



# Venus Exploration Analysis Group

## IDEA Policy and Code of Conduct

### VEXAG Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Policy

VEXAG seeks to reflect the increasingly diverse community in the Venus-related sciences and technological enterprises by promoting awareness, understanding, and appreciation of diversity throughout the community from steering committee to active members, to incoming and early career members. VEXAG values inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility as this increases the quality and satisfaction of the community and brings diverse opinions, life experiences, and points of view to research, policy, and decision-making processes.

The purpose of the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility effort in VEXAG (organized through SAW 11) is to:

- Assist, help develop, recommend, plan, and implement initiatives that support IDEA in VEXAG and in the Venus Community
- Strengthen the sensitivity of the Steering Committee and community members to diverse races, cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, genders, and ages
- Promote and actively increase opportunities for underrepresented groups to work with and become part of VEXAG (Steering Committee and SAWs)
- Increase understanding of working within a diverse workforce, to include managing a diverse workforce
- Represent VEXAG in the IDEA Inter-AG workgroup

### VEXAG Code of Conduct

Summary: VEXAG is committed to providing a harassment-free experience for Steering Committee members, participants in our meetings, and other activities VEXAG sponsors or participates in, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, race, religion, or other protected status. While attending a VEXAG meeting or any related ancillary or social events, participants should not engage in harassment in any form. All participants are expected to behave according to professional standards and in accordance with their employers' policies on appropriate workplace behavior.

Conduct or harassment concerns should be reported to the VEXAG Chair, Deputy Chair, and/ or IDEA representatives (SAW 11 group leads).

*Detailed VEXAG Code of Conduct is Adapted (very closely) from, and with full credit to the creators of the MeXAG CoC V1.*

The VEXAG SC members establish this Code of Conduct to state their intent to promote a safe and more equitable work environment for all members of the community. The VEXAG SC Code of Conduct outlines the minimum expected commitment and conduct of the SC members as they work together to support and advance the community's goals for the exploration of the second planet. This document outlines: (1) the standards to which we (the VEXAG SC) will hold ourselves; (2) unacceptable behavior; (3) means to enforce this Code of Conduct; (4) instructions for filing an incident report; and (5) training and reference materials for meeting participants, organizers, staff, and volunteers on how to respond to incident reports.

#### 1. Conduct Standards

As individual SC members and as the committee as a whole:

- We will refrain from discriminatory behavior.
- We will create mechanisms to implement and monitor conflict of interest policies.
- We will act on behalf of members of VEXAG, rather than our personal agendas.
- We will make decisions based on the merits of the issues.
- We will treat VEXAG SC colleagues and fellow VEXAG members or collaborators as professionals—with respect and consideration, valuing a diversity of views and opinions.
- We will create a safe environment for respectful conversation, critiquing ideas rather than individuals, discussing any concerns in person whenever possible, and taking responsibility for our statements by speaking as much as possible in the first person (“I” statements) rather than in the third person.
- We will not engage in personal attacks nor inappropriate/negative body language directed toward other VEXAG SC members, fellow VEXAG members, partners, or collaborators.
- Although we may disagree with VEXAG SC colleagues during meetings—and discuss personal views with members if asked—we will demonstrate a unified front and support the final decisions made by the SC.
- We will convey the general outcomes of SC discussions, but not the details of who said what during SC meetings, conference calls, or email discussions.
- We will not share confidential or proprietary information.
- We will read the SC agenda materials distributed in advance of SC meetings, come prepared to participate constructively, and refrain from conducting other professional or personal business during meetings.
- We will actively engage in VEXAG and VEXAG SC activities beyond meetings, equitably sharing the responsibilities of the SC in supporting its mission.
- We will make every effort to ensure that we are participating in SC conference calls/webinars in a private setting, to avoid distractions to the group.
- We will stay informed about current trends in the profession that could affect VEXAG.
- We will serve as ambassadors of VEXAG core mission, policies, programs, and services.
- We will refrain from speaking as official spokespersons of NASA to the media, partners, or policymakers, unless we have been designated as such by NASA.
- When we represent VEXAG on social media, we will act to promote the core mission of VEXAG and adhere to the points of acceptable behavior outlined in this Code of Conduct and the VEXAG SC Social Media Guidelines.
- Collectively, and as individuals, we will serve as role models, demonstrating the highest standards of ethical conduct. VEXAG SC members will maintain a professional reputation in the community.
- We will ensure an equitable, inclusive, diverse, and accessible work environment within the VEXAG SC, where possible through proactive actions such as, but not limited to, participating in professional training opportunities (e.g., unconscious bias training).

#### 2. Unacceptable Behavior

Any of the following behavior is considered unacceptable:

- Discriminatory and disrespectful comments or speculative remarks related to race, national origin, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability/health, beliefs, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other personal characteristics that make SC members unique;
- Dissemination of discriminating or inappropriate statements and images in online domains or presentations, whether they be public or for internal use;
- Inappropriate and non-consensual physical contact;
- Real or implied threats, stalking, intimidation, or physical or verbal abuse;
- Unprofessional behaviors that disrupt presentations during meetings;
- Taking pictures or making audio/video recordings of presentations at VEXAG and VEXAG SC meetings without prior permission from the presenter or convener.

