Geoethics Issues for the 21st Century: Perspectives from the AGU Ethics and Equity Center - A Call for Education and Action

Billy Williams, Eric Davidson, Margaret Fraiser, Raj Pandya, and Brooks Hanson

The American Geophysical Union (AGU), a scientific society of >60,000 members worldwide, has established a set of scientific integrity and professional ethics guidelines for the actions of its members, the governance of the union in its internal activities, and the operations and participation in its publications and scientific meetings. The actions around the AGU Ethics policy have in recent years focused on establishing and reinforcing professional conduct standards, including professional conduct during field research. However, the recently updated AGU Strategic plan has a strong focus on applied transdisciplinary science; growing respect for Indigenous data, cultural heritages, and Knowledges; and emphasis on geoscientists’ responsibility to support traditionally underserved communities with respect to environmental justice, issues of equity and inclusion, and the impact of global anthropogenic change. Additional emerging ethics issues for the geosciences include a need to establish ethical AI frameworks for effective decision-making without misuse of data, and a need for ethical guidance around testing proposed climate intervention technologies.

These combined foci have heightened AGU’s attention to global Geoethics and have led to a re-examination of the partnerships necessary to deliver important education and impacts on such pressing issues. This presentation will highlight a few of the Geoethics issues currently being addressed by the AGU Ethics and Equity Center, including results to date and actions underway to secure and support the necessary broad partnerships.