



Engaging faculty and students in developing inclusive ecology pedagogy for increasing diversity of ecologists (RCN-UNIDE)

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Undergraduate Network for Increasing Diversity of Ecologists (UNIDE) Goals 2020-2025

To identify the barriers and challenges that must be overcome in order to support diverse participation in Ecology and Environmental (EE) fields

To build a sustainable and interdisciplinary network of faculty, students and practitioners in ecology/environmental science (EE), education and social sciences who develop, assess and promote inclusive pedagogy in EE fields

To characterize the ecological identity, or sense of belonging of under-represented people in EE fields

To develop pedagogical approaches and team-building interventions that foster social-belonging of diverse students in EE education

The UNIDE Approach to Improving EE Education – Students as Change-Agents: Guided by EE Students and Practitioners Focus Group Findings

In the UNIDE model, a person's sense of belonging is influenced by their individual sense of identity, the academic context (including interpersonal interactions and institutional factors), and the match (or mismatch) between their personal views of nature and those of the EE fields.

We conducted focus groups to investigate variation in sense of belonging in EE fields among those typically included and those under-represented based on ethnicity or race.

The focus groups investigated personal stories, shared experiences, and narratives of how individuals became practitioners in EE fields.

Focus Group Findings Fostering excitement and belonging

Desire to better understand the natural world and/or environmental issues

Desire to have a positive impact on environment and one's community

Childhood/youth experiences that foster connection to the natural world, awareness of environmental issues, and knowledge of environmental careers

Enjoyment of EE activities such as fieldwork

The shared passion of people in these EE fields

Seeing people that "look like me"

A welcoming interpersonal environment (e.g. mentors, teachers, peers, etc.)

Institutional supports such as scholarships and targeted programs

Barriers to Recruiting Diverse Students in EE (1)

Lack of identified enhancers that foster belonging

Lack of time, money, connections, and knowledge of university systems. Imposter syndrome.

Institutional missteps such as lip service to diversity

Educational deficits: lacking knowledge and experiences necessary for succeeding in EE

Lack of knowledge about EE majors and careers

EE not seen as legitimate path (students pushed toward medicine by family, community, advisors)



RCN-UNIDE STEERING Committee



Nature in the eye of the beholder
Identity influences inquiry
Undergraduate Network for Increasing Diversity of Ecologists (UNIDE)



UNIDE Focus Groups Process

<p>10 online groups in 2021 36 people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 people of color, mostly Black and/or Latinx • 21 undergrads (2 with an ecology focus) • 4 grad students (3 in ecology) • 11 faculty, not all tenure track (5 in ecology) 	<p>Analysis in five stages: Identifying themes and variation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to entire focus group and correct auto-transcription • Annotate each transcript with key ideas • Identify themes <i>within</i> each group • Identify themes <i>across</i> the groups • Group and summarize themes for presentation
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Barriers (2): Gatekeeping by mentors, teachers, others about What is Ecology

Applied and interdisciplinary work discouraged	Lack of focus on environmental problems
Lack of full range of human dimensions	Who can be an ecologist: race, gender, clothing (the outdoorsy look), and language



ONGOING 2022-2023 – UNIDE Student Advisory Board formation

- To Guide in Creating Inclusive EE Career Environments
- 15 diverse students - 6 sophomores, 6 juniors, 3 graduate students

Criteria used for EE Underrepresented Student Selection

Passion and understanding of nature and DEI issues	Year in school
Communication skills	Showing leadership initiative
Letter of recommendation	Variety of institutions