

Scientist Professional Advisory Committee (SciPAC) Charter

(Revised August 2014)

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I. MISSION

The Scientist Professional Advisory Committee (SciPAC) provides advice and consultation to the Surgeon General (SG) on issues relating to the professional practice and the personnel activities of scientists in the Commissioned Corps Scientist Category and the Civil Service. The SciPAC provides similar advisory assistance to the Chief Scientist Officer (CSO) and, upon request, to the Agency and/or Program Heads of the Public Health Service (PHS), and to non-PHS Programs that routinely use PHS personnel. Lastly, the SciPAC provides service to its Scientist officers through the functions of the PAC to include career development, mentoring, and advocacy.

II. RELATION OF THE SciPAC TO THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

In carrying out its responsibilities, the SciPAC operates in a staff capacity. The members do not substitute for line management or in any way exercise the prerogatives of the operating programs. Thus, the SciPAC advises the CSO, who, in turn, advises the Surgeon General. While SciPAC members are chosen from the respective PHS OPDIVs, they neither represent OPDIV management nor speak for the OPDIV. They are knowledgeable professionals who represent a cross section of the interests, concerns, and responsibilities of the professionals in the OPDIVs and organizations staffed by PHS personnel.

III. OBJECTIVES

The SciPAC represents a large number of professional interests and disciplines and seeks to recognize the importance of scientific contributions to the mission of the PHS. The SciPAC functions in a resource and advisory capacity to assist with the development, coordination, and evaluation of activities related to the scientific disciplines in the PHS with the specific objectives of:

1. Identifying and facilitating resolution of issues and concerns within the PHS Scientist category and related public health professional disciplines.
2. Assessing PHS personnel needs and assisting in meeting these needs through recruitment, training, utilization, and professional recognition of officers in the PHS Scientist category and scientists in related public health professional disciplines.
3. Developing position papers, statistical reports, and/or guidelines where appropriate, in order to advise and comment on matters relating to the personnel issues and professional practice of the PHS Scientist category and related public health professional disciplines.
4. Promoting the development and utilization of scientists by the PHS and other governmental programs.
5. Promoting cooperation and communication among scientists within PHS and related public health professional disciplines.
6. Promoting all aspects of the PHS Scientist category and related public health professional disciplines throughout the Agencies and Programs of the PHS.
7. Providing liaison with PHS professional disciplines and advice and consultation to the Agency and Program Heads upon request.

8. Advocating for best practices within the scientist community.
9. Facilitating relationships with professional organizations and academia to promote the linkage between public health professions and disciplines of the USPHS.

IV. FUNCTIONS

In carrying out its broad mission and objectives, the functions of the SciPAC shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Provide general professional advice and recommendations:
 - a. Review and comment on issues referred to the SciPAC by the SG, CSO, Agency Heads, and/or Program Heads.
 - b. Deliberate issues, develop findings, and present recommendations to the SG and/or the CSO.
 - c. Provide advice on the professional aspects of the Scientist category, i.e., new technologies, regulations, curricula, roles, etc.
 - d. Provide advice on ethical and professional standards issues affecting SciPAC membership, retention and standard operating procedures regarding SciPAC.

Review and provide recommendations concerning proposed or needed changes to appointment standards and professional requirements for the Scientist category.

2. Act as a primary source for career development:
 - a. Advise on Commissioned Corps and public health practices concerning career development.
 - b. Advise on operating practices concerning the appropriate/optimum use of scientists designed to meet PHS needs and the needs of the individual.
 - c. Advise on issues related to PHS promotion practices of the Scientist category.
 - d. Formulate criteria for the selection of scientist candidates for training and/or other career development options.
 - e. Identify both continuing and long-term intramural and extramural education needs of the Scientist category and identify and recommend training and/or experience opportunities designed to meet these needs.

- f. Review applications for long-term training, assess appropriateness of requested training in terms of individual and the PHS needs, and provide recommendations for the approval or disapproval of such requests.
3. Provide advice and assistance on recruitment issues:
 - a. Assess and project the needs for Scientist category throughout the PHS.
 - b. Provide advice on the goals, objectives, and procedures designed to meet the PHS staffing needs and assist in category retention initiatives.
 - c. Provide guidance for recruitment to the short-term student affiliation programs (COSTEP, summer students, etc.).
 - d. Develop, and/or review and critique, Scientist category-specific PHS recruitment materials, procedures, and programs.
 - e. Help establish networks of current, as well as former, PHS scientists who can assist and facilitate recruitment activities.
 - f. Provide guidance to approved PHS recruiters concerning the recruitment of qualified candidates to the Scientist category and related public health professional disciplines.
 - g. Assist in the development of orientation materials for newly-hired Scientist category professionals and provide advice/recommendations concerning orientation programs.
4. Communicate and encourage appropriate use of awards/recognition systems to foster visibility:
 - a. Identify, establish, and help administer professional, Scientist category specific awards.
 - b. Maintain cognizance of the existing Commissioned Corps and public health award programs and opportunities.
5. Serve as a communication link and information resource for the various scientific disciplines and serve as liaison with scientific organizations:
 - a. Communicate to the Commissioned Corps Scientists important information concerning professional, ethical, and technical issues.
 - b. Encourage individual membership in, and involvement with, the scientific organizations and societies in order to promote open communications with non-Federal colleagues.

