

Valuing and rewarding efforts to broaden participation in geochemistry

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Despite sustained attempts to broaden participation in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), a lack of racial and ethnic diversity persists in the Geosciences. This suggests that ingrained systemic and cultural factors may be key to understand the lack of diversity within our field. Through interviews and a nation-wide survey, we asked geoscience faculty members at academic institutions about their perceptions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities aimed at broadening participation in the Geosciences, including what motivates faculty to participate in this work, and how their efforts are valued and considered in the tenure, promotion, evaluation, and reward systems. We found that responses varied by institutional type, career stage, and individual demographics, framing our broader understanding of academic reward systems and cultures. In particular, we found disconnects between perceptions of DEI work at primarily undergraduate institutions and perceptions at R1 universities (where most future faculty are trained), e.g. differing perceptions of workload distribution and engagement in DEI work, as well as how such work is figured into faculty evaluation structures. We also found significantly different perceptions of hurdles preventing further DEI engagement between under-represented minoritized faculty and senior faculty/faculty leaders. We argue that attaining racial and ethnic representation at levels similar to broader society requires looking beyond recruitment and retention of students, and must also consider how ingrained, systemic structures and cultural norms, including evaluation and reward systems affect faculty motivations and behaviors in our discipline. Adopting more inclusive evaluation and reward structures that meaningfully value teaching, research, and service efforts aimed at broadening participation could empower sustained engagement by more individuals, while also recognizing ongoing efforts.