

**Diversity and Inclusion Report and Recommendations**

**On Behalf of the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative**

**Represented by**

*(in alphabetical order)*

Marine Biological Laboratory

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Sea Education Association

United States Geological Survey

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

Woods Hole Research Center

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The consortium of scientific institutes in Woods Hole, Massachusetts contracted me to assist in their efforts to create greater diversity and inclusion in their organizations. On January 26, 2018, I met with Walter Barnhardt (USGS), Peg Brandon (SEA), Susan Gardner (NOAA), Max Holmes (WHRC), George Liles (NOAA), David Mark-Welch (MBL), Rae Nishi (MBL), and Margaret Tivey (WHOI) to discuss institutional mission, core values, desired outcomes, and timeline.

All six institutions (which I will collectively refer to as WH) identified racial/ethnic diversity as their primary objective, with an interest in increasing other forms of diversity as well. They also voiced their perceptions of some of the barriers and difficulties associated with the racial diversification of the current workforce (e.g., homogeneous applicant pools, attractiveness of the Woods Hole community for people of color).

WH expressed a mission to increase: (1) numerical representation of ethnic diversity at the various institutes and in the community, (2) a greater sense of belonging, appreciation, and respect toward members of these underrepresented communities, and (3) increased scientific innovation and output as a result of the input from diverse perspectives. I will refer to these three objectives as diversity, inclusion, and integration, respectively.

My role as consultant is to diagnose, prescribe, and facilitate a five-year rehabilitation plan. In other words, I will work to assess the problems, to create actionable solutions, and to assist with the implementation of long-term strategic plans. As part of the diagnosis phase, I asked for the names of current and former employees or students of color at the institute. The logic of this request is that these individuals would be in the best situation to provide an accurate and informed assessment of the D&I challenges facing WH. I was given approximately a dozen names, and from conversations with these individuals, I was able to obtain another ten names of people who were not on the original list.

I contacted most of these individuals ( $N > 15$ ) and conducted interviews that ranged in duration from 38 minutes to 114 minutes. In total, I was able to collect approximately 20 hours of qualitative data that offered insightful, first-hand accounts of how they arrived in Woods Hole, what it is like to live and work there. Among the respondents, there was a high level of diversity in age (25-65+), tenure at WH (4 weeks to 40+ years), race/ethnicity [White, Black (African American and other ethnicities), Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic (from various ethnicities)], educational level (e.g., HS, BS, MS, PhD) and job type (e.g., researcher, administrator, staff, etc.).

The interviewees were given the chance to offer open-ended commentary about their experience of living or working in Woods Hole. I also asked a number of questions related to: how they became interested in marine science, what they view as both positive and negative aspects of work/life at WH, what they see as some of the biggest problems/challenges around diversity and inclusion, what they would suggest as remedies or solutions, whether they feel welcome at WH (and why or why not), whether they have experienced blatant racism at work or in the community, and why they have chosen to stay (if current) or why they left (if former).

This first section of this report contains a summary of the major findings of my interviews with current and former employees and students of WH. The second section contains a set of strategic recommendations based on: (1) interviews, (2) initial meeting with WH leaders, (3) the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative (WHDI) Roadmap, (4) empirical research and finding on strategic diversity, and (5) the consultant's first-hand experience, expertise, and knowledge of effective D&I interventions.

## Findings on the Challenges Facing the Woods Hole Institutions

Some respondents were both delighted that WH is undertaking this endeavor, and hopeful that things will improve in the future. Others were so skeptical of any “earnest” or “serious” intent to effect social change that they initially refused to waste their time indulging what they saw as an empty exercise. Finally, there were those who remained cautiously optimistic, firmly entrenched in the “wait and see” mode. Given the wide variability in conviction, I see this as a rare opportunity for WH to either build trust and engagement among the minority community—or lose credibility and goodwill, perhaps irreparably.

Although there were a couple individuals who expressed satisfaction, contentment, and even gratitude to be at WH, the predominant perspective among the people that I interviewed is that WH is an unhealthy work environment for people of color. I took many pages of notes during the 20 hours of interviews and reduced/synthesized these qualitative data into what appeared to be five emergent clusters:

1. Dearth of Diversity: Individuals, Programming, and Concern
2. Absence of Cultural Competence
3. Lack of Psychological Safety
4. Preponderance of Overt Racism and Aggression/Micro-aggression
5. Presence of Apathy, Skepticism, and Resignation

1. **Dearth of Diversity**—Every single person that I interviewed lamented the lack of demographic diversity at WH (again, “WH” in this report refers to all six DI institutions collectively). One respondent revealed, “I am used to being the only Black person and yet it’s remarkable how different it is [here]”. Another remarked, “I don’t care about sensitivity training...just get more people [of color]!” Several individuals noted the feeling of “eyes being on them” due to how much they stick out when they are at work or in the community. Others discussed how the lack of diversity created complications, such as the lack of dating opportunities, difficulty in finding housing, or unpleasant scrutiny and harassment by the police.

