

21 December 2014

Dear Ms. Jessup:

On behalf of the American Geosciences Institute (AGI), a federation of 50 geoscience societies, I am writing to request that Person Question No. 12 - Undergraduate Field of Degree continue to be incorporated into future American Community Survey questionnaires.

Though Question 12 has been classified as a low-benefit, low-cost question overall for the ACS, we believe that for the agencies in the science community and their external partners, this question is the critical cornerstone to understand the technical workforce in the United States, and thus is a high-benefit question. One of the long-standing roles of AGI has been the measurement, monitoring, and promotion of a robust domestic geoscience workforce in support of the economic and security needs of the United States. AGI accomplishes this task in coordination with federal agencies, especially the National Science Foundation, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, along with other scientific societies, and members of our community. Not only do our federal partners rely on the results of the ACS, but so do all of our non-governmental partners such as universities, societies, and industry, as it provides a critical whole-population insight and facilitates the ability for us to understand the relationship in the labor market between various science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines. All of these disciplines form an ecosystem in support of economic development in the U.S., and often trends that affect one science field reverberate across all of the fields.

Understanding the dynamic of the geoscience workforce, and its relationship to and distribution within, the entire U.S. population allows AGI to inform college and university programs, employers, and science agencies about key dynamics in human capital to allow for them to appropriately plan their programs and activities. The loss of a key delimiter of our community in such a critical national data collection effort will greatly impede our mission and will likely lead to either suboptimal actions by the science community in human capital investment or the shifting of the cost of collecting the required data to our federal data partners, such as the National Science Foundation.

I encourage the review subcommittee to retain Question 12 in its current form, especially as it is classified as a low-cost question, but we feel the impact is substantial to science agencies and their partners in ensuring the utility of this critical source of national data.

If you have any questions regarding this comment, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,



Christopher M. Keane, Ph.D.
Director, Communications and Technology
keane@americangeosciences.org