Safety Plan: Expectations for our Pod Community

A. Purpose of this Document

The Rutgers URGE Pod is dedicated to creating an inclusive and antiracist environment that fosters academic growth and ensures the physical and emotional safety of our members and collaborators. Pod members should use this document to define expectations in their respective labs groups. Pod members who already have a Safety Plan established for their lab are encouraged to revise their safety plan as needed to align with the expectations set forth here.

B. Scope of this Document

This document is supplemental to the existing ethical codes and rules identified in Rutgers University’s Code of Ethics, Code of Student Conduct, Title IX Policy, and Policy Prohibiting Discrimination and Harassment.

The policies outlined here apply at all places and times where you are working in a capacity related to the lab, including but not limited to conferences, travel, workshops, field sites, and social work functions.

This is a living document. It is intended to adapt and change to address the concerns of present and future Pod members as they arise. Pod members are invited to voice any concerns about their experience in their lab or suggestions about how to improve this document whenever necessary.

C. Code of Conduct

1. Expectations

Making expectations for community behavior explicit and documented has been shown to decrease negative experiences and outcomes for trainees (Nelson et al. 2017). We acknowledge that power imbalances exist and their abuses corrode a positive community culture. Therefore, Pod members at all levels commit to supporting their peers and junior members.

- *Pod community expectations.* We are all responsible for creating and maintaining our community and supporting one another, including:

○ Treating all members and collaborators (including volunteers, industry partners, and project staff) with respect.
○ Not assuming someone’s pronouns, gender, etc. If unsure, respectfully ask. Additionally, adding your own pronouns at the end of email signatures, zoom names, etc. to promote inclusivity.
○ Celebrating successes, validating disappointments.
○ Listening actively -- respect others when they are talking.
○ Being conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words (even on a video call!)
○ Speaking from your own experience instead of generalizing.
○ “Trusting intent; owning impact.” Trusting that people’s intentions are usually good; conversely, own up to the impacts of your words or actions even if you didn’t intend them to be hurtful.
○ Being collaborative and constructive -- do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks.
○ Recognizing that we all have blind spots. Be aware that others may experience a given situation differently, and may be sensitive to issues that you are not.
○ Participating to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
○ Actively looking out for the physical and emotional wellbeing of others in the Pod community. Intervene if you can safely do so. (See section E: Reporting Violations)

● Community expectations in the time of COVID. During this difficult time, try to:
  ○ Be patient with yourself and others.
  ○ Prioritize wellbeing over productivity; recognize that we’re not working from home, we’re stuck at home in a crisis and trying to work.
  ○ Communicate with at least one member of the lab at least once a week.

● Supervisor expectations. You can expect that your supervisor will:
  ○ Clearly communicate their specific expectations for trainees. This includes transparency about the differences in their expectations for different career stages and experience levels.
  ○ Provide you with timely and constructive feedback.
  ○ Assist trainees in making progress towards long-term professional development goals.
  ○ Support your physical and mental wellbeing in the field and lab; this includes not asking you to work beyond the limit where you both are and feel physically safe.
  ○ Communicate the limits of their knowledge and expertise and suggest outside resources when needed.
  ○ Develop solutions to anticipate and respond to conflicts that arise with people outside the lab community in the course of research. It is a supervisor’s role to advocate for trainees in these scenarios.
○ Quickly and transparently address violations of the guidelines articulated in this document.
○ Follow up or debrief with trainees at appropriate conclusion and transition points during projects to foster communication and improve trainee experiences.
○ Regularly lead discussions about antiracism in the lab.

● **Trainee expectations.** Your supervisor can expect that you will:
  ○ Participate actively in defining personal and project goals.
  ○ Take ownership of project goals and your role within the lab.
  ○ Seek opportunities to contribute positively to lab culture and scientific goals.
  ○ Work to meet the expectations agreed upon with the supervisor and other team members, and notify the supervisor if there are reasons why these expectations will not be met.
  ○ Proactively and quickly communicate concerns related to safety, ability, or comfort with project activities.
  ○ Recognize your limitations and ask for help when needed.

