

# Code of Conduct

## **Background:**

BSA has been considering implementing a Code of Conduct for one year now and has considered it in two different forms. The challenging part under discussion at the last Board meeting revolved around the reporting and handling of Code violations. BSA staff have been investigating better ways of handling Code violations by consulting with other scientific societies like SSE and seeking outside advice from a consultant with a background in this area. Any Code of Conduct must be developed in conjunction with the other participating societies for BOTANY conference.

[NSF's recent notice](#) about reporting and investigating harassment by grantees, including at meetings and conferences may also affect the way we craft our policy. Their notice states, "NSF is working to make certain that awardee organizations respond promptly and appropriately to instances of sexual and all other forms of harassment. A community effort is essential to eliminate sexual and other harassment in science and to build scientific workspaces where people can learn, grow and thrive."

## **For Discussion:**

The following is a slightly tweaked Code of Conduct with a new provision on reporting and investigation of Code violations. It has already taken into account a first round of input from our partner societies. It will be important under this code to:

- 1) Decide if we are in favor of using an outside consultant as an independent ombudsperson/safety officer for handling code violations. This consultant would be used on an ad hoc/ per hour basis to serve as the first point of contact for taking reports and for investigating incident reports. (would not be on site at the meeting)
- 2) Get further input and approval of the other partner Societies in BOTANY conferences
- 3) Present the Code of Conduct as part of meeting registration and include it in a prominent place on the meeting web site and in the program
- 4) Ombudsperson keeps the reporter and the violator information confidential. Decide WHO makes the decision on how to respond to incidents. (Conference Program Committee, an special Ad Hoc Code of Conduct Committee, etc.) with input from the Ombudsperson.

## PROPOSED CODE OF CONDUCT

The BOTANY conference is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and productive meeting environment that fosters open dialogue and the exchange of scientific ideas, promotes equal opportunities and treatment for all participants, and is free of harassment and discrimination. The participating societies in BOTANY conference will make every effort to maintain an environment that is free of harassment, even though we do not control the behavior of third parties. All registrants, guests, volunteers, exhibitors, staff, contractors, vendors, venue staff, and others in attendance are expected to abide by this Code of Conduct at all venues at BOTANY conference, including ancillary events and official and unofficial social gatherings.

Unacceptable behavior includes (but is not limited to):

- intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory or demeaning speech or actions by any participant in BOTANY conference, at all related events and in one-on-one communications carried out in the context of BOTANY conference.
- harmful or prejudicial verbal or written comments or visual images related to gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, age, appearance, or other personal characteristics
- inappropriate or gratuitous use of nudity, sexual images, or stereotyped images in public spaces (including presentation slides);
- deliberate intimidation, stalking or following;
- sustained disruption of talks or other events;
- unwelcome and uninvited attention or contact
- physical assault (including unwelcome touch or groping)
- real or implied threat of physical harm
- real or implied threat of professional or financial damage or harm

Retaliation for reporting unacceptable behavior is a violation of the Code of Conduct. Falsely reporting unacceptable behavior is a violation of the Code of Conduct.

The meeting organizers, Society staff and Society executive officers reserve the right to enforce this code of conduct in any manner deemed appropriate. Anyone violating the code of conduct may be: (a) warned to cease the behavior and that any further reports will result in more serious sanctions (b) expelled from the meeting (without refund), and/or (c) prohibited from attending future meetings indefinitely or for a period of time (d) removed from membership in any or all of the partner societies involved in BOTANY conferences and e) held accountable through notification of the individual's employer of the action taken regarding this violation.

Establishing this code of conduct is intended to prevent incidents of harassment, discrimination, and violence, and to maintain the high quality of scientific discourse that our members have come to expect from BOTANY conferences.

The participating societies shall not be responsible for any defamatory, offensive, or illegal conduct of BOTANY conference participants, and shall not be held liable for personal injury, property damage, theft or damage of any kind suffered by the participants at or in connection with the BOTANY conference. By registering for and attending the annual BOTANY Conference, each participant acknowledges that they have read this Disclaimer, and expressly releases the Societies and its board members, directors, officers, employees, or agents from any and all liability in connection with such Conference.

### **Reporting a Code Violation:**

If you are being subjected to, or notice that someone else is being subjected to behavior that violates this Code of Conduct, please contact our independent Ombudsman, Ms. Sherry Marts, at [CELL PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL ADDRESS, AND OTHER FORMS OF CONTACT].

All complaints will be treated seriously and responded to promptly.

All reports are confidential.

If possible, provide the following information, preferably in writing:

- Identifying information (name/badge information, appearance) of the participant doing the harassing
- The behavior that was in violation
- The approximate time of the behavior (if different than the time the report was made)
- The circumstances surrounding the incident
- Other people involved in or witnessing the incident

Anyone experiencing or witnessing behavior that constitutes an immediate or serious threat to public safety, or a criminal act is expected to contact 911. Those witnessing a potential criminal act should also take actions necessary to maintain their own personal safety.

### **Addressing Grievances**

If you feel you have been falsely or unfairly accused of violating this Code of Conduct you should notify our independent Ombudsperson, Ms. Sherry Marts, with a concise description of your grievance. Your grievance will be handled in promptly.

## **Social Media Policy**

BOTANY permits and encourages the use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and blogging as a way to summarize, highlight, excerpt, review, critique, and/or promote the presented materials, poster and exhibit materials, and the conference in general, provided that:

1. the material is not shared in full, and
2. the author or speaker is referenced and cited appropriately in each case.

Please keep in mind that our speakers have invested many hours in the research and development of this material and US copyright laws apply.

If a Presenter does not want information from his/her presentation to be broadcast, they should make this clear in their talk/poster and we ask that attendees respect their wishes.

Out of respect for the other participants, we ask that electronic devices be silenced, though they need not be turned off, so that they may be used to follow along with the materials, tweet, or take notes in accordance with the above stated social media policy.

### **We Encourage You To:**

- Blog, post, and tweet highlights of and comments on the conference.
- Suggest sessions and workshops to attend and events to enjoy; discuss favorite speakers and posters; chat about products and services in the Exhibit Hall; post job openings and opportunities.
- Request the permission of speakers if you would like to take their photograph before or after a session.
- Provide feedback to Show Management and the Organizing Committee (perhaps discuss topics and/or speakers of interest for next year's conference, make suggestions for sessions, or comment on the format.)
- Keep criticism constructive!

### **Please Refrain From:**

- Capturing, transmitting, or redistributing the bulk of the material presented in a session. Doing so infringes on the intellectual property rights of the speakers.
- Blogging, posting, and/or tweeting about the content of a plenary lecture, scientific session, workshop, etc. when the organizer or speaker has explicitly requested that some or all of the information presented is not to be captured or shared.

- Engaging in rudeness or personal attacks.