



Volunteer Code of Conduct

Research | Education | Outreach



The University of Texas at Austin

WHAT STARTS HERE CHANGES THE WORLD

Message from our director

Welcome to the University of Texas Marine Science Institute! The Institute is part of The University of Texas at Austin, and we are supplemented by special item funding from the state's budget. We are dedicated to understanding and sharing our knowledge of the world's oceans and coasts. We also manage the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve, the third largest in the country.

As a volunteer with us, it is important that you represent the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in a professional manner at all times. We want to ensure that we have a working environment that enables each of us to conduct business in accordance with the highest ethical standards.

We believe that every person at every level within our organization has an obligation to perform his or her duties with the highest degree of honesty and integrity. To support this endeavor we have developed this document to help guide you through some of the laws and policies you need to abide by.



We have high expectations of our volunteers, so please read through this document and ask questions of your supervisor at any time. We want to keep you and our staff safe, keep our university's reputation high and intact, and make this the best possible working environment for everyone.

Let's work together to uphold the values of the university.

Robert W. Dickey, Ph.D.
Director, Marine Science Institute at the
University of Texas at Austin

Why do we have a Code of Conduct?

Our Code highlights some of the laws, regulations, UT policies, and ethical standards everyone is expected to follow. It provides guidance on how to carry out our daily activities in accordance with our purpose and values. Our actions shape the public's view of our university, which is why it is so important that we each take responsibility to act legally and ethically in all situations.

Our university proudly has representatives in all parts of the world. We expect the members of our community to comply with the laws of the United States and with the laws of other countries while we are there. While we embrace diversity and respect cultural differences, if a local custom or business practice violates our Code, we must follow the Code. If something permitted or required by our Code violates local law, then we must follow local law.



Did you know...

Our compliance and ethics program is overseen by the Executive Compliance Committee, which is made up of the president and vice presidents of each unit.

Resources

Whenever we are unsure about whether a decision or action meets expectations of the law, regulations, or University of Texas at Austin policies, the following resources are available to us:

- Our *immediate supervisor* or department manager
- The *policies* for UT Austin
- *University Compliance Services*
- The UT Austin *Hotline*

Ask questions

Familiarize yourself with the Code, as well as the policies and procedures that apply to you in your role at UT Austin.

Of course, this document can't address every possible situation, so it is up to you to use good judgment and seek help whenever you have questions or aren't sure about the right course of action.



Speak up, report concerns

If you suspect that someone is behaving illegally or unethically, please speak up. Talk to your supervisor or manager, call the Hotline, submit an online report, or send an email to hotline@compliance.utexas.edu. UT Austin does not tolerate retaliation against anyone who asks questions or raises concerns.

Table of Contents

Message from our director	2
Why do we have a Code of Conduct?	3
Resources	3
Ask questions.....	4
Speak up, report concerns	4
Table of Contents.....	5
Ethical Conduct in the Workplace	7
Ethical principles	7
Retaliation	8
Our culture	9
Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Respect.....	9
Workplace Harassment and Misconduct.....	10
Drugs, Alcohol, and Smoking.....	10
Weapons.....	11
Use of State Property	11
Maintaining Records and Information	12
Conflicts of Interest.....	13
Gifts and Gratuities	13
Political Activity and Contributions	14

Purchasing and Contracts	15
Environmental Issues	16
Sustainability.....	16
Fitness for Duty.....	17
Reporting Injuries	17
Obligation to Report Wrongdoing.....	18
How can I report a violation?	18
Further Guidance and Resources	19
Ethical Decision Making	19
Ethics and Compliance Resources	20
University Compliance Services.....	20
Compliance & Ethics Hotline	20



Ethical Conduct in the Workplace

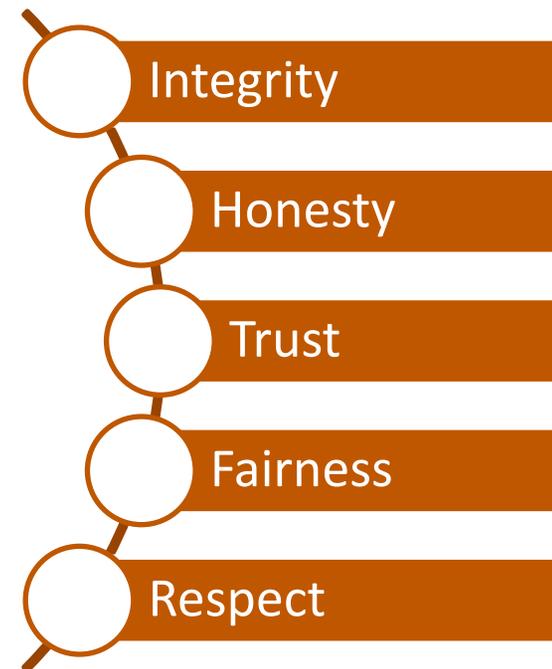
Each member of our university is expected to uphold our core values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. We value the important role that volunteers play in accomplishing the university's mission and require the same compliance with rules and attention to duties and responsibilities for volunteers as we do for university employees, including background checks and following the Youth Protection Program Policy (if the service involves minors).

