CSU Department of Geosciences
Safety Plan
Developed for URGE (Unlearning Racism in Geosciences)

I.   Purpose of the Safety Plan

The purpose of the following safety plan is to outline, acknowledge, and address some of
the risks that could be faced by non-majority identities in the field and in the lab with the
CSU Geosciences Department. The document is for leadership (including faculty,
advisors, and teaching assistants) as well as collaborators, students, and field assistants
that work or learn within the CSU Geosciences Department. We acknowledge that
conversations regarding identity-based risk can be difficult to broach, and many
supervisors have been taught to avoid such conversations or view engaging in dialogue
with at-risk individuals as a form of targeting or negative bias. However, these
conversations are likely to arise during field or lab work, and we encourage all
supervisors and relevant personnel to 'hold harmless' any good faith conversation or
discussion regarding the negative impacts of these disproportionate risks on at-risk
individuals. Following Demery and Pipkin (2021), we recommend that it should never be
considered a form of bias or discrimination for a supervisor to offer a discussion
regarding the intersection of safety and identity to any individual that they supervise.

II.   Identified Risks

   a. Who is at risk?
          i. Entering new or unfamiliar communities oftentimes places individuals of
              specific backgrounds or identities in uncomfortable and potentially unsafe
              positions. Though people of all backgrounds routinely enter these
              communities while conducting research, the risks are often
              disproportionately high for those individuals placed in an "othered"
              position due to their specific identity. In addition to increased risk, these
              individuals often experience increased prejudices in ways that do not
              necessarily manifest against those that do not share said identity (Demery
              and Pipkin, 2021). Increased risks are most often felt by those that hold
              non-majority identities of race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual
              orientation, religion, and/or disability (Demery and Pipkin, 2021). At-risk
              individuals may hold any of several roles, from student to instructor,
              though risks may be heightened for individuals in non-authority positions.

   b. What are the risks?
          i. **Risks during Field Work**: Many researchers have indicated that
              conducting fieldwork alone and/or within specific geographic areas has
              caused them to feel uncomfortable, frighted, and/or threatened by both the
              local community and/or their scientific colleagues (Clancy et al., 2014;

Demery and Pipkin, 2021). These risks are often heightened for those who hold minority identities, which local communities may take as suggestions of danger from that individual and may lead to biased action from both law enforcement and/or vigilantes. Research has indicated that individuals with minority identities experience increased occurrence of harassment and misconduct in the field. These incidents may include, but are not limited to, targeted confrontation by law enforcement, having a firearm brandished against them, display of hate symbols, refused service such as food or accommodations, slurs, stalking, assault, offered accommodations with bigoted connotations (such as staying on a plantation), or a history of racial violence or racial hate groups in the area of work (Demery and Pipkin, 2021). At-risk individuals may also be subject to unfair and bigoted assumptions (for example, a local community member may assume an individual of that identity may not have permission to be somewhere where they indeed do), prejudiced interactions (community members may speak down to at-risk individuals or ignore them entirely), and hateful language (both obvious slurs as well as "coded" terms such as thug, etc.). Risks may also manifest in unspoken ways, such as the presence of signs or slogans suggesting political or ideological leanings, or simply geographic setting. For example, the lack of communication ability in remote areas may heighten perceptions of danger felt by at-risk individuals. At-risk individuals may also experience bigoted, prejudiced, and hateful language, interaction, and violence from peers/members of their own party in the field as well, the dangers of which can be heightened by the field setting.

ii. **Risks on Campus**: Though the field oftentimes takes precedence in discussions of safety, at-risk individuals face heightened risks in the lab and around the CSU Campus as well. Individuals with minority identities face risks associated with bigoted language (such as slurs and other coded language), prejudiced assumptions and statements (for example, a supervisor suggesting that a Muslim student may respond better to male authority, e.g. Mehta, 2018), or a non-inclusive campus climate (e.g. Hurtado et al., 1998). At Colorado State in particular, several incidents in the recent past involving prejudiced or bigoted action against BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) individuals may create the impression of a culture of non-inclusivity that is disproportionately and unfairly felt by at-risk individuals. In addition, people with minority identities may encounter or perceive heightened risk when working after hours, when traveling across campus, when asked to host peers/colleagues (for example, a researcher identifying as a woman may be subject to sexual harassment while giving a tour to a visiting colleague), or when interacting with vendors (for example, an international student may

experience abusive language while on the phone with tech support for a lab instrument). At-risk individuals may be subject to the heightened risks described above, and many others, from collaborators, both within the department, college, and University, peers (fellow students, etc.) and supervisors, and other individuals they may encounter. At-risk individuals may also be subject to disproportionate risk when traveling to, attending, and/or presenting at conferences and other proceedings off-campus.

