

The University of Texas Marine Science Institute

Guidelines for Ethical Research Conduct

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Purpose

We recognize that the freedom we are given to perform research by the University and the State of Texas carries with it the responsibility to ensure that research is conducted with an honest search for the truth and with the highest possible ethical standards. We understand that fulfilling our responsibilities rests on both individual and collective endeavors to assure the highest standards of academic integrity, professional courtesy, and individual accountability. This statement has been adopted in order to establish guidelines by which we will conduct ourselves and our research.

Applicability

The actions of all members of the faculty, staff, and student body of the University of Texas Marine Science Institute (hereinafter called the Institute) shall be guided by this statement. Individuals are responsible for knowing and following the ethical guidelines set forth by the University as well as the guidelines of the Institute addressed in this document.

Responsibility and Accountability in Research Conduct

1. The Institute is committed to promoting a respectful working environment for its members. Such an environment provides equal opportunity for individuals and is free of any unlawful discrimination or harassment based on ethnicity, religion, age, disability, citizenship, veteran status, gender, or sexual orientation as defined by the UT Handbook of Operating Procedures. The Institute is also committed to promoting an academic and work environment free of any verbal or physical abuse of power by an advisor, mentor, or superior with higher authority.
2. The integrity of the Institute rests on the shoulders of each of us, and lapses in academic integrity cannot be tolerated. While honest error and differences of opinion can occur, we must strive to avoid the appearance of misconduct such as fabrication or falsification of data, [plagiarism](#), or [academic dishonesty](#). We should always try our best to allocate proper credit where credit is due.
3. The strength of the Institute lies in our multidisciplinary nature and the ease of collaboration among individuals. We must always be conscious, however, that collaboration is a team effort which is expected that all collaborators understand the: (a) expectations, goals, outcomes, or products; (b) estimation of an initial time frame, expected contributions, and allocation of responsibilities; (c) criteria by which authorship and credit will be assigned, legal obligations of each party, intellectual property requirements, and regulatory compliance; and (d) accountability to research institutions, funding agencies, the profession, and the public.
4. The foundation of teamwork is trust and we strive to build the best team possible at the Institute. Accordingly, individuals are responsible for avoiding real or apparent potential biases, which may occur due to prior or existing personal or professional relationships. Individuals within the Institute should strive to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest through open and honest communication of personal, financial, and professional interests, or relationships that may compromise objective and

reliable fulfillment of duties. Should a conflict of interest be identified, this individual or group should abstain from participating in relevant activities.

5. Publication of scientific literature is one of the major goals of any scientific endeavor and we believe that authorship should never be considered an reward or a benefit. In order to be considered as an author on a professional manuscript or research report, an individual must accept responsibility for the accuracy and merit of the work being published and have had a role in both of the following areas: (a) conception of the hypothesis being tested, design of the experimental methods, and/or analysis of collected data; and (b) preparation of the manuscript and/or final approval before submission. Individuals who are unwilling to accept this responsibility and those who have merely assisted financially, with lab space, occasional analysis, or sample materials should be acknowledged in the text but may not necessarily be listed as authors.
6. As members of the scientific community, we are often asked to review manuscripts for publication. We recognize that peer review is the primary process by which scientists ensure the quality, integrity, originality and ethical standards of research published in a journal or a grant proposal. We accept the responsibility for unbiased, in-depth evaluation of the research.
7. Some research performed at the Institute may involve tissues, live animals, or people and we must treat all of these subjects with the highest possible ethical standards. Researchers should carefully evaluate the potential impact or benefit to be derived from the research project and the amount of pain to be inflicted on any experimental subjects to avoid undue pain and distress. Researchers should strive to utilize non-sentient materials whenever possible. We must always remember that the interests of science or society should never take priority over the welfare of any human subject.
8. We believe that any member of the Institute who has witnessed any form of misconduct has an ethical obligation to act. Individuals witnessing any form of misconduct should first be reasonably certain that some form of misconduct has taken place and then report the act to a superior. Reporting misconduct allows the Institute to address potential problems and to redress wrongs. Because we firmly believe that the only way to fix a problem is to first identify it, we support all state and federal laws designed to protect whistle-blowers from harassment, discharge, suspension and other actions as a result of reporting misconduct.
9. Due to the nature of our work, we often collect samples and data from field sites around the world. It is the responsibility of each individual to maintain the integrity of the environment during field research and data collection by obtaining appropriate permits and by limiting impact required to complete the research. Waste and hazardous materials will be handled according to the rules of UT Environmental Health and Safety.
10. Finally, as members of the Institute, it is our responsibility to provide service to the community by clarifying conclusions of research relevant to the Gulf of Mexico and beyond. No member of the Institute should claim a level of competency that they do not possess and should distinguish between fact and opinion when engaging in scientific discourse with the public.