

Society of Toxicology Council

Disclosure, Conflict of Interest, and Conduct Policy

The Society of Toxicology is dedicated to developing knowledge for the improvement of the health and safety of living beings and the protection of their environment. In attaining this objective, each Member of Council must maintain high ethical standards and to this purpose, this code requires a personal commitment.

All officers of SOT council are expected to support these objectives of the Society and as members in good standing of the Society of Toxicology, are expected to practice and uphold the Society's Code of Ethics, <http://www.toxicology.org/ms/ethics.asp>, the Constitution and By Laws of the Society, <http://www.toxicology.org/ms/constitution.asp>, and to be familiar and uphold the Society of Toxicology's policy statements. (E.g. policy for the use of animals in research, http://www.toxicology.org/ai/air/AIR_PubPolicy.asp).

By upholding and practicing these principles, the Councilors of the Society of Toxicology (SOT) act in the best interest of SOT. Councilors should avoid any situation that could be construed as providing personal or third-party gain or financial enrichment. Councilors must fully disclose all relationships (monetary and non-monetary) that may be perceived as leading to biased decisions.

When encountering potential conflicts of interest, Council Members must identify the potential conflict and, when required, remove themselves from all discussion and voting on the matter. Councilors must not conduct themselves in a manner that could potentially cause harm to the Society.

Disclosure

Council Members must:

- Annually, complete a disclosure form that details all relationships (monetary and non-monetary) that may be perceived to bias decisions.
- Prior to each Council meeting, provide any updates to their disclosure forms.
- When Council is deliberating, indicate all sources of related funding along with any potential financial or other interests that may be perceived to bias decisions (Councilors are not required to state the monetary value of their financial interests). This includes corporate, governmental, institutional, and/or public interest funds. All sponsors that are not from the Councilor's institution must be identified. Some examples of relationships that may bias a decision or which, if known, could give the perception of bias include:
 - (1) Stock options or bond holdings in a for-profit corporation or self-directed pension plan;
 - (2) Research grants;
 - (3) Employment (full or part-time) of a spouse or family member;
 - (4) Ownership or partnership;
 - (5) Consulting fee or other remuneration;

- (6) Non-remunerative positions of influence such as officer, board member, trustee, or spokesperson; receipt of royalties; or, membership on a speakers bureau; and/or
- (7) Factors such as professional collaboration or competition.

Conflict of Interest

Council Members must:

- Avoid placing (and avoid the appearance of placing) one's own self-interest or any third-party interest above that of SOT; while the receipt of incidental personal or third-party benefit may necessarily flow from certain SOT activities, such benefit must be merely incidental to the primary benefit to SOT and its purposes;
- Not engage in any outside business, professional or other activities that would directly or indirectly materially adversely affect SOT;
- Provide goods or services to SOT as a paid vendor to SOT only after full disclosure to, and advance approval by, the Council, and pursuant to any related procedures adopted by the Council; and
- Not persuade or attempt to persuade any member, exhibitor, advertiser, sponsor, subscriber, supplier, contractor, or any other person or entity with an actual or potential relationship to or with SOT to terminate, curtail, or not enter into its relationship to or with SOT, or to in any way reduce the monetary or other benefits to SOT of such relationship.

Conduct

Council Members must:

- Use best efforts to participate in activities of Council and to perform duties in a professional and timely manner;
- Not abuse their Council membership by improperly using said membership or office or SOT's staff, services, equipment, materials, resources, or property for their personal or third-party gain or pleasure, and shall not represent to third parties that their authority as a Council member extends any further than it actually extends;
- Not engage in or facilitate any discriminatory or harassing behavior directed toward SOT staff, members, officers, Councilors, meeting attendees, exhibitors, advertisers, sponsors, suppliers, contractors, or others in the context of activities relating to SOT;
- Not solicit or accept gifts, gratuities, free trips, honoraria, personal property, or any other item of value from any person or entity as a direct or indirect inducement to provide special treatment to such donor with respect to matters pertaining to SOT without fully disclosing such items to the Council; and
- Not disclose confidential information, including from meetings and communications.

Enforcement:

Council members are asked to self-identify potential perceived conflict of interest and recuse themselves in the event that the potential conflict of interest is direct and would result in personal or third party gain or financial enrichments.

For clarification, several examples are included to provide context for recusion.

1. A Council member who is from a company that is an SOT Affiliate would not need to recuse him/herself from a general discussion of SOT Affiliate companies; however, would be expected to recuse him/herself if a specific discussion on abuse of the Council member's employer company was undertaken.
2. A Council member who receives NIH grants would not have to recuse him/herself for a general discussion of NIH grants. That member would recuse him/herself when a discussion of his/her specific grant was discussed with a deliberate attempt to influence financial gain.

These examples are only meant to be illustrative and not inclusive.

Any member of Council may at any time raise with the President (or other presiding officer if during a Council meeting) the issue of a violation of this policy, in which event, if raised during a meeting of Council, the member of Council believed to have violated the policy shall leave the meeting.

The President may seek the opinions of other members of Council if the challenge is made during a meeting of Council, following which the President shall as soon as possible convey to the alleged violator the concerns expressed for the purpose of giving him or her opportunity to rectify the violation by appropriate action.

Only if the violation remains un-rectified shall Council, with advice from SOT's legal counsel, determine what action, including removal of the member from office pursuant to Article First, Section 10 of the By-laws, is appropriate.

In the event that the alleged violator of this policy is the person presiding over the meeting of Council, either when the matter of privilege is raised or when the alleged violations is under discussion by Council, that person, whether the President or other presiding officer, shall turn over the chair to another member of Council using officer ranking and shall otherwise comply with the above.

Footnote: The Society of Toxicology uses all definitions of bias and conflict of interest as defined by the National Research Policy and as approved by the Councils of the National Academy of Science and Engineering, the Institute of Medicine and NRC Governing Board (*The National Research Council Policy on Disclosure of Personal Involvement and Other Matters Potentially Affecting Committee Service*, November 1, 1992). These policies/definitions are available in the document entitled, Appointment and Participation of Scientist in Peer Review Panels and Scientific Advisory Boards, <http://www.toxicology.org/gp/AdvisoryBoard.asp>.