



Building a Constructive and Inclusive Culture in Geoscience Departments and Academic Leaders

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Professional organizations exist to support the profession and its community. One critical nexus of the geoscience community is the academic department, where active research, teaching, and the next generation of geoscientists are developed. Ensuring a constructive and inclusive environment within academic departments is paramount for the long-term health of the geosciences.

Since 2012, the American Geosciences Institute (AGI) and the American Geophysical Union (AGU) have partnered to host monthly webinars on topics that speak to the success of departments. Heads and chairs as well as faculty have had the opportunity to learn more about legal issues related to field trips, recruiting and retaining diverse students, and mentoring and nurturing junior faculty among other critical topics. More recent webinar topics have covered many discussions on sexual harassment and workplace climate, and personnel management. The webinars are held for an hour, include some comments or presentations by panelists followed by a substantial discussion session. While the webinars have anywhere from 20 to 100 live attendees, exponentially more people view the post-webinar recordings. AGI continues to also play an important supporting role in the AGU's Heads and Chairs Workshop held at its annual meeting by providing information on the status of and the trends in the geoscience workforce and other pertinent information to support departments. The ensuing discussions from the webinars and workshop yield insights into the needs of academic departments and their leaders, which informs programmatic efforts by the societies. It guides AGI on topics for coverage on its data-centric series Geoscience Currents or the need for a diversity of online continuing education opportunities for students. These discussions have also fine-tuned pan-geoscience efforts, such as efforts to build harassment and conduct standards by AGU, AGI, and the AGI Member Societies.

The development of these webinars stems from a mutual interest among AGI and AGU in supporting and sustaining thriving geoscience departments, a desire to combine activities and resources towards strengthening that support, and more importantly to assist academic departments in creating an inclusive workplace for its faculty and students. But more than just a one-way transfer of knowledge, the format has enabled an ongoing discussion among academic leadership about emerging issues and solutions.