In addition, many individuals spoke at length about the lack of diverse programming as well as narrow participation in the diversity programming that does exist. Respondents claimed that there are only a handful of events that celebrate minority communities, and that Whites typically does not attend these events. One respondent mentioned that s/he was overjoyed when s/he “saw that the higher-ups were attending multi-cultural events.” S/he went on to say, “it’s nice when you show your involvement and participate. Step in and step up. Minorities attend White events. Why can’t you attend ours? It’s nice when people take the time.”

Finally, many people commented on what they saw as a lack of concern around diversity and inclusion. One respondent stated that, “it’s frustrating because the institutions talk a lot about valuing diversity but they are not doing anything. We desperately need a critical mass. People feel isolated and the folks here don’t get it...so they go somewhere else”. This sentiment was echoed by another respondent who said

that “[diversity] is a box that they are checking just because it’s a popular topic.”

Some felt that the lack of concern about diversity is tied to the perception that it undermines the quality of the institute(s). For example, one respondent stated that “academic rigor and institutional status are more important than issues around diversity. They have created a wall that they are very proud of...because it grants the institution status.” Consistent with this idea is the notion that WH doesn’t need to pro-actively seek diversity due to its status. According to one respondent, “Woods Hole believes that they are the best at what they do and that people of color, or anyone for that matter, should be seeking out Woods Hole and not the other way around.” Another respondent described the sentiment as, “‘We are the best!’ ‘We shouldn’t have to try’. Being ‘colorblind’ is about the most effort they are willing to expend.” S/he went on to say, “[Diversity] is not something that we need to be bothered with...we have enough stress from grants, publications, etc.” The most shocking comment came from a respondent who claimed that a leader at one of the institutes, when asked what s/he planned to do about diversity and inclusion during a public event replied “we are not going to lower our standards.”

In short, people felt that Woods Hole sorely lacked diverse people, multicultural programming, and sufficient concern or remorse about the lack of diversity. Even the people who loved living and working in Woods Hole reported feeling “isolated”. When asked why they had decided to stay, most interviewees cited four reasons: (1) natural beauty of the area, (2) unique research opportunities at WH, (3) friends who live in the area, and (4) defiance (refusing to let the community and its challenges run them off).

2. **Absence of Cultural Competence**—Most interviewees were of the strong opinion that many, if not most, of the researchers and staff at WH simply do not understand the social dynamics and consequences of privilege and disadvantage. Consequently, they are unable to empathize (or even sympathize) with the difficulties and threats that people of color at WH face on a regular basis. A large number of respondents of color explicitly stated that they do not believe that most of the White community is intentionally racist, but rather their racially biased behaviors are the result of ignorance and lack of exposure to other cultures.

One respondent who had spent many years living in Woods Hole stated that, “I don’t think most of the White people around here mean to say some of the ignorant or hurtful things that they say. They just don’t know any better.” Others were less forgiving of cultural incompetence, citing people’s “conscious choice to not leave the bubble that they live in every day.”

Bennett (1993) discusses 6 components of cultural competence that span from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. In the early phases of cultural competence development, people experience *denial*, *defense*, or *minimization*, which are all characteristic of an ethnocentric mindset. In later stages of development, people experience *acceptance*, *adaptation*, and *integration*, which are more characteristic of an ethnorelativist mindset and greater cultural competence. Based on the examples provided by interviewees, most of the employees are deeply entrenched in the ethnocentric stages of cultural competence.

For the people of color, this adds insult to injury. Not only are they in an environment with scant ethnic diversity, they also feel that they are “blamed” for transgressions that occur to them (characteristic of the “defense” response). Alternatively they feel that blatant experiences with discrimination are minimized (“Oh, so-and-so didn’t really mean it that way. You’re being too sensitive”) or even patently denied or ignored. This creates a lack of psychological safety.

3. **Lack of Psychological Safety**—Psychological safety is a multi-faceted construct, comprised of four central components (Edmonson, 2004): (1)*Respect*. Do employees feel that their talents are recognized by peers and superiors? Can they express opinions without being ignored, ostracized, or ridiculed? (2)

*Support.* Does the organization value their happiness and well-being? (3) *Involvement.* Are employees systematically excluded from making valuable contributions to the group? (4) *Protection.* Are there structures, policies, or individuals in place to intervene if/when they are abused or treated unfairly?

