

The Northwestern CIERA REU Program Code of Conduct

The Northwestern CIERA Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Program is committed to creating an inclusive, collaborative environment. We endorse guidelines regarding professional behavior, bullying, and harassment, of the American Physical Society (APS), American Astronomical Society (AAS), and the Associated Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA). These documents are linked below, and we expect that our REU students will read and abide by these guidelines. In addition, we summarize the main values and rules of the program below, which draw heavily from the linked APS/AAS/AURA documents, as well as additional online resources (such as the guidelines of the [Recurse Center](#)).

Our Values

The following three principles are intended to foster a learning environment that leads to rigor and excellence.

1. **Shared Responsibility.** As scientists, and specifically as CIERA REU participants, each student is a citizen within the global community of scientists, and shares responsibility in maintaining the health of their community.
2. **Honesty.** Quoting from the APS: "Science is best advanced when there is mutual trust, based upon honest behavior, throughout the community."
3. **Respect.** Inclusive environments foster excellence by challenging us to consider a variety of viewpoints and approaches. We honor alternate viewpoints as opportunities for discussion and learning, and therefore treat others with respect, even if we disagree. Quoting from the AAS guidelines: "Scientists should work to provide an environment that encourages the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. They should promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all their colleagues, regardless of gender, race, ethnic and national origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, or any other reason not related to scientific merit."

Principles of Engagement:

The following are a few basic social rules, adapted from those of the Recurse Center. These rules make explicit certain norms of social behavior that help uphold the values listed above, as well as the ethical guidelines we endorse. If you mess up on any of the below, don't panic: we all make mistakes sometimes. Apologize, reflect, move forward.

1. **Raise all voices.** During group work and discussions, pay attention to who is contributing. Invite contributions from quieter members of the group and be conscientious of not dominating the conversation. We understand that it can be exciting to discuss a new idea, but always strive to listen (rather than just wait your turn to speak).

2. **No feigning surprise.** In a learning environment, it is very important that people feel comfortable saying "I don't know" or "I don't understand." Therefore, please do not act surprised when someone says they don't know something, whether it is regarding a technical or non-technical subject (e.g. "What?! I can't believe you don't know what X is!"). Quoting from Recurse: "Feigning surprise has absolutely no social or educational benefit: When people feign surprise, it's usually to make them feel better about themselves and others feel worse. And even when that's not the intention, it's almost always the effect."

3. **No well-actually's.** As defined by Recurse, "A 'well-actually' happens when someone says something that's almost (but not entirely) correct, and you say, 'well, actually...' and then give a minor correction." Well-actually's interrupt the discussion and fixate on a minor, usually irrelevant point, often solely to make the person delivering the well-actually feel more important. If you feel the need to correct someone, take a moment to consider whether your correction is in the spirit of truth-seeking, rather than grandstanding, and whether it will provide a positive contribution to the discussion.

4. **No -isms.** The CIERA REU explicitly bans racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other kinds of bias— whether these behaviors are overt or subtle. Subtle -isms can be particularly tricky, as they are often unconscious behaviors we engage in by mistake, and are sometimes caused by conflicting norms between cultures. To use an example from Recurse, saying "It's so easy my grandmother could do it" is a subtle -ism.

If you experience any of these behaviors during the course of the program, you should feel free to bring it up directly with the person, or if it's more comfortable, point out the behavior to a member of the CIERA REU leadership team. If someone points out that you have engaged in this behavior, it can be tempting to become defensive. Instead, we ask that you apologize, reflect on how you can learn from that moment, and move on. If you do not understand why others took issue with your behavior, the CIERA REU leadership will be happy to discuss it with you, so that everyone can learn from the experience.

Rules, Reporting, and Consequences Regarding Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation:

Harassment, discrimination, and retaliation (as defined by the [AAS anti-harassment policy](#)) will not be tolerated. All code of conduct violations should be reported, whether or not you are the subject of the unacceptable behavior. All participants share responsibility in maintaining a healthy community. To report violations, please speak to or email a member of the CIERA REU leadership team: Aaron Geller (a-geller@northwestern.edu), Tjitske Starkenburg (tjitske.starkenburg@northwestern.edu), or Kari Frank (kari.frank@northwestern.edu). Especially for sexual misconduct cases, if you are more comfortable speaking to someone outside CIERA, please contact the [Northwestern Title IX office](#). Reports will be kept confidential to the extent possible, except if we've discussed with you and agree otherwise. A member of the leadership team will follow up with the reporter and the individual who violated the code of conduct, and violators will be subject to discipline.

Further Resources:

AAS Ethics Statement, including "Conduct Towards Others":

<https://aas.org/policies/ethics>

AAS Anti-Harassment Policy:

<https://aas.org/policies/anti-harassment-policy>

The APS Guidelines for Professional Conduct:

https://www.aps.org/policy/statements/02_2.cfm

The Recurse Center Manual:

<https://www.recurse.com/manual>

[AURA Standards of Workplace Conduct](#)