



Foster Equity-Centered Research Teams & Community Engagement

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT(S) THIS INITIATIVE SUPPORTS

- 7 - Sustainability Literacy
- **10 - Sustainability Research Funding**

INITIATIVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE CHARGE

- **Eliminate Emissions:** By incorporating ethical guidelines for research that prioritize equity and justice principles, the University is taking a proactive step in reducing potential negative social and environmental impacts that may result from research activities. By training researchers to consider these principles, we can reduce unintentional harm and mitigate emissions associated with unethical practices.
- **Build Community:** This is the foundation of the initiative as it aims to uphold equity and inclusion by actively engaging our surrounding communities and the communities impacted by our work, fostering collaboration and input from diverse perspectives.
- **Be Actionable:** The establishment of transparent and enforceable policies for ethical research aligns with the need for actionable and enforceable sustainability and climate action initiatives. By setting clear expectations and providing training, the University ensures that ethical considerations are integrated into research operations effectively, making this initiative actionable.
- **Be Data Informed:** This initiative promotes data-informed decision-making by emphasizing the importance of ethical guidelines in research. By collecting data on ethical considerations and their impact on research outcomes, the University can assess and improve its ethical research practices over time, ensuring that its research activities are data informed.
- **Inspire Adaptive Management:** This initiative encourages adaptive management by acknowledging that ethical research practices may need adjustments over time. By offering ongoing training, enhancing the ethics review board, and developing resources for researchers, the University ensures that it can adapt to evolving equity and justice considerations in research practices.
- **Demonstrate Leadership:** By mainstreaming equity and justice in research practices, the University solidifies its position as a leader not only in sustainability and climate action but also in ethical research. Demonstrating a commitment to ethical research practices aligns with the University's broader leadership role in promoting sustainability, equity, and justice across its research, teaching, and community engagement efforts.

INITIATIVE DETAILS

Initiative Summary

This initiative proposes to integrate equity and justice into the core of University of Arizona's research efforts, particularly in climate change and sustainability studies, acknowledging both its pivotal role and ethical responsibility as a leading institution. It will also promote equitable research funding allocation for climate change and sustainability research to address current disparities and support projects focused on equity and justice. By embedding these principles, the university aims to foster a research environment that celebrates diversity, dismantles barriers to participation, and prioritizes ethical considerations in addressing global challenges. Actionable items include:

- Establish and maintain ethical research practices that integrate equity and justice principles into guidelines and training for climate change and sustainability research.
- Promote equitable allocation of research funding by creating dedicated grants and implementing transparent review processes that prioritize projects focusing on equity and justice.
- Foster inclusive research teams through inclusive recruitment, mentorship programs, and community engagement initiatives, ensuring diverse participation and meaningful collaboration.

Proposed Initiative & Background

This initiative recognizes the crucial significance of embedding equity and justice within the research functions of the University of Arizona, particularly within the realm of climate change and sustainability research. The University of Arizona, as a leading institution in climate change and sustainability studies, has a unique opportunity and responsibility to champion these principles.

In this context, we acknowledge that our research endeavors not only contribute to advancing knowledge and innovation but also play a pivotal role in addressing the pressing challenges posed by climate change. Moreover, our location in the southwestern United States places us in a region with distinct socio-environmental vulnerabilities, making it imperative that our research approach reflects our commitment to equity and justice.

By weaving equity and justice into the very fabric of our research practices, we aim to foster an academic environment where diversity is celebrated, and barriers to equitable participation are dismantled. Our research outcomes will be guided by ethical considerations, contributing meaningfully to the well-being of all individuals and communities impacted by climate change. Through this initiative, the University of Arizona seeks to empower researchers to take a leadership role in combating climate change (see initiative RE 4, Build Interdisciplinary Approach to Climate-Engaged Research) while upholding the principles of fairness and social justice, thereby exemplifying its dedication to sustainability and equity in all aspects of its mission.

1. Ethical Research Practices
 - **Action:**

- Establish ethical practices for climate change and sustainability research that uphold equity and justice principles.
- **Strategies:**
 - Collaborate with Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewers and staff, ethicists, social scientists, and community leaders to develop and regularly update research ethics guidelines specifically tailored to climate change and sustainability research.
 - Offer ongoing training to researchers and research administrators on ethical considerations in research in climate change and sustainability research, with a focus on integrating equity and justice principles.
- **Supporting Activities:**
 - Strengthen the IRB, which is responsible for ensuring research aligns with ethical principles, to include a focus on equity and justice considerations.
 - Develop resources and case studies to help researchers navigate ethical challenges in research, particularly those related to equity and justice.
 - Implement a system for metrics, monitoring, and evaluation to track the integration of equity and justice principles in climate change and sustainability research.

