

Panel on Public Affairs
October 8, 2021 - Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting

Members Present:

W.Collins (Chair), D.Dahlberg (Past-Chair), W.McCurdy (Chair-Elect), E. Mazur (Vice-Chair), J. Adams, P.Bucksbaum, D. Dahlberg, J.Dailey, S.Demers, E.Gawiser, S.Fetter, L.Grego, D.Louca, C. Nitta, R.Orbach, W. Taylor, M.White, J.Wurtele

Virtual Advisors/Staff Present:

J.Bagger, M.Elsesser, J.Gates, F.Hellman, J.Hernandez Charpak, J.Oliver, B.Rosner, J.Russo, F.Slakey

Action: W.Collins called the meeting at 11:05 AM

Motion: To approve the June meeting minutes
(Dahlberg, Hellman)

Action: the motion passed (16 in favor 1 abstention)

National Security Subcommittee

Grego, Chair of the National Security Subcommittee presented the new statement to replace 06.1 The Use of Nuclear Weapons and edits for the new statement on Verification Science for International and Security.

POPA discussed the impact of nuclear weapons and their effects on civilization. The committee proposed adding references and footnotes to support the conclusions drawn in the text.

Motion: Approve new statement 06.1 The Use of Nuclear Weapons and add references and footnotes and forward to PPC
(McCurdy, White)

Action: The motion passed (17 in favor) unanimous

Motion: to revisit Statement 01.1 "Security & Science at the Weapons Laboratories" considering comments from the POPA committee. The Subcommittee will review relevant APS statements and revise 01.1 for the next POPA meeting in Feb 2022

Motion: vote to accept minor edits for statement Verification Science for International and Security
(Rosner, Hellman)

Action: the motion passed (17 in favor) unanimous

GA Advocacy Update

Elsesser, Director of Government Affairs provided an update on the recent activities of APS Government Affairs (GA). GA sent the Research Security Policies and Their Impacts Survey to membership that reported more than 3,200 physics professionals and students show that the US federal government's current approach to addressing research security concerns is weakening, not strengthening, the US scientific enterprise. APS President Jim Gates wrote a letter to the DOJ and OSTP calling for a number of reforms through the China initiative to make it more effective for international members. GA continues its activities around the Presidential Proclamation 10043 to develop a path forward and maintain the US commitment to welcoming international talent and promoting beneficial international collaborations.

Physics & the Public Subcommittee

McCurdy, Chair of Physics and the Public Subcommittee presented the following statements to the committee for approval

Motion: to approve the edits for statement “15.2 Status of Women in Physics” and forward to Council

(Hellman, McCurdy)

Action: the motion passed (17 in favor) unanimous

Motion: to approve the revised statement “06.3 Career Options for Physicists” and forward to Council

(Gawiser, McCurdy)

Action: the motion passed (16 in favor) unanimous

Motion: renew statement “01.2 K-12 Assessment & Science” w/ minor edits and forward to Council (Helman, white)

Action: the motion passed (16 in favor) unanimous

Motion: renew statement “06.2 Advocacy for Science Education” w/ minor edits and forward to Council

(Dahlberg, White)

Action: the motion passed (16 in favor) unanimous

Collins, McCurdy, Taylor discussed the possibility of a report to revisit the APS direct air capture of the 2011 POPA report: [Energy Critical Elements: Securing Materials for Emerging Technologies](#). There has been an increased interest with the issue in both the public and private sectors. The report would take a broader approach of the 2011 report to address the energetic and mass considerations and specific technologies being proposed. The committee discussed political considerations to consider when looking at the results of the report. Wati and others will develop a proposal for the committee to vote in February 2022.

Energy & Environment Subcommittee

Orbach, Chair of the Energy and Environment Subcommittee, presented the 15.3 Earth's Changing Climate statement to POPA to review. The committee discussed the membership comments and considered adding the AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis report as a reference.

Motion: to approve statement 15.3 “Earth’s Changing Climate” and forward to the Board for review (Hellman, Grego)

Action: the motion passed (12 in favor, 1 against, 0 abstentions)

Collins provided a brief update on the Methane Study. The report committee diligently working hard to complete the final sections of the report and present it to POPA for a full vote by the end of the year.

Ethics Committee

Frances Houle, Ethics Committee Chair, provided an update on the Ethics Committee activities. The committee has been monitoring the complaints submitted to ethics@aps.org. The EC has been working to develop a profile for complaints and resolution processes. The EC has also begun the full process of professional conduct disclosures which are required for major elected positions and awardees.