Beginning with “respect”, many respondents feel that their talents are not recognized by peers or superiors. There were copious examples of people reporting that their competence, credentials, or work ethic had been questioned in a way that it wouldn’t have been if they were a White male. Others report being invisible altogether and not being heard. As one respondent put it, “they don’t hear it until *they* say it.”

A handful of the respondents reported not being supported by WH. One respondent who is not longer at WH stated that “I don’t want to go back because people just don’t care about me.” When I asked what it would take to reconsider, s/he responded “they would have to double my salary...and I would still only *think* about it.”

With respect to “involvement”, a number of people reported being socially excluded. There were many such stories and it was heartbreaking to listen to them. One respondent told the story of being invited to one institution’s annual Board dinner, only to be snubbed. The invited student group “dressed up” for the event and were told that the buses would come back to pick them up. They waited for nearly an hour. Finally, (two student mentors) happened to stop by the residences and carried them to the event in their cars. According to the respondent, “when we finally arrived you could tell that they were really surprised to see us, and didn’t want us there. It was so passive aggressive and I felt really hurt and humiliated. I think the whole group did. I actually wanted to cry but (the leader of the hosting institution) was really cool. He pulled up chairs for us and asked the speaker to give us a private recap of the presentation that we missed.” Another story came from a student whose advisor invited everyone to his/her mountain home except for this particular student. I could hear the pain and feeling of rejection. “I’m not sure why [s/he] never invited me. I don’t know...I guess they just assumed that I don’t ski or something.” S/he does ski.

There were many concerns around “protection”. In fact, this was one of the biggest sources of concern. The prevailing belief is that, despite all of the hostility that people of color face, there is no grievance option. As one respondent stated, “you either suck it up and deal with it or you leave. If you complain, you’ll get it twice as bad”. Another confessed that “it’s so hard to get in [at WH] that you don’t want to risk not getting in [by complaining]” A different respondent noted that “passive aggressive energy directed at [people of color] makes you feel like you have to cover your bases all the time because you’re constantly under suspicion”. Another respondent reported that people of color are very vulnerable to lies that are spread about them by envious or prejudiced White employees. S/he said, “they constantly told lies to my boss that I wasn’t doing my work. Finally my boss said something to me about it and I said that the person had never asked me to do that task (which they had lied and said that they asked me repeatedly). My boss confronted the person, who finally came clean. They lie on you because you’re an easy target...especially being a Black person with some “power” because they want to take you down. The take-home lesson is for all managers to verify any negative information that is communicated through informal channels, especially when the person they are talking about is a [person of color].”

#### **4. Preponderance of Overt Racism and Aggression/Micro-Aggressions**

In addition to the absence of psychological safety, a separate but related problem facing WH is the high prevalence of racism and workplace aggression. This aggression can take at least four forms: (1)

intentional harm, (2) environmental tension, (3) passive aggression, and (4) micro-aggressions. For example, the act of equating diversity with low standards is a classic micro-aggression, or unintentional slight and indignity. It communicates that: (1) there are no qualified Blacks or people of color; quality and diversity are mutually exclusive, and (2) the handful of people of color of Blacks that we have here are not here because of their merit. They are here based on sympathy or reparative social policies.

Other examples of micro-aggression involves a PEP student who witnessed a staff member—a tall, stocky, African American man—drinking a beer while barbecuing. One of the White staff members approached him/her and said “I know why you didn’t say anything to him [about the beer]. I’m sure you were intimidated. And I was thinking ‘no I wasn’t intimidated at all...[John Doe] is the nicest person in the world’.” The message that the individual took away is that s/he would (or should) have been frightened by a big black man. The same individual stated that a different person gushed about me after my talk at WH adding “he’s so well-spoken”. Her quiet response was “He’s a PhD and world-renowned researcher who teaches at Harvard. Why would he *not* be well-spoken?”

There are more direct examples of harmful and passive aggressive behavior that was reported by interviewees. In one example, a respondent was told directly that s/he was “scary” by a White co-worker. On another occasion s/he was told that s/he should smile more. There have also been reports by employees of being mistaken for a homeless person or the assumption being made that they lived at Emerson House (a halfway house). In addition, respondents reported being *repeatedly* harassed or stopped by the police. One respondent was even followed by the police down a two-mile dirt road leading to his/her home that no one drives on except residents of that street.

