

Subject: A Letter from the EAPS Undergraduate Community About Diversity and Inclusion

Dear EAPS Community Members,

In light of recent discussions surrounding diversity and inclusion, EAPS undergraduates would like to highlight a component thus far undiscussed: the role of undergraduate education in improving diversity in the geosciences. We believe this omission reflects serious issues in the department's approach towards undergraduate education, which we now seek to address. While we are encouraged by and support ongoing efforts to widen or improve the geosciences "pipeline" at the graduate, postgraduate, and faculty level, we must also acknowledge that these efforts lose their effectiveness if we fail to bring students to the pipeline in the first place. This is demonstrated by the department's continual struggles to attract and retain undergraduates--an issue we've noticed disproportionately affects minorities and students of color. Although these are problems that many departments at and outside of MIT face, there are many steps EAPS can and should take to foster a more inclusive undergraduate learning environment.

EAPS undergraduates take EAPS courses, work on research projects with EAPS faculty, and represent the future of earth, atmospheric and planetary scientists. However, the curriculum and support for undergraduates is highly inconsistent within the department. While individual EAPS courses may be instructive and enjoyable, the undergraduate curriculum as a whole lacks clarity and cohesiveness. Each disciplinary track presents a plethora of elective classes with no clear sequence. In addition, many courses within each track are not offered regularly or on a balanced fall/spring schedule. Not only does this make it difficult to build on previous knowledge and achieve depth of understanding, it is confusing to an undergraduate interested in pursuing a degree with EAPS. Without the guidance of many wonderful faculty members and upperclassmen, many of us might not still be in EAPS. **It is important to recognize that the level of informal mentorship that must be sought and received to be able to navigate an EAPS undergraduate education is an obstacle that disproportionately disfavors minorities and people of color** in a department as non-diverse as ours.

Although we greatly appreciate the dedication shown by individual faculty and administrators towards undergraduate education, it's evident that certain structural challenges require a more cohesive response. **We are calling for the department to promulgate an undergraduate education mission statement and, with the support and engagement of all faculty members and undergraduates, design an inclusive undergraduate experience that will facilitate those goals.** We believe that such a discussion is long overdue and especially pertinent as the department considers its role in promoting diversity and inclusion within the geosciences.

With love but genuine concern,
EAPS Undergraduates

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