Ethical principles

Our actions will be guided by our ethical principles even when confronted by personal, professional, social, or economic pressures. Our reputation is one of our most valuable assets and should be protected.

We all have shared responsibilities and should do the right thing. If you are unsure of the right course of action, ask yourself: Is it legal? Could it violate policy? Is this decision in line with expectations of the university?

If you're still unsure, talk with your supervisor, the compliance officer in the related compliance area, University Compliance Services, Human Resources, or Legal Affairs. You can also ask a question through the Hotline. For more information, see the Resources section at the end of this document.



Retaliation

We must be able to ask questions and raise issues without fear of retaliation and we must know that our concern will be treated seriously, fairly, and promptly. Every person in our community is responsible for making sure that the university conducts its business with honesty and integrity. To help, you should report all instances of possible violations of law, regulations, or university policy. University Compliance Services provides several ways for you to report these violations without fear of retaliation. Knowingly making a false report or reporting with malice or reckless disregard for the truth is also prohibited.

Did you know...

UT Austin's Hotline is available by phone or web, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. All reports using this channel are treated confidentially.

Retaliation is an adverse workplace action (or a credible threat of an adverse workplace action) taken against someone who participated in an investigation or raised a concern they believed to be truthful. Examples of adverse workplace actions include: unjustified negative evaluations or references, demotions, or terminations in response to a "good faith" report.

Any university employee who engages in retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. If you suspect retaliation in response to reporting a concern or participating in an investigation, please contact University Compliance Services immediately or make a report through the Hotline.

If you think you are being retaliated against, or that an investigation is being conducted inappropriately, you should report it immediately using any of the reporting avenues available to you.

Note: In situations involving immediate threat of personal harm, you should immediately notify UTPD or other emergency services.



Our culture

We recognize that our decisions and actions reflect not only upon our individual reputations, but also upon the reputation of the university. Our relationships with each other are what drive success.

Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Respect

Having a diverse working environment – made up of people of all ages, races, cultures, and backgrounds – brings value to our team. People with a wide variety of skills, abilities, experiences, and perspectives make us a stronger and more innovative university. We are committed to the values of equal opportunity, inclusion, and respect.

For appointment decisions, assignments, promotions, terminations, benefits, or any other workplace-related activity, we do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, citizenship status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. We are committed to seeking the best-qualified person to fill each available position and will reward each person based on his or her job performance.

Related policy:

[HOP 3-3020: Nondiscrimination Policy](#)

We respect each other, even though we may have different ideas and opinions. We treat each other fairly and with dignity, which helps to create a positive atmosphere.

Workplace Harassment and Misconduct

We strive to provide an educational and working environment for students, faculty, staff, volunteers, and visitors that is free from illegal and/or inappropriate workplace conduct, including violence, harassment, sexual misconduct, threats, and hazing. Harassment and misconduct can include unwanted sexual advances or comments, visual displays such as derogatory or sexually-oriented pictures, and physical conduct including unwanted touching. This means we treat each other with dignity and respect. We also encourage everyone to promptly report incidents of misconduct. The university will respond appropriately, including taking disciplinary action when warranted, in response to misconduct by its community members.

Related policy:

[HOP 3-3031: Prohibition of Sexual Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Sexual Misconduct, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking](#)

Drugs, Alcohol, and Smoking

The university has had a tobacco-free policy since 2012 and using tobacco and nicotine delivery products on university property is prohibited. This does not mean the university requires that you quit smoking or using tobacco, but we expect you to follow the policy while on university property. This includes all buildings and structures, sidewalks, parking lots, walkways, attached parking structures, and university-owned vehicles. For resources on how to “Live Tobacco Free at UT, go to: <http://sites.utexas.edu/tobaccofree/>

In addition, illegal drugs, controlled substances, and unauthorized alcohol use while on duty is also prohibited. Anyone who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination.



