



# Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Action Plan

*This plan is a working document that may be updated and revised as the goals of the organization grow and change and as progress is made.*

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# Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory Statement of Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

The Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory recognizes the deep abuses committed as a result of systemic racism, white privilege, and environmental injustice. We understand it is our duty, as an organization and as individuals, to take concrete steps against these abuses and towards a more equitable and inclusive approach to addressing the problems facing our oceans and our communities.

Therefore, the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory commits to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in our field of marine science. We proactively strive to bring the voices, intellect, and talents of people of all colors, cultures, backgrounds, and identities into our work to further science and conservation. This action plan outlines the concrete actions that we are taking to achieve our vision of a more diverse and inclusive organization. The planet's health relies on all of us working together for the benefit of all.

## Goal 1: Continuously grow team knowledge of DEIJ and anti-racism

Identify resources and ingest new information to improve our individual and collective knowledge of topics related to DEIJ and anti-racism. Foster a safe and respectful environment that encourages sharing and communication.

- A. Ensure that everybody on the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory team has a forum to provide feedback and engage in DEIJ issues.
  - a. Enable by 1) holding monthly Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory DEIJ meetings for all staff, interns, and volunteers, 2) encouraging team members to feel empowered to speak out on these issues without fear of retribution or shaming, and 3) providing access to an anonymous Google form for staff, interns, and volunteers to submit DEIJ-related feedback.
- B. Maintain a Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory book club covering books about DEIJ, anti-racism, etc., especially those written by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) authors.
  - a. Format: 2 books/year, discussed at biweekly brown bag lunch meetings.
  - b. If possible, purchase books through BIPOC-owned bookstores.
  - c. Previously read:

- i. *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Oluo
  - ii. *Me and White Supremacy*, Layla F. Saad
  - iii. *The Water Dancer*, Ta-Nehisi Coates
  - iv. *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*, edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katharine K. Wilkinson
  - v. *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer
- C. As a team, read and discuss articles and papers related to DEIJ and anti-racism in ocean and conservation science.
  - a. Format: Discuss during monthly DEIJ meetings at a frequency of once per quarter.
  - b. Previously read and discussed:
    - i. [Ten simple rules for Global North researchers to stop perpetuating helicopter research in the Global South](#)
    - ii. [Replacing “parachute science” with “global science” in ecology and conservation biology](#)
    - iii. [Stowing parachutes, strengthening science](#)
    - iv. [Lessons from Palau to end parachute science in international conservation research](#)
    - v. [Towards equity and justice in ocean sciences](#)
- D. Maintain an active list of DEIJ & anti-racism resources and organizations on campus and in the Santa Barbara community. Engage and support these organizations when relevant.
  - a. [UCSB Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#)
  - b. [UCSB Office of Equal Opportunity and Discrimination Prevention](#)
  - c. [UCSB Center for Black Studies Research](#)
  - d. [UCSB McNair Scholars Program](#)
  - e. [UCSB Environmental Justice Alliance](#)
  - f. [UCSB Global Environmental Justice Project](#)
  - g. [UCSB REEF](#)
  - h. [UCSB STEM Outreach Programs](#)
  - i. [UC-HBCU Initiative](#)
  - a. [NCEAS Annual DEIJ Seminar Series](#)
  - j. [Santa Barbara Young Black Professionals](#)
- E. Attend academic department diversity trainings as a team (microaggression, bystander intervention, implicit bias, etc.).
  - a. UCSB Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion DEI [trainings](#)
  - b. UCSB Office of Equal Opportunity and Discrimination Prevention [trainings](#)

- F. Maintain a #bosl-diversity channel on the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory Slack workspace for sharing ideas, events, and topics relating to promoting DEIJ.
- G. Ensure that all new staff & intern hires have access to all Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory DEIJ resources.
  - a. Share the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory DEIJ plan and anonymous feedback form as part of the onboarding process.

## Goal 2: Ensure fair and unbiased recruitment and hiring processes

Implement standardized recruitment and hiring processes that increase access and equity and reduce bias. Emphasize our commitment to DEIJ through these processes and pay staff and interns equitable wages.