Another egregious example comes from someone who reported having a newspaper article taped to his/her office door. It was an article about Affirmative Action, with the headline circled in red and an arrow drawn in the direction of the office. The implication was that the person who inhabited the office was an “affirmative action” hire, who presumably did not belong.

One of the most shocking examples came from someone who reported that his/her advisor stated “I’m a [pelagic] nigger. No one wants to give me money to study [open ocean fish]” The focal area of research was changed to protect the respondent, but his/her White advisor referred to himself using the N-word repeatedly despite the fact that s/he asked the advisor not to use that word in his/her presence. The troublesome implication, apart from the offensive choice of language, is the stereotype that Black people have no money or resources—so the assumption is that this word was an appropriate metaphor to describe his/her lack of funding. This individual went to HR, who instead of addressing the culprit, also repeatedly used the word himself/herself. This is also an example of the lack of “protection” discussed in the last section.

5. **Presence of Apathy, Skepticism, and Resignation**—A number of respondents initially expressed a lack of interest in speaking with me because they were thoroughly convinced that WH was not serious about improving D&I. People seemed to experience a sense of hopelessness that things could ever get better.

In addition, there was a sense of resignation. People expressed feeling that nothing they did would ever be enough. For example, one respondent felt that s/he was in a no-win situation: “I’ve been given feedback that I should communicate more. Then a few months later I’m told that I should communicate less...what does that mean anyway? More communication is always better, right? I just felt that nothing was good enough because they simply didn’t want me there. I gave up.”

Others expressed the sense of “walking on eggshells” and constant anxiety. One person did not want to speak with me because of their desire not to “re-live” the trauma that they had experienced in Woods

Hole. Another respondent expressed that “even though it’s a toxic environment with negative psychological consequences, I just have to deal with it. If you complain it makes the situation that much worse. I don’t want people to retaliate against me so I just deal with whatever I have to.”

In summary, among the challenges for WH moving forward is to build a critical mass of diversity, as well as a climate of trust and respect necessary to function as a forward-thinking academic consortium that provides students, researchers, and employees with the tools to learn and grow to their full potential. The following recommendations offer suggestions for how these objectives can be accomplished.

## Recommendations

This section is divided into strategic recommendations around: (1) Diversity, (2) Inclusion, and (3) Integration. The bulk of the recommendations at this stage focus on Diversity and Inclusion, as they are inextricably connected. That is, you will not be successful at building or maintaining diversity if the climate is hostile toward people of color. At the same time, there needs to exist some diversity before the concept of inclusion becomes meaningful in an intergroup sense. Integration is the long-term goal of the organization once diversity and inclusion have been established.

### Diversity

#### Strategies for Recruitment

- A. **Widen the Net**—As one person stated, “You *have* to know someone to get in [WH]. If you’re a young person there is no way that you would get in there without knowing someone...especially as a minority.” In fact, many if not most of the people of color at WH can trace their job to a social network tie.

Nevertheless, almost everyone insisted that there *are* good people of color available throughout the nation—one just needs to look for them. One respondent stated that “we tell students to develop networks. Yet doesn’t [WH] feel that it needs to develop its networks too?”

So how can WH widen the net?

1. **Think Broadly about Academic Discipline.** It is true that there is a relative under-representation of African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics studying marine biology (though there are some; see Item 4). However, there are many people of color in the sciences more broadly. For example, engineering programs are replete with cultural and ethnic diversity. There are many professional engineering societies where people of color can be found (see Item 4). Other options are mathematics, biology, chemistry, computer science, or even English departments. As one respondent put it “you don’t have to study fish...there are people who do pure math and computer science who work in Woods Hole. You just have to show them why applying these skills to ocean science would be interesting”

2. **Think Broadly about Academic Institutions.** Many respondents referred to the existence of a certain level of elitism in WH that makes researchers reluctant to look beyond the Ivy League. When asked whether it was to capitalize on the likelihood of quality, many felt that it had as much to do with class and “cultural fit” as academic ability per se. One respondent stated that WH wants to “stay in its own lane...they only recruit from top tier schools—White institutions. There are top students at other schools too. Just ask (the senior scientist) who learned this when he took on a student from (a small college with no research program) who turned out to be better than the student from Oxford.”

