

URGEO

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



Department of Geoscience: Inclusive Field Safety Plan

Preliminary

Updated April 20, 2021

Overview, Purpose, and Scope

The Department of Geosciences at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee currently does not have explicit safety plans or guidelines for field experiences (class field trips, extracurricular field trips, or field research) conducted by members of the department.

Without a field safety plan that considers the dangers and barriers specific to people of color, we risk making these essential educational and cultural experiences unwelcoming and unsafe.

The purpose of this draft document is to take the first steps in creating an Inclusive Field Safety Plan that will strive to ensure field experiences organized by the Department of Geosciences at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee are safe and inclusive for all participants.

The people who are organizing the field experience are responsible for educating themselves on the potential risks to all participants and to work towards mitigating those risks. This work should include ongoing discussions with participants in these field experiences.

Department Responsibilities

- Possible action item: Vet field camps and field experiences by undergraduates, since they attend a lot of different field camps. Survey students on their experiences. Make sure that the department recommends experiences that are good, supportive environments. Be explicit and open about the process – make sure it’s not a “whisper network”.

The following is a list of actions that can be taken on the department level to support at-risk individuals (from Demery and Pipkin, 2020; <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202008.0021.v1>) :

1. Supply an official letter of support for researchers doing fieldwork with contact information. This provides additional credibility to the researcher, if and when they are approached and challenged.

2. Make a general field safety, harassment training, and first aid course available and mandatory for all field work organizers (i.e. faculty, instructors, TAs, and RAs). Examples include:
 - **Harassment & Discrimination Training**
 - Already required for employees
 - **Wilderness First Aid**
 - <https://www.nols.edu/en/coursefinder/courses/wilderness-first-aid-WFA/>
 - <https://www.wildmed.com/course/wilderness-first-aid/>
 - <https://www.rei.com/events/a/outdoor-skills-wilderness-medicine>
 - <https://www.longleafmedical.com/wfa.html>
 - <https://www.soloschools.com/sponsored-wilderness-first-aid-wfa/>
 - **Field Safety Training?**
 - No known options? Look into similar programs for environmental educators
 - **“De-escalation”, “conflict Management”, or “Crisis Prevention” training**
 - Look into similar programs for environmental educators
 - **Talk to Residential Life? - RA training**
3. Make a list of resources available about diversity in the sciences, barriers to entry in the sciences and safety concern
4. Regularly reevaluate all current department and institutional practices to remove barriers to inclusion in safety practices. Develop a proactive plan to alter detrimental (anti-inclusion and equity) practices and document the process to increase transparency of decision-making
5. Inform and advise supervisors and research groups about the benefits of acting responsibly and with care, as well as legal and social ramifications if they fail to invest in researcher safety during university-sanctioned fieldwork.
6. **Mentor Training:** Provide training to supervisors on how to be an effective mentor to diverse individuals. This training should provide clear lines of communication for anyone conducting fieldwork, regardless of the researcher's institutional affiliation (e.g., a visiting researcher working with faculty and field sites managed by the institution).
7. Ensure field course locations and housing are appropriate, safe, and equitable for all identities. Solicit regular, anonymized feedback from field researchers to determine the climate and safety of field sites and accommodations and engage supervisors in responding to this feedback.
8. Ensure that all department-or institution-managed field sites are clearly labeled as a part of the institution. On this signage, include acceptable activities allowed at such locations (e.g., birdwatching, dog walking, no public access)
9. Collate information on all active or newly established field sites throughout the year and provide this information to relevant police departments. Due to the sheer volume of field projects occurring at a single time, this cannot feasibly be accomplished by supervisors and researchers.

Supervisors or individual researchers should only have to contact specific law enforcement if the field site(s) was(were)not a part of this initial package.

Code of Conduct

In the future we will work towards developing a code of conduct that is specific to field work. The basis for this code of conduct will be the Dept. Of Geosciences Graduate Student Code of Conduct (the Graduate Student Handbook is available at: <https://uwm.edu/geosciences/graduate/resources/>), as well as UWM Faculty/Staff Code of Conduct. Sections of each of these resources that are relevant to field work are copied below. This code of conduct will apply to all participants in the field experience.