Weapons

The University of Texas at Austin is committed to providing a safe environment for students, employees, and community, and to respecting the rights of individuals who are licensed to carry a handgun as permitted by Texas state law. Since August 1, 2016, anyone who is licensed to carry may carry a concealed handgun throughout university campuses except in locations and at activities prohibited by law or as specified in our policy.

Openly displaying weapons while on university property is prohibited.

This means you should not see a weapon on campus, including a handgun, unless it is being carried by a peace officer. If you see a weapon on university property, you should call 911.

Related policy:

[HOP 8-1060: Campus Concealed Carry](#)

Use of State Property

Assets owned by UT Austin or any other state entity are to be used for official state purposes only. This means the personal use of any UT Austin asset, like buildings, equipment, or other property, is not allowed, except in specific limited circumstances. You cannot use UT property for personal gain or for anything other than official university business. The occasional, incidental use of certain items, such as e-mail and telephones, is allowed if it does not interfere with your job performance or impose a cost to the university.



Maintaining Records & Information

As a State agency, we are required to follow federal and state laws regarding records retention. This means that any information created or received while doing university business is considered a state record and we must keep it for a certain period of time. This could include electronic information, like emails, or information on paper. It includes documents, images, videos, press releases, websites, and more. Remember that it's the content of the record that's important – not how it got to you.

Certain records are covered by laws and regulations, like FERPA, HIPAA, the Texas Public Information Act, and more, are confidential and cannot be disclosed without proper authorization.

Before deleting, throwing away, or destroying any document you created as part of your university business, please check with your supervisor or [Records Management Services](#).



Did you know...

Records we create, like emails, must be kept for a certain period of time. A good rule of thumb for routine emails is to keep them for 2 years. But some of our records need to be kept longer. And some records at the university can never be deleted because of their historical value!



Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest exists in a situation where a member of the university community allows outside personal interests to influence their decisions at work. Outside interests could include personal financial interests, professional activities, nepotism (family members who work for the university), the offer or acceptance of gifts or benefits from third parties, and more. Those can create conflicts between the interests of the university and your private interests.

Some outside relationships are prohibited even if those outside interests do not actually impair your ability to act in the best interest of the university, because it may appear to the public that your independence of judgment or loyalty has been affected.

Related policy:

[HOP 5-2011: Conflict of Interest, Conflict of Commitment, and Outside Activities](#)

Gifts and Gratuities

By definition, a volunteer is someone who performs services directly related to the business of the university without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation. This means payment for volunteer services is not allowed and, in general, no one at the university may not accept or solicit any gift, reward, favor, benefit, or service that might reasonably influence or appear to influence our official duties. We may not accept a gift under any circumstances that has a value greater than \$50.

Even though the acceptance of a gift may not constitute a crime or change our decisions in any way, it may appear to the public that a gift has influenced us in performing our duties. This means you should not accept gifts that could reasonably appear to influence official conduct, even if the gift is technically legal.

Self-Dealing

We are not allowed use our status as a volunteer for the university or information we learn during volunteering to directly or indirectly benefit our personal financial or business interests. This means that you cannot use your status as a volunteer to secure privileges or exemptions for yourself or others that are not otherwise available to the general public.

For example, you cannot accept fees, honoraria, commissions, or other things of value as payment for your volunteer services. It also means that you cannot recommend the purchase of goods or services in which you (or people with whom you have a personal relationship) have a direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise. If you are concerned that an action you take may be considered self-dealing please contact your supervisor for guidance.

Political Activity and Contributions

No member of our community may make any public statement on any political or other obviously controversial subject which might reasonably be understood as an official statement of The University of Texas at Austin. Of course, we retain our right to speak as individuals, but you need to be careful if you are contacted by the media or asked to participate in an event because you volunteer with UT since someone may believe you speak on behalf of the university. If you do speak to the media or take part in an event, you must make it clear (“on the record”) that you do not have the authority to speak on behalf of the university and that any views you express are yours and not the university’s.



Purchasing and Contracts

As a volunteer, you do not have the authority to sign contracts on behalf of the university. Signing a contract without university authorization is against the law and may make the contract unenforceable. It may also create individual liability for you. This means you should never sign contracts on behalf of the university, even if the dollar amount seems small. All contracts need to go through the proper process.