I propose *sending* people to recruit from HBCUs (e-mailing a program or job description isn’t enough. A flesh and blood presenter would be more effective). Some HBCUs, non-Ivy, and minority serving institutions with Marine Biology and/or Environmental Science programs are: University of Maryland—Eastern Shore, Hampton University, California State University system, Virginia Union University, Norfolk State University, North Carolina A&T, Elizabeth City State University, Florida A&M University, University of Hawaii (all campuses), and Western Washington University (I have a close faculty contact here). For talented students in math and other STEM fields, add Howard University, Tuskegee University, Morehouse College (I personally know the President and can facilitate partnership), and Spelman College.

3. **Think Broadly about Jobs/Roles**—Not all of the jobs in WH require a PhD with an award-winning dissertation on the migration patterns of bluefin tuna. There are many types of positions at WH: writers, receptionists, statisticians, accountants, security officers...even “the people who build the nets in the warehouse.” In an attempt to create a critical mass of people of color in the community, it might be worthwhile to focus diversity efforts on these roles as well as research/academic positions.
4. **Think Outside of the Box**—Be creative and intentional in the search for passionate and qualified people of color with a potential interest in marine science. Develop connections and form partnerships with non-academic organizations that might be excellent sources of potential candidates. Here are some examples:

National Association of Black Scuba Divers (<http://www.nabsdivers.org/>). Has over 2000 members. They provide scholarships to college students studying marine or environmental science.

Blacks Girls who Dive (<https://www.blackgirlsdivefoundation.org/>). Organization to promote aquatic recreation and STEM-based scholarship among African American Women.

Gates Millenium Scholarship (<http://www.gmsp.org/>). This fellowship is specifically designed to increase the representation of high talent African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Pacific Islanders in disciplines in the sciences, where they are typically underrepresented. They also provide funding for graduate school.

National Association of Black Geoscientists (<http://www.nabg-us.org/>)



MSPHD's Pathways to Science— Ashanti Johnson, Director (<http://www.pathwaystoscience.org/>). Although you need membership in this organization to post jobs, any member (e.g., Ambrose Gerald) can post to the listserv.

SACNAS—Society for Advancing Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (<http://sacnas.org/>)

AISES-American Indian Science and Engineering Society (<http://www.aises.org/>)

ASLO-MP (Minority Participation). Sponsored by Ben Cuker at Hampton University ([benjamin.cuker@hamptonu.edu](mailto:benjamin.cuker@hamptonu.edu))

National Society of Black Engineers. This society is so large that there is even a separate chapter New England. The link is: (<http://www.nsbe.org/Professionals/Regions/Region1/for-chapter.aspx>)

Finally, you will want to simply advertise more broadly and strategically. One respondent said that his/her job was not advertised on the popular jobsite: <http://jobstar.org/index.php>. However, it was advertised on Craigslist, which seemed unusual to this individual.

5. **Connect with the Local Community**—recruit from the local (Cape Cod, Providence, Boston) Black and Native community. As one respondent put it, “You have people in your backyard that don’t know about the aquarium or what you do”. Adopt a practice of greater community engagement. Connect with and recruit from the Black churches in West Falmouth and Mashpee, especially for the non-specialized positions.

- B. **The Rooney Rule**—As one respondent stated, “they put out the lofty goals but there is no accountability or follow through. So I have a hard time believing that they *really* want diverse candidates...who aren’t all that hard to find.”

The Rooney Rule was established by the NFL in 2003 in response to: (1) the very low representation of Black coaches, and (2) the finding that the few extant Black coaches were more likely to be fired than White coaches, despite a higher winning record. The rule only ensures that minority candidates will be considered and interviewed for each search. It does not mandate actual hiring or quotas.

Variants of the Rooney Rule have been adopted in a variety of organizations and industries. Because it does not stipulate hiring requirements, it is highly resistant to legal challenges around quotas. My recommendation is that WH establish its own version of the Rooney Rule to motivate broader recruitment, as outlined under A.

- C. **Capture the School (rather than the fish)**-- Fish school for a reason; it provides safety and protection. Hire more than one person of color at a time to create a cohort that can provide professional and social support to one another. This effectiveness of this approach is exemplified by the Posse Program ([www.possefoundation.org](http://www.possefoundation.org)) which has found that the graduation rate of

people of color soars beyond 90% when they are accompanied to college by other kids from their communities.

I recommend that WH adopt the practice of cluster hiring. In addition to providing support to others in the cohort, it produces a “snowball effect” whereby persons of previous cohorts provide support to future cohorts. Like compound interest, it enriches and facilitates the process of diversification over time.

