

Know before you go: A best practices guide to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion consciousness in AGU Fall Meeting attendees at all career stages

Layla F. Saad says, *"when we have caused harm, our impact matters more than our intention"*. The climate around diversity and inclusion had taken a dramatic turn over the past year. While many of us are eager to embrace this new code of conduct, we may be struggling to keep up with best practices when it comes to creating an inclusive environment. Below we have compiled some information that may help AGU attendees at all stages and from all backgrounds improve their interactions. We recognize this guide may not include everyone or be comprehensive. This is a living document that we will revisit after the Fall Meeting. It aims to help build an inclusive environment and is intended to be updated each year. Feedback is welcome and can be sent to AGU-Biogeo-DEI-Chairs@lbl.gov.

General guiding principle

The last two years have felt like one long Zoom meeting with folks forgetting to mute & unmute, as such, many of us may be feeling nervous about small talk. Worried you might say something wrong and inadvertently offend someone? Just remember that this is a scientific conference, **lead with science**. Ask fellow attendees about what they are working on, to give a two-minute summary of their poster, a question about their talk earlier, etc. Often when we are meeting others for the first time, many questions that might be customary to us, could be misread by others and possibly found offensive. To avoid these sorts of interactions, we suggest refraining from assumptions or discussing personal matters and focusing on questions regarding science and career. See below for some more specific tips on phrasing that can improve your interactions.

Question Suggestions

One of the great things about AGU is the opportunity to meet a diversity of scientists from around the world. To make the most of your interactions with new scientists, we suggest some of the following phrasing:

- Instead of asking "where are you from?", try asking, "what institution are you with?"; this wording places the focus on your colleague's professional life
- Instead of asking "are you a student?", try asking, "what is your professional title?"; this helps to avoid making assumptions about a person's career
- Instead of asking "how is your name pronounced?", try asking "how would you like me to say your name?"
- It is never appropriate to ask people about their sexuality, but you can ask "what pronouns do you want me to use?"
- Commenting on people's clothing or appearance can be a great way to connect but can also come with risks of making people feel out of place. Instead of saying "you always wear the most interesting clothing", consider simply saying "I love your outfit". You may also consider refraining from commenting on people's appearance altogether and focus on their professional attributes.

- Instead of assuming a person's COVID boundaries and reaching out for a handshake or hug, consider asking "are you comfortable shaking hands?"

Creating an Inclusive Fall Meeting

Whether a first-time attendee or a longtime attendee, there are things you can do to make AGU's fall meeting a more welcoming experience for both yourself and those around you.

For all

We have provided some resources to help meeting goers navigate terminology as it relates to race and gender identity:

- Sex: male, female
- Gender: how someone identifies (woman, man, non-binary)
- LatinX: removes gender from the ethnicity identifier
- Pronouns: Consider adding pronouns to your name tag or Zoom profile "he/him", "she/her", or "they/them"; this helps avoid confusion around gender identity
- A more comprehensive list of gender identity terms and race terminology [here](#)

For students

AGU is a great way to network and learn about exciting new research in your field. Here are some tips to help students make the most out of the Fall Meeting:

- Attend your section mixer.
- If you are nervous to speak to a scientist, try asking someone more senior to introduce you.
- Meetings are a great way to get to know potential PhD/postdoc advisors; try emailing them beforehand (with your CV) to set up a time to chat at the meeting.
- Meals are a great way to network; try finding people to get lunch or dinner with (but please don't feel obliged to drink at social functions).
- Don't forget to prioritize self-care (see below)!
- Clothing is a form of self expression; feel free to be yourself. You do not have to look like everyone else around you, but it is also good to remain professional in your attire.
- Most Biogeosciences sessions happen in a few hallways (at least at Moscone), this can be a good place to bump into colleagues or start a conversation about someone's talk.
- AGU can be expensive, especially if you don't have grants to pay for it. Consider reaching out to colleagues early to ask about housing shares and apply for travel grants through the sections (travel grants), the section's DEI committee (DEI travel grants), or the section's early career committee (caregiver awards).
- Looking to talk to new people? Go up to poster presenters and ask them to tell you about their poster.
- First time attending AGU? See the HS3 [guide](#) for first time attendees to gain tips on everything from how to read the scientific program to footwear recommendations.

