

Call for Applications

4th Student Workshop on International Marine and Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mexico Yaguajay, Caguanes National Park, and Cayo Santa Maria, Cuba October 7-16, 2018

Application Deadline: May 15, 2018

The sustainability of the Gulf and its communities depends on being prepared to face and respond adequately to the challenges of climate change.

The Gulf of Mexico is facing new threats. An increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme events, as occurred in 2017 with Hurricanes Irma, Maria and Harvey, constitutes a new reality to which scientists, experts and communities must respond appropriately. The ability to coordinate responses in a fast and organized way, to understand vulnerabilities and strengths, and to prepare for extreme situations are essential skills that will help save lives.

The 4th Student Workshop on International Marine and Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mexico ("SWIMM 2018") will take place from October 7-16, 2018 in northern central Cuba (Yaguajay, Caguanes National Park, and Cayo Santa Maria). The workshop is organized by the Harte Research Institute (HRI) at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi and the Center for Marine Research (CIM) at the University of Havana, and it is supported by the Gulf Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and the HRI Furgason International Fellowship.

Northern central Cuba, where HRI and CIM are engaged in ongoing research, experienced the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Irma in August 2017. Coastal ecosystems in the region suffered devastating damage from this Category 5 storm, and this situation provides the setting for SWIMM 2018. Students will participate in the development of a set of indicators and a visual report that provide a synoptic evaluation of the damage caused by the hurricane and the degree of ecological recovery.

The first part of the workshop will be field-based, and students will closely work with members of local fishing and agricultural communities and park staff to test a pilot instrument or "report card" via interviews and hands-on activities. Ideally, this effort will form the basis for a participatory and community monitoring program to study environmental and anthropogenic pressures affecting the health of the communities and habitats in the region. This work will be supplemented with lectures by ecologists and experts dedicated to critical marine species conservation, fisheries, oceanographic measurements and other topics related to sustainable marine and coastal management. Later, during an excursion to Cayo Santa Maria, students will observe new and growing

challenges such as those associated with the tourism industry and urban development. During the final stage of the workshop, students will travel to the capital of Cuba, Havana, to present the results of their efforts at MarCuba 2018, the 11th Congress on Marine Sciences.

We invite applications from graduate students who are enrolled in Ph.D. or M.S. programs 1.) in the U.S., Mexico and Cuba, or 2.) who are citizens of any of these three countries. 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, adaptation to risk and disasters, 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 wider 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.harterresearchinstitute.org/swimm>

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

1. **Please compose answers to the following three questions indicating your interest and qualifications to participate in the workshop.** The answers should not exceed 1500 characters each 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 the questions being asked will automatically disqualify an application for further consideration.

2. **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 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. Furthermore, candidates should not have any legal impediment that prevents them from obtaining a visa to visit Cuba. For details about traveling to Cuba as a U.S. citizen, see <https://cu.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/traveling-to-cuba/>. 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, a practical working ability with the language is desirable.

The final announcement of participant selections will be made around June 30, 2018.

The program will cover roundtrip airfare from the U.S. or Mexico to Cuba, and transport, food, and lodging expenses related to the workshop while in Cuba. Participants will be responsible for expenses in their own home country (like getting to/from the airport) and for personal items such as toiletries or souvenirs in Cuba.

Due to travel restrictions and other circumstances beyond the control of the 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 May 15, 2018. Incomplete applications or materials submitted past the deadline will not be considered.

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