* Develop an 'action plan' for how to support and implement any improvements or new strategies.
- **Strategy 2.3: Provide written Code of Conduct (and related guidance) to all WG members to promote an inclusive atmosphere**
 - *Rationale:* Not all WG participants may be aware of power dynamics and privilege, and some participants may feel more comfortable speaking up if issues have been raised up front
 - *Action:* Consider current NCEAS Code of Conduct, how it is shared, and any potential improvements to this process
- **Strategy 2.4: Collect & analyze diversity data on NCEAS WG and training activities**
 - *Rationale:* NCEAS should track if and how it makes progress on this document's goals over time
 - *Action:* Monitor demographic data from the new synthesis science survey instruments, and consider how to integrate and explore similar data from Learning Hub and other programs. Report data in aggregate form to ensure privacy of individual participants

Goal 3: Increase and support the diversity of NCEAS staff and researchers

- **Strategy 3.1: Advertise widely, and focus recruitment on channels that reach URG (Under-Represented Groups)**
 - *Rationale:* Targeted advertising will attract a more diverse applicant pool, and signal commitments to DEI
 - *Action:* Create list of free and paid forums, listservs, department contacts (see ShutDownStem brainstorm document), and Twitter hashtags to be managed by personnel in charge of advertising positions
 - *Action:* Create list of in-person conferences or meetings of URGs in STEM to which NCEAS should send an outreach liaison, in order “to go where people are” (e.g., SACNAS)
 - *Action:* Commit Director’s discretionary funds to support posting job ads on paid forums that reach URGs
 - *Action:* In longer-term, seek funding for paid advertising on forums for URG in STEM. Compile requirements by the UCSB Office of Equal Opportunity and Discrimination Prevention for transparency within NCEAS

- **Strategy 3.2: Reduce bias in the hiring process**
 - *Rationale:* Conscious and unconscious bias can disadvantage URG applicants.
 - *Action:* Create guidance and process for anonymizing applications before review and structuring the review process to minimize bias, to be shared with personnel in charge of advertising positions. Research validated and proven methods, in conjunction with HR, to minimize unintended consequences and ensure that UC policy is not violated.
 - *Action:* Explore options for unconscious bias training for anybody involved in reviewing applications; incorporate this into guidance document (See UCSB resources [here](#))
 - *Action:* Implement the application review process developed in 3.1

- **Strategy 3.3: Consider contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion when assessing job and internship applicants**
 - *Rationale:* Contributions to DEI efforts may not be reflected elsewhere in the application, and recruiting candidates with a commitment to these shared values will help us achieve other DEI goals
 - *Action:* Create and require inclusion of prompts for short diversity statements for inclusion in applications, to be shared with personnel in charge of hiring, and provide guidance to applicants on the application website
 - *Action:* Develop a rubric to be used by reviewers to align the criteria to use in the evaluation of diversity statements

- **Strategy 3.4: Evaluate diversity of applicants and hires at NCEAS**
 - *Rationale:* NCEAS receives summary reports of diversity at applicant pool, short list, interview, and offer stages, and these reports should be used as tools for evaluating our progress towards the broader goal
 - *Action:* Compile and evaluate reports that we get from HR at UCSB

Goal 4: Recognize and engage with diverse perspectives and communities external to NCEAS

- **Strategy 4.1: Engage in community outreach in Santa Barbara**
 - *Rationale:* Situated in Santa Barbara, NCEAS is part of a larger, diverse community, and intentional engagement with its institutions, organizations, and individuals can inform research that is locally motivated, expose more people to STEM and ecology, and provide NCEAS residents with a broader sense of community and citizenship
 - *Action:* Develop a NCEAS Community Outreach committee to develop ideas and actions related to engagement with local schools, organizations, and volunteer opportunities
- **Strategy 4.2: Increase diversity of Roundtable speakers**
 - *Rationale:* The weekly NCEAS Roundtable is a forum for exposing residents and visitors to new ideas, and providing a venue to engage with diverse viewpoints
 - *Action:* Reach out to diverse speakers when planning the roundtable schedule, including local Indigenous groups
 - *Action:* Seek funding for honoraria & travel
- **Strategy 4.3: Incorporate DEI considerations in NCEAS' Art & Science initiatives**
 - *Rationale:* Art provides one unique way to build community and raise awareness about DEI topics
 - *Action:* Encourage artists from URG to apply for the NCEAS artist-in-residency program; showcase art from such individuals in the NCEAS halls; highlight work by URG ecologists through art and other displays; host an exhibit exploring race and ecology, with roundtables and discussions
- **Strategy 4.4: Support BIPOC-owned business in Santa Barbara for NCEAS catering and in other local purchase decisions**
 - *Rationale:* Align spending with values and support local community
 - *Action:* Consider creating a list of businesses that provide food and other services regularly purchased by NCEAS; first, consult with Campus Purchasing to determine appropriate strategy

- **Strategy 4.5: Encourage the use of land acknowledgements in presentations**
 - *Rationale:* Show respect for indigenous populations and acknowledge their ongoing relationship with the land on which research is conducted.
 - *Action:* Develop an accurate land acknowledgment passage vetted by local tribes; explore options to make acknowledgements as inclusive as possible

Goal 5: Provide training and other opportunities to individuals from under-represented groups in ecology

- **Strategy 5.1: Create scholarships or tuition waivers for URG participating in fee-based activities (e.g., NCEAS data science trainings)**
 - *Rationale:* There are often financial barriers to equitable access to opportunities, including NCEAS courses and trainings. Providing better access to such trainings could help diversify our field
 - *Action:* Determine guidelines and policies for assessing demographic information of applicants, and incorporate into strategies for application review
 - *Action:* Look into funding opportunities/sources, and ensure that requirements are vetted to ensure no violation of State or Federal law
- **Strategy 5.2: Publicize open-access resources on NCEAS website**
 - *Rationale:* Through its commitment to open science, NCEAS makes many materials available to the public; these could be expanded and advertised more widely, particularly to URG
 - *Action:* Assess currently-available training materials on the new website, and develop a plan for circulating materials more broadly
- **Strategy 5.3: Develop and host workshops for URG in ecology and data science**
 - *Rationale:* Given the underrepresentation of many groups in ecology and data science, training may provide an avenue to diversify our field. Furthermore, there is value in fostering community among URG, and providing a forum to share experiences and build connections
 - *Action:* Look into funding opportunities/sources; see current SESYNC activities (also capitalize on [EDSIN](#) and [Power of Data](#))