One respondent insisted that “having a house where I could provide a room to a person of color who might have a hard time getting housing elsewhere was very important to [me/us]”

- D. **Go on a Top Three Spree**— At Harvard University, the mean level of aptitude is higher (and the standard deviation lower) than most other non-Ivy universities. However, means and standard deviations only matter when one is interested in an entire population (or is drawing randomly from such pools). If the interest is in a few individuals then it makes little sense to focus exclusively on top universities because there are highly talented people everywhere. There just may not be as many of them at second- or third-tier schools.

Based on this logic, I propose targeting students at underserved institutions who rank in the top X (e.g., 3-5%)% of their class. It might also be sensible to contact ETS to get a list of Black/Latino students who scored in the top decile, quintile, or quartile on the quantitative section of the SAT or GRE. To be sure, there are two issues with standardized tests: (1) whether the test is biased against and has decreased predictive validity for Blacks/Latinos, and (2) whether there are Blacks/Latino *individuals* who score really high on the test, despite the fact that group performance tends to be lower (by the way, there is little difference in the performance of Black/Latino students versus White students at the extreme high tail of the distribution, where Asian students dominate). The answer to both questions is yes. However, if the institution chooses not to take up the argument associated with the first point, it can still increase its diversity by focusing on the second point (i.e., targeted recruitment of high-scoring minorities).

- E. **Build Bridges and Fuel the Pipeline**—In addition to PEP and SEA, WH could build other programs that inspire interest and passion in oceanic science among younger children. For example, some respondents mentioned the possibility of building bridges with the Wampanoag community in Woods Hole.

According to one respondent, “the Wampanoag feel deeply connected to Woods Hole but don’t feel welcomed back in the community except for rare and occasional ceremonies.” Another stated that “there is diversity on Cape Cod...the institutes just don’t connect to it in any way.”

It might also be fruitful to establish partnerships with local high schools in Mashpee and Falmouth to increase both ethnic and socioeconomic diversity within Woods Hole.

Finally, it is important to invest resources in building the pipeline. One great example is KPMG’s observation that there were not many minority accounting candidates. To remedy the situation, they decided to invest in a program to put more minority business professors in the classroom, believing that this would inspire more minority business students. The result is the PhD project ([www.phdproject.org](http://www.phdproject.org)), which succeeded in quadrupling the number of minority faculty in business schools across the country from 294 to 1,253 since 1994.

- F. **Bring People to Woods Hole**—give people the opportunity to visit and acclimate to the environment. Many respondents cautioned against simply assuming that a person of color would not want to live in Woods Hole because of the weather or the lack of diversity. Some people of color are comfortable around White people and would be less bothered by the lack of demographic diversity than other people of color. There are other reasons that a person of color might be happy in Woods Hole. Several respondents were from warmer regions but decided to settle in Woods Hole because of the natural beauty and their commitment to marine science.

### Strategies for Hiring

- A. **Create Diversity Policy for Contractors**—Massport observed that very few of the contractors on their multi-million dollar development contracts were people of color. Consequently, the organization established a set of criteria and selection guidelines that increased the likelihood of D&I. Specifically, for the \$500M Seaport convention center hotel, project, proposals were evaluated on 4 criteria, each weighted 25%: Finance (i.e., do you have the economic resources?), Infrastructure (i.e., do you have the building team and human resources to complete the project?), Design (i.e., is the proposed hotel both functional and aesthetically attractive?), and Diversity (i.e., how does the project promote diversity and inclusion?).

The fourth criterion was open-ended. That is, contractors were free to define what they meant by “diversity and inclusion”, and it only counted for 25%. However, given that finance and infrastructure were almost assured for corporations competing at the half-billion dollar level of development, the de facto determinants of success would be design and diversity. In fact, the winning proposal, the Omni Hotel, included a ground-breaking proposal for how to increase D&I. More about this case can be found here:

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2017/05/16/boston-can-unwelcoming-place-business-but-here-how-change-that/rq2B5YKyXlvLHlf67Sey0I/story.html>

I propose that WH adopt a similar policy of selection for outside contractors. That is, the institutes should think carefully about what the appropriate criteria for selection should be, and add “diversity and inclusion” to the list. This means that diversity will be “baked-in” to what the institutes value and how they exercise those values (i.e., hiring). They could consider doing the same for employees who are hired directly. Here is one example:

**Academic Preparation** (Grades, Degree Level, Publications, Quality of University) 25%

**Extramural Funding** (Track Record of Grant Funding? Total Dollars Received? Potential for Grant Capture) 25%

**Topic of Research** (Interesting? Cutting-edge? Not currently represented?) 25%

**Diversity and Inclusion** (Underrepresented minority? *Demonstrated* commitment to D&I of underrepresented minorities, e.g., Teach for America? Demonstrated resilience by overcoming hardship or struggle? The research benefits underrepresented minorities?) 25%

One advantage of baking in these criteria for everyone is that it mitigates the perception that someone is hired *because* of their race or ethnicity. *Every* candidate simply expresses how they represent an integral value of the organization, and they needn’t occupy any specific demographic

to do so. They simply need to demonstrate engagement and commitment to diversity, or a viable plan to foster greater diversity and inclusion.