UWM Graduate Student Handbook/AGU Scientific Code of Conduct:

A. Principles

- **Excellence, integrity, and honesty** in all aspects of research
- **Personal accountability** in the conduct of research and the dissemination of the results
- **Professional courtesy, equity, and fairness** in working with others
- **Freedom to responsibly pursue science without interference or coercion**
- **Unselfish cooperation** in research
- **Good stewardship of research and data on behalf of others**
- **Legal compliance** in all aspects of research, including intellectual property

B. Responsibilities

- **Integrity:** We will act with honesty in the interest of the advancement of science, take full responsibility for the trustworthiness of our research and its dissemination, and treat others with courtesy, equity, and fairness.
- **Adherence to Law and Regulations:** We will be aware of and adhere to laws and regulations related to the professional conduct of research; *and to professional ethics, law and policy related to discrimination, harassment, and bullying.*
- **Environment:** *We are responsible for creating and upholding a safe, open, and professional environment for learning, conducting, and communicating science with integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency in all scientific endeavors.*
- **Misconduct:** *We will not engage in discrimination, harassment, bullying, dishonesty, fraud, misrepresentation, coercive manipulation, censorship, or other misconduct that alters the content, veracity, or meaning of research findings or that may affect the planning, conduct, reporting, or application of science. This applies to all professional, research, and learning environments.*
- **Societal Considerations:** We have an ethical obligation to weigh the societal benefits of our research against the costs and risks to human and animal welfare, heritage sites, or other potential impacts on the environment and society. We need to be aware of legal requirements in this area.
- **Stewardship of the Earth:** We have an ethical obligation to responsibly, accurately, and clearly inform the public about natural resources, hazards, and other geoscience phenomena of importance to the well-being of Earth and society.

C. Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination

We work to maintain an environment that allows science and scientific careers to flourish through respectful, inclusive, and equitable treatment of others. As a statement of principle,

we reject discrimination and harassment by any means, based on factors such as ethnic or national origin, race, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, age, or economic class. **In addition, we oppose all forms of bullying including threatening, humiliating, coercive, or intimidating conduct that causes harm to, interferes with, or sabotages scientific activity and careers.** Discrimination, harassment (in any form), and bullying create a hostile environment that reduces the quality, integrity, and pace of the advancement of science by marginalizing individuals and communities. It also damages productivity and career advancement and prevents the healthy exchange of ideas. We affirm that discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), or bullying in any scientific or learning environment is unacceptable and constitutes scientific misconduct.

- **Discrimination** means unequal or unfair treatment in professional opportunities, education, benefits, evaluation, and employment (such as hiring, termination, promotion, compensation) as well as retaliation and various types of harassment. *Discriminatory practices can be explicit or implicit, intentional, or unconscious.*
- **Harassment** is a type of discrimination that consists of a single intense and severe act, or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts, which are unwanted, unwelcome, demeaning, abusive, or offensive. Offensive conduct constitutes harassment when:
 - i. it becomes a condition of an opportunity, education, benefit, evaluation, or employment or
 - ii. the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work or educational environment that most people would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.

These acts may include epithets, slurs, or negative stereotyping based on gender, race, sexual identity, or other categories, as protected by U.S. federal law. Also included are threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts; denigrating jokes and displays; or circulation of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or a group.

- **Sexual harassment** includes any unwanted and/or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.
- **Bullying** is the use of force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively dominate others in the professional environment that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. These actions can include abusive criticism, humiliation, the spreading of rumors, physical and verbal attacks, isolation, undermining, and professional exclusion of individuals through any means.

Risk Assessment

- Identify Local Law Enforcement Agencies and
 - Let them know that you will be working in the area, introduce yourself and your group
 - Make it known how to contact them in case of an emergency – especially if cell service might not be available
- Emergency Services
 - Make it known how to contact them in case of an emergency – especially if cell service might not be available
 - Especially internationally
 - Where is the nearest hospital and/or emergency room?
 - What is/is not covered by and individuals' medical insurance?
- Are these areas reasonably safe for people of color to work?
 - Is there a history of racialized violence in the area?
 - Have there been recent incidents of racialized violence?
 - Consult Hate Maps:
 - <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>
 - <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/adl-heat-map>
 - <https://www.khalifahler.org/hate-map>

Pre-Departure Safety Awareness Checklist

- **Field trip leaders should be in communication with participants – accessibility resource center**
- [International] Know how to locate relevant embassy contact and location information

Reporting and Accountability Process

- If you wish to report a hate/bias incident, please use the [Hate/Bias Incident Reporting online form](#). You may also contact our office at (414) 229-5923 or report in person in Mitchell Hall, Rm. 359

