



Building on Our Foundations: Fostering Inclusion and Driving Change



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Welcome to the 2023-2024 edition of the GFDL Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee's (DEIAC) Annual Newsletter! Since its inception in 2020, the DEIAC has spearheaded initiatives to create an environment where everyone feels safe, included, and supported, regardless of who they are, what they do, or where they come from. In this issue, you'll find stories summarizing our accomplishments over the past year, along with other highlights from our community.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are foundational to the success and innovation at GFDL. A diverse and inclusive environment fosters creativity and broadens perspectives, enabling us to tackle complex scientific challenges more effectively. It is important that every individual at GFDL feels valued and empowered to contribute their unique talents and insights. The committee's work ensures that GFDL maintains a welcoming atmosphere where everyone can thrive. By championing DEIA, we not only uphold our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment but also enhance the overall quality and impact of our research.

The work of the DEIA Committee has been pivotal in driving positive change within our lab. Through various initiatives, workshops, and community-building events, we have collectively worked together to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace. These efforts have led to increased awareness and understanding of DEIA issues among team members, fostering a culture of respect and collaboration. DEIAC's dedication to this mission has not only improved the working environment here at GFDL but contributed to the professional and personal growth of our team members.

A Message From GFDL Deputy Director, Whit Anderson, Ph.D.

GFDL's core values— *service*, *excellence*, *integrity*, *belonging*, and *DEIA*—are the heart of our work. These values guide our efforts to advance scientific understanding and provide critical insights in climate science. DEIAC continues to play a crucial role in ensuring that these values are upheld, particularly through its focus on diversity and collaboration, which drive excellence in our research. The committee's membership has grown to 17 members for FY 2023-2024, thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of our community. This growth reflects the increasing importance and impact of DEIAC's initiatives. Our fantastic team includes *Andrew Williams*, *Avery Kiihne*, *Carl Wright*, *Gaby Negrete Garcia*, *Ilam Shah*, *Jacob Steinberg*, *Jessica Luo*, *Joseph Clark*, *Katherine Turner*, *Kristen Schepel*, *Mitch Bushuk*, *Mingjing Tong*, *Nicole Schlegel*, *Sammi Schuh*, *Sammy Ghazal*, *Veeshan Narinesingh (Chair)*, *Zack Labe*. Their contributions and leadership have been instrumental in advancing our mission. Thank you to all DEIAC members for your dedication and hard work!





Small Talk Forums Foster Inclusivity and Connection

by Nicole Schlegel



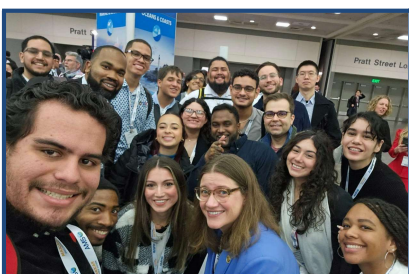
A photo from the February 2024 Small Talk Event

In December 2023, the DEIAC hosted its very first Small Talk Community Forum. The event, organized by Ilam Shah, Mingjing Tong, Nicole Schlegel, and Andrew Williams, kicked off with an introduction to ‘The Art of Small Talk.’ They then shared the benefits of light, friendly conversations at work and offered helpful tips on the “do’s” and “don’ts” of small talk. The discussion also emphasized the importance of being culturally aware and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of others around us. For those who often find it tough to start a casual chat with someone they don’t know well, the committee members provided some practical advice. Participants also had the opportunity to put their small talk skills to the test in breakout sessions, followed by a group discussion. The December community forum was such a success that the DEIAC, with support from the GFDL Employee Association (GFDLEA), organized a similar event in February 2024. During this event, GFDLers created a safe space for small talk discussions and connected with others in the lab to build stronger community ties.

These events have shown how valuable it is to create opportunities for authentic interactions among team members, helping to foster a vibrant and inclusive workplace culture.