For senior scientists

Many senior scientists are experienced when it comes to academic conferences; you may know many other attendees and have plans every evening that week. Now is a great time to think

about how you can use your position to improve the meeting for less experienced attendees. Here are some tips to consider:

- If you have students, introduce them to researchers who work on similar topics
- Bring colleagues to student posters, or stand next to your student's poster to help draw people in
- Invite people outside your usual professional circle to partake in meals and other AGU activities
- Create physical space at gatherings with colleagues for others to join your discussions (for example, during casual conversations in the poster hall)
- Consider joining a DEI mentor program (see opportunities to get involved [here](#))
- Think ahead about housing/funding so that students and senior scientist can have separate housing
- Plug your student's talks and posters in your own talk
- Lead by example; attending a talk outside your discipline, creating space for others to participate in conversation, or engaging in self-care are all ways you can help foster a more inclusive scientific society
- Not able to attend the meeting in-person? Consider introducing your mentees to senior/mid-career colleagues over email prior to the meeting so that they might arrange a chat

For session conveners

Session conveners can have a lot of influence in meeting norms. The following suggestions for conference committees and session organizers may help improve the comfort:

- Session chairs should ask speakers in advance "How would you like me to pronounce your name?" Alternatively, Googling "how to pronounce <name>" will give you a close approximation
- Consider finding new name tag positions or passing out name tag holders that keep people focused on attendee's faces (e.g., head name tag holder tiaras)
- Consider passing out bracelets/stickers that indicate COVID boundaries (for instance, red means "please keep 6 feet apart" and green means "come on in for a hug")
- Consider systematic changes that can remove bias to build diverse, equitable, and inclusive committees and sessions
- Given the new oral session format of five-minute talks followed by discussion, session conveners should make sure all speakers get questions, and participate in the discussion

Guide for self-care

AGU is a huge conference that is jam packed with so much cool stuff to take part in. This means that making time for self-care can be challenging. We provide some recommendations for making the most of your meeting without feeling completely drained by the end of it.

- Be selective: You will be amazed how many talks you see compared to how many you actually remember once the conference is over. Picking just a few sessions you are really interested in can sometimes be more impactful than trying to see everything.
- Take breaks: Rather than attending every session every day and every lunch and every

dinner and evening activity, consider a nap or walk to some other break from the conference from time to time.

- Ditch feelings of guilt: no matter what you do, there's no way to take it all in.
- Sleep: Starting the conference at 8 am (waking up at 6:30 am) and staying out all even can wear on you after a week. Try to get some sleep. Your body and immune system will thank you.
- Prepare ahead of time: Conferences can be very stressful when you start practicing your talk the day before and realize you have a ton of work to do on it still. We recommend 'practice talks' (in front of people who can give you feedback) before the conference and during. Do not do a 'practice talk' the day before, otherwise you will be up all night fixing your talk instead of practicing it.
- Go sightseeing: Conferences are a great way to explore new places. Consider planning a day/evening or weekend (following the conference) to go exploring. Planning this with other conference attendees can also help you meet other scientists.

AGU Resources

- The AGU Hydrology Section Student Subcommittee (HS3) group has put together a great [list of DEI events](#) at this year's fall meeting
- For a more comprehensive guide to safety and inclusivity, we recommend this [guide](#) for promoting a safe, educational, and inclusive atmosphere during off-campus activities, put together by Georgia Tech
- If ever in need, [Safe AGU](#) is a resource provided to "promoting a safe work environment in the Earth and space sciences and ensuring that all AGU program activities are free from discrimination, bias or harassment of any type. Individuals with concerns – including situations that may not rise to the level of an ethics complaint – can reach out to AGU Ethics for assistance. Inquiries are confidential".
- AGU will host weekly virtual office hours beginning the week of 11 October to help everyone plan for the meeting. You'll be able to see a schedule of times on the Fall Meeting website. During office hours, AGU meetings staff will be online to answer questions. We will turn these answers into updates on the meeting FAQ's. Please join with your questions.
- Consider supporting Women owned (list [here](#)) and Black owned (list [here](#)) businesses while in New Orleans

