

# DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES CODE OF CONDUCT

The MTSU Department of Geosciences Code of Conduct is a set of principles and practices for professional behavior that governs all Geosciences faculty members, staff, and students. All individuals associated with the Department of Geosciences are expected to aspire and adhere to the following standards of behavior:

## A. Principles

1. Excellence, integrity, and honesty in all aspects of professional work
2. Professional courtesy, equity, and fairness in working with others
3. Freedom to responsibly pursue science without interference or coercion
4. Unselfish cooperation in all department activities
5. Legal compliance in all aspects of the department's professional activities

## B. Responsibilities

1. **Integrity:** Members will act with honesty in the interest of the department, take full responsibility for the trustworthiness of their research, teaching, and service activities, and treat others with courtesy, equity, and fairness.
2. **Adherence to Law and Regulations:** Members will be aware of and adhere to laws and regulations related to their professional conduct.
3. **Responsibility:** Members will take responsibility for the integrity of their contributions to all professional activities related to the department and university.
4. **Acknowledgement:** Members will acknowledge the names and roles of those who made significant contributions (such as ideas and scientific discussion) to department activities.
5. **Public Communication:** Members, when representing the Department of Geosciences, will limit professional comments to their areas of scholarly expertise when engaged in public discussions about the application and importance of scientific knowledge and will clearly distinguish professional comments from their opinions based on personal views.
6. **Reporting Irresponsible Practices:** Members will take responsibility to act or intercede where possible to prevent misconduct. The procedures of this Policy will be followed to report to MTSU any suspected misconduct, including fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism of materials, as well as discrimination, harassment, bullying, or other irresponsible behaviors that undermine the department or university.
7. **Environment:** Members 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 at all organizational levels and in all endeavors.
8. **Misconduct:** Members will not engage in discrimination, harassment, bullying, violent acts, dishonesty, fraud, misrepresentation, coercive manipulation, censorship, or other misconduct. This applies to all professional, research, and teaching environments. An expanded discussion of this topic appears below.

9. **Stewardship of the Earth:** Members 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. Student–Advisor Relationship**

The relationship between a student and the student advisor is a unique one in the academic environment. This relationship carries extra demands for ethical behavior. Key principles include areas of sensitivity and concern such as these recommendations for advisors:

- promote an environment that is intellectually stimulating and free of harassment;
- be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful;
- recognize and respect the cultural backgrounds of students;
- be sensitive to the power imbalance in the student–advisor relationship;

Students (undergraduate and graduate) and student advisors are encouraged to be aware of responsibilities of the advisor, the student, and the institution in regards to this relationship.

### **D. Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination**

The Department of Geosciences works 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, the department rejects 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, the department opposes all forms of bullying including threatening, humiliating, coercive, intimidating conduct, or physical violence that causes harm to, interferes with, or sabotages academic 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 misconduct under the Department of Geosciences Code of Conduct. Such behavior should be reported and addressed with consequences for the offender, including but not limited to sanctions or expulsion as allowed by MTSU policy.

### **E. Definitions**

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 1) it becomes a condition of an opportunity, education, benefit, evaluation, or employment or 2) 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.

This code of conduct is adapted from the American Geophysical Union's 2017 Scientific Integrity and Professional Ethics handbook. Last updated February 20<sup>th</sup> 2018.