From Deliverable 2 (Complaints and Reporting Policy for University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee):

- **The link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:**
 - UW system policy: <https://www.wisconsin.edu/uw-policies/uw-system-administrative-policies/complaint-procedures/>
 - UWM official policy: [SAAP 5-1. Discriminatory Conduct Policy.pdf \(uwm.edu\)](#)
 - UWM policy in plainer language: <https://uwm.edu/complaints-grievances/>
 - UWM policy in plainer language specifically focused for students: [Complaints and Grievances - Dean of Students \(uwm.edu\)](#)
 - Report-it website: <https://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/report-it/>
 - Department, Lab, Division, Advisor or Supervisor Policies:
 - Every class syllabus must include links to the UWM policy linked above
 - Generally labs, divisions, etc use the UWM reporting policy rather than having specific separate policies.

- Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy?
 - UW system policies are reviewed and updated when they are identified as a priority for updating. Each policy lists the history, and they seem to be updated every few years. The procedure is described here: <https://www.wisconsin.edu/uw-policies/administrative-policy-development/>.
 - The UW system policy on harassment, discrimination, and retaliation was updated in 2018: <https://www.wisconsin.edu/regents/policies/discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation/>.
 - The UWM policy (linked above) was updated 2017
- Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)?
 - Every year, UWM publishes the annual security report, <https://uwm.edu/equity-diversity-services/reporting-an-incident/#:~:text=To%20report%20discrimination%20or%20for,at%20diverse%40uwm.edu>, which lists crimes, including hate crimes.
 - We couldn't find a record of the number of reports more generally, that might not rise to the level of a crime.
- **What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?**
 - The designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents?
 - We could not find a comprehensive list of designated reporters
 - Can reports be made online? Where?
 - Yes, <https://uwm.edu/equity-diversity-services/reporting-an-incident/#:~:text=To%20report%20discrimination%20or%20for,at%20diverse%40uwm.edu>.
 - Can reports be made anonymously?
 - The Ombuds Council (<https://uwm.edu/ombuds/>) is an independent, informal, neutral and confidential resource that assists members of the university community in exploring options to resolve problems, complaints and conflicts at a preliminary and informal level. An ombuds can serve as a resource for those who seek informal guidance on policies, procedures and regulations affecting faculty and staff. Faculty and academic staff may also contact the Office of the Secretary of the University, Lubar Hall N450, (414) 229-5988.
 - Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports?
 - In-person and online reports go to the Office of Equity/Diversity Services. It's not clear who specifically in this office has access to see reports.
 - <https://uwm.edu/equity-diversity-services/people/>
 - Are police included in the process? When and how? Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization?
 - Incidents involving an immediate threat should always be reported to the police (as well as being reported to the appropriate UWM complaints office)

- However, we found nothing to indicate that the office of equity and diversity services would directly involve the police, or provide an advocate for talking to the police

- **What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?**
 - Follow-up by supervisor, training (bias, etc.), disciplinary action, termination.
 - There is no specific list of all possible consequences
 - Dismissal is mentioned in the policy as a possible consequence of complaints
 - Who decides the outcomes/consequences? What is the process?
 - EDS starts an investigation of the report within 10 days, and makes a recommendation; the investigation could be halted if either party requests a negotiated response, until (And if) the negotiation is successful
 - At the conclusion of the investigation, ED will forward their report with remedial recommendations to the office of the provost
 - The remedial recommendations can be appealed
 - The provost can accept or modify the EDS recommendations, or request more investigation
 - Is disciplinary action is required, it is further considered by various other committees
 - Are reports tracked? How are they tracked? By who?
 - There is no information on this
 - Are repeated complaints escalated to a disciplinary board? What is the process?
 - There is no information about this

- **What resources are available for individuals reporting?**
 - Counselors or advocates, especially those of the same race, ethnicity, and gender.
 - <https://uwm.edu/equity-diversity-services/resources/>
 - There is counseling available, but it doesn't seem like it is automatically provided to individuals reporting; there is also no clear language indicating that counselors are available of specific races, ethnicities, or genders
 - Automatic or requested investigation of potential impact on grades or evaluations.
 - We found no information on this
 - Protection against retaliation or repercussions, accommodations for continuing work/courses, option for pass/fail or outside assessment.
 - Retaliation is considered a separate violation of the harassment policy, and allows the reporter to make another report