Other Ethics Committee activities during 2021:

- Surveys of early career members and department chairs:
 - Data analysis completed
 - 2 Physics Today articles in preparation
- Organizational:
 - Established committee structure with chair line and subcommittees
 - Research Integrity Subcommittee (Nan Phinney, chair)
 - Ethics Education Subcommittee (Michael Marder, chair)

Houle presented changes to the **19.1 Guidelines on Ethics**. The changes are promoted by complaints the Ethics Committee has received and by the emerging research integrity issues. Three changes were made to strengthen the language that supports APS actions:

- Enabling misconduct
- Clarifying code of conduct for meetings
- Strengthening the conflicts of interest and commitment

New section in guidelines

Ethical Principle

Persons in positions of responsibility such as group leaders, department heads and chairs, deans or other administrators have a responsibility to ensure that all faculty, staff, and students understand and observe institutional policies on treatment of colleagues and subordinates. Harassment and other inappropriate behavior must not be tolerated.

Recommended Implementation

1. Persons in authority who fail to respond appropriately to complaints may themselves be subject to a complaint about their behavior.
2. Persons in authority must refer complaints to their institutions promptly for investigation and should be supportive of institutionally determined sanctions.
3. APS views enabling as professional misconduct and may respond to complaints by applying sanctions as appropriate.
4. Persons making a complaint must be treated with confidentiality and protected. They should not be pressured to suppress the complaint, nor should they be subjected to retaliation of any kind.

Ethical Principle, 3rd paragraph

If participants observe inappropriate comments or actions, and personal intervention seems appropriate and safe, consideration of all parties involved should be made before intervening. Anyone at an APS meeting who observes conduct in violation of these guidelines has an obligation to bring the violation to the attention of APS leadership, whether they are the victim or a bystander. If an observer feels able and safe calling out misconduct on-the-spot, they should respectfully intervene. Complaints can be brought to the attention of an APS staff member, or they may be reported on the APS Ethics Hotline. Confidentiality must be maintained to the extent possible to protect the complainant.

The policy of the APS is that violations of this code of conduct at its own meetings will not be tolerated, and the APS will pursue an appropriate course of action if complaints are received. The policy applies to attendees, vendors, APS staff, volunteers, and all other stakeholders at APS meetings.

Prompted by research security concerns

- Existing “Ethical Principle” text determined to be sufficient, with 1 sentence reworded by BEC to remove confusing language

Ethical Principle

There are many professional activities of physicists that have the potential for conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment that may be personal, commercial, political, academic, or financial. Relevant conflicts are matters that may prevent full attention being paid to one’s responsibilities, improperly influence one’s judgment and decision-making, or when revealed later, would make others feel misled or deceived. Relevant conflicts are matters that, when revealed later, would make others feel misled or deceived, may prevent full attention being paid to one’s responsibilities, or improperly influence one’s judgment and decision-making. Conflicts of interest can arise from employment, research funding, stock ownership, payment for lectures or travel, consultancies, and corporate support for staff. Conflicts of commitment include acceptance of projects or roles that are beyond one’s available time and resources, evidenced, for example, by persistent failure to complete a project’s goals.

Prompted by research security concerns

- Updated language for consistency with the National Science and Technology Council Joint Committee on the Research Environment (JCORE) – transparency, disclosure, reciprocity.

Recommended Implementation

1. Conflicts or potential conflicts of interest and commitment must be fully disclosed. Openness and transparency help ensure appropriate disclosure and allow determination of whether conflicts can be managed, or whether conflicting activities should be discontinued.
2. Scientists and institutions should ensure reciprocity in the exchange of research information between all collaborating partners.
3. Conflicts of interest and commitment relevant to the publication process must be declared to editors by researchers, authors, and reviewers. Editors should also disclose relevant conflicts of interest and commitment to their readers. Sometimes editors may need to withdraw from the review and selection process for the relevant submission.
4. Conflicts of interest and commitment associated with awards and promotion decisions are defined by institutional policies and must be disclosed.

5. When a subordinate is engaged to work on a project, the supervisor and subordinate should each ensure that they have sufficient time and resources to perform the work successfully

POPA provided feedback on the proposed changes and to share with the Ethics Committee to consider adding to the statement. Houle will return at the February 2022 meeting to discuss recommendations for POPA to be involved in Ethics Committee activities.

Action: Adjournment, W.Collins ended the meeting at 3:37 PM