Safety Plan for Students Completing Field & Laboratory Work

For this deliverable, Pods were asked to consider spaces in your organization as well as in the broader geosciences that have barriers to access for people of color. Much of the attention on this topic has been regarding field work but this also applies to spaces closer to home, e.g. a Black student walking home late from lab work may be more likely to be stopped and questioned by police. Consider that Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other people of color will face different challenges from one another.

To formulate a plan and recommendations for next work, the following were suggested discussion questions:

- Where is your work done? Are these spaces uncomfortable or unsafe for people of color?
- What training does your organization require or offer? How often? Do you find this training effective? What would you introduce to make it more effective?

Rider University Code of Conduct

Rider University policies for students and employees apply on campus as well as when engaged in off-campus research and field work. Particularly relevant sections of the policies are listed below:

- Student Code of Social Conduct
- Alcohol Policy
- University Anti-Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

When visiting off-campus locations, faculty, staff, and students also should abide by local policies and regulations.

Process for reporting violations of Rider University policies:

- Student Complaint Procedures are outlined at this link
- Bias Incidents can be reported online at this link
Draft Policies or Procedures for Relevant Faculty or Departments to Consider:

1. Supervisors or instructors should create an official document that includes the activities students will be engaged in and specific students involved, if appropriate, to share ahead of time with public safety or the field site managers. Give students involved a copy as well. Students will also carry a “permit” of some sort on Rider University letterhead with the name, signature, and contact information of the supervising faculty member and Public Safety.

2. Students should complete a liability waiver (Assumption of Risk form) for any off-campus research activities. Supervising faculty should apply for permits to conduct field work in lands where one is required (e.g. Mercer county parks) and all people involved in the field work should have access to a copy of the awarded permit.

3. Students working in labs should do so while supervising faculty are also present (or at least in the building), and if not possible, then a plan should be developed to ensure safety.

4. Students and faculty should collaborate in open spaces. Particularly when a faculty member is working with just one student, doors to labs should be open when possible or have windows in those doors that allow one to view inside the lab.

5. For fieldwork, faculty and students should discuss health concerns in advance, including allergies, the possibilities of health risks such as Lyme disease, and bring along a basic first aid kit. Students and faculty should also have a discussion about any concerns that the students might have in participating in the field work and how to interact with the public if that is a possibility. Discuss with students the field or lab site options for their work and their comfort level in working at any of their sites. When more than one option is available, consider the student’s preferences in deciding locations.

6. Supervising faculty should discuss with BIPOC and students in other relevant demographics the risks of harassment or misconduct from people they may encounter in their field work, strategies to handle and respond to such unwanted interactions, and options to file complaints when such encounters do occur. Proper procedure on how to file a complaint will be provided via the Rider incident response protocol.

7. Supervising faculty should have a conversation with all students on the risks, which may be higher for certain demographics, and preparations to minimize risk. All students should be made aware of bystander intervention techniques and reporting procedures for incidents. Implementing this procedure will require some form of training for faculty and students.

8. Students should work in the field in groups/pairs whenever possible. If/when not possible, a plan should be developed to ensure safety of the student.

9. Students in the field should have an “out,” including access to transportation and communication devices whenever possible. Students should have the means to contact help if needed, and be provided with the means to do so (e.g., relevant contact information, communication devices if personal phones are not available).

10. Provide to students a First aid kit & backpack with necessary supplies for their field work.
11. Keep an updated first aid kit in labs in a visible location (or signage directing people to its location) and orient student workers to resources available in the lab space.
12. Provide to BIPOC students and faculty some alternate contact people when/if supervisors or colleagues dismiss their concerns about unsafe situations.

13. We encourage all faculty to consider this suggested procedures list and additional resources noted when making decisions about having students perform field work.

* This draft will require additional input from colleagues beyond our Pod before it can be finalized.

**Recommendations:**
- Departments and faculty who require field and lab work from students in courses and/or research projects should review their protocols to prepare students for the work involved, and their policies/procedures about how such work can be done.
- These same departments should investigate possible training options for handling difficult situations and emergencies.
- While Rider faculty typically do not send students into remote field locations, BIPOC and students of other relevant demographics are known to experience harassment and misconduct from people they encounter in well populated areas. As such, it is recommended that faculty review how to handle such situations and also learn how to guide their students to be prepared. Engaging students who are typically less susceptible to these situations may empower them to get involved effectively when a colleague student encounters trouble. Some resources that might be helpful: This should be included in the above effort to identify possible training opportunities. Some resources identified in this program include:
  - [https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html](https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html)