

Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research Program

Diversity Plan

Mission Statement:

The Virginia Coast Reserve Long-Term Ecological Research (VCR-LTER) program is committed to enhancing and sustaining diversity among our students, faculty and staff and scientific community in general. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, groups defined by race, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability and/or health status, gender identity/expression, veteran status, geographic origins, and socio-economic status.

Vision Statement:

The Virginia Coast Reserve LTER Program will enhance and sustain an environment that is diverse and inclusive, where individual differences are valued and serve as a source for collective empowerment. The VCR Site embraces diversity in all forms, with a vision of creating an inclusive environment where all persons of the VCR-LTER community are respected.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions:

Goal 1: Enhance and sustain an institutional climate that values and welcomes diversity and inclusion.

Objective: Promote exposure to and interactions among different cultures.

Action: Encourage participation in international research opportunities through NSF and other agencies.

Action: Encourage interactive activities (social as well as professional) among VCR students, faculty and staff.

Objective: Provide strong leadership for site diversity efforts.

Action: Identify a specific leader to direct site diversity efforts and to serve as a student mentor.

Goal 2: Promote diversity of students, faculty and staff.

Objective: Increase the recruitment and retention of diverse students, with emphasis on those who are historically underrepresented.

Action: Explore funding possibilities that will facilitate diversity recruiting (e.g. NSF's REU program, NSF's Transforming Undergraduate Education (TUES) Program, etc.).

Action: Apply to become an REU site.

Action: Establish strong links with regional HBCU's and promote opportunities among their students.

Action: Ensure there are no discriminatory obstacles that limit the success and advancement of members of underrepresented groups within our program.

Action: Recruit students from across the nation and across the globe.

Action: Strengthen the links between the LTER Schoolyard programs (especially at the high school level) and undergraduate recruiting efforts.

Objective: Recruit, retain and support a more diverse faculty and staff.

Action: Establish a formal mentoring program to provide a historical overview of previous research at the VCR LTER to assist PIs and students from underrepresented groups to write successful proposals and prepare manuscripts for publication.

Goal 3: Promote partnerships that increase diversity-related research and program initiatives.

Objective: Establish formal relationships with appropriate organizations and promote VCR programs and opportunities.

Action: Develop partnerships with HBCU's that have natural science programs, (partnerships, as used here, meaning both formal arrangements (MOU's) as well as simple exchanges of information and advertising).

Action: Establish a partnership with an ILTER site as a "Sister Site".

Action: Establish contacts and possible collaborative efforts with diversity programs associated with professional societies (the Ecological Society of America's SEEDS program, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS), etc.).

Goal 4: Integrate diversity and inclusion into established systems of accountability.

Objective: Establish a system of accountability in order to evaluate success of diversity efforts.

Action: Develop and institute a system for documenting progress toward meeting plan objectives. Evaluate the data on an annual basis.

Action: Establish a formal system of tracking students through their programs and beyond so we can assess the level of success.