- A. Require all Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory staff that participate in search committees to complete DEIJ training.
  - a. At a minimum, all search committee members should review the anti-bias in recruitment slides, the Applying EO/AA/Diversity Practices to Academic Searches slides, and UCLA's [Implicit Bias](#) video series. Additional resources are also available to staff.
  - b. When we have a critical mass of at least three Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory staff members who will be participating in hiring but have not yet attended DEIJ training, reach out to the [UCSB DEI Office](#) to set up a training session.
  - c. Advocate for recruiting to be included in department diversity trainings.
- B. Include an optional Statement of Contributions to Diversity in application materials for all recruitments (staff/academic and intern hires) (i.e., in addition to cover letter and CV, applicants are encouraged to submit a Statement of Contributions to Diversity).
  - a. The Statement of Contributions to Diversity shall be reviewed alongside the other application materials. Applicants who submit a thoughtfully-written statement that demonstrates how they tangibly have contributed towards DEIJ in alignment with the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory and UCSB's goals will be credited towards their application rating score. Prior to reviewing applications, the hiring committee will decide how the statements are evaluated to maintain consistency.

- b. Applicants may also be asked during an interview regarding their views on the importance of promoting DEIJ in the workplace.
- C. Formalize and distribute job and internship opportunities widely, rather than hiring via existing connections or word of mouth. Advertise to institutions and organizations that train and support diverse students and scientists from underrepresented groups (e.g., via Job Elephant [Blacks in Higher Ed], Handshake, ESA Black Ecologists, National Society of Black Engineers at UCSB). Job searches and distribution of announcements should not be limited to existing UCSB departments that currently lack diversity.
  - a. Designate funding to support posting job ads on paid forums that reach underrepresented groups.
  - b. Learn the anonymous demographic breakdown of applicants to determine whether our diversity in recruitment efforts are effective. To get these data, contact MSI Personnel Analysts after the close of a recruitment and they can share the UCSB Academic Personnel EEO memo that summarizes diversity data.
  - c. Maintain and use lists of recruitment channels for student and non-student hires.
  - d. Explore options for recruiting diverse student interns from outside the UCSB student body, and support initiatives to increase the diversity of on-campus departments.
- D. Pay all interns and staff a competitive, fair, and honest wage, commiserate with education and experience and in line with peer organizations and cost of living adjustments.
  - a. Students should be compensated for their contributions so that financial insecurity never hinders someone's ability to pursue an opportunity with the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory.
  - b. Annually review pay scales for interns and adjust for inflation.

### Goal 3: Establish opportunities for students and youth from underrepresented groups to participate in marine science

Engage students and youth of underrepresented groups in the field of marine science through mentorship, partnerships, events, and accessible content.

- A. Lead a marine science mentorship program:

- a. Maintain and grow Sea The Future, Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory's academic mentorship program that encourages junior high students to pursue a career in marine science by providing them with knowledge, skills, and relationships in the marine science field.
- B. Engage in partnerships:
  - a. As opportunities arise, engage in partnerships (in the form of volunteer time and/or funding) with UCSB programs, local aquariums, and museums:
    - i. UCSB: UCSB REEF Center, UCSB Scitrek, FUERTE, DIVERsity in Diving, A-OK
    - ii. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Sea Center, MOXI (The Wolf Museum of Exploration + Innovation), Santa Barbara Natural History Museum, Botanic Garden, Santa Barbara City College, Schools (science fairs at schools), Libraries
    - iii. Regional: Aquarium of the Pacific, Monterey Bay Aquarium, California Science Center, Cal Academy
- C. Events:
  - a. As opportunities arise, lead or participate in events promoting the participation of students and youth from underrepresented groups in marine science.
  - b. When possible, offer bilingual events.
  - c. Format examples:
    - i. Webinars (e.g., "An Ocean of Science" webinar, January 2021)
    - ii. In-person events
      - 1. UCSB Shark Night
    - iii. Local Science Fairs

## Goal 4: Increase access to marine science career development opportunities for underrepresented groups

Provide funding for career development opportunities and reduce barriers to participation in marine science for students from underrepresented groups at all education levels.

