

# Partnership Departments Request for Proposals 2024-2025 AGU Bridge Program Cycle

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Students from historically marginalized communities (defined in this project as people identifying as Hispanic, Black/African American, American Indian, Pacific Islander, Alaskan Native and/or Native Hawaiian) make up a third of all college-age U.S. citizens, yet in 2019, less than 10% of doctorate degrees, less than 20% bachelor's and less than 15% master's degrees were awarded to historically marginalized students in the geosciences in the same year. (Gonzales & Keane, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. Through the promotion of equitable graduate education practices and student support, the American Geophysical Union Bridge Program (AGU-BP) aims to increase participation of historically marginalized students in geoscience graduate education.

As part of a national effort funded by the National Science Foundation, the [Inclusive Graduate Education Network \(IGEN\)](#), AGU is developing sustainable model bridge programs that improve the access to, and culture of, graduate education for all students, with an emphasis on individuals who have been historically excluded from graduate programs in geoscience. Another component of the program includes developing a national network of graduate degree granting departments who are all working to advance equitable educational practices in their graduate programs. The AGU Bridge Program advocates for departments to adopt equitable practices rooted in educational research and partners with programs that are already working to put these into practice, thereby supporting students from historically marginalized communities in their pursuit of graduate education.

The project has the following goals:

1. Develop, document, and evaluate sustainable model bridging experiences that improve the access to, and culture of, graduate education for all students, with an emphasis on those from historically marginalized communities, in geoscience graduate programs.
2. Promote and disseminate successful program components to the geoscience community.
3. Increase, within ten years, the percentage of geoscience graduate degrees awarded to students from historically marginalized communities to match the percentage of geoscience bachelor's degrees granted to individuals identifying with these communities.

## 2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The AGU Bridge Program invites your department to consider joining a network of Partner departments that will provide students from historically marginalized communities with a smooth transition into graduate programs. To ensure a supportive pairing between students and graduate

programs, we established the Partner application process to vet departments and to support departments to recruit students to their programs.

This document provides guidelines by which departments can apply to become Partners, including the criteria we use to select these departments. The procedure for becoming a Partner will require departments to submit a brief proposal detailing programs and practices that support students entering and successfully completing their graduate program.

### **3. ELIGIBILITY**

The Partner department must be part of a university or college that offers a Master's and/or Doctoral degree in the geosciences and be located and accredited in the United States or U.S. Territories. The institution must have active research programs readily available to students throughout the academic year.

### **4. BENEFITS**

Departments that become Partners will be able to take advantage of the following benefits:

- Access to individuals in the IGEN project who are knowledgeable about best practices and equity in graduate education.
- Join the community of existing Bridge Programs to engage in shared learning and collective action to advance equity in graduate education.
- Recognition by the AGU of the department's commitment to equity and inclusion in the geosciences.
- Access to AGU Bridge Program applicant database (an annual recruitment effort by IGEN to identify students from historically marginalized communities who are interested in earning a graduate degree in geoscience).
- Promotion of the Partner departments to students interested in graduate school, including being featured on AGU Bridge Program website.

### **5. APPROVAL PROCESS**

Eligible partner department applications will be reviewed by the AGU Bridge Program Review Committee. See section 5.4 for additional details. If your department has previously submitted an application to the AGU Bridge Program and is reapplying, your new application must demonstrate substantial changes from previously submitted applications to be considered by the Review Committee.

#### **5.1 Proposal Submission**

To be considered for partnership, your department must submit your proposal via an online submission platform. The proposal is comprised of two parts:

- A short answer form consisting of 8 prompts
- 1-page narrative uploaded as a PDF. Narratives that exceed the 1-page limit will not be considered.

Proposals will be reviewed annually for approval. The proposal must be submitted online via the submission platform at the link below and **must** include the completed short-answer section and the 1-page narrative (submitted as a single PDF document). Application link can be found [here](#). **The deadline for proposals is 10 September 2024 at 11:59 PM ET. Late proposals will not be accepted.**

## **5.2 Narrative Formatting Guidelines**

Narrative must be clear, readily legible, and conform to the following requirements:

Use of only the approved typefaces identified below, a black font color, and a font size of 10 points or larger must be used:

For Windows users: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia

For Macintosh users: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino, or Georgia

For TeX users: Computer Modern

A Symbol font may be used to insert special characters; however, the font size requirement still applies.

- b. No more than 6 lines within a vertical space of 1 inch; and
- c. Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch.

Please note that no supplemental documents can be sent as an attachment or submitted after the submission deadline. They will be discarded. Additionally, the committee is not obligated to follow or review hyperlinks embedded in your application. Any listed citations or references must be part of the 1-page narrative or otherwise included in the word count of the online form. Please do not use footnotes in the document.

