

Call for Applications

6th Student Workshop on International Coastal and Marine Management in the Gulf of Mexico Alacranes Reef (Campeche Bank) and Coastal Yucatán, Mexico June and October, 2021

Application Deadline: April 16, 2021

Development of an Environmental Report Card for Alacranes Reef, Campeche Bank, Mexico

Coral reefs in the Gulf of Mexico are facing growing threats from a combination of natural and anthropogenic stresses. These pressures have caused a variety of environmental and economic impacts including degraded water quality, loss of critical habitat, introduction of invasive species and diseases, depleted fish stocks, physical damage to corals and reef structure, increased susceptibility to storms and hazards, and other problems. The ability to understand the extent of these changes and vulnerabilities and to adopt adaptive management strategies is an essential aspect of improving the environmental and socio-economic health of these reef systems, and by extension, the Gulf of Mexico region. Moreover, effective management will only occur with the cooperative participation of the three nations that surround the Gulf—Mexico, Cuba, and the United States.

We invite graduate-level students from these three nations to apply to the 6th Student Workshop on International Coastal and Marine Management in the Gulf of Mexico (“SWIMM 2021”), which will take place in a two-part, mixed virtual/in-person format in June and October 2021. The workshop is organized by the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi (HRI), the UMDI-Sisal, Facultad de Ciencias of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), and the Centro de Investigaciones Marinas at the Universidad de La Habana (CIM-UH), and it is supported by the Gulf Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and the HRI Furgason International Fellowship.

Rapid changes due to structural transitions in the fishing industry, offshore hydrocarbon production, increasing tourism, and expanding coastal transportation and communications infrastructure are occurring in the coastal zones of the Yucatán Peninsula. Offshore coral reef systems are directly and indirectly impacted by these changes. Students will participate in the development of indicators for a preliminary Environmental Report Card for Alacranes Reef (the "Report Card"), an offshore reef on Campeche Bank about 120 km north of the port of Progreso. These indicators will be used to assess the health of environmental and socio-economic systems of both the reef and stakeholder communities in coastal Yucatán State, and to monitor positive and negative changes over time.

The workshop will start virtually in May 2021 with a series of short, recorded presentations and online activities about the SWIMM 2021 program, environmental report cards, and information about various aspects of Alacranes Reef to provide background. The active portion of the workshop will take place in a mixed virtual/in-person format during the second week of June 2021, and a fully in-person format during the second week of October 2021. During the June session, Cuba- and U.S.-based participants will remain remote, but in close contact with the Mexico-based participants, who will serve as the "boots on the ground" for the group in coastal Yucatán State. Together the entire group will work with local stakeholders and government authorities to learn about local conditions and community priorities with respect to Alacranes Reef. They will then use this information to select a set of environmental and socio-economic indicators that represent agents of change and key resources for the reef and its stakeholders. In addition, these indicators will be used to establish an environmental baseline that could potentially be used to prioritize monitoring programs and support future management strategies and decision making. Following the mid-June event, all participants will engage virtually over the summer to finalize the preliminary Report Card, and to help develop and organize a two-day, peer exchange event that will be held in-person in the second week of October 2021 on the Riviera Maya. This two-day event will be attended by approximately 25 coral reef stakeholders from around the Gulf of Mexico and Greater Caribbean region, and will focus on Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD), but will also provide a venue for presenting the Alacranes Report Card. All SWIMM 2021 participants will take part in this two-day, peer exchange event on the Riviera Maya, which will also include additional days in the region to allow for other thematic, in-person activities.

We invite applications from Ph.D. and M.S. graduate students who are either 1.) enrolled in graduate programs in the United States, Mexico and Cuba, or 2.) who are citizens of any of these three countries, but enrolled elsewhere. Candidates should be engaged in a program of studies and/or research in areas of environmental management, environmental or ecological sciences, environmental anthropology or political and social sciences with focus on environmental issues, community or hazards planning, coastal or marine sciences, oceanography, biology, ecology or marine zoology and related disciplines. We are specifically interested in students who:

- can demonstrate skills in interdisciplinary work or in the design of solutions to problems in environmental resource management,
- have work experience at the interface between management and research, and
- are familiar with innovative or collaborative solutions and that are interested in incorporating educational and/or community components.

We are also interested in students who are committed to studying the problems and challenges of ecosystem conservation the Gulf of Mexico and Greater Caribbean region whether it be through their present work or in the future.

Applications for this program must be completed online at the following URL:

<https://www.hartheresearchinstitute.org/swimm>

Please prepare the following materials BEFORE beginning the application process because they will be needed to complete the online application:

1. **Please compose answers to the following three questions indicating your interest and qualifications to participate in the workshop.** The answers for each question should not exceed 1500 characters (limit is strictly enforced by the online form and not flexible) and should be written in simple, clear language.
 - a.) How do your research objectives and academic career relate to the theme of this workshop?
 - b.) What previous experience do you have with coastal and marine ecosystems?
 - c.) How will participation in this workshop help advance your professional (academic and career) and personal goals?

Answers that do not directly address these three questions will automatically disqualify an application for further consideration.

2. **Please prepare a single, Adobe Acrobat PDF file of supporting materials that contains the following documents in the order specified:**
 - a.) Up-to-date Curriculum Vitae (two-page limit).
 - b.) Copy of all college-level transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable).
 - c.) Two letters of support, one must be from the applicant's advisor or main supervisor and express their agreement with the student's participation in the workshop. Letter writers should clearly indicate their relationship to the applicant, and provide their contact information.
 - d.) Copy of passport valid for at least 12 months (Mexican citizens may substitute their INE card for a passport). Furthermore, candidates should not have any legal impediment that prevents them from traveling to Mexico. For details about traveling to Mexico as a U.S. citizen, see <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Mexico.html>. For non-U.S. citizens, please review the appropriate information for your country of citizenship.

Submissions that do not closely follow the guidelines above will automatically disqualify an application for further consideration.

Although fluency in Spanish is not a precondition to participate, most interviews and activities will take place in Spanish. A strong working ability with the language is highly recommended and will be one of the criteria used to select participants.

The final announcement of participant selections will be made by e-mail around April 30, 2021.

The program will cover roundtrip air or bus transport for participants to Mérida (start location for Mexican participants in June 2021) and Cancún (start location for all participants in October 2021), and transport, food, and lodging expenses related to the workshop while in Mexico. Participants will be responsible for expenses in their own home country before and after the workshop (like meals and getting to/from the airport) and for personal items such as toiletries or souvenirs while in Mexico.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, travel restrictions, and other circumstances beyond the control of the workshop organizers, the current itinerary may be subject to change or cancellation.

The application process, including submitting the PDF file of supporting documents mentioned above, must be completed by 5:00 pm Central Time on April 16, 2021. Incomplete applications or materials submitted past the deadline will not be considered.

For more information, please write swimm@tamucc.edu.