

Annex X: Maintaining an Environment of Respect Aboard Ships (MERAS) Committee

1. Introduction

In 2015, the UNOLS Council formed an ad hoc committee, later designated Maintaining an Environment of Respect Aboard Ships (MERAS). The committee was charged with researching existing policies and practices aboard the U.S. Academic Research Fleet (ARF) regarding protected personal information, medical history forms, participation at sea for pregnant participants and provisions for nursing participants, and other issues as identified. The committee's role has evolved to address issues of equity/respect and diversity/inclusion more broadly throughout the ARF. As many issues in the MERAS purview deal with social change—which often requires time and effort to see realized—MERAS transitioned to a standing committee to provide a forum in which to address relevant matters of concern to the ARF.

2. Purpose

The MERAS Committee works to facilitate an environment of respect onboard ARF vessels and to cultivate and preserve a culture of inclusion, regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, nationality, or socio-economic background. The committee provides recommendations to the UNOLS community regarding resources and practices to identify and overcome related workplace barriers in the ARF and assists the UNOLS Council, funding agencies, and the ARF operators in formulation of new policies as needed. Examples of scope, drawn from prior activities, include, but are not limited to: making pregnancy and nursing policies of ship operating institutions readily available to users of the ARF, assisting in development of a video to improve civility and eliminate bullying and harassment associated with shipboard research at sea and ashore, and recommending new cruise planning document policies concerning gender expression, support, and safety.

3. Organization / Membership

a) Membership

The MERAS membership shall be composed of five members, one being the Chair. Terms for all members are three years, for no more than two consecutive terms.

Each MERAS member shall be entitled to one vote on matters at MERAS meetings. However, the Chair may submit matters for vote at other times. These matters shall be voted on by mail or electronic mail, and votes shall be collected for a period of two weeks and require a simple majority vote.

b) Nominations/Officers

Nominations to the MERAS shall be open to the research community. Vacancies shall be announced through the UNOLS listservs and on the UNOLS website. Candidates shall be asked

to submit their 2-page curriculum vitae and a statement of interest. Applications for membership to the MERAS Committee shall be reviewed and voted on by the standing MERAS members. The standing MERAS members will select one nominee for each open position. The MERAS committee will nominate a Chair. Nominations for the MERAS committee members and the MERAS Chair will be sent to the UNOLS Council Chair who, with the endorsement of the UNOLS Council, shall appoint the MERAS members/Chair.

The MERAS Chair shall represent the Committee in all matters deemed necessary in the interest of the Committee. The Chair shall implement recommendations made by the Committee and shall preside over the Committee meetings. The MERAS Chair is an ex officio member of the UNOLS Council.

The Committee can appoint a Vice Chair, who shall function as the MERAS Chair in the absence of the Chair. In the event the Chair cannot participate in a UNOLS Council meeting, the Vice Chair shall stand in and fully participate including participation in any votes that are required.

c) Working Groups and Subcommittees

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, and with a majority vote of the Committee, various working groups and panels, as necessary to the work of the Committee, may be formed. The charge and duration of action of such working groups and panels shall be stipulated at the time of inception.

d) Liaison with other UNOLS Committees

MERAS will establish and maintain liaisons with other UNOLS committees such as, but not limited to, RVOC, the safety committee, and RVTEC.

4. Specific Tasks

Specific tasks for the MERAS include but are not limited to:

- a) Promote and sustain a respectful and professional work environment onboard the vessels of the ARF.
- b) Facilitate an environment free of harassment and bullying
- c) Cultivate an environment that embraces diversity and inclusivity
- d) Develop actions to promote diversity, equity and inclusion within the US ARF
- e) Respond to concerns of the ARF community by helping to implement new policy concerning items above.

5. Meetings/Reports

The Committee shall meet as required, with at least one annual meeting. This will be held in person if possible, with other meetings held electronically. The MERAS Chair shall set the agenda for meetings in consultation with the Committee, the UNOLS Office, facility managers, funding agencies, and others as appropriate. The business of this meeting shall encompass reports of any active working groups and panels, and discussions of project and actions of the Committee.

Passage of actions shall be by vote, in accordance with the voting procedures set forth in Section 3a, Membership, paragraph 2.

The various working groups shall each meet in person or electronically as necessary to accomplish their task at least once yearly.

6. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Originally Adopted: XXXXX