**Important:** The PDF narrative must have your institution and department name listed at the beginning of the document (as the main title for this page) and the same institution and department name must be used in the naming of the file. (e.g., University of XYZ\_Dept Name.pdf)

## **5.3 Parts of the Proposal**

The proposal is comprised of two parts: a short answer submission and a 1-page narrative (uploaded as a single PDF file within the submission platform).

### **A: Short Answer submission**

**The short answer section of the proposal has some basic contact and department information collected for data purposes as well as the below eight sections about practices within your department submitted via text boxes in the submission platform.**

The following 8 sections list the components to be addressed in the short answer section of the online submission platform. All 8 sections are essential to helping the committee engage in a holistic review of your application. The list below details the formatting for each section. See

section 5.4 for additional detail on how each section will be evaluated by the review committee, including detailed descriptions of components that should be included with each section.

1. DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW (Short description/overview of department, not to exceed 250 words)
2. FACULTY ENGAGEMENT (Bulleted or Numbered list, not to exceed 400 words)
3. MENTORING ACTIVITIES (Combination of bulleted or numbered list and short description, not to exceed 500 words)
4. ADMISSION PRACTICES (Combination of bulleted or numbered list and short description, not to exceed 400 words)
5. ADVISING AND INDUCTION (Combination of bulleted or numbered list and short description, not to exceed 400 words)
6. PROGRESS MONITORING (bulleted or numbered list, not to exceed 400 words)
7. DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS (bulleted or numbered list, not to exceed 200 words)
8. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION EFFORTS (Description not to exceed 500 words)

**B: Narrative (to be submitted as a one-page PDF attachment uploaded on the proposal submission platform)**

The narrative is a one-page summary document that consists of a high-level overview of your department's motivations and actions that have been taken.

The narrative should not be an abstract of Part A of the application, but rather a self-contained summary. It should be written in the third person and must clearly address three separate statements (within the one-page limit):

1. **Motivation:** Description of departmental commitment and why your department is pursuing AGU Bridge partnership – what motivated the department to apply to become a Bridge Partner?
2. **Current Practices:** Description of what the department considers two best examples or cases for unique interventions from Part A that have proved successful. You must select an example from Mentoring Activities and one additional activity from either Progress Monitoring or Advising and Induction.
3. **Continuous Learning:** Description of at least two initiatives that indicate new activities or interventions that are beginning to be implemented or will be implemented soon based on recent/new learnings or trainings undergone by the department faculty. This demonstrates the department's willingness to try new things to improve aspects of graduate education in

their programs.

This narrative is the most important part of the department's application and the first thing a reviewer will read. The narrative is your best chance to grab the attention/interest of the reviewers and convince them of the importance of the work that your department is doing to attract, retain, and graduate students. Applicants should write this portion last after all the above 8 questions from Part A of the application have been answered.

#### **5.4 Review of Proposals**

The AGU Bridge Program Review Committee will review applications. The following considerations are used in evaluating every eligible proposal.

- **Narrative**
  - Motivation to become a Bridge Partner
  - Description of Mentoring Activities and one other current practice selected from one of two categories: Progress Monitoring or Advising and Induction
  - Evidence of continuous learning by the department faculty in advancing graduate education
  
- **Department overview**
  - Description of the department
  
- **Engaged & Committed Faculty**
  - Active faculty participation is defined as a group that includes a minimum of 10-15% of tenured faculty in the geoscience department. This group must include the chair and/or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or equivalent.
  - List should include details of how faculty members will directly contribute to the AGU Bridge Program and support of incoming Bridge students.
  
- **Mentoring Activities**
  - Mentoring and Mentor Training experience
    - List mentor trainings departmental faculty/staff have participated in that enhances their ability to advise and mentor students.
      - Required mentoring trainings for faculty/staff
      - Usage of mentor-mentee compacts
    - Description of efforts to mentor and support students
      - Usage of peer mentoring
      - Required training or mentoring for peer mentors and/or TAs and RAs
    - List supports related to student professional development, social-emotional development, and general non-academic support
  
  - Description and examples of previous mentoring success for students from historically marginalized groups.
  - Outline how your department has or will engage with institutional or external resources to support students from historically marginalized backgrounds recruited via the AGU-BP