2. Equitable Research Funding Allocation:

- **Action:**
 - Promote equitable research funding allocation for climate change and sustainability research to address current disparities and support projects focused on equity and justice.
- **Strategies:**
 - Create specific grants and funding dedicated to supporting climate change and sustainability research projects that prioritize equity and justice.
 - Implement transparent and equitable review processes for grant applications and research proposals incentivizing the inclusion of projects that emphasize equity and justice considerations.
 - Create one or more positions within Sponsored Projects Services (SPS) that are dedicated to grant applications and research proposals that emphasize equity and justice.
- **Supporting Activities:**
 - Develop detailed grant guidelines for grant-seekers that highlight the importance of addressing equity and justice in research proposals, encouraging researchers to incorporate these principles into their projects.
 - Offer training and resources to University of Arizona grant writers, reviewers, and research administrators to help them recognize, value, and assess diverse research methodologies that contribute to equitable and just outcomes, focusing on both internal and external (e.g., federal) grant processes.

3. Foster Equity-Centered Research Teams:

- **Action:**

- Promote diversity and inclusion within research teams through inclusive recruitment practices, mentorship programs, and community engagement. Support with activities such as diversity training, mechanisms to address discrimination and bias, and capacity-building for community partners, fostering an inclusive and equitable research environment.
- **Strategies:**
 - Implement inclusive recruitment practices that actively seek researchers and collaborators from underrepresented backgrounds and reduce barriers to participation.
 - Develop mentorship and support programs for early-career researchers, particularly those from marginalized groups. This will allow for support systems among researchers and avoid tokenization.
 - Create avenues for community members to participate in research design, data collection, and decision-making.
 - Develop community-based research initiatives that directly address local equity and justice concerns.
- **Supporting Activities:**
 - Conduct diversity training for research team leaders and faculty to foster an inclusive and respectful research environment. Ensure that diversity training is an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. Incorporate modules that address unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive leadership.
 - Establish a clear and anonymous mechanism for addressing discrimination and bias in research teams and activities.
 - Organize capacity-building workshops for community partners to enhance their engagement in research activities.
 - Establish regular advisory meetings with community partners to guide research direction and ensure research findings are accessible and relevant. This will include training researchers in public outreach/science translation.
 - Provide media training and science translation and outreach services to research teams.

Mainstreaming equity and justice in the University of Arizona’s research practice is highly feasible, with examples from several other universities. However, several implementation challenges can be anticipated including resistance to change, resource allocation, ensuring consistency, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Overcoming resistance to change in established research practices may pose a challenge, requiring effective communication and awareness campaigns. Allocating resources for training programs, community engagement initiatives, and establishing an ethics review board may face budget constraints and require strategic resource management. Ensuring consistent implementation of equity and justice principles across diverse research projects may be challenging and require ongoing monitoring and support. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration between academic departments and research units may face institutional barriers that must be addressed for successful integration. By addressing these challenges proactively and leveraging existing resources, the implementation of this initiative focused on mainstreaming equity and justice in the university’s research practice can be successfully achieved.

While research projects on climate change/sustainability are often referenced above, this initiative should extend to all university research that has equity and justice implications. It does not intend to (inequitably) burden particular groups of researchers/research projects with additional reporting/justification needs (i.e., only those engaged in climate change/sustainability-related research).

Data Analyses to Support Initiative

The analysis required to mainstream equity and justice in university research practices may take various forms, and universities worldwide are increasingly recognizing the need to conduct such assessments to foster more inclusive and equitable research environments. To support the successful implementation of the initiative at the University of Arizona, specific analyses are needed to assess and address various aspects of equity and justice in climate change and sustainability research practices. These analyses should encompass:

Equity Assessment for Research Practices: Conduct a comprehensive equity assessment of existing research practices within the university, in the extension of current data collection efforts on faculty conducted by Faculty Affairs. This assessment should include an examination of the demographics of researchers, disparities in funding allocation, any potential biases in research methodologies, and potential barriers to enhancing equity. Data sources for this assessment can include existing institutional demographic data, research funding records, and surveys or interviews with researchers. Evaluation benchmarks can be informed by the research evaluation metrics recommended below. UC Berkley and the University of Michigan are examples of universities that have conducted assessments of diversity, equity, and inclusion in research and scholarship. UC Berkeley has implemented various initiatives (e.g., “Thriving Initiatives”) to address diversity and inclusion in research. The campus regularly conducts assessments and publishes reports on faculty diversity and climate. University of Michigan’s comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan includes efforts to enhance diversity in research and address disparities.

