



Governance

Policy Name	Disclosure Policy
Date Approved	October 2024
Updates	

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect the interests of AUGS by: (a) preventing the personal benefits of volunteer leaders from influencing their duties to AUGS, (b) avoiding any inappropriate/undue financial, professional, or political gain on the part of such individuals and (c) avoiding actual, potential or perceived inappropriate/undue influence of outside entities (e.g. industry, pharma, professional organizations) on the operations and management of AUGS. The intent of this policy is to supplement, not replace, any applicable federal, state, or local laws regarding conflicts of interest.

Policy Statement

All AUGS volunteers are required to disclose potential conflicts of interest (COI), as identified in the Conflict of Interest policies (*Volunteer Conflict of Interest Policy: Industry Relationships* and *Volunteer Conflict of Interest Policy: Other Professional Societies*), by completing a COI Disclosure Form when they apply for a volunteer role and within 30 days of any new potential conflicts that arise. Volunteers will be asked to review their Disclosure Form annually. AUGS Board members are additionally asked to confirm and update their disclosures prior to each Board meeting.

Chairs and Vice Chairs of publication and writing groups or any committee tasked with developing guidelines or clinical review are asked to confirm their current disclosures prior to the development process, and update as appropriate throughout. All disclosure information will be posted along with the published document.

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) maintains regulations that may require different criteria for AUGS to provide continuing medical education credits. Therefore, members of education-related committees and speakers/instructors for CME activities, may be required to submit additional disclosure forms to ensure compliance with these standards.

Volunteer disclosures will be made publicly available if a specific request is made to AUGS, or when required in accordance with ACCME educational content.

Failure to disclose is viewed as a breach of trust and will be investigated and managed as deemed appropriate by the AUGS Governance Committee.

Procedure

Identifying Potential Conflict of Interest

AUGS' Board President, Committee Chairs, and staff will be responsible for reviewing the disclosures prior to every meeting of their respective committees and/or governing bodies and will take action to mitigate any potential conflicts. In addition, each meeting will begin with an acknowledgement that the disclosure forms have been reviewed and to remind members to submit a new statement whenever changes in status occur.

Determining COI

When a potential conflict of interest is relevant to a matter that comes under consideration or requires action by the Board or a committee, the Board President/Committee Chair shall call it to the attention of the Board/committee and disclose all relevant facts. After this disclosure, and after any necessary clarifying discussion, the potentially conflicted volunteer shall leave the governing Board or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is discussed and voted upon by the remaining members.

Recusal

Recusal means refraining from participating in the vote relating to the matter where there are potential conflicts of interest.

An opportunity to verbalize potential conflicts will be made available at the start of each meeting. If a COI is determined, the volunteer shall not be present during decision on the matter. However, that person may provide the Board/committee with any relevant information and/or may contribute to the discussion when called upon by the President/Chair. The conflicted volunteer may not vote on the decision or action and shall not be present when the vote is taken. Such person shall not attempt to exert their personal influence with respect to the matter, either at or outside of the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting shall reflect:

- a. the conflict of interest that was disclosed
- b. the content of the discussion determining COI

- c. individuals present
- d. that the interested person was not present during discussion or decision and did not vote

The conflicted volunteer's presence at the meeting may be counted in determining whether a quorum of the Board or committee is present.

When a significant conflict exists, creating persistent and disruptive recusals, or is in direct violation of the Conflict of Interest Policies, resolution of the matter may include requiring the volunteer to:

- discontinue or modify their participation on the Board or committee
- divest from the conflicted relationship
- refrain from collecting direct financial benefits until term completion

Violations

If the Board/committee has reasonable cause to believe a volunteer has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the Governance Committee in writing of the basis for such belief. The Governance Committee shall afford the volunteer in question an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.

If, after hearing the response and making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Governance Committee determines the volunteer has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate corrective action to avoid potential negative influences of the conflict in accordance with the AUGS Member Code of Conduct and Violations Policy.