

## **Development of the American Geosciences Institute Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct: History, Context, and Intended Use**

**History and Charge to the Committee:** In 1999, the American Geosciences Institute (AGI) was one of the first organizations to introduce Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct to its member societies. The AGI Leadership Forum on Ethics and the Geosciences met in September 2013 and drafted a Consensus Statement on Ethics in the Geosciences. This statement was approved by 27 member societies who agreed to:

- Promote informed understanding of the role of ethics in the geoscience
- Raise standards of professional practice among our memberships
- Develop and promote a Common Code of Ethics for geoscientists

In response to the expressed commitment, AGI has assumed a leadership role in developing **Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct** on behalf of its member societies.

**Process:** All societies that signed the Consensus Statement were invited to nominate a member to a committee charged with developing a Common Code of Ethics. Twelve nominations were received, and the committee was established in May 2014 (members and their societies are identified in the accompanying table). Five conference calls were convened, and numerous drafts of the document were circulated and revised by the committee between June and October 2014. The committee reviewed the existing AGI Guidelines on Ethics (1999), the current Ethics policies adopted by numerous geoscience professional societies and identified the common, overarching principles articulated in these policies. In-depth discussions (via e-mail and in teleconferences) considered the breadth and scope of topics covered, with careful attention to the intent, implications, and nuances of the approved text. The document now presented to AGI members is a consensus statement, approved by all members of the committee.

**Guiding Principles:** This Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct has been developed as an aspirational document to set high ethical standards for professional geoscientists. AGI offers these guidelines as a useful reference for its member societies. The specific points in these guidelines are written in general terms to convey ethical standards and expectations a) in the daily professional work of geoscientists, and b) as members of a professional scientific community. Personal and professional responsibilities are emphasized. They do not mandate ethical behavioral norms or expectations, nor do they prescribe remedies or consequences. The member societies of AGI are invited to adopt these guidelines to the degree appropriate to their missions. These guidelines are not binding on any AGI member organization or its members.

**Intended use of these Guidelines:** The **Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct** serve as a framework to identify the ethical principles that should inform

the professional conduct of geoscientists. It serves as a reference point for AGI's member societies as they review and revise their own codes of ethics, or to develop new codes of ethics as needed by professional organizations. The overarching goal is to establish a universal set of ethical expectations to be practiced by geoscientists from among the diverse disciplines embraced by the geosciences. This is particularly important as the geosciences engage increasingly in multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary work in investigating and reporting on the complex Earth system. This framework is also important to set a standard for ethical conduct in the pre-professional training of young geoscientists in all the geoscience disciplines.

**Timeline for Next Steps:** This draft **Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct** will be distributed to the AGI member societies for their consideration following the 2014 GSA meeting. Comments and suggested revisions will be accepted through **20 February 2015**. The AGI Ethics Committee will reconvene in March 2015 to prepare the final version of the **Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct**, and will submit it to AGI by the end of April. The final document will be presented to the AGI Executive Committee for their consideration in May 2015 at their meeting at AAPG.

Table 1: Members of the Ethics Committee

Name	Affiliation	Society
<b>Dave Mogk (Chair)</b>	Montana State University	NAGT
David Abbott	Consultant	AIPG
Robert Finkelman	UT, Dallas	IMGA
Joe Gillman	Missouri State Geologist	AASG
Linda Gundersen	USGS (Emeritus)	AGU
Denise Hills	Alabama Geol. Survey	AWG
Murray Hitzman	Colorado School of Mines	SEG
Edmund Nickless	Executive Secretary, GSL	GSL
Lee Phillips	UNC, Greensboro	CUR
Monica Ramirez	Front Range CC	AWG
Robert Tepel	Retired	AEG
Douglas Walker	University of Kansas	GSA