- B. **Employ Diverse Interview Panels**—much empirical research indicates that diverse panels result in fairer outcomes for minority job candidates (e.g., Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres, & Lewis, 1996; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006), and many companies have adopted a *mandatory* policy of diverse interview panels (e.g., Proctor and Gamble, Verizon, Cisco, Accenture).

I propose that WH adopt the policy of employing diverse interview panels. In the event that there are not diverse interviewers available (due to the paucity of diversity), then the panel should have a diverse “monitor” who acts as an unofficial observer. The mere presence of others in the room can provide oversight and increase accountability even if those individuals do not hold official authority.

In addition, WH should employ the practice of *structured interviewing*, in which each candidate is asked identical questions.

- C. **Institute Mandatory Diversity Training for Hiring Panels**—emphasize that all hiring panels undergo diversity training that will emphasize: (1) the importance of considering diversity in hiring practices, (2) the notion that diversity and excellence are mutually exclusive is a myth, and (3) the best practices for effective decision-making.
- D. **Create a Professional Development Program for New Hires**—one can easily attribute disparities to a lack of talent. However, what Maria Klawe’s accomplishments at Harvey Mudd College demonstrate is that having sufficient structural supports in place can make a tremendous difference. One respondent stated that “building computational skills was critical to my success at WH. Everyone should have access to similar training. It makes all the difference in the world.”
- E. **Hire Diverse Veterans**—because the two federal institutions (i.e., NOAA, USGS) have built-in policies that give strong preference to veterans, one effective strategy for building diversity in these institutes would be to target veterans of color. Given the thousands of minority veterans living within a 100-mile radius of Woods Hole, it should not be too difficult to capture a few dozen employees through targeted recruitment.

I recommend that all of the institutes adopt a policy of advertising all new searches with the following organizations: National Association of Black Veterans <https://nabvets.org/>. Hispanic Veterans <http://hispanicveterans.org/>. Native Veteran’s Association <https://nativevets.org/about-us/> and Asian American Veterans Association <http://www.javadc.org/>.

For the non-federal organizations, it is a way to increase ethnic diversity in a manner that might be less objectionable to diversity-resistant middle managers and staff members. As stated by one respondent, “They don’t value diversity. Why does it matter? As long as you hire good people and they are doing good quality work, then why does the skin color matter? *But*, they aren’t asking these same questions about veterans.”

- F. **Exercise Leadership and Moral Authority**—many breakthroughs in diversity did not rely on gaining consensus but rather the courageous decision of one (powerful) individual or a small group of individuals. I am not advocating for oppressive autocracy. I am simply highlighting that

leadership often requires the courage to “do the right thing”, even against the resistance of an unsympathetic majority. This is consistent with Item B.2. of the Woods Hole Diversity Advisory Committee’s Roadmap created in July 2005.

### **Inclusion**

- A. Leaders Explicitly Communicate Values and Norms**--building on Item F, it is important to lead cultural change at WH. One of the first steps in doing so involves clear, consistent, and constant communication of the values from the leadership. I would also suggest creating a new mission statement to reflect the integration of D&I into the values of the entire organization, its mission, and its operations. This is also consistent with Item B.2. of the Woods Hole Diversity Advisory Committee’s Roadmap created in July 2005.
- B. Add New Wall Art**—hanging portraits of notable scientists from a variety of gender and ethnic groups sends a clear message to people that they are entering a space that values inclusion. It is also another subtle yet effective way to implement Item A.
- C. Create ERGs**—many respondents stated that it would be very helpful to have an “affinity group” that could serve as a basis of social support. These groups are very common at most universities and business organizations.

I propose that WH establish (and fund) an ethnic minority ERG (Employee Resource Group). It probably makes sense to start with an inclusive group that invites all people of color across all of the six institutes. With time and greater diversity, it might be feasible to create ERGs that are specific to distinct minority groups at distinct institutes.

Although some of the social events hosted by ERGs may be for people of color to get to know each other, it’s purpose is also to bring multi-cultural awareness to the community at large. Therefore, its public events and activities should be attended and supported by all members of WH, to show support and solidarity. One respondent said that “the directors should introduce the speaker when we have speakers for Black history month to show that it’s something that is endorsed by the institution and not just imposed by the Black history committee.”

