

## **Committee Guidelines – Handling Potential Ethical Issues During Selection Process**

### **Purpose**

The Geological Society of America (GSA) has several committees that make recommendations to Council on which candidates should be elected to leadership positions (as officers, councilors, or committee members) or granted honors and awards. The purpose of these guidelines is to help committee members understand how to handle potential ethical issues that may arise in the course of their work.

### **Applicability**

These guidelines apply to the following GSA committees: Membership & Fellowship Committee, Nominations Committee, GSA Foundation Nominating Committee, and all individual awards committees.

### **Guidelines**

GSA is committed to using a fair and consistent process to select qualified candidates for leadership positions, honors, and awards (“candidates”). The individuals we select for these roles represent the best of our profession, and GSA expects them to meet commonly held standards of professional ethics and scientific integrity, including GSA’s [Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct](#). To uphold GSA’s commitment to integrity, all candidates must complete an Ethics Disclosure form to remain eligible for consideration.<sup>1</sup>

GSA has adopted the following guidelines to assist committee members involved in vetting candidates for leadership positions, honors, and awards:

1. Limit your discussion to matters relating to the legitimate criteria GSA has established for such roles.
2. Avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest. Proactively disclose your committee chair any issues that reasonably could make someone question your judgment, honesty, or objectivity.
3. If you have reason to believe that a candidate has engaged in ethical misconduct based on an internet search, a rumor, or information spread “through the grapevine, do **NOT** share or discuss this type of information during the committee’s work and deliberations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ethics Disclosure Form includes 2 questions: (1) Has any court, regulatory agency, employer, or other public or private entity issued a restriction, sanction, ban, or any other form of discipline against you based on a finding that you engaged in professional misconduct of the type covered in GSA’s Code of Ethics? (2) To the best of your knowledge, are you currently under investigation by any court, regulatory agency, employer, or other public or private entity for professional misconduct of the type covered in GSA’s Code of Ethics? Candidates must answer “no” to both questions to remain eligible for consideration.

4. GSA has established specific enforcement procedures to manage potential violations of the Code of Ethics (see [Enforcement Policy & Procedures – Code of Ethics](#)). If you believe that a candidate has engaged in ethical misconduct or may be under investigation promptly notify the committee chair, who in turn should notify GSA's Ethics & Compliance Office at [ethics@geosociety.com](mailto:ethics@geosociety.com). This will enable GSA to evaluate how best to proceed in accordance with established policies. One such option may be the filing of an [Enforcement Request](#) form.
5. If an Enforcement Request is filed during a committee's review cycle, GSA's Ethics Committee may decide that the committee should temporarily suspend its consideration of the candidate pending the outcome of the case. If this occurs, GSA's Executive Director will
  - Ensure that the committee is notified as soon as possible with a directive to stop its consideration of the candidate in question.
  - Notify the applicable Director Advisor or Staff Liaison for administrative support and guidance on communicating with committee members and nominators about the candidate's status. (Such communications will balance the need to share pertinent information on a need-to-know basis while safeguarding the nominee's interest in confidentiality.)
  - If GSA later finds insufficient evidence to support a finding that a violation has occurred, the Society strongly encourages affected committees to resume their consideration of the nominee as soon as practicable. Committees have the discretion to carry over their consideration of such candidates to the following year's review cycle.

### **Who to Contact**

Please contact Nan Stout, Associate Director of Scientific Integrity & Strategic Partnerships, with any questions about these guidelines. She can be reached at [nstout@geosociety.org](mailto:nstout@geosociety.org) and 303-357-1012.