ISCB CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

The Articles of Incorporation of the International Society for Computational Biology (ISCB) state that the objective of the Society shall be to promote the application of computational methods to problems of biological significance. Further, the mission of the Society is to advance understanding of living systems through computation and to communicate scientific advances worldwide. These goals demand honesty and truthfulness in all activities sponsored or supported by the Society.

Science is best advanced when there is mutual trust, based upon honest behavior, throughout the community. Acts of deception, or any other acts that deliberately compromise the advancement of science, are unacceptable. Honesty must be regarded as the cornerstone of ethics in science. Professional integrity in the formulation, conduct, and reporting of bioinformatics and computational biology activities reflects not only on the reputations of individual and their organizations, but also on the image and credibility of the profession as perceived by scientific colleagues, government and the public. It is important that the tradition of ethical behavior be carefully maintained and transmitted with enthusiasm to future generations.

Each researchers, practitioners, technicians, students, and suppliers within the field is a citizen of the community of science. Each shares responsibility for the welfare of this community. The guiding principles set forth in the ISCB code of ethics and conduct are meant to protect the community of science. The guidelines are not meant to be a complete list of all ethical issues. They will be modified and amplified by events and experience. These are guidelines, not a collection of rigid rules. Society members have an individual and a collective responsibility to ensure that there is no compromise with these guidelines.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ISCB members...

● Aim to uphold and advance the integrity and dignity of the profession and practice of bioinformatics and computational biology.

● Aspire to use their knowledge and skills for the advancement of life sciences and human welfare.

● Strive to increase the competence and prestige of the profession and practice of bioinformatics and computational biology by responsible action and by sharing the results of their research through academic and commercial endeavors, or public service.

● Seek to maintain and expand their professional knowledge and skills.
● Respect professional Codes of Ethics and abide by the prevailing ethical and legal norms of their profession.

● Endeavor for objectivity in their professional activities through recognition, acknowledgment, and mitigation of intentional and unintentional biases.

● Act responsibly toward colleagues, government, corporate sponsors, the wider health care community and the public at large. Build public trust through accountability.

● Foster fair participation of all people, including those of underrepresented groups. Prejudicial discrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, ethnicity, family status, gender identity, labor union membership, military status, nationality, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other inappropriate factor is an explicit violation of the Code. Harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying, and other abuses of power and authority, is a form of discrimination that, amongst other harms, limits fair access to the virtual and physical spaces where such harassment takes place.

● Treat colleagues and researchers with respect and courtesy, based on principles of equality and mutual respect for those with differing worldviews or from different cultures. Share research results and ideas honestly, giving proper credit for others’ contributions to their work.

Professional Conduct

ISCB members
● Maintain professional competence by advancing their knowledge and understanding of new scientific developments and emerging areas of practice through ongoing education and training.

● Educate employees, students, and professionals to follow responsible research practices consistent with the highest ethical standards. Treat trainees with respect and provide them with opportunities for professional growth and development.

● Share knowledge in research, practice, and ethics through publication, professional meetings and conferences, and foster collaborations. Meet applicable ethical and legal standards while collaborating

● Foster public understanding of the nature and objectives of bioinformatics and computational biology consistent with open and responsible use of findings in science and health care.
● Strive for objectivity in their professional activities through recognition, acknowledgment, and mitigation of intentional and unintentional biases.

● Respect the confidential nature of all information and research data entrusted to them. Disclose information with proper and specific authority through the consent of the individual or where there is a legal, ethical or professional right or duty to disclose.

● Claim expertise only in areas where they have the necessary depth of knowledge, especially when contributing to public discussion or policy debate. Do not make statements that are false, deceptive, or fraudulent concerning research, practice, or other work activities, or those of persons or groups with whom they are affiliated. Present personal opinions as such and not as those of the Society.

● Disclose any potential conflicts of interest. Safeguard the quality and credibility of their professional judgment.

● Report findings, including negative findings, accurately, completely, without distortion and in a timely manner.

● Adhere to the highest standards of publication ethics in line with those documented by the Committee on Publication Ethics (https://publicationethics.org). This includes but is not limited to: timely and accurate reporting of findings; full disclosure of author contributions, sources financial support, and any potential conflicts of interest; fair and objective peer-review.

● Refrain from demeaning, discriminatory, or harassing behavior and speech; make ISCB a place that is welcoming and respectful to all participants, regardless of race, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, national origin, ethnicity, or religion.

● Demonstrate professionalism and collegiality in ISCB activities and communications, including committees, task forces, forums, and events, at all times avoiding abusive, racist, sexist, harassing, or threatening behavior towards any other ISCB volunteer, staff, contractor, member, or event participant.

ISCB, through its Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee (EPC) may be able to provide some assistance or guidance for individual members injured in their capacity as bioinformaticians and computational biologists by violations of these ethical principles. In each case, EPC will determine the appropriate ways in which it can be helpful (including making recommendations to the Board of Directors of the Society). ISCB cannot enforce these guidelines, however, and it
cannot substitute for individual responsibility or for the responsibility of members’ institutions and the bioinformatics and computational biology community at large.

For allegations of abusive, harassing, threatening, or similar behavior by a member in connection with ISCB activities or communications which happen within the confines of ISCB, e.g. at an event or during a committee meeting, the EPC may be able to take a more direct role in addressing complaints. Members who have been subjected to, or personally witnessed, such conduct by an ISCB member may submit a written complaint to the EPC. Upon receipt of a complaint, the EPC will generally adhere to the following process:

(1) The EPC will review the complaint to determine if it adequately alleges material misconduct by a member in connection with an ISCB activity or commination.

(2) If the EPC decides to proceed, it will seek to obtain such further information it may need to assess the merits of the complaint, including interviewing the complaining party and any witnesses.

(3) The member who is accused will be provided with written notice of the allegations, in sufficient detail to allow the member to respond comprehensively.

(4) The accused member will be asked to submit a response to the accusations in writing. The response may include statements of witnesses with personal knowledge of matters relevant to the allegations.

(5) The EPC will make a determination based on consideration of all evidence, including the complaint, witness accounts, and the accused member’s response, which the EPC will deliver to the ISCB Executive Committee.

(6) The Executive Committee will determine whether the accused member engaged in the alleged conduct and, if so, will decide upon the appropriate action, which in egregious cases may include suspension or expulsion from membership. The Executive Committee will notify the accused member.

(7) The accused member will have 15 days to appeal, in writing, the decision and/or the disciplinary action to the Executive Committee. The appeal may include additional material or arguments from the accused member.

(8) The ISCB Executive Committee will make a final decision.

(9) A report will be issued to the Board of Directors and retained on file. The report will provide anonymity to all parties.
ISCB reserves the right to summarily suspend or terminate any member’s participation within the Society if said member is convicted of a crime and the conviction is brought to the attention of ISCB. ISCB does not conduct background checks of its members.