

A Retrospective on Fostering Diversity in Geoscience

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Diversity in the geosciences still has many challenges ahead, but there has been change over the decades, albeit slow. I count myself fortunate to have made it through the leaky pipeline. In looking back, there are the usual instances of being the first or only woman in too many situations, being saddled with extra service, the imposter syndrome, and more. But there are also the well-established themes of role models, mentorship, and positive experiences that made a difference. I focus on highlights of my journey, and on three perspectives from my own experiences to encourage diversity.

Mentorship: I was privileged to have strong role models and mentors to guide my preparation and career. As an example, a mentor taught me the elements of good oral presentation skills that gave me confidence and helped open up many opportunities during my career. Teaching the new generation better presentation skills will help us convey our science more effectively to both scientific and public communities.

Professional experiences: Professional societies are critically dependent on investing in students who can grow into and sustain the society. Getting diverse students to professional meetings with organized activities for a yearly cohort provides positive experiences, networking, and a sense of belonging.

Opportunities: Universities need to find creative ways to encourage turnover for senior faculty in order to open more academic slots, thus enabling hires of diversity faculty and role models. Faculty train the next generation, but do they make room for them when the time comes to retire? Some Ph.D.s may do several post-doctoral fellowships waiting for a scarce academic position. Opportunities to increase diversity could be hastened by making room for the next generation.

To foster diversity in geoscience, we should: include more training for skill sets that increase success; support student participation in professional societies and their governance; and find ways to make more opportunities for the trained generation.