● **Fieldwork and lab work expectations.** For fieldwork and lab work:
  ○ You will have scheduled meetings with your supervisor to discuss both their and your expectations for fieldwork/lab work, which can be an evolving process.
  ○ Prioritize your self-care! This is an important aspect to fieldwork and lab work; fatigue can lead to mistakes and accidents! Check in with yourself and your supervisor if the workload seems unmanageable.
  ○ Expect a range of fieldwork (i.e. physical labor, hours in the field, locations, etc.) and lab work (i.e. experiment types, duration of experiments, chemicals used, etc.) experiences. All are valid and important research opportunities for a student; there should be a space to experience different types of fieldwork/lab work to learn which is best suited for you.

2. **Unacceptable behaviors**

We do not tolerate sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, racism of any kind, discrimination of any kind, or retaliation against anyone reporting a violation of this policy. We recognize harassment to include not only inappropriate sexual remarks and behavior but also put-downs in the form of non-sexual and offensive comments related to age, body size, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, language differences, nationality, marital status, parental status, physical appearance, physical, mental and developmental abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status, as well as exclusion from opportunities and resources and gendered divisions of labor (Clancy et al. 2014).

The following behaviors constitute violations of our Pod community behavioral expectations and most are violations of Rutgers policy and federal and/or state law:
- **Acting on implicit biases**: “An implicit bias is an unconsciously triggered belief in the inferiority of, or negative attitude toward, a group(s)” (Clair and Dennis 2015).
- **Deliberately mis-characterizing a person’s gender identity**: including through the use of a name or pronoun that the person has rejected.
- **Discrimination**: unequal or offensive treatment of a person on the basis of age; ethnicity; gender; gender identity and expression; language differences; nationality; parental status; marital status; physical, mental and developmental abilities; race; religion; sexual orientation; or socio-economic status; including, but not limited to, preventing or limiting access to opportunities or resources.
- **Gratuitous or off-topic sexual images or behavior**.
- **Microaggressions**: statements or actions that are indirect, subtle, or unintentional but display bias toward marginalized groups, such as asking a person of color where they are really from.
- **Patterns of inappropriate social contact**: such as requesting/assuming inappropriate levels of intimacy with others.
- **Racism**: holding and overtly acting upon the belief that one or more racial groups are superior which justifies the poor treatment of other supposed inferior racial groups (Clair and Dennis 2015). Racism also includes less overt forms such as:
  - **Symbolic racism**: the merging of “a genuine belief in the universalistic principles of Western liberal democracy with stereotypes and moral resentments (rooted in childhood socialization) toward ‘irresponsible’ blacks” (Clair and Dennis 2015).
  - **Laissez-faire racism**: “persistent antiblack (and antinative) stereotyping and a tendency to blame blacks (and other minorities) for their social problems despite increased support for racial equality in principle” (Clair and Dennis 2015).
  - **Colorblind racism**: “refers to a set of frames, styles, and scripts that are used to explain and justify the racial status quo without sounding racist” (Clair and Dennis 2015), such as declaring one does not “see color” (Dutt 2020).
- **Retaliation**: adverse employment, academic or other actions against anyone reporting a violation of this policy (including reporting to any lab member, police, or Title IX office).
- **Sexual Harassment**: both come-ons and put-downs (Clancy et al. 2014). Come-ons include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Put-downs include non-sexual and offensive comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, and body size, as well as exclusion from opportunities and resources and gendered divisions of labor.
- **Sexual Misconduct**: rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching, sexual battery, sexual exploitation, coercion, and other forms of non-consensual sexual activity.
- **Tokenism**: making only a symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of underrepresented and minority groups to give the appearance of equality and antiracism in the community.