- D. Establish Mandatory Diversity Training Program**—this program is something that all current and future employees will be required to attend. The program will focus on building cultural competency (to move employees from more ethnocentric to more ethnorelative mindsets).

It is also possible to track progress using the ICCQ (Robertson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2002) or another measure of cultural competence.

- E. Create an Office of Diversity and Inclusion office**—the proposal here is to hire a Chief Diversity Officer, with staff, to assist with the day-to-day affairs associated with diversity and inclusion across the institutes. This person’s job responsibilities would included the following:
  - 1. Monitor all interview panels (see Item B under strategies for hiring)
  - 2. Provides a source of support and guidance for the community of color
  - 3. Handles complaints, grievances, and Title IX violations and investigations
  - 4. Have a monthly one-hour meeting with directors of all of the institutes
  - 5. Assist with the planning of multi-cultural programming and events (so that it doesn’t always fall on current employees)
  - 6. Make trips around the country to facilitate broader recruitment

7. Build connections and partnerships with “out of the box” organizations
8. Serve as a liaison with the broader Cape Cod community (e.g., Falmouth, Mashpee)

It is important that the institutes think carefully about the person that they hire. Ideally, it should be someone who is: (1) familiar with academic or funding institutions, or WH more specifically, (2) vehemently committed to the mission of diversity and inclusion, and (3) politically savvy, persuasive, and able to effectively deal with diverse and potentially difficult personalities. I would be happy to help with drafting the ad for such a position and serving on the interview panel.

**F. Foster Greater Warmth and Work/Life Balance**—people in general felt that the environment could be somewhat cold and unfriendly. This was not always due to cultural differences, but rather was often attributed to the “scientific personality” or “New England culture”. However, this lack of warmth affected people of color more severely. One respondent suggested instituting “a policy of kindness. Put *people* before money or prestige.” S/he half-jokingly added, “the head of the departments could even have tea and cookies with the students.” Many interviewees felt that no one cared about them at WH. Small gestures of kindness can go a long way toward reversing that perception.

I propose establishing casual Fridays where people can socialize and perhaps informally discuss science. For example, people could have conversations around recent findings in the literature or on the news. It could also be an opportunity for people to informally discuss projects that they are working on and get feedback from others. Informal gatherings like this will strengthen bonds, build community, and foster greater cooperation, familiarity, and concern.

An added concern is that people are expected to work weekends and holidays, and that there is also a double-standard when it comes to work ethic. White researchers are given the benefit of the doubt whereas people of color are not.

### **What are the next steps?**

A succinct summary of the organizational challenges facing WH are: (1) very low numerical representation of people of color, (2) no concrete strategic plan to address the low numbers by modifying recruitment or hiring practices, (3) no accountability or formal structures to ensure that diversity is a consideration in recruitment and hiring, (4) low inclusivity coupled with widespread aggression against people of color, and (5) no conspicuous institutional procedure for reporting, tracking, or addressing grievances from employees who experience hostility and discrimination at work.

A common trap that some well-intentioned organizations fall into regarding diversity and inclusion is the following: “my organization doesn’t have the time or resources to do *everything* but I really think that diversity is important so I want to do *something*”. This ultimately results in the organization doing basically *nothing*.

To avoid falling into this trap it is really important that the organization think through the concrete steps (and sacrifices) that it is willing to take to achieve this goal of diversity and inclusion. The current recommendations are designed to produce outcomes that are consistent with the stated objectives of WH. In addition to the recommendations outlined above, an effective and sustainable intervention requires

long-term commitment as well as objective indicators of success. The following five steps are critical to ensuring progress:

1. Develop a concrete plan for implementing strategies around recruitment and hiring, and most importantly for creating accountability and personal responsibility for diversity *outcomes* (as well as process).
2. Establish diversity percentage targets, create timeline, and chart progress. One possible campaign is “25 in 5”, or getting the percentage of underrepresented minorities to 9% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 8% Asian/Pacific Islander in 5 years. Although it would more than double the representation of people of color in WH, it falls well below the 40% minority population of the U.S. In that sense, 25% doesn’t seem too radical.
3. Measure current cultural competence and establish improvement or progress over time
4. Determine the content, audience, and delivery dates of diversity training and cultural competence workshops
5. The integration/sustainability piece requires having a full-time staff that is dedicated to creating structures and policies that support and reinforce the D&I agenda.