- **Admissions Practices and Beliefs**

- Description of the admissions process and how graduate admission decisions are made - what inputs are considered. Examples could include the use of multi-faceted admission criteria that, along with traditional measures of academic preparation, examine a broad range of indicators of a student's potential to conduct original research, and that specifically do not employ the GRE.
- Specify if GRE is used in admissions decisions and how. Please specifically identify which of the below reflects your program's requirements and note any exceptions or additional information.
  - Does not accept: Institution does not accept GRE scores
  - Accepts, not required: Institution does not require GRE scores, but applicants may submit their scores. Identify how scores are then used in admissions decisions.
  - Required, no cutoff: Institution requires GRE scores be submitted, but has no defined minimum score requirements.
  - Required, with cutoff: Institution requires GRE scores be submitted and has set a minimum score requirement for admission.
- Listing of financial support package and health benefits awarded to students.
  - The financial support package should include information about the length of the award and any requirements students must follow to maintain funding. (*# of years that financial support is provided to a Master's student, # of years financial support is provided to doctoral student, conditions to maintain support*).
  - Information detailing the cost of attendance for graduate students at your institution. Any additional resources to reduce financial burdens for students. (Examples: Summer support, relocation assistance, computer and other educational purchases, reduced transit fare programs, open educational resources, etc.)

- **Advising & Induction**

- Description of procedures (evaluation and advising) for accepted students to fulfill any missing prerequisites from undergraduate education (e.g. can students take upper-division undergraduate courses? What does this process look like?).
- Description of how students find an appropriate research advisor.
- Indicate whether the department uses Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for the professional advancement of students (Y/N)
- List activities and procedures for inducting students into graduate student academic and social cultures and into the department.
- Listing of department level housing initiatives, student handbook, etc.

- **Student Progress & Monitoring Procedures**

- List the timeline for student progress milestones and whether IDPs are used to track progress
- How student progress is monitored in the first few semesters, including when in the term this occurs

- Early intervention plans in case student is doing poorly, including tutoring assistance, considerations of add/drop dates, and having students enroll in different level courses.
  - Exam structure for reaching candidacy
    - Comprehensive or qualifying exam (*List requirements for attempting, passing, passing and retaking the exam, and the pass rate for students*)
    - PhD candidacy exam (*List requirements for attempting, passing, passing and retaking the exam, and the pass rate for students*)
  - Long term progress monitoring plans for students
  - Presence of an Ombudsman and procedure on how grievances are handled in the department
  
- **Data and Demographics**
  - Retention rate of all students and of any students from historically marginalized groups from admission to graduation.
  - Reasons why students left the graduate program in the past five years if known. (*receive degree, transfer, obtain MS, full or part-time employment, personal reasons, etc*); *include data if available*
  - Number of students (total and disaggregated (students from historically marginalized communities)):
    - Applicants who applied in the previous year
    - Students who were accepted into the program
    - Students who are currently enrolled
  
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**
  - Describe efforts that your department is undertaking that demonstrate actively working towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
  - If applicable, describe ways in which DEI initiatives are rewarded or incentivized within your department/college/institution.
  - Highlight explicitly what components of departmental efforts in this area are focused on race and ethnicity.
  - *This section should include new information on components of departmental practices and efforts and should not merely repeat information from the above sections.*

## 5.5 Review by AGU Bridge Partner Review Committee

AGU Bridge Partner Review Committee members will review all completed and eligible submissions. Possible outcomes from the review committee are as follows:

1. Approved
  - Full approval: Department designation as an AGU Bridge Partner, invitation to join onboarding event, MOU process commences.
2. Denied
  - Denied proposals will receive notification of status and feedback.

## 6. Expectations of a Partner Department

The following are expectations for continuing as a recognized Bridge Partner:

1. Participate in collaborative discussions with other partner departments and the AGU-BP on practices that improve all programs
2. Engage faculty/staff/students both internally and externally in discussions that improve the access to and culture of graduate education for all students
3. Inform AGU-BP of all offers and student acceptances from the AGU-BP application portal
4. Work with AGU-BP to track student progress and submit progress reports each semester including enrollment status, accomplishments and program milestones (Grades, GPA, or transcripts are not collected).
5. Submit an annual report about impact of Bridge Program on the overall graduate program and/or department.
6. Fulfil requirement of Memorandum of Agreement with AGU including mentoring education.
7. Participate in project evaluations or annual surveys as led by IGEN partner and evaluation team, WestEd (<https://www.wested.org/>) about program satisfaction and impact on department and students.
8. Opportunity for renewal of certification will be completed every 5 years.

More information about the program is available at the [AGU Bridge Program website](#). General inquiries can be directed to Bridge Program staff at [Bridge@agu.org](mailto:Bridge@agu.org)

Applications **must** be submitted via the online proposal submission platform form found [here](#). The submission platform includes space for both part A and B of the proposal. Please ensure that the narrative PDF file name also identifies your institution (e.g University of XYZ\_Department\_Bridge Partner Application). Refer to section 5.2 for additional formatting requirements. Applications are due by 10 September 2024 at 11:59 PM ET.