- A. Maintain the annual Benioff Scholars Program in Applied Environmental Science to offer fellowships to UCSB graduate students from communities historically underrepresented in the sciences.

- B. Remove barriers to key marine science skill-building opportunities for underrepresented groups.
  - a. Build or support a program to provide field work opportunities to undergraduate students.
  - b. Build or support a program to provide funding for swim lessons.
  - c. Build or support a program to provide funding for scuba diving certification.
- C. If we have the opportunity to direct funding to external groups, consider those specifically created to support BIPOC researchers in marine science, e.g.:
  - a. [Black in Marine Science](#)
  - b. [Minorities in Shark Sciences](#)
  - c. [Black Women in Ecology, Evolution and Marine Science](#)

## Goal 5: Engage and amplify underrepresented voices in marine science

Increase the visibility and exposure of marine scientists from underrepresented groups by highlighting diverse experts and spokespeople in scientific working groups, media opportunities, panels, speaking engagements, social channels, and papers and citations.

- A. Invite diverse scientists to all Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory scientific working groups.
- B. Request diversity statements in RFPs for all Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory funded projects.
- C. Build a list of BIPOC experts & spokespeople in ocean science who we could suggest when we're approached for media opportunities, working groups, panels, or other speaking engagements. Ensure that there are BIPOC participating and ask organizers to adjust if not.
  - a. Add experts relevant to Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory projects.
  - b. Ensure the list is regularly updated.
  - c. Continue to share this with groups that regularly organize events, e.g., World Economic Forum.
- D. On Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory social media, aim to share at least two posts per month highlighting BIPOC work in marine science. Build this into the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory communications strategy.
  - a. Follow BIPOC marine experts/groups on social channels and reshare.

- E. Encourage the use of land acknowledgements in public Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory presentations.
  - a. Develop an accurate land acknowledgment passage vetted by local tribes; explore options to make acknowledgements as inclusive as possible. UCSB sample language [here](#).

## Goal 6: Integrate environmental justice and equity into our projects and workstreams

Incorporate and prioritize principles of environmental justice (EJ) into all new and existing projects, proposals, and communications. Ensure all team members have access to EJ resources and expand our external network to include EJ organizations.

- A. Ensure that all members of the Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory have access to EJ resources including online courses and university contacts.
- B. Expand network connections to include EJ organizations and leaders. Establish professional relationships for project mentorship, development, and education.
- C. Develop and maintain the EJ tracker for current Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory projects and integrate EJ where possible through project communication materials, network expansion, and project additions.
  - a. Annually review the EJ tracker for each project and discuss where improvements can be made.
- D. Include EJ criteria when selecting new flagship projects from crowdsourcing platform and funding proposals.
- E. Build EJ communication materials into Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory social channels and communication strategy.
- F. Ensure priorities of local communities are centered in projects hosted abroad. Engage and consult with community leaders early-on in the process.
- G. Decouple white/Western-dominant biases and neocolonialist principles when engaging with any partners, especially those abroad. Ensure these biases are addressed during early stages of project development.



## Goal 7: Establish long-term commitment to DEIJ and anti-racism

Hold ourselves and our organization accountable to our DEIJ action plan goals by taking action, measuring progress, and evaluating impact.

- A. Maintain monthly all-hands Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory DEIJ meetings.
- B. Create a framework for how we measure progress, take action, and stay accountable to achieving these goals.
- C. Review and update this Action Plan once annually.
  - a. Thoroughly review the plan and goals on a regular basis to ensure we are taking action and keeping resources and goals up to date.
  - b. Assign sections for team members to review and update during the January DEIJ meeting, and follow-up with those updates during the February DEIJ Meeting.
- D. All employees, volunteers, interns participate in UCSB/department DEIJ training each year.
- E. Dedicate funding to DEIJ initiatives and programs.
  - a. Support with funds to participate in Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory projects and goals including internships, fellowships, employment.
  - b. See goals 3 and 4 for details.