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Students' exploring and refining their equity ethic within the Access Network¹

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The Access Network is an organization that supports vibrant interactions among students and faculty who advocate for equity work in the physical sciences across nine university-based sites. While each site differs in their implementations, they share a commitment to five core principles: 1) fostering supportive learning communities, 2) engaging students in authentic science, 3) developing students' professional skills, 4) empowering students to take ownership of their education, and 5) increasing diversity and equity in the physical sciences. The first half of this presentation will share our network's goals and activities. The second half of this talk will use McGee and Bentley's framework of "equity ethic" (EE) to understand how Access student leaders adopt and refine a commitment to equity and social justice work within the physical sciences. In McGee and Bentley's study of STEM students of color, they define EE as students' sense of altruism and collectivism within and outside of their communities. Through interviews with student leaders, we model components of students' EEs and how their EEs are influenced by their participation in Access. Student accounts illustrate that they are invested in improving equity within their disciplinary communities and see progress toward these goals as an important measure of success. Our findings highlight how students are already infusing an EE into their professional physics activities. This research suggests that student leaders benefit from having opportunities to articulate and refine critiques of disciplinary culture, and connect their EE to their professional practices. Students' accounts suggest that this development occurs in conversation with other equity leaders around issues of social justice.

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