- c. Ensure the distribution of minutes and/or other SciPAC developed materials as appropriate to Commissioned Corps Scientists. Ensure availability of SciPAC minutes to other PACs and the Office of the SG through the SciPAC website.
6. This list of functions is not all inclusive. The SciPAC has the responsibility to identify and add functions as necessary to carry out its objectives. Such functions shall be in concert with the overall mission of the SciPAC.

V. MEMBERSHIP

1. **Basic Eligibility Requirements for Voting Membership:** Members must be full-time Commissioned Corps or Civil Service personnel, at the time they are nominated and appointed to the SciPAC, and meet the eligibility requirements for initial appointment to the Scientist category and personnel systems. In addition, all Commissioned Corps personnel must meet the Public Health Service basic readiness standards at the time they are nominated and appointed to the SciPAC and throughout their term of service on the SciPAC.
2. Staff from the Office of the Secretary (OS) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) may serve on a PAC providing that they recuse themselves from voting on issues and decisions that may have the appearance of a conflict of interest with respect to their duty assignments.
3. **Size of SciPAC:** The SciPAC shall have no fewer than 7 and no more than 20 voting members. The term for voting membership will be 3 years.
4. **Organizational Representation:** To provide the range of experiences and perspectives necessary for addressing issues before the SciPAC, every effort must be made to have the broadest representation possible among all agencies that are routinely staffed by Commissioned Corps Officers of the Scientist category.
5. **Geographic Considerations:** The SciPAC will have, as voting members, at least two individuals whose regular duty station is geographically removed by a distance of 75 or more miles from the Washington Metropolitan Area.
6. **Gender and Minority Representation:** The SciPAC will make a concerted effort to include both men and women and racial and ethnic minorities in the composition of its membership.
7. **Personnel System:** The SciPAC will make a concerted effort to include a civil service representative in the composition of its membership.
8. **Professional Seniority:** The SciPAC will have as a voting member a minimum of one individual who at the time of the appointment to the SciPAC has less than 5 years of professional experience.

9. Professional Discipline Composition: Cognizant of the fact that the SciPAC is structured around the PHS Commissioned Corps defined professional categories that encompass more than one major professional discipline, to the extent possible, the SciPAC should make a reasonable effort to ensure that the voting membership is proportionally representative of the major Scientist Category sub-disciplines.
10. Ex-Officio Members (non-voting): The CSO is an ex-officio member of the SciPAC. The former chair may serve 1 year as an ex-officio member of the SciPAC. The SciPAC may identify other individuals and request they serve as ex-officio members.
11. Liaison Members (non-voting): The SciPAC may identify individuals to serve in a liaison capacity to provide information or to assist with activities (e.g., staff from the Office of the Secretary [OS] or the OASH).

VI. NOMINATION PROCESS

1. Annually, the SciPAC will solicit, through newsletters and other appropriate means, nominations for voting membership vacancies on the SciPAC from all individuals in the category. Self-nominations will be solicited. A nomination committee (selected by the Rules and Membership subcommittee) and the CSO will identify, by name, those highly qualified to fill anticipated vacancies. A final list of nominees will be sent by the CSO to the SG for selection and approval.
2. This nomination process shall be conducted so that the final nomination package for a new voting membership is available for the SG's consideration no less than 60 calendar days prior to the expiration of the regular term of a current member.
3. Should the need arise to fill an unexpired term, the same process as used for regular term appointments will be followed except that the nomination package will be conveyed to the SG as soon as possible for action.

VII. TERM OF APPOINTMENT

1. Terms will be staggered so approximately one-third of the members' terms will expire annually. The SciPAC operational year is September 1 through August 31 and newly elected or appointed voting members will begin their term in September of the operational year.
2. Once a voting member has accumulated a lifetime total of 6 years of service on the SciPAC, they are not eligible for reappointment. Terms of office may be served consecutively at the discretion of the SciPAC.