Community Feedback Analysis: Gather and analyze feedback from the university community, particularly marginalized and underrepresented groups, to understand their perceptions of equity and justice in research practices. This analysis should identify community concerns, priorities, and initiatives for improvement. Data sources for this analysis can include surveys, focus groups, and community engagement sessions.

Research Evaluation Metrics: Develop specific metrics and evaluation criteria to assess the extent to which climate change and sustainability research align with equity and justice principles. This includes evaluating research project proposals, ongoing research activities, and the outcomes of research projects. There is also an opportunity to document who benefits from these research projects to assess the social/societal benefits. Metrics should be designed to measure the integration of equity and justice considerations in research. Data sources for this analysis include research project documentation, progress reports, and evaluation reports.

Comparative Data: Collect comparative data to benchmark the university’s progress in integrating equity and justice principles in research practices. This may involve comparing the university’s practices to those of peer institutions or establishing institutional standards for ethical and equitable research. Data sources for this analysis can include reports from peer institutions, industry standards, and best practices in research ethics.

Resource Allocation Analysis: Analyze the allocation of resources, including research funding and access to research opportunities, to identify disparities and potential barriers that hinder equitable participation in climate change and sustainability research. Data sources for this analysis include financial records, grant allocation data, and interviews with research administrators.

Training and Awareness Assessment: Evaluate the effectiveness of the training programs and resources provided to researchers and research administrators regarding ethical and equitable research practices. Assess the awareness and understanding of equity and justice principles among the university's research community. Data sources for this analysis can include training attendance records, pre- and post-training surveys, and feedback from training participants.

Ethics Review Board Impact Assessment: Assess the impact and effectiveness of the current ethics review board in promoting equity and justice in research practices. Evaluate its role in ensuring that research aligns with ethical principles, especially those related to equity and justice. Data sources for this analysis include the board's review records, feedback from researchers, and board meeting minutes.

By conducting the suggested specific analyses, the University can gather essential data to inform the development, implementation, and monitoring of the recommended ethical and equitable framework for climate change and sustainability research. These analyses will provide a foundation for evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement in research practices aligned with equity and justice principles.

Resource Requirements & Return on Investment

Resource Requirements

- Personnel for program development, implementation, and monitoring
- Training and education for researchers and IRB personnel
- Data collection and evaluation costs
- Communication and outreach costs
- Technology and software costs
- Travel and meeting costs

Return on Investment

- The return on investment of this initiative is unclear due to the highly qualitative nature of its proposed activities, however, it is unlikely that this initiative will result in a direct return on any investments made.

Potential Funding Sources

- **University Research Grants:** Allocate internal research funding to support the implementation of ethical research practices and equitable research funding allocation. This funding can be sourced from research budgets or sustainability initiatives.

- **External Grants:** Seek external grants from government agencies, private foundations, and organizations that prioritize equity, justice, and sustainability in research. These grants can support the university's efforts to promote ethical research practices and equitable research funding allocation.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with external partners, including nonprofit organizations and community groups focused on equity and justice in research, to access additional resources and funding opportunities. Partnering with organizations aligned with these principles can provide financial support and expertise.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Integrate funding for ethical research practices and equitable research funding allocation into the university's broader sustainability initiatives and action plans. This can ensure that sustainability-related budgets are utilized to support these efforts.
- **Endowments and Donor Contributions:** Explore the possibility of creating endowments or seeking donor contributions specifically dedicated to promoting equity and justice in research. Engage with philanthropic individuals or organizations that share these values.
- **Grant Administration Fees:** Consider allocating a portion of grant administration fees, typically associated with externally funded research projects, to support the ongoing implementation of ethical research practices and equitable research funding allocation.

Accountable Division(s) & Department(s)

- Research, Innovation, & Impact
- Office of Diversity & Inclusion
- Cooperative Extension

Partners & Collaborators

- Arizona Institute for Resilience
- Human Subjects/Institutional Review Board
- Department of Sociology (or relevant social sciences department)
- Government & Community Relations
- Sponsored Projects
- University development and philanthropy
- Institutional Review Board
- Office of Sustainability

Implementation

Length of Time to Implement

- Less than one year
- **One to five years**
- More than five years

Difficulty of Implementation

- Low
- Medium
- High
- Extremely High

Relative Timing

- Begin within two years
- Begin in three to five years
- Begin in six years or later

Metrics for Success

- Demographic Surveys: Conduct surveys of research teams and activities at the University of Arizona.
- Community Needs Assessments: Measure the impact of research on surrounding communities through community needs assessments.
- Reporting: Research teams must complete and submit demographic data of their teams and the communities they support.
- Oversight Committee: A designated committee will oversee the collection and review of demographic and impact data.