

# NATIONAL SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD FOR BIOSECURITY

## Codes of Conduct Working Group

Progress Report  
November 21, 2005



# Charge

- **“To provide recommendations on the development of a code of conduct for scientists and laboratory workers that can be adopted by professional organizations and institutions engaged in the performance of life science research.”**
  - **To develop standards and principles that can be included in a formal educational and training program to promote appreciation for codes of conduct in the life sciences.**
  - **To draft recommendations on issues related to the conduct of DUR.**

# Members

## Voting Members

- M. Cohen
- C. Fraser
- J. Lumpkin
- M. Nance (Chair)
- D. Wara

## Federal Agency Reps.

- L. Chapman (OSTP)
- J. Fly (DoD)
- R. Mikulak (DoS)
- J. Nicholson (CDC)
- S. Nightingale (DHHS)
- G. Parker (DHHS Alt.)
- K. Patterson (DoD)
- C. Rexroad (USDA)
- S. Steele (DoJ)

# Presentations to the Working Group

- **Margaret Somerville, McGill University**  
**“What Role Can a Code of Conduct Play in the Life Sciences”**
- **Stephanie Bird, MIT**  
**“Crafting a Code of Conduct: What to Consider”**
- **Katherine Heitman, Vanderbilt University**  
**“Using and Reinforcing Codes in Educational Activities”**
- **Francis Macrina, Virginia Commonwealth University**  
**“How Do We Evaluate Responsible Conduct and the Impact of Codes?”**
- **Vivian Weil, Illinois Institute of Technology**  
**“Codes as a Means of Reaching International Audiences”**

# Overview of Findings

- **Key Considerations**
  - **General**
  - **Specific to Dual Use Research (DUR)**
- **Goals, Objectives, and Audience for a DUR Code**
- **Process for Development**

# Findings – Key Considerations

- **A code of conduct in the life sciences can be an effective tool for raising awareness and defining issues of concern, as well as for articulating responsibilities associated with DUR.**
- **A code of conduct cannot prevent intentional acts of bioterrorism.**

# Findings – Key Considerations

- **Many scientific organizations and professional societies have already adopted codes of conduct for their membership.**
- **Most codes are voluntary, but promote a culture of responsibility by defining professional standards and common expectations of members.**
- **Codes of conduct can reach an international audience; national regulations typically do not.**

# Findings – Key Considerations

- **Input from the intended adherents to codes optimizes “buy-in” and the code’s effectiveness.**
- **Opinion leaders and high-profile members of the life sciences can engender support for a code.**



# Findings – Observations Specific to DUR

- **Very few existing codes address the topics of DUR and/or biosecurity.**
- **Other organizations considering biosecurity codes include the Biological Weapons Convention, International Council for Science, National Academies of Science, etc.**
- **A code recommended by NSABB can positively influence consideration of DUR issues by a broad life science constituency.**
- **The criteria to define DUR (under development) are fundamental to the end product and audience for this WG.**

# Findings – Overarching Goal

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- **To reduce the likelihood that dual use research may be misused to threaten public health and/or national security.**

# Findings – Specific Objectives Related to DUR

- **A code for DUR should:**
  - **Increase awareness of DUR concerns.**
  - **Establish:**
    - **Standardized DUR concepts and vocabulary**
    - **Clear values/standards that pertain to biosecurity in the life sciences.**
    - **Sense of responsibility and appropriate conduct among all participants in life science research.**

# Findings – Audience for the Code

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- **The target audience for the code should be a cross section of individuals engaged in life sciences and biosecurity activities.**

# Findings – Process for Development of the Code

- **To define relevant standards and values for a biosecurity code, stakeholder input is critical, the Working Group will:**
  - **Hold a meeting with recognized thought leaders in the life sciences to explore issues related to the development of a code.**
  - **Embark upon a dialogue with the life sciences community by participating in sessions at selected professional and scientific meetings.**
  - **Sponsor “town-hall” style workshops to exchange information about codes with stakeholders.**

# Next Steps

- **Develop an education and outreach program for exchange of information with stakeholders.**
  - **To solicit input on the content of a code.**
  - **To educate constituents about the code, once developed.**
- **Identify standards of conduct that are critical to a code for DUR.**
- **Develop a draft code.**
- **Consider ways to evaluate the impact of a future code on behaviors relevant to DUR.**

# Questions to the Board

- **Which stakeholder groups should be consulted on the development of a code for DUR?**
- **Which professional societies and scientific associations should be targeted for subsequent outreach activities?**
- **What type of forum would facilitate the most effective exchange of information at professional meetings?**
- **Are there other tasks or objectives this WG should consider?**