    iii. **Defining the possible risks faced** –These are likely specific to each location, project, or trip. In constructing this safety plan, supervisors/leaders should be thorough but not overly assuming. This could be difficult if there has only been limited interaction with, say, a field area prior to completing this plan. Additional risks could exist depending on the specific task or location. Prior to fieldwork, coursework, or lab work, supervisors should identify and define the specific risks by completing a formalized diversity and inclusion risk assessment

c. Where are the risks?
    i. **Field**: As discussed previously, at-risk individuals often bear disproportionate and unfair amounts of risk in the field due to their identities. Because "in the field" can often be a vague catchall term, here it is defined as off-campus research settings outside of a laboratory. Field settings here are defined as any location - rural or urban, domestic or international - where individuals may be gathering scientific data or making scientific observations. Risks in the field may be additionally heightened for at-risk individuals when in community centers (for example, a Muslim student may be subject to prejudiced language at a gas station in a town near their field area) but may also be unduly felt by individuals with minority identities in remote areas (for example, a postdoctoral research leader with a minority identity may feel that the risks already disproportionately encountered by them are accentuated by an inability to or difficulty in calling for help in a remote valley). Overall, at-risk individuals may encounter increased risks in any settings outside of campus or a laboratory that could be broadly categorized as "in the field."

    ii. **Laboratory**: Though what constitutes laboratory setting may be relatively clearly defined, it is important to explicitly identify the laboratory as a potential location where at-risk individuals may experience disproportionate bias, harassment, and/or misconduct as a result of their identity. Laboratory settings are often close quarters, potentially increasing the danger felt by individuals with minority identities. Additionally, laboratories are oftentimes loud or in secluded parts of the building where few people could hear or see bias. Recognition of this setting as one where

specific individuals could perceive or experience heightened risk as a result of their identity is essential for mitigating, addressing, and eliminating that disproportionate risk.

    iii. **Campus/office**: Individuals who are at-risk of disproportionate bias, prejudice, harassment, and/or misconduct due to their identity may experience one or several of these risks both on campus broadly or more specifically in an office setting on-campus (For supervisor education on bias reports at CSU, see the [CSU Bias Reporting](#) website). At-risk individuals may oftentimes experience bias, harassment, and/or misconduct and/or perceive heightened risk of these due to subtle pervasive attitudes, such as campus or office climate. The disproportionate risk faced on campus by individuals who have a minority identity may not occur during research activities but must be acknowledged and addressed in order to foster a safe environment for all.

III.   <u>Acknowledging and addressing the risks</u>

    a. Acknowledging risk: expectations of leadership
        i. **Who is the leadership?** *Be thorough. Often more than one person fills a "leadership" role.* Individual(s) in leadership position(s) likely depend on the role of the at-risk individual(s). For example, if the at-risk individuals are primarily students on a course field trip, then the leadership hierarchy may be the teaching assistant and professor/instructor, but also may include the department head and college dean. In this situation, acknowledgement, mitigation, and prevention of risk for at-risk individuals from the teaching assistant and leading professor may be sufficient to create an environment where participants feel their safety has been adequately considered. However, if the at-risk individual is a more senior member such as a professor or postdoctoral researcher, then leadership likely encompasses both the department head and individuals at the college level (e.g. assistant dean or college dean). These situations may require the department head or college dean to make arrangements so that the safety of senior members (such as a professor leading a field excursion) is adequately accounted and provided for. Such arrangements may include, but are not limited to, purchase of equipment such as satellite phones or GPS devices to ensure a good line of communication, increased expenditures to ensure safe accommodations (perhaps acquiring lodging in a setting that may be farther from a field area but safer for a course instructor who is at-risk as a result of their identity), or formalized recognition of the increased risk and explicit mechanisms for reporting and addressing incidences of bias, prejudice, and/or misconduct.

ii. **Statement that risk exists/ potential for risk exists:** As an individual in a leadership role, I recognize that individuals who have minority identities are often additionally at-risk for incidences of bias, prejudice, and/or misconduct, and that these risks are often perceived and/or experienced disproportionately and unfairly by students who hold those identities. In light of this fact, I/we as leadership have evaluated the potential for at-risk individuals to experience these types of dangerous experiences in the course of their field studies/laboratory experiments/time on campus. I/we have made arrangements to ensure the safety of those individuals holding minority identities, including mandatory DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) training for trip/lab leaders and participants, a formal risk assessment of the field area for risks related to minority identity – race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and/or disability – and determination if that risk exceeds scholarly/pedagogical value, establishment of clear lines of communication and the means do to so (satellite phones, Internet hotspots, etc.), and either creation of clear and explicit guidelines and procedures for communicating incidences of bias, harassment and/or misconduct or explicit and transparent instructions for locating such guidelines that already exist.

