

Isabel Carrera Zamanillo

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Assistant Director at the Stanford School of Earth, Energy, and Environmental Sciences



What is your current occupation?

Role: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Assistant Director at the Stanford School of Earth, Energy, and Environmental Sciences.

Responsibilities:

- Create strategies, implement innovative solutions to promote justice, equity, inclusion and diversity principles in different working communities in the School (including staff, students, faculty, and postdocs)
- Collaborate with senior leaders and managers across Stanford University, partner with groups within and outside Stanford University to identify and advance new efforts to remove systemic barriers into higher education.
- Design workshops and events to increase awareness of issues related to power and privilege, co-design outreach strategies with departments and communications staff.
- Oversee and implement SURGE Scholars program and manage day-to-day activities of program, including budget, publicity, recruitment, applications, faculty match, alumni network, and program evaluation and reporting.
- Update and create DEI content for website, brochures, recruitment and retention materials to distribute through various Stanford Earth DEI communications channels, including email list and social media.
- Assist Director with grant management administration and with monitoring DEI office budget and expense accounting.

What is your educational background?

- Ph.D. Environmental Sciences, University of Washington (School of Forestry & Environmental Sciences)
- Certificate in Science, Technology & Society Studies, University of Washington
- M.S. Biological Sciences – Taxonomy & Systematics, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Ciencias (last semester in Johns Hopkins University, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Department of History of Science and Technology)
- B.S. Biology, major in Molecular and Cell Biology, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Ciencias
- Professional training in community-based participatory action research, ethnographic research, science education, natural illustration, museum collections, GIS, JEDI facilitation techniques
- Past jobs: Data mining specialist, surgeon assistant, paralegal, international trade, librarian

A key message for students is that the geoscience workforce is dynamic, and boundaries between sectors and occupations are fluid. How has this been true in your career?

My professional path has been far from straight. If I compare what I thought I will be doing at this age when I was in high school versus my current reality, I would not have guessed I will end up working in an area where I can apply all the skills I developed from my past experiences. Initially, part of my decisions was driven by medical needs, since I suffer a chronic condition that took a while to be controlled. Not having a real chance to work in lab environments or doing fieldwork, forced me to explore other areas including philosophy. That first bifurcation allowed me to discover new paths and interests, which took me to travel across Mexico and the United States. Once I migrated to the United States, personal needs forced me to look for other jobs, although I combined them with volunteer opportunities in natural history museums and creating culturally responsive education opportunities for Latinx families. Other changes in my personal life pushed me to look for a doctorate, but I was looking for a program where I could incorporate all that I have done and learn more social sciences skills. That is when I relocated to Seattle, WA to start a doctorate program. Thanks to the volunteer work on social justice and some bad experiences as a graduate student, I became a strong JEDI activist in the College of the Environment, and although I had to accelerate my graduation, I found opportunities to apply all that I learned and lived to address systemic inequities in higher education through DEI-related jobs. My academic background allows me to continue collaborating with community organizations on environmental justice projects, while enabling me to understand better the kind of discussions within the geosciences, and therefore, work on promoting a positive change. In other words, the key is to be flexible and open to opportunities where learned skills can be applied. There are no perfect jobs where we do exactly (and only) what we were trained to do; all jobs require some effort and an adaptive spirit.

Where do you see your sector moving in future years? How would you advise students to prepare to be competitive job applicants and successful employees?

In general, the geosciences are becoming a more interdisciplinary sector, especially when trying to make science relevant and address problems that different local communities face. In the terms of environmental and climate justice, due to increasing awareness on social justice topics and the more common negative impacts of climate change, is becoming an important area of study, that requires an interdisciplinary background. A great way to go is to find as many opportunities as possible to practice different sets of skills; apply to internships, find opportunities to join a research project and work in the lab or field; when possible, participate in volunteering experiences. The best way to find these opportunities and have better chances to be selected is by networking.

What is the role of networking in your sector? Do you have advice for a student who is just beginning to build their network? What is the best way for students to get their foot in the door?

As I mentioned, networking is crucial not only in the geosciences but in any sector. The idea is to connect with different communities and people. For example, professional organizations provide an excellent platform to meet other students and professionals in a sector. Many of them organize annual conferences where students can present their research and discover more opportunities. Another great opportunity to expand your network and increase your level of experience is through internships. Federal agencies such as NASA and NOAA offer some summer and year-round internship programs. In addition, the National Science Foundation supports [Research Experiences for Undergraduates](#) (REU) in collaboration with different universities and institutes across the country.

What does a “typical” day of work look like for you?

Every day is different, but I usually have to answer questions via email, attend meetings, read articles and continue educating myself. Somedays, I connect via email with other colleagues, work designing learning material, or organize events or workshops. In summer, I coordinate an internship program.

What is the best part of your job?

Learning new things to be updated and connecting with different people to find ways to promote institutional change.

Do you have any other comments or advice for students looking to enter your sector of the geoscience workforce?

Be brave and explore different areas of knowledge. It is hard to know what we really like or dislike if we are only exposed to limited frameworks and perspectives. But overall be open to learn from all experiences.

Connect:

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<https://www.agclimate.net/2021/08/18/check-it-out-spanish-language-reports-on-climate-impacts-in-washington/>