#### 3. Explanation of Enforcement

Standards and unacceptable behaviors outlined in this Code of Conduct will be enforced following these guidelines:

- Insensitive or inappropriate comments are often unintentional (e.g., use of out-of-date language). Such comments can often be addressed through education and helpful rephrasing suggestions. These suggestions are best made in response to the comments, or as soon as possible afterward if the venue is not appropriate. SC members commit to engage in such constructive behavior within SC meetings, as well as in the broader community, to maintain a safe and equitable environment.
- During SC meetings, SC members will do their utmost to resolve a situation as it occurs; however, the person leading the meeting is ultimately in charge (Chair/Deputy-Chair of the SC, or designated proxy).
- If a SC member feels that another SC member or the SC as a whole is not acting in an inclusive, equitable, or accessible manner, that member should bring the matter to the attention of the Chair/Deputy-Chair of the SC, and/or IDEA SAW leadership as soon as possible.
- If a member of the VEXAG SC directly witnesses or is being made aware of unacceptable behavior by participants of VEXAG events, the incident should be reported to the VEXAG leadership.
- Any VEXAG SC member who is requested to stop unacceptable behavior, is expected to comply immediately.
- The VEXAG SC as a whole may take any action(s) deemed necessary and appropriate if a SC member violates this Code of Conduct, including but not limited to the immediate removal from the SC and prohibiting participation in any future VEXAG SC activities.
- The VEXAG SC reserves the right to maintain a record of individuals (SC members) that behaved inappropriately and prohibit their attendance at any future VEXAG meeting or other VEXAG event.

#### 4. Incident reporting

If you witness harassment, discrimination, or insensitive or inappropriate comments as a bystander, it is important that you speak up and take as many of the following steps as possible:

1. If possible, and assuming it is safe to do so, call out the harassment or discrimination.
2. Let the victim know you have witnessed the behavior and that you are prepared to help e.g., through documenting and reporting the incident.
3. Keep records and notes detailing the incident (e.g., emails or written reports that contain evidences of discrimination, harassment, or insensitive or inappropriate behavior). Notes should list the time and location of where the incident took place, who was present as a witness, and what was said or done.
4. Report the discriminatory or harassment incident to VEXAG SC members you feel comfortable with, IDEA SAW members, and/or the Chair/Deputy-Chair, of the VEXAG SC in writing, along with your records or notes from the reporting process. SC members will be responsible for looping in the Chair/Deputy Chair to address issues raised to them.

If you experience harassment or discrimination, please consider the following steps to help protect yourself:

1. Keep records and notes detailing the discriminatory or harassment experience, whether as the subject or as a witness (e.g., emails or written reports that contain evidences of discrimination and harassment). Notes should list the time and location of where the incident took place, who was present as a witness, and what was said or done.
2. Report the discriminatory or harassment incident to members, or the Chair/Deputy-Chair, of the VEXAG SC in writing, along with records or notes from the reporting process.
3. Follow up with the VEXAG SC for updates on actions by the VEXAG SC in response to the complaint.
4. Reach out to friends and family, or seek help from a mental health professional, for support.

In case of insensitive or inappropriate comments directed toward you, consider the following options:

1. Seek clarification and offer a non-threatening option to correct the insensitive or inappropriate comments made by the person.
2. If you are in a situation in which it is reasonable to assume your physical safety is at risk, walk away and report the incident to the members, or Chair/Deputy-Chair, of the VEXAG SC.
3. In the event that the behavior occurs in a public setting (e.g., a professional meeting) an is witnessed by or brought to the attention of the VEXAG SC, the Chair/Deputy-Chair of the SC will report the behavior and incident to the meeting organizers.

In case of an emergency situation, if deemed appropriate, emergency services should be called (call 911 in the U.S.) or a local fire alarm should be activated. If you witness a crime or behavior that constitutes an immediate or serious threat to public safety, make sure you keep yourself safe while notifying the appropriate authorities. Follow the directions of facility security and public safety personnel. Initiate first aid based on need and your training. Provide as much specific information as possible (e.g., nature of incident, precise location, number of people involved) to 911 and emergency responders.

#### 5. References for further information

Diniega S., Castillo-Rogez J., Daubar I., Filiberto J., Goudge T., Lynch K., Rutledge A., Rathbun J., Scully J., Smith R., Richey C., Udovicic C.T., and Villarreal M. (2020) Ensuring a safe and equitable workspace: The importance and feasibility of a Code of Conduct, along with clear policies regarding authorship and team membership. White Paper . LPI Contribution Number: LPI-002544.

Favaro et al.: Your Science Conference Should Have a Code of Conduct. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, V. 3. 103. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2016.00103>

Foxx et al.: Evaluating the prevalence and quality of conference codes of conduct. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, V. 116 (30) 14931-14936. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1819409116>