Environmental Issues

The university seeks to promote excellence in advancing environmental stewardship and sustainability on our campus, in our academic and research programs, and in our public service and outreach activities. The primary goal of the Marine Science Institute is to improve understanding of the marine environment through rigorous scientific investigations. The goal of the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve is to promote appreciation and support for the protection of natural resources by integrating research, monitoring, education, and resource management. Stewardship is part of our core values.

Sustainability

Our interest in the environment goes beyond what the government tells us we must do. We follow all applicable environmental laws and regulations, but we also set standards for environmental excellence and make decisions that benefit flora and fauna, water quality, and people. We practice recycling and recover debris that others have left behind. We reduce the amount of water, energy, paper, and other resources that we use whenever possible. We also follow responsible disposal of all electronics.

Fitness for Duty

We are committed to providing a safe workplace for the benefit of the university community. In order to provide a safe work environment, we must be able to perform our job duties in a safe, secure, productive, and effective manner, and remain able to do so throughout the entire time we are working. If we aren't fit for duty, we may present a safety hazard to ourselves, to other employees, to the university, or to the public. The university has a responsibility and an obligation to ensure we are able to do our activities safely.

This means we are responsible for notifying our supervisors when we are not fit for duty and when we see a coworker acting in a manner that may indicate they are unfit for duty.

Related policy:

[HOP 5-2340: Fitness for Duty](#)

Did you know...

If you trip on a sidewalk and hurt your ankle, we want to know about it! Please tell your supervisor about any injuries you get while on the job so we can help fix the situation.

Reporting Injuries

Safety is our first priority. If you or anyone else is injured on university property, regardless of the cause, you need to report the essential details to your supervisor. We want to make sure the injuries are taken care of, but we also want to make sure that the incident is documented so that we can correct the situation that caused the injury in the first place.



Report Illegal or Unethical Activities

All members of our community should report, without fear of retaliation, any:

- illegal or fraudulent activity
- financial misstatements, or accounting or auditing irregularities
- conflicts of interests or dishonest or unethical conduct
- violations of the university's code of conduct
- and violations of other laws, rules, or regulations

How can I report a violation?

You can report anonymously through the web at www.reportlineweb.com/utaustin or by phone at **1-877-507-7321**. You may also report suspected non-compliance by email, telephone, US mail, campus mail, or even stop by in person.

E-mail: hotline@compliance.utexas.edu

Phone: 512-232-7055

US Mail: PO BOX 8118, Austin, TX 78713-8118

Campus Mail: UTA 2.206, Mail Code D9200

Please note that all information submitted to the Compliance and Ethics Hotline is publicly available through the Texas Public Information Act. The university will maintain confidentiality within the confines of the law.



Further Guidance and Resources

Thank you for reading our Code of Conduct. We hope you find it useful in guiding your behavior and decisions as you carry out your daily activities here.

Ethical Decision Making

If you're ever unsure of what to do, ask yourself these questions:

- Is it legal?
- Does it follow the rule and spirit of our policies?
- Does it reflect the university's values and ethical principles?
- Does it respect our community?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no”, don't do it. If you are still unsure, seek help.

University of Texas at Austin Policy Library

The [Handbook of Operating Procedures](#) (HOP) contains many of the policies that relate to our daily activities at the university. On this website you will also find links to the [Handbook of Business Procedures](#), [IT policies](#), the [Board of Regents Rules and Regulations](#), the [University of Texas System policies](#), and more. If you aren't sure where a policy is located, check with your supervisor.

Ethics and Compliance Resources

University Compliance Services

Paul Liebman, Director and Chief Compliance Officer

Address: 1616 Guadalupe St., Austin, TX 78749

Phone: 512-232-7055 | **Email:** hotline@compliance.utexas.edu | **Website:** compliance.utexas.edu/

Compliance & Ethics Hotline

Anonymous reporting via phone: 877-507-7321

Anonymous reporting online: www.reportlineweb.com/utaustin

Acknowledgement

_____ Date

I, _____, have read and understood the Marine Science Institute’s Code of Conduct
(Please print your name)
and as a condition of my volunteer service I agree to be bound by the requirements for ethical conduct while
volunteering for The University of Texas Marine Science Institute. I further acknowledge that volunteers serve at
the pleasure of the university and that my assignment can be terminated at any time. No length of performance
of volunteer services for the university shall create any entitlement, right, or privilege to continue providing
volunteer services for the university in the future.

Signature

Group

UTEID

Phone Number

Please return the signed document to:
Nicole Pringle, Education Specialist and Volunteer Coordinator

