

Call for Applications

9th Student Workshop on International Coastal and Marine Management in the Gulf of Mexico (SWIMM) Mérida, Mexico

**Virtual meetings in Fall 2025 with in-person event in February 2026
and follow-up virtual meetings**

Application Deadline: October 29, 2025

Shared Living Shorelines and Scientific Diplomacy in the Gulf of Mexico

The Gulf of Mexico is a single, interconnected ecosystem shared by Mexico, Cuba, and the United States. Despite cultural, political, and economic differences, all three nations face common threats to their coastal ecosystems including habitat loss, climate change, rising sea level, and pressures from unsustainable development. These challenges threaten biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the resilience of coastal communities.

The 2025–2026 edition of the *Student Workshop on International Coastal and Marine Management in the Gulf of Mexico* (SWIMM, see <https://www.harterresearch.org/swimm>) will bring together graduate students, scientists and practitioners, and environmental law specialists to develop a shared agenda for coastal conservation and restoration, grounded in both science and policy. The program will focus on living shorelines and scientific diplomacy as a trilateral strategy for resilience, emphasizing five key ecosystems—mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds, oyster reefs, and coastal dunes.

This edition of the SWIMM program will be co-organized by the Harte Research Institute (HRI) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Kalanbio A.C., the UMDI-Sisal, Facultad de Ciencias de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), the Laboratorio Nacional de Resiliencia Costera (LANRESC), and the Centro de Investigaciones Marinas de la Universidad de La Habana (CIM-UH). The SWIMM program is funded by the Gulf Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and the HRI Furgason Fellowships.

SWIMM 2025-2026 will foster interdisciplinary collaboration across the sciences, law, and policy, with graduate students from all three Gulf nations working side-by-side with ecosystem experts and environmental law specialists to:

- Analyze coastal and marine ecosystems in light of national legal frameworks.
- Identify shared conservation priorities and feasible regulatory alignments.
- Develop applied deliverables including a comparative legal analysis, a harmonization strategy, policy recommendations, and an action plan for continued trilateral cooperation.

Through this integrated approach, participants will gain not only technical and legal insights, but also the diplomatic and cross-cultural skills essential to advancing sustainable management of the Gulf of Mexico.

Graduate students studying in the three Gulf nations are invited to apply for the 2025-2026 edition of SWIMM. The program is structured in two phases. Virtual participation will begin in Fall 2025, with online sessions that allow students and mentors to meet, explore background materials, and begin comparative analysis of ecological and legal frameworks across the three nations. The second phase will include a fully-funded, approximately seven day (possibly more depending on funding), in-person workshop in Mérida, Yucatán in February 2026. This phase will bring participants together in person and will include expert presentations, interactive working groups, legal framework analysis, and a final drafting session for the program deliverables. Field excursions and cultural activities will strengthen the understanding of local coastal socio-ecosystems and build lasting trilateral bonds among participants. A few virtual meetings are expected after the in-person event to follow-up and finalize deliverables.

Upon successful completion of SWIMM, students will receive a reference letter and certificate recognizing their participation in the program.

We invite applications from doctorate and masters level graduate students who are either:

1. Enrolled in graduate programs in Mexico, Cuba, or the United States, or
2. Who are citizens of any of these three countries, but enrolled elsewhere.

We seek candidates from a wide variety of disciplines with at least some connection to the program theme via their course of studies or graduate research work. The connection may be via management, law and policy, ecology, coastal/marine sciences, economy, public health, political/social sciences with a focus on socio-environmental issues, anthropology, community planning, risk management, engineering, and any related disciplines. We are especially interested in students who:

- can demonstrate skills in broadly interdisciplinary work, especially with a law and policy focus or with science backgrounds that contribute to the design of solutions to problems in environmental resource management,
- have work or academic 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.

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

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

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

1. **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 does your course of study or graduate research work relate to the theme of this workshop?
 - b.) What previous experience do you have with generating scientific, technical, legal/policy knowledge or managing 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. **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 undergraduate and graduate level college 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. Letter writers may choose to submit their letters directly to the SWIMM program given confidentiality concerns.
 - d.) High-quality scan of passport that is valid for at least 12 months (Mexican citizens who reside in Mexico 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 prerequisite for participation, most parts of the workshop and related activities will take place in Spanish. A strong practical ability to communicate in the language is highly recommended and will be one of the criteria used to select participants.

Regarding the in-person field experience in February 2026, the SWIMM program will cover roundtrip air or bus transport for participants to Mérida from their airport or bus station of origin, 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.

The current program focus and schedule may be subject to change or cancellation due to circumstances beyond the control of the workshop organizers, such as changes in travel restrictions, a resurgence of COVID-19, or other unforeseen events.

The application process, including submitting the PDF file of supporting documents mentioned above, should be completed by 5:00 pm Central Time on October 29, 2025, at which point consideration of applications and selection of participants will begin. Applications received after the deadline may be considered if space allows, but priority will go to those submitted on time. Incomplete applications with missing materials will not be considered.

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