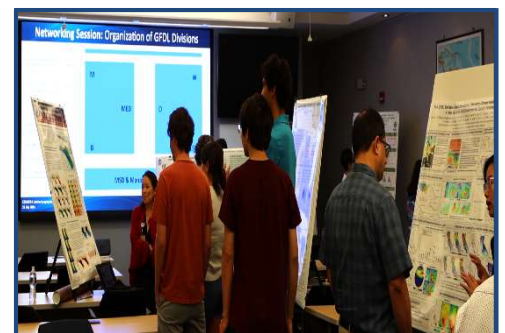
Strengthening Partnerships with NOAA Cooperative Science Centers within Minority Serving Institutions

by Joseph Clark



[NOAA's Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions \(EPP/MSI\)](#) has been training student fellows since 2000, equipping them with the skills to contribute to NOAA's mission and scientific enterprise. Aligning with GFDL's commitment to broadening participation in climate science, the DEIAC has worked diligently to build stronger partnerships with EPP/MSI [Cooperative Science Centers](#) (CSCs). Our efforts have

included visits, lectures, conference meetups, hosting speakers and interns, and more. These initiatives led to GFDL hosting three CSC interns over the summer and organizing a one-day visit where 19 students from the CSC, [NOAA CESSRST II](#), shared their work and interacted with our GFDL community. Through these activities, the DEIAC has fostered meaningful connections and provided valuable opportunities for emerging scientists, furthering our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in climate science.



NOAA CESSRST students and faculty engaged with GFDL professionals at the CESSRST Annual Symposium on July 31.



GFDL Hosts Three Rising Stars from NOAA Cooperative Science Centers

by Veeshan Narinesingh

Stephanie Ortiz Rosario of Cayey, Puerto Rico, is a fellow from the [NOAA Center for Atmospheric Science and Meteorology II](#) (NCAS-M). She is a rising senior at The University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez studying Theoretical Physics and Meteorology. She has been working on extreme tropical precipitation and is co-mentored by Andrew Williams, Tim Merlis, Veeshan Narinesingh, and Gaby Negrete Garcia. Stephanie heard about GFDL when she attended the AMS NOAA Booth meetup earlier in the year. She says that at GFDL, “It’s been really nice working with my mentors, they are very supportive and helped me realize I am not alone in this!”



Left to right: Stephanie Ortiz Rosario, Carlos Ordaz, and Benaya Berhane

Carlos Ordaz of Tijuana, Mexico and San Diego, California, is a Ph.D. fellow from the NOAA Center For Earth System Sciences and Remote Sensing Technologies II (CESSRST). He studies Physics at the City University of New York. Carlos learned about NOAA from an outreach event. His Ph.D. advisor told him, “[if you want] to apply your passion for physics to climate problems, one of the best places to do that is GFDL.” With his GFDL mentor, Nadir Jeevanjee, Carlos is investigating the physical drivers of precipitation distribution changes in a warming climate as part of his Ph.D. thesis.

Benaya Berhane of Laurel, Maryland is an NCAS-M fellow. He is a rising senior at The University of Maryland Baltimore County studying Information Systems. Benaya has been researching heat waves in Eritrea, a country in Africa where his family is from. Benaya is co-mentored by Veeshan Narinesingh, Ryan Kramer, Carl Wright, Tara McQueen, and Levin Carn. Benaya described his experience so far: “It’s been very welcoming, and I’ve felt very supported by not only my mentors but also the broader GFDL community. I enjoy how passionate everybody is about their work, it inspires you to find something that you are passionate about.”

GFDL’s Community, Inclusivity, and Belonging Week

by Katherine Turner

As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, the DEIAC organized a week in May focused on fostering community, inclusivity, and belonging within GFDL. The event was coordinated with OAR’s Behavioral Health and Wellness (BHW) team and centered around a visit from the BHW Officer, Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Candice Karber. LCDR Karber led an all-hands meeting on [“Valuing Inclusivity and Belonging: Cultivating Transparency Across the Workplace Continuum.”](#) Her presentation included recommendations to encourage workplace well-being and strategies to consider inter-generational differences within the workplace.



The GFDL DEIAC updates OAR’s Behavioral Health and Wellness Officer, LCDR Candice Karber, on DEIAC efforts during her visit for Community, Inclusivity, and Belonging Week.

In addition to the all-hands meeting, LCDR Karber met with various interest groups at GFDL, including LGBTQ+, people of color, and early career professionals, as well as Front Office Leadership, to discuss potential ways to improve well-being at GFDL. The week concluded with a mindfulness meditation session led by Sammy Ghazal. We greatly appreciate LCDR Karber’s willingness to come to GFDL and share insights and resources to help make GFDL a better place to work. We look forward to continued wellness collaborations with the BHW team.