### D. Preparation/Planning for Field and Lab Work
Additional guidelines should be created to address the particular needs and situations of individual projects. Project leaders should initiate a conversation at the beginning of each
project or when new personnel join a project to discuss safety issues in detail. Potential discussion items can include:

- Where is the field site located and will there be individual risk to participants due to their identities (race, gender, etc.)?
- What are the amenities available at a field or remote location?
- How and when the supervisor/project leader will notify authorities of students working late in the lab or at a field site.
- How a student may communicate concern or worry before, and importantly, during their field or lab work.
- Discussions on how to implement a buddy system if students are in the field without their supervisor/project leader.

**Field Work Specific:**

- Field work warrants specific discussions and preparation including:
  - Discussing the physical location of the field site (i.e. high altitudes, polar environments, out at sea, etc.).
  - Discussing possible risks/inconveniences and how they might be dealt with in situ (weather/nature, sampling gear, injuries, access to typical restroom facilities), as well as limitations that may be encountered when dealing with these situations in a field or remote setting.
  - A pre-departure checklist of things to bring so each person is best prepared given their own needs (credentials, clothing layers, food/snacks, water, medicine, sunscreen/bug spray, etc. ...things a “seasoned” participant may know but that a new participant may not think of); also discuss the financing of specific field gear items needed for the field.
  - Development of specific lab gear to wear out in the field (i.e. hats, shirts with university or lab logo).
  - A racial risk assessment of field sites and discussions about this with the field crew.
  - Reaching out to local authorities, businesses, and community leaders, especially in white communities, to provide early notice of the diverse nature of their teams. This should be undertaken by the supervisor or project leader prior to fieldwork.
  - Completion of bystander intervention training (or see section F: Training Resources for other training options).
  - Completion of any other relevant and necessary fieldwork related training (e.g. how to pitch a tent, boating safety, defensive driving, etc.)
  - Completion of the Rutgers International Travel requirements (if applicable).
  - Setting procedures for documenting incidents in the field. This must be discussed prior to the start of fieldwork, and should consider the isolating nature and remote environment of the field experience. This plan needs to be specific to each field experience. The Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) code of conduct has language about reporting and responding to incidents during field work that may be useful when drafting a plan.
Lab Work Specific:

- Lab work warrants specific discussions and preparation including:
  - Taking the Rutgers Environmental Health and Safety (REHS) Training and any specific lab training pertaining to the techniques that will be used in experiments.
  - Updating and maintaining the chemical hygiene plan for all protocols and chemicals in the lab.
  - Annual lab check-ins by the supervisor/project leader to remind lab members of the location of safety equipment and the accident reporting protocol (especially if working in more than one lab).
  - Discussing expectations of the amount of time to be spent in the lab (dependent on the lab work).
  - Planning a schedule, especially if lab work needs to occur during the weekends or over night (no one should be in the lab alone, especially after working hours!). The supervisor will notify campus security if students are to be on campus after working hours.
  - Discussing the specific supplies needed for a project, where they are purchased, and the funds used to acquire supplies.

E. Reporting Violations

1. If you experience behavior that violates these guidelines:

   We support you. You have the right to:
   - Talk to anyone about your experience;
   - To not talk to anyone about your experience;
   - Report to the PI, the police, or any of the other reporting options listed below;
   - Bring someone with you to provide support during reporting or any resulting discussions;
   - To seek reasonable accommodations to minimize the impact of the experience on the success of your work in the lab;
   - To seek medical assistance, including medical care and a medical forensic exam.

   Note: The above is not intended to be a comprehensive list.

2. Reporting options at Rutgers:

   A good “reporting directory” is available from the Ethics and Compliance Office here. It is important to know that almost all Rutgers employees are Mandatory Reporters. The Rutgers Compliance Hotline is available to accept reports anonymously 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 1-833-783-8442 or by reporting a violation or concern online. The Ethics and Compliance Office website provides detailed resources on (1) what to report; (2) what happens after you report; and (3) a reporting flow chart. Although their reporting directory is the most authoritative list, we outline a few relevant reporting options here:
If you need to report violations by a Rutgers faculty or staff member, contact University Human Resources at 848-932-3020.
  ○ If you are a Rutgers New Brunswick student, you can also report violations to the Ombudsperson for Students at 848-932-1452.

