



Time's up, bottom-up! A successful bottom-up approach for diversity and inclusions at Utrecht University

Manon Verberne, Jana R. Cox, Frances E. Dunn, Merel Postma, and Tina Venema
Utrecht University, Department of Earth Sciences, Utrecht, Netherlands

Young Women of Geoscience (YWOG) is a group of young professionals (PhDs, postdocs, assistant professors and supporting staff) at Utrecht University with the aim to inspire, connect and support women and historically underrepresented groups in the field of geosciences, by creating an equal and inclusive working environment. We do this by opening up conversations and creating a safe and positive space for discussion. Now in our seventh year, the committee has established itself as a constant and stable presence within the faculty with regular events and initiatives that can easily be organized from our reputable base.

Our regular events consist of meet-and-greet sessions with senior staff members, that are well-attended by a variety of colleagues, which result in inspiring conversations. Additionally, book give-aways combined with book discussions are a recurring event, where books on diversity, inclusions and climate change are used to open conversations. These events often engage individuals who may not have initially identified with the committee's target audience, but afterwards their interest was sparked. In recent years we also organized successful events due to requests from staff members. Parenting during COVID was a successful online event with a panel discussion consisting of colleagues sharing tips and struggles. Additionally, this year we organized an event on pronouns, reaching a wide audience, from PhDs to supporting staff, professors and the faculty dean. It was also this session, with informative presentations and lively discussion, that led to immediate action from higher level staff on practical matters concerning pronouns in the workplace.

Our experience highlights the importance of a bottom-up approach in instigating meaningful change. The pronouns event is a prime example of this, opening the eyes of many attendees and making people feel the urgency for action. The event stemmed from a need within the faculty. However, to be able to organize such an event there must be a platform to do so. We have the opportunity to organize many events helped by funding through an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) scheme and an internal award won by the committee. We aim to continue with the regular events like the meet-and-greets and book shares, and hope to organize more events that are based on the needs in the faculty to open conversations. YWOG's experience demonstrates the efficacy of a bottom-up approach, emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives in fostering substantial changes toward a more inclusive working environment. The committee looks forward to sharing its experiences, connecting with other faculties and universities, and inspiring

collective efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within geosciences.