Celebrating Our Progress: DEIAC Highlights and Achievements 2023-2024

by Joseph Clark, Zachary Labe, and Veeshan Narinesingh

As we look back on the past year, the GFDL Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee (DEIAC) is proud to share our significant strides in fostering a more inclusive and engaging community. Our dedicated efforts have spanned various initiatives, from comprehensive onboarding improvements to impactful community outreach and enriching internship experiences. Below are some key highlights and achievements from 2023-2024.

2023-2024 Outreach Engagements

- 9/11/23: Community lecture at Hershey Horticulture Society on climate change impacts in Central Pennsylvania
- 9/25/23: Purdue University Earth and Planetary Science Career Panel
- 10/12/23: Presentation about Science Career Pathways to students from the CUNY Graduate Center's Llewellyn Fellowship for Minorities
- 11/7 & 28/23: Guest Lecture for Graduate Environmental Science Course at NOAA Cooperative Science Center Partner, CUNY Graduate Center
- 11/16-17/23: Visit to NOAA Cooperative Science Centers at HBCU Hampton University
- 11/18/23: Public lecture at NJ State Museum in Trenton on an intro to climate change impacts in New Jersey
- 12/6/2: Presentation on science careers/grad school at Mercer County Community College
- 1/30-31/24: GFDL and NOAA Cooperative Science Center Student Meetups at NOAA's AMS Booth
- 2/3/24: Monmouth Junction Elementary School Science Fair
- 2/15/24: Cornell University Earth and Atmospheric Science Career Panel
- 3/25/24: Public workshop on communicating science and science careers at Temple University
- 3/27/24: NOAA Cooperative Science Center Students, "All About the EPP Forum" Panel
- 4/26/24: GFDLEA Take Your Child to Work Day
- 5/9/24: Bronx Scientific Research Partnership program for High School students, Keynote Speakers
- 5/18-19/24: Booth at NJ Ocean Fun Days
- 5/31/24: Round table discussion with NOAA Cooperative Science Center Faculty at Hampton University, "Cultivating a Diverse Climate Modeling Workforce"
- 6/12/24: Presentation at OAR SRC on GFDL engagements with Cooperative Science Centers and career pathways
- 7/8/24: Extreme Heat Python Tutorial for high school students in City College of New York's CREST-HIRES program
- 7/31/24: CESSRST II Student Visit to GFDL

Enhancing the Onboarding Experience

To improve the GFDL onboarding process, the DEIAC collaborated with GFDL's Onboarding Committee and Administrative Services to revamp the New Team Member Orientation. One significant enhancement is the inclusion of seasoned team members, including leadership, in the orientation to share valuable tips on settling in and thriving at GFDL. These perspectives provide new hires with valuable insights and a realistic understanding of their new roles. Additionally, the team has begun developing a host orientation aimed at promoting high-quality mentorship practices.

Building a Dynamic Internship Program

This summer, GFDL reinforced its commitment to making interns feel valued and welcomed while providing them with career-building opportunities. DEIAC members and the GFDL community organized a variety of events for interns, including biweekly lunches ("chat-and-chews"), workshops, and a graduate school application panel. Interns also participated in a "networking scavenger hunt," where they matched facts to GFDL team members. Feedback from this summer's interns will be used to further enhance the internship experience at GFDL in the future.

Engaging the GFDL Community Through Open Meetings

Following a suggestion from a member of the GFDL community, the DEIAC initiated open meetings for non-DEIAC members to stay informed about DEIAC initiatives and share their concerns and suggestions. The first open meeting for all GFDL community members was held in February 2024. This open dialogue led to the idea of hosting the NOAA Cooperative Science Center Student Visit, further fostering community engagement and collaboration.





Team Member Spotlights

by Ilam Shah



*Gabriela Negrete García (she/her)
Physical Scientist - Federal*

Joining DEIAC as a new employee has allowed me to connect with a diverse and welcoming group of kind, driven colleagues from various GFDL divisions. This experience has given me the chance to engage with others who are passionately dedicated to enhancing our lab's culture. The DEIAC has enriched my experience and aided my integration into the GFDL community.