If you need to report violations by a Rutgers student, contact the Office of Student Affairs Compliance at 848-932-8576.
  ○ If you are a Rutgers New Brunswick student, you can also file an online incident report.

You may also specifically report a sexual misconduct incident through this online reporting form.

You may also specifically report a discrimination and harassment complaint through this online reporting form.

If you are a Rutgers New Brunswick student, you may also specifically report a bias incident to the Bias Prevention and Education Committee through this online reporting form.

Many of the above reporting forms, and more, can be found here.

Students from Rutgers Newark can report through the sexual assault hotline 973-353-4357 or can reach out to the Sexual Assault Program Coordinator at 973-353-1279.

The Rutgers Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance has confidential victim advocates available 24/7 at 848-932-1181.

Rutgers University Discrimination, Harassment, Workplace Violence, and Retaliation Complaint Process

Some schools, departments, and programs also have their own avenues for reporting certain incidents:
  ○ Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences (EPS) Graduate Program
  ○ Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences (DMCS)
  ○ School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS)
  ○ School of Graduate Studies (SGS)

3. What happens after a report is made:

We note that reports filed with one of the Rutgers offices above are out of our control. However, where the lab does have the authority to respond, swift responses will be a priority. If you report an incident to your supervisor within the lab you will be informed of the results of that report, unless you opt out.

4. What to do if someone discloses to you

Remember that the well-being of the person who was harmed must be prioritized. Reporting an incident to police or others without the support or knowledge of the person who was harmed could be more traumatic than helpful. If you are a mandatory reporter, you must report any illegal behavior to a Rutgers Title IX Coordinator. If it appears that someone may be about to
report misconduct to you and you are a mandatory reporter, it is your responsibility to inform them that, depending on the nature of the misconduct, what they share with you may not be confidential.

If a lab member or collaborator discloses that they have been targeted by misconduct, there are a number of ways in which you can support them:

- Tell them that you believe them, that you support them, that it is not their fault, that no one deserves to be targeted by such behavior.
- Provide them with the list of contact information and resources included in this document.
- Ask if they want your help in finding out what their options are.
- Ask what else you can do to help.
- Respect their decision not to talk with you if they don’t want to.

5. What to do if you see something inappropriate

Here are some suggestions to take an active role in the safety of our community:

- Be aware of your surroundings and social situations.
- If a situation makes you or others uncomfortable, or it looks like someone is being targeted, recognize that this is a problem and that you can be part of the solution to help.
- Take action to diffuse the situation while staying safe; some ideas include checking in with the targeted individual, telling the PI or project leader what is happening, recruiting help from friends, defusing the situation by distracting those involved (look at that neat thing over there!).
- If you are uncertain if there is a problem, check in privately with the individuals involved to see if they are okay or need help.
- Consider power dynamics. If you are in a position of power and/or privilege (noting these can be in opposition), it is your responsibility to speak up for others.
- If appropriate, use the reporting systems for concerns about bias, sexual misconduct, student conduct, student well-being, or mental health.

F. Training Resources

1. University wide mandatory training

Rutgers mandates the following training for all faculty, staff, and students:

- Harassment Prevention & Title IX: For information on the mandatory online ‘Harassment Prevention & Title IX’ training via SkillSoft please call the Office of Employment Equity at 848-932-3973.

