GES-ICARE -  
Deliverable - Session 6: Safety Plan

Our Pod discussed the deliverables for this session - we agreed that the Safety Plan may be very laboratory-specific, especially for groups that do field work vs. those that do not. We also agreed that an individual group’s safety plan would likely change depending upon location. Therefore, we have decided to pull together our answers to the provided discussion questions as our preliminary deliverable for this Session.

Where is your work done? Are these spaces uncomfortable or unsafe for people of color?

**CH:** Most of my group’s work is done on UMBC’s campus. We also participate in field work, but this is not as regular. Our most recent field campaigns were in: Hart-Miller Island, MD (located in the Chesapeake Bay, approximately 10 miles from downtown Baltimore) in 2018, and Denver, CO (2014). The Hart-Miller Island site was remote, and could only be reached by boat. The Denver, CO site was located in the suburbs of a highly populated city. The prevalence of violence against unarmed black people has made it clear that any of the sites, even the on-campus site, could be considered unsafe.

**TM:** Our work is done primarily on UMBC’s campus, but once or several times per year, we collect fish from streams in the southeastern United States, often in rural districts in which Confederate flags are prominently displayed. I have not developed a formal safety plan for students in my lab. We keep our collecting permit clearly visible on the dashboard of the van while we are in the stream, and we are always together as a group, with me as the responsible party. Making copies of the collecting permit for students to carry with them, as well as perhaps making official-looking lab t-shirts, are things that I’m considering and will discuss with students when we are once again able to travel together.

**AM:** Our field work includes class field trips to local rivers and streams, mostly in county and state parks. We generally go out in groups to carry out field surveys, streamflow measurements, drone flights, or sample collections. For field trips we are required by the university to have students fill out a safety waiver. We have not had an organized training for occasional field trips - we generally have students out one day at a time on targeted activities rather than extended periods in the field. We have not encountered any threatening situations in field sites and for the most part we do not send students out alone, although there are times when they go out to set up control points or do field reconnaissance. Some of the neighborhoods where we do field work are inner-ring suburbs with diverse populations and our students have not encountered any problems. Others are closer to wealthier suburbs but are accessed through county parks. One Asian-American student has worked extensively at these sites and has not expressed any discomfort. An African-American PhD student did much of her dissertation research in the same watershed (she graduated almost a decade ago), sometimes on her own; she never mentioned any discomfort either but I will ask for her reaction in retrospect.
RD: Research work requires to visit state owned facilities in various locations, some are isolated and others are located in the middle of neighborhoods. When we retrieve or place instrumentation we clearly identify equipment and engage the local communities and authorities to avoid any type of situation that may lead to a misunderstanding that could inadvertently escalate and jeopardize the faculty and student safety. If the equipment is recovered (weather balloon package) by a third party in some isolated location (middle of a farm in the Eastern Shore), I (faculty member) manage the recovery. The weather balloon package consists of a styrofoam box, with external wires and battery that for the non-expert might give the impression that it is an explosive device.

**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?**

CH: While UMBC requires lab safety training in order to conduct research, there is no training associated with safety in the community (to my knowledge). There is also no required safety training for field work associated with the location. In that sense, any training would be more effective than what we have in place. Question for our URGE Pod - who is best suited to develop and lead this type of training?

TM: As above, students in my lab are all required to take lab safety and animal care training courses as well as wildlife research training. I do not believe there are any components of these modules that address personal safety from a BIPOC lens. The infrastructure for adding a module on this is in place via WebNet or CITI training.

AM: So far as I am aware our department has had no department-level safety training; our students do research on a very broad range of topics but some of them do community-based social science research and some do natural-science research in underserved urban communities. I know that the Baltimore Ecosystem Study has traditionally run a mandatory field safety training session for summer research interns which included a wide range of subject matter from physical safety in the field to interactions with the community. Other colleagues in our department who have had students work independently in those communities throughout the year may have implemented safety training protocols but again I don’t have specific information on those at this point.

RD: I have no knowledge of training, resources or protocols. Any training or awareness taught is more designed to err on the side of cautious, and is based on personnel experience. In field campaigns we engage local communities but no formal protocols are followed.