

Dear CNS Community,

We find ourselves in a time of renewed urgency to fight for Black lives. This urgency is underlined by the disproportionate, deadly effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and policing on the Black community. Anti-black racism is in our healthcare system, the criminal justice system, and our universities. The brutal murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade and countless others result from and highlight the deep institutional racism and anti-Blackness embedded in the structure of our American society. The community we have built through BRiDGE is intentionally anti-racist and we stand with the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

Academia and broader research institutions perpetuate racism and other forms of oppression. A cursory glance at the history of higher education shows that public policy and statutory provisions excluded Black people until *Brown v. Board of Education* rejected the "separate but equal" doctrine in 1954. Integration did not bring equality or expunge the pernicious racist infrastructure that is currently reflected in academia. [We founded BRiDGE](#) to increase the representation and amplify the voices of early career scientists from underrepresented groups to address a specific problem we observed in our community: the attrition of underrepresented graduate students. This attrition is a product of the systemic racism that continues to pervade academia today. The BRiDGE Team, along with so many individual graduate students in your departments have been fighting this for years and using our voices to advocate for change.

As our research communities begin to seek ways to fight anti-Blackness and look for materials to educate ourselves on our country and individual fields' racist histories -- **we wish to remind you and direct your attention to the resources that your student community has already built to address these pervasive issues.** These programs and efforts will not survive if individual departments do not 1) step up, show up, and make use of these resources, and 2) formalize a value system that credits and compensates students who have built these resources with countless hours of their labor. Now is the time for you to educate yourself on these resources, to share these resources, and above all -- to show your continued and strengthened support of these resources year round and into the future. This includes continual institutional support. This includes showing up for your students.

We would like to highlight some of these student-led efforts and initiatives that have time and time again provided actionable change for our departments here at UMass Amherst:

1. BRiDGE - provides a mechanism to highlight the contribution of early-career underrepresented scientists in departmental seminars while increasing the visibility of LGBTQ+BIPOC researchers and providing spaces for conversations about Broader Impacts, which promote reflections about privilege, positionality, and the lived experiences of STEM practitioners.
2. GWIS - provides opportunities and leadership experiences for graduate women and friends in Outreach, Communications, Mentoring, Advocacy (including the #Safeatwork campaign), Finance & Administration, and Diversity & Inclusion.
3. GSCA - hosts regular events and community spaces for graduate students of color including an annual celebratory dinner and awards ceremony in recognition of the accomplishments of graduate students of color.

4. oSTEM - creates an intentional and supportive community of LGBTQ+ undergraduate and graduate students and promotes the inclusion of diverse students.
5. ECo & Geosciences DEI Pedagogy seminar - provides a forum for discussion, learning, and exploration of the structural bigotry, sexism, racism, ableism, and all oppressive systems present in our academic domains, our universities, and our society via open discussion and critique of peer-reviewed literature.

This is not a comprehensive list and does not highlight the contributions from individual LGBTQ+ & BIPOC students in our departments. We encourage individual departments to step up and recognize these students for their efforts and to fully employ the tools, infrastructure, and resources these students have already built for our research community. It is devastating that current events were necessary to spark wider conversations about the barriers to inclusion faced by our LGBTQ+ & BIPOC, and specifically Black, community members. As BRiDGE organizers, we affirm that lasting change will require long-term engagement and sustained discussion of these topics. Although the current moment has driven many to seek new ways to dialogue about these issues, student organizations on campus have been cultivating these spaces for years. We reiterate that all community members are invited to participate in our efforts to build resilient, lasting change across CNS. Let us not wait for the next tragedy that comes to light for our community to spring into action or to give validity and strength to the many voices that have been calling for change.

In solidarity
BRiDGE Organizing Committee

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