2. Fieldwork and lab work specific training

Rutgers mandates the following trainings for all faculty, staff, and students working in the lab:
3. Optional training

Rutgers offers the following optional training. Pod members are encouraged to partake in these workshops:

- **Bystander Intervention.** This program ([Engaging Allies](https://engagingallies.rutgers.edu)) is run through the [Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance](https://vpva.rutgers.edu).
- The [Diversity Peer Educator Program](https://diversity.rutgers.edu/peers) hosts a variety of workshops for students including, but not limited to, Power and Privilege, Race in America, and Gender in Society: Trans Identity.
- The [Center on Violence Against Women and Children](https://cvaawc.rutgers.edu) has training workshops on bystander intervention, microaggressions, interpersonal violence, and sexual misconduct which are open to all faculty and staff.
- [Responding to Interpersonal Violence at Rutgers University](https://vpa.rutgers.edu/services/interpersonal-violence)
- [Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](https://vpa.rutgers.edu/services/harassment)
- The [Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance](https://vpva.rutgers.edu) provides a variety of facilitated workshops for student organizations and groups, residence halls, faculty and staff including [Rolling with Rejection, Escalation, Challenging and Changing, Building Healthy Relationships, Sexy and Mandatory, Rutgers CARES, Identity and Oppression](https://vpva.rutgers.edu/services).  
- [Title IX Overview](https://titleix.rutgers.edu)

G. Additional Resources

1. From Rutgers

- [Bias Prevention](https://biasprevention.rutgers.edu) - Division of Student Affairs
- [The Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities](https://cse.rutgers.edu)
- Compiled list of [Rutgers student services](https://studentservices.rutgers.edu), including but not limited to health and wellness, bias prevention and reporting, student organizations, and legal services
- [Disability Accommodations](https://disability.rutgers.edu)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action](https://hr.rutgers.edu/eoe)
- For Title IX complaints, see the [FAQs for Student Complainants and Respondents](https://titleix.rutgers.edu/faq) page for more information.
- [International Students](https://international.rutgers.edu)
- [Religious Accommodation Request Process](https://hr.rutgers.edu/accommodations/religion) for faculty
- Rutgers [diversity, equity, and inclusion](https://diversity.rutgers.edu) website
- [Rutgers Newark Health and Wellness](https://newark.rutgers.edu/wellness) services for students
- [Self-care resources](https://studentservices.rutgers.edu/services) for students, faculty, staff, and community members
- [Student Counseling Services](https://counseling.rutgers.edu)
- [Teaching about Racism, Injustice and Structural Inequality](https://gse.rutgers.edu) from the Graduate School of Education
The Rutgers Office of Employment Equity offers a [DVD Library](#) (scroll down to see titles) for faculty and supervisors that includes materials on such topics as diversity, ethics, solving conflict in the workplace, interviewing, managing, giving constructive criticism, and preventing sexual harassment. The DVDs may be used for individual education, departmental training sessions, or class instruction. DVDs may be borrowed by Rutgers employees for up to 7 days by calling the Office of Employment Equity at 848-932-3973.

2. From other sources

[Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE)](#) has a variety of resources available on their [website](#).

The [Center for Biodiversity and Conservation at the American Museum of Natural History](#) has created a crowd-sourced document with resources for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in the context of environmental sciences. Access the document [here](#). Many of the resources below may also be present on this list and on the URGE website.

- [AdvanceGeo Partnership Resources](#)
- [Association of Polar Early Career Scientists Code of Conduct](#)
- [Basin Research Group (BRG) Code of Conduct](#)
- [Can We Talk? Difficult Conversations with Underrepresented People of Color: Sense of Belonging and Obstacles to STEM Fields](#)
- [Cornell University Implicit Bias Resources](#)
- [The Fieldwork Initiative](#)
- [Maintaining an Environment of Respect Aboard Ships (MERAS) Committee](#)
- [Making the Outdoors Great for Everyone](#)
- [National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs Polar Code of Conduct](#)

3. Literature


- Duncombe, J. (2021). Seven ways PIs can counteract systemic bias right now. *Eos* 102. [https://doi.org/10.1029/2021EO155778](#).


H. Resources used in Developing this Document

**This document was largely adapted from Olaf Jensen’s Lab Community Expectations**


The Penn State University Field experience policy, http://www.anthgenomicslab.com/psu-anth-safe/


UAF Toolik Field Station policy, https://toolik.alaska.edu/user_guide/policies.php