b. Acknowledging risk: expectations of participants / students

    i. **Statement that the student feels their safety has been adequately considered/provided for:** As a participant/student/student employee, I feel that my safety has been adequately considered and provided for with respect to the risks to individuals with minority identities. My supervisor/professor/instructor has communicated to me the potential for risk within the area and how they have planned to both protect me and others from that risk and/or address incidences of bias, harassment and/or misconduct if and when they do arise. I feel that the plan for avoiding, preventing, and/or addressing these sorts of incidences is clear and concise and am confident that I and others, as well as leadership, can follow it to the best of our abilities. Should any incident arise, I feel confident that I will be able to contact the necessary individuals and/or groups to remove myself without undue endangerment to me or my person. Additionally, I feel confident that I can report the incident following the proper channels with assurances that everything can and will be done to both account for my safety and ensure such incidences will not happen again. Overall, I acknowledge that existing plans and considerations are adequate to protect me from harm, as well as address any incidences that do occur without fear of additional repercussions against me.

ii. **Avenues to pursue if the student does not feel their safety has been adequately considered:**
1. If student(s)/participant(s) feel that their safety and risks associated with undertaken activities has not been adequately considered, provided for, or addressed, then the responsibility for doing so falls again on the shoulders of leadership, whoever they may be. Students have no obligation to suggest of provide solutions for this inadequate consideration and are not expected to communicate that such an inadequacy exists beyond simply not signing the above statement. It is the responsibility of leadership to enact additional policies or make additional considerations to ensure that the student/participants feel safe and to contact them with an updated plan. The onus of responsibility for improving the plan or communicating changes to the plan in the name of said improvement should never fall to non-leadership individuals. As a reminder, if "traditional" leadership individuals (such as a professor/course instructor) are themselves at-risk individuals then the responsibility for adequate safety planning falls to individuals higher up the chain of command, e.g. department head or dean.

2. Additionally, at-risk individuals can report incidences where they feel that their safety has not been adequately accounted for or incidences of bias and harassment have occurred. These can be reported here:
   a. **Anonymous Bias Reporting**: https://biasreporting.colostate.edu/
   b. **OEO**: https://oeo.colostate.edu/
   c. **Student Conflict Resolution Center**: https://resolutioncenter.colostate.edu/

IV. <u>Management and prevention of risk</u>

a. **Strategies for risk prevention**:
   i. Outlining a research timeline and discuss the expected timeline before work starts. Detail expected communications / avenues for communication if the participant should even be threatened by risk. Avenues for this sort of reporting or communication are delineated above in Section III.b.ii.2
   ii. *Continuing education: trainings, resources, etc.* Both individuals in leadership roles as well as students/participants should participate in training and continuing education to the best of their availability. It is strongly recommended that all involved individuals, both leadership and participant, undertake a diversity training prior to departure/beginning, as available here: https://diversity.colostate.edu/education/schedule-a-

training/. Additional continuing education resources are also broadly available from the Office of the Vice President of Diversity: https://diversity.colostate.edu/. It is again strongly recommended that all participants and leadership access these resources regularly.

    iii. *Assessment of scientific/pedagogical value of the research/field trip location in the light of risk to minoritized individuals.* Could the work be done in other locations which pose lower risks or is the location critical to the objectives? Assurances that these considerations have been made and duly weighed are implicit in choosing to go through with the work. Leadership should strongly consider explicitly communicating that such an assessment has been made.

b. **Signing a code of conduct**: In general, all participants and leadership that are students are expected to abide by the broad CSU Student Code of Conduct. By signing here students indicate that they agree to these guidelines. Individual labs or courses are strongly encouraged to develop their own code of conduct (CoCs). Several open source CoCs can be found here and here and here. Broad examples can be found through Carleton College. Additionally, for specific courses such as Field Camp, the existing CSU Department of Geosciences Field Camp Agreement/Code of Conduct can be found here.

c. **Recommendations**: This safety plan requires all individuals in the field be accompanied at all times. Additionally, it is highly recommended that the individuals with minority identities be given the opportunity to self-identify and that, following this, ample consideration be given to ensure that all groups be comprised of a diverse set of minority and non-minority individuals. Additionally, this safety plan strongly recommends that all leadership carry a device with an ability to send and receive outside communication at all times (satellite phone, Garmin InReach, etc.). All individuals involved with the undertakings covered by this safety plan are strongly recommended to take a diversity training prior to departure; for leadership (as identified in prior sections), it is required that a Diversity & Inclusion at CSU training be scheduled and taken prior to departure/beginning. This training can be scheduled through the Office of the Vice President of Diversity

d. **Framework (not a check list) for performing a (diversity) risk assessment.** Leadership are strongly encouraged to conduct a formalized diversity risk assessment in a manner that is most applicable to the specific area/type of work being undertaken. Assessments should ideally be done by individuals with DEI training, but can carried out in the context of the information, resources, and experiences provided by Carleton College, especially as related to field work: https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html

e. **Addressing bias from leadership:** In the case of bias, harassment, and/or misconduct from the person leading the work/group, this plan advocates for identifying an additional/secondary trusted faculty/staff available to discuss the issue and be able to bring it up to the individual perpetrating the bias.