

TO: South Carolina Space Grant Consortium (SCSGC) Faculty PI Mentors
FROM: SCSGC Management Team
SUBJECT: **Statement of Expectations, Guidelines, and Compliance Consequences for Faculty Mentors**

The South Carolina Space Grant Consortium is committed to developing a highly skilled, diverse, and capable Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) workforce. Central to this mission is the active, hands-on participation of our faculty mentors. Because our student programs are built around authentic, intensive NASA-related research, the consistent presence, timely administrative management, and direct leadership provided by our faculty are vital to student success.

To maintain the rigorous standards required by NASA and the Consortium, all faculty members acting as primary mentors for SCSGC Scholarships and Fellowships (including the Graduate Research Fellowship, Kathryn D. Sullivan Fellowship, Undergraduate Student Research Award, Technical College Research Award, and Palmetto Academy) are expected to fulfill the following obligations:

1. On-Campus Presence and Availability of Faculty Mentor (PI)

- **In-Person Mentorship Requirement:** Faculty mentors must maintain an active, in-person presence on campus or in the field to provide direct, face-to-face guidance to their student mentees. NOTE: Remote or entirely virtual mentorship does not meet the standard of this program.
- **Minimum Time Commitment:** Mentors are expected to be physically present on campus or in the field and directly available to the student for at least 80% of the project's duration.
- **Absence and Substitution Protocol:** If a primary mentor must be off-campus or unavailable, exceeding the allowed 20% absence window due to travel, sabbatical, medical leave, or other professional obligations, the following actions are strictly required:
 - **1. Appoint a Substitute or Interim Mentor:** Another qualified institutional faculty member with subject matter expertise must formally take over the primary mentorship and supervisory duties.
 - **2. Immediate Notification & Coverage Plan:** The South Carolina Space Grant Consortium management team must be notified immediately in writing. This notification must include a detailed coverage plan outlining how the student's research continuity, safety, and institutional support will be maintained under the interim mentor's supervision. This plan is subject to approval by the SCSGC program office.

2. Student Advising, Program Limits, and Financial Administration

- **Mentorship Cap:** To ensure high-quality, personalized guidance, a faculty member may serve as the primary research mentor for no more than three (3) students concurrently across all SCSGC student programs during each award period (May-April).

- **Student Eligibility Verification:** Mentors must ensure that their student mentees meet all base eligibility criteria, including maintaining full-time enrollment at a 2-year technical college or 4-year member undergraduate institution (where applicable) and holding U.S. citizenship.
- **Timely Student Compensation:** Mentors are directly responsible for overseeing the administrative tracking and prompt release of student stipends/wages. Faculty must ensure that their student mentees are processed and paid within one (1) week of performing work for the program. Financial delays due to faculty mentor negligence or delayed paperwork submissions are unacceptable.

3. Research Supervision & Deliverables

- **Hour Requirements:** For high-intensity tracks like the Palmetto Academy Research Program or summer fellowships, mentors must structure workflows to help students successfully log and meet their required hours (e.g., a minimum of 350 hours for Palmetto Academy and Kathryn Sullivan Fellowship).
- **NASA Collaboration:** Mentors are strongly encouraged to help students bridge connections and foster collaborative relationships with NASA scientists and researchers at NASA Centers and/or local aerospace-related industries.
- **Reporting Compliance:** Mentors are responsible for overseeing scheduling the final project presentation and submission of the student's final written project report; both of which must be delivered to the SCSGC within one (1) month of project completion.

4. Professional Development & Workforce Tracking

- **Public Presentation:** Faculty are expected to prepare their student mentees to present their research findings publicly. Per NASA outcome indicators, 100% of awardees are expected to present at a local, state, regional, and/or national professional meeting within a year of receiving their award.
- **Scholarly Output:** Mentors should actively co-author academic materials with their students, working toward the program target of 80% of awardees producing a paper or abstract with their mentors within one year of the award.
- **Workforce Tracking Participation:** Mentors must encourage students to participate in longitudinal tracking to report on their post-graduation status (e.g., entering graduate school or transitioning into the aerospace/STEM workforce). This is a requirement of the NASA Space Grant program.

Consequences for Non-Compliance During the Grant Period

SCSGC actively monitors active grants to ensure NASA performance metrics, financial timelines, and student safety standards are met. If a faculty mentor is found to be in violation of any of the rules outlined above—including unapproved off-campus absences, failing to provide an approved coverage plan, exceeding student mentorship caps, or failing to ensure students are paid within the mandatory one-week window—the following progressive actions and consequences will be enforced during the active grant period:

1. First Notice & Remediation Period: Upon identification of a policy infraction (including delayed student payments), the mentor will receive an official written warning. The mentor will have five (5) business days to submit a formal remediation plan to correct the deficit to the SCSGC for approval.

2. Institutional Escalation: If the infraction is not resolved within the five-day remediation window, or if a pattern of non-compliance persists, formal notification of the policy violation will be immediately escalated and sent directly to the mentor's respective Department Chair and Institutional Dean.

3. Suspension of Funding: If institutional escalation does not yield immediate resolution, or if a mentor leaves campus without an approved substitute, SCSGC will immediately freeze and suspend all remaining stipend, research, and travel funding associated with the mentor's portion of the award.

4. Future Funding Restrictions: Faculty members who violate these policies during the grant period will face a minimum two-year suspension from eligibility to serve as a primary mentor or principal investigator on any future SCSGC grants, fellowships, or proposals.

Acknowledgement & Agreement

By signing below, I certify that I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the South Carolina Space Grant Consortium (SCSGC) Faculty Mentor Expectations, Guidelines, and Compliance Consequences. I acknowledge that failure to meet these guidelines may result in the progressive enforcement actions detailed above, up to and including the suspension of active grant funding and restriction from future funding opportunities.

Faculty Mentor Printed Name: _____

Faculty Mentor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Home Institution and Department: _____

Department Chair Name & Email Address: _____

Dean Name & Email Address: _____

We appreciate your continued dedication to inspiring and engaging the next generation of space and aerospace pioneers in South Carolina by providing them with secure, consistent, and administratively sound leadership.

For questions regarding these expectations, absence notifications, student payroll guidelines, or compliance policies, please contact the SCSGC Program Manager, **Tara B. Scozzaro, MPA**, at scozzarot@cofc.edu.