*Carl Wright (he/him)
Computer Operator - Federal*

My time in the GFDL DEIAC has been profoundly impactful, not only for me but also for the people I work with. It has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had since joining the Lab. It has given me a new perspective on GFDL, especially considering the limited representation of people of color - which this committee is actively working to change. I look forward to the continued progress this committee will make here.



*Tom Knutson (he/him)
W Division Leader - Federal*

It has been great to see W Division's Mingjing Tong active in the DEIAC. Through her leadership in initiatives like the Small Talk community forums, she and the committee have created valuable opportunities for connection within the Lab. DEIAC has advanced equity, inclusivity, and accessibility at GFDL, which has helped foster a culture of collaboration and respect.



*Nicole Zenes (she/her)
Scientific Programmer - Federal*

DEIAC's fostering of a strong sense of community ensures that everyone is accepted and valued for who they are, not just for what they contribute to their work. I particularly enjoyed participating in the "Take Your Child To Work Day" career path discussion, where we had the opportunity to talk about what we do here at GFDL.



Embracing Our Core Values: Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Accessibility

At GFDL, diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility are not just principles we uphold—they are integral to our core values. These principles govern our code of conduct and guide our actions and goals, ensuring that every member of our community feels valued and respected.

GFDL's mission is to be a world leader in developing comprehensive, integrated, and unified models of the Earth system, encompassing the atmosphere, oceans, land, biosphere, cryosphere, and ecosystems. We apply these models for seamless understanding, predictions, and projections of the Earth system, from hours to decades and from global to regional scales, accounting for both natural variations and forced changes.

Achieving this mission requires innovation, strong collaborations, and teamwork. Innovation flourishes in an environment where diverse perspectives, experiences, opinions, and backgrounds are included, welcomed, respected, and valued. GFDL is committed to fostering a vibrant, diverse, inclusive, interactive, accessible, and equitable community to fulfill NOAA's mission objectives and enhance leadership in science, service, and stewardship.

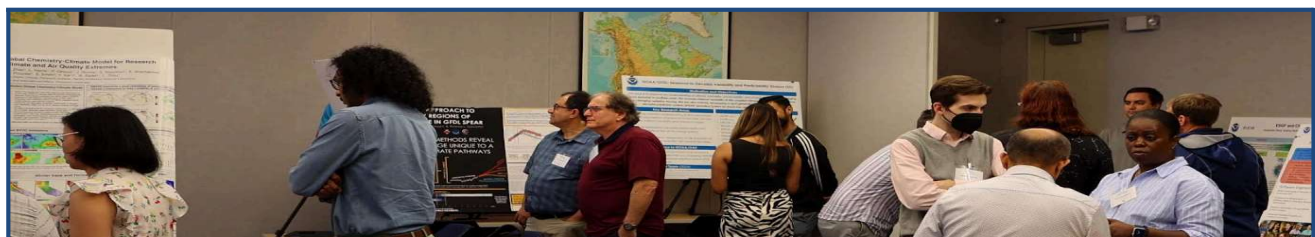
By embracing these core values, we not only advance our scientific endeavors but also create a supportive and dynamic workplace where everyone can thrive.



Highlights from the December and February
Small Talk Community Forums

RESOURCES, SUPPORT, AND CALL TO ACTION

- **Host an EPP/MSI Intern or Collaborate with Faculty:** If you are a Federal employee at GFDL interested in hosting an EPP/MSI intern or collaborating with faculty, please add your information [here](#) to connect!
- **One-on-One Consultations with Lieutenant Commander Karber:** LCDR Karber is available for confidential, one-on-one consultations. Schedule your session [here](#). Additionally, the [OAR BHW page](#) offers a variety of resources on workplace wellness. The slides from LCDR Karber's visit can be found [here](#).
- **Next DEIAC Open Meeting:** Keep an eye out for our Fall 2024 meeting. This is your chance to voice any DEIAC-related concerns or suggestions.
- **Join the Team or Share Ideas:** Interested in joining the DEIAC team or have ideas to share? Reach out to us at oar.gfdl.deia.cmte@noaa.gov.



A photo from the science networking session during the NOAA CESSRST student visit to GFDL on July 31st.