



The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) reaffirms its commitment to a workplace that is safe and free of any type of harassment. STRI takes all allegations of misconduct seriously, especially when inappropriate conduct creates hostile conditions for members of our shared community.

Harassment of any type is not allowed at the Smithsonian Institution or at STRI, and any employee or anyone affiliated with the Smithsonian—intern, fellow, visiting scientist, post-doctoral associate—who experiences harassment is asked to report it to their supervisor, the Smithsonian Institution Civil program coordinator, a facility resource contact, Human Resources or the Smithsonian Office of Protection Services. The Smithsonian can correct misconduct only if it is brought to our attention, so we encourage employees and visitors to voice and report any concerns.

Sexual harassment incidents have, unfortunately, taken place throughout academia. This issue is broader than STRI and broader than the Smithsonian (SI), but in no way reduces the impact or the responsibility for change that sits with the Smithsonian. The Secretary of the Smithsonian, the Smithsonian Under Secretary for Science and Research, and STRI Leadership have leaned strongly into this issue, making a safe, harassment-free culture the institution's top priority and, put human and financial resources behind our commitments. Below are some ways that we have taken action to create a harassment-free, diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all our employees or anyone affiliated with the Smithsonian.

### **1. Accountability**

The advent and strengthening of the [SI Civil Program](#), and the hiring of Jamie Velasco at STRI as the first SI Civil coordinator at a Smithsonian Unit, and the first fully bilingual SI Civil staff, have ensured that we have dedicated staff focused on maintaining a safe, harassment-free working environment at all times. Annual evaluation and performance appraisals for mentors and advisors now include elements on mentorship, DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion), in addition to traditional scientific productivity metrics. During onboarding sessions, information on SI Civil and support resources is shared with new academic appointees, visitors, and new hires. And with the strong presence of SI Civil, no complaints sit at a director's desk – all complaints get handled professionally and promptly by SI Civil.

### **2. New and more robust reporting mechanisms and sources of information**

The Smithsonian recently launched a new online reporting platform called "**Voice It: *If you see it, feel it, or hear it, we want you to...Voice It***". This institutional service is available through both an English and Spanish 24/7 hotline and an online reporting platform, the [Voice It website](#). Information on this hotline is posted on prominent signage throughout all STRI facilities. Each facility also has a trained, bilingual, first-line responder available for confidential consultation.

### **3. Transparency.**

We measure general perceptions and incidents of harassment and unfair treatment within the STRI community annually, and we work to gather ideas and suggestions to make STRI a safer and more supportive work environment continuously. In early October 2021, we sent a workplace climate survey to the STRI community, and 797 people responded. In a commitment to transparency, the full report and an executive summary are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on our public website. We have committed to repeating that survey to measure our progress every 2 years. In addition, the STRI website now has a tab dedicated to [Anti-harassment support resources](#), accessible to anyone. Shorter surveys, such as pulse and exit surveys, have been created and are under review to regularly measure where we are as an institution. Said surveys will be implemented for employees, and a new survey for academic programs (interns, fellows), and visitors is now in place.

### **4. Listening to our community**

As a result of the workplace climate survey, Human Resources acted on employees' concerns, by initiating a compensation study for local employees, providing Inclusive Health Insurance (which now allows our local employees to add their same-sex partner to their insurance plan), and aligning holidays with the US Embassy in Panama for both local and non-local employees.

In addition, HR is continuously facilitating new training opportunities that include Fundamentals Training for Supervisors which emphasizes local laws and safety and security, plus annual SI Civil and Diversity trainings. Additional development opportunities such as Field Safety Training, Supervisor Leadership Training and Brain Health and Workplace Wellbeing Workshops have been conducted successfully. In addition, STRI partnered with the local NGO FundaMorgan to train staff on rights and responsibilities under the Panamanian legal code.

### **5. Changing systems.**

We have restructured our Fellow and Intern selection process to reduce conflicts of interest and mitigate power imbalances. A set of [new guidelines](#) for the fellowship award processes are available on STRI's website under Academic Programs. These guidelines were implemented to ensure that fellowship selection is fair, free of solid conflicts of interest, and supports broad community involvement.

### **6. Safety and security**

STRI'S Office of Protection Services and the STRI Safety Office personnel conduct periodic reviews of safety and security measures at all STRI facilities, including housing and residential facilities, and keep the community up to date with information on workplace safety measures and procedures, security notices, and more. Our dedicated safety and [security webpage](#) has important emergency contacts and information.

### **7. An improved code of conduct.**

We have updated and strengthened our code of conduct, ensuring it better articulates expected and prohibited behaviors and reporting options. We have instituted a policy to ensure everyone working at STRI and coming to STRI for research and study agrees to this [code of conduct](#).

## **8. Culture change.**

We have hired Ernesto Cole as the first unit-level Diversity Manager in the Smithsonian system. Ernesto provides oversight to organizational DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion) initiatives, projects, and goals that support the institution's anti-harassment strategy and equity agenda, including STRI's first-time active participation in community activities such as World Pride Panama. Ernesto is working closely with the Office of Diversity at the Smithsonian Institution to focus the mission, vision, values, and plan for DEAI at STRI in alignment with the broader institution. To date, we have integrated DEAI into the recruiting and onboarding processes for employees, academic appointees, and visitors, and vetted service providers for DEAI Education.

In addition to the specific action areas detailed above, STRI continues a strong commitment to affinity groups such as the grassroots, independent STRI-IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access). STRI-IDEA includes members from the community— from past and present fellows to technicians, field assistants, administrative staff, and STRI staff scientists. The group strives to work with the community to overcome barriers to access and systemic inequities in science and is focused on making action plans to facilitate a more just and accessible research and learning environment.

We are also aware that this is a work in progress. STRI leadership will continue to reform systems, change policies, listen, respond to our community, and work to support a safe, healthy, diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environment. We are deeply aware of our community's pain, and we continue to speak openly about the work not yet done, the barriers we still face, and the future we want for STRI and for science.

We are confident that our structured and thoughtful approach will support our diverse community and further the knowledge necessary to understand, sustain, and rebuild trust in a thriving, diverse, equitable workplace that is inclusive and safe for all.

For STRI media related enquiries, please contact Linette Dutari at [DutariLD@si.edu](mailto:DutariLD@si.edu).