URGE- Women in Coastal Geoscience and Engineering (WICGE)-Safety Plan

This safety plan is intended to be a guide developed and distributed by WICGE to individual geoscience and STEM departments to implement in their home institutions. It is specifically for at-risk individuals such as BIPOC scholars in their respective scientific laboratories and geoscience/ecological fieldwork setting. It focuses on what PI & supervisors and institutions/departments can do to create an inclusive and safe environment to study or work in. The goal of this safety plan is to ensure and “design student-centered field experiences that speak to the learning identities of participants” (Morales et al. 2020). It includes a code of conduct below and is linked to the procedure for reporting violations as documented in WICGE Complaints and Reporting Policy.

WICGE emphasizes that these safety measures were developed with an anti-racist framework in mind. However, many of the people in our organization have intersectional identities that need to be considered in field code of conduct and safety guidelines. Most obviously, many of our members are women, and may be also identify as LGBTQ+, with physical or mental disabilities, and with the varied cultural identities that span our global membership. With this in mind, future updates to this safety plan will focus on creating a safe field environment for coastal field researchers with intersectional identities.

Code of Conduct:

1. Institutions should develop and implement anti-racist policy as part of its regular operation as well as a robust complaints procedure within the department and at an institutional level. This would involve regular multi-level, anti-racism initiatives and participation in discussion groups (Chaudhary and Berhe, 2020).

2. Provide robust and culturally-conscious mentoring and anti-discrimination training for supervisors, principal investigators and all faculty.

3. The Principal Investigator/Supervisor must encourage BIPOC participation in fieldwork activities, particularly in circumstances where there is a new BIPOC participant to break down cultural barriers that may be present in the fieldwork team.
4. Prior to carrying out fieldwork, principal investigators must take precautions to ensure that a mandatory racial risk assessment is carried out for each study site of fieldwork. This would entail the following consideration as detailed in Anadu et al. 2020.

5. A pre-departure checklist of discussions within the field team must include discussions of the racial risk assessment for each study site.

6. A code of conduct should be distributed to members of the field campaign prior to departure. Teams may also choose to collect signatures agreeing to abiding by this code of conduct. This will set a tone of respect and demonstrate that the trip participants will not tolerate harassment in any form.

7. Bystander intervention training, de-escalation training and allyship training should be given to all staff and students in the team involved in fieldwork (Anadu et al. 2020).

8. Document hostile encounters as they happen and address any reported microaggressions by both BIPOC or bystanders and allies (Anadu et al. 2020).

9. Provide a safety-net for BIPOC scholars to reduce the occurrence of racialized violence in the field including official-looking field apparel or work buddies (Chaudhary and Berhe, 2020).

10. Introduce at risk individuals to all relevant stakeholders such as field site managers and relevant campus/field site security staff (Chaudhary and Berhe, 2020).

11. Specific to scientific research cruises, the chief scientist should assign a complaints officer who is the first point of contact for reports of any racial harassment or violence and be aware of the isolated nature of these work conditions.

12. There should be systems in place for reporting complaints (via telephone, email) of racial harassment or violence to persons in power (Department Chairs, Deans) that are not on the field trip, and explicit guidelines for how such behavior should be addressed 1) while in the field, and 2) upon returning from the field.

13. We suggest distribution of post-field questionnaires to attendees as an additional reporting structure for racial harassment and bad behavior.
Future areas to expand this safety plan
- Guidelines for coastal-specific research
  - I.e. research done alone, with a team, at sea
  - Accessibility -- ability to swim, maneuver over unstable sand/ground
- Specific measures to provide a safe field environment for team members with intersectional identities
- Identify methods of reporting beyond individual institutions for our members

References