3. Alternates: Cognizant of the demands of the member's primary work responsibilities, and the SciPAC's need to conduct business, the SciPAC has the option of establishing procedures to allow each voting member to appoint, and inform the Chairperson of a single individual who can serve as his/her alternate. Such alternates shall have voting privileges when serving in the place of a primary member. It is the responsibility of the primary SciPAC member to keep the alternate fully informed and knowledgeable of the SciPAC's activities. Any Agency clearance or approval requirements for travel/per diem must be handled within the Agency by the primary SciPAC voting member.
4. Attendance: Any voting member of the SciPAC who misses greater than 3 meetings without just cause (i.e. unexcused absences) can, at the discretion of the SciPAC voting members, executive board, and/or CSO be asked to voluntarily resign from the SciPAC voting membership, or SciPAC can initiate a request to the SG to terminate said membership.

VIII. CHAIRPERSON/VICE-CHAIRPERSON

1. The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected by the voting membership of the SciPAC. They may be nominated or self-nominated.
2. Term of the Chair and Vice-Chair: The Chair and Vice-Chair will each serve a 1-year term. The role of Vice-Chair is considered the Chair-elect. It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the Vice-Chair is trained in the duties and responsibilities of the Chair throughout their 1 year term. At the conclusion of the Chair's term, the Vice-Chair will assume the role of Chair.
3. Term of Appointment: If the term of the Chair coincides with the expiration of that individual's membership on the SciPAC, the former Chair may serve one additional year as an ex-officio member of the SciPAC, provided the Agency Head is informed and concurs with the extension, unless reappointed as a regular member per the provisions of Section (VI).

IX. EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. The Executive Board shall be elected by the voting membership of the SciPAC. Candidates shall be voting members of the SciPAC and may be nominated or self-nominated for Executive Board positions. The Executive Board shall be comprised of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Executive Secretary, COF liaison, and the ex-officio Chairperson.

X. CHIEF SCIENTIST OFFICER

1. SciPAC Membership: The SciPAC CSO shall be a non-voting, ex-officio member of the SciPAC.

2. Relationship with SciPAC: All appropriate output of the SciPAC, be it correspondence, reports, minutes of its proceedings, or other business, must be transmitted through the CSO who, as he/she may deem appropriate, may provide concurring or nonconcurring comments but may not stop or unduly delay such transmittals.

XI. OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES

1. The SciPAC has developed its own internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) These include, at the minimum, provisions covering the following:
 - a. Operational year: The SciPAC operational year shall be from 01 September through 31 August.
 - b. Frequency of meeting: Meetings will be held once per quarter at a minimum.
 - c. Agenda: The Executive Secretary, with direction from the Chairperson, shall prepare an agenda prior to each meeting. Upon approval, the Executive Secretary shall make it and associated materials available to SciPAC members before the meeting.
2. Records and Reporting:
 - a. Minutes of each SciPAC meeting shall be recorded by the Executive Secretary. Draft minutes shall be circulated to SciPAC Voting Members for review and corrections. The Executive Secretary shall send the corrected minutes to the Chairperson for approval.
 - b. Minutes and reports of the SciPAC will be distributed in accordance with Section IV.5(c).
 - c. The SciPAC will establish a system to maintain a permanent file of the official minutes and non-sensitive reports on the SciPAC website.
3. Executive Secretary: The Executive Secretary will transfer all records (e.g., meeting minutes, achievements, other documentation, etc.) produced during their term to the outgoing and incoming SciPAC chairpersons who will archive the SciPAC materials.
4. Quorum: A quorum consists of 50 percent of the SciPAC's voting membership. An alternate attending in lieu of a voting member shall be counted in determining the quorum requirement.
5. Voting: Where voting is required or appropriate, (e.g., election of the Executive

Board Officers), once a quorum is established, action will be determined by the simple majority of those voting members present excluding abstentions.

6. Subcommittees: Where the SciPAC elects to establish standing or ad hoc subcommittees, said membership may include both Commissioned Corps and/or Civil Service members provided that the subcommittee Chairperson is a voting member of the SciPAC.
7. Charter Update and Approval:
 - a. The SciPAC Charter must be reviewed and approved by the SG.
 - b. If the SciPAC subsequently modifies its charter, such modifications require the review and approval of the SG.
 - c. The SciPAC will review and, if required, update its charter at least every three years.

Dates SciPAC Charter Reviewed and Revised:

April 29, 1988

August 2, 1988

June 22, 1990

June 26, 1992

December 1, 1995

December 3, 1998

April 4, 2002

April 2, 2005

December 1, 2009

May 13, 2011

August 22, 2014

Rev. August 2014

DECISION

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Date _____