

Agricultural History Society

Statement of Professional Standards and Codes of Conduct

Effective date: June 2, 2020

Statement of Professional Standards

The Agricultural History Society (AHS) is committed to ensuring harassment-free environments where all participants can participate without fear of discrimination or intimidation based on their race, ethnicity, nationality, neurodiversity, physical ability, socioeconomic status, veteran status, age, religion, or of their actual or perceived sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status. All AHS members and participants in AHS activities should be respectful of co-members and participants and should both model and preserve AHS's standards of professional conduct. This pertains to all venues during officially sanctioned AHS activities (conferences, committee work, award deliberations, and other professional engagement) whether those venues are face-to-face, hybrid, or virtual (synchronous or asynchronous).

This document aligns with professional standards adopted by the American Historical Association and by other organizations with which AHS members may engage and work (see Resources).

AHS will post this document prominently under "The Society" at <https://www.aghistorysociety.org/>. All participants in officially sanctioned AHS activities will acknowledge this policy as part of conference registration. Those serving in elected or appointed positions will submit their signed Conflict of Interest Statement and Disclosure Form. The Executive Secretary will aggregate data of reported misconduct and mediated incidents of misconduct (removing names to protect identity of all involved) in the annual report which is circulated to the Executive Committee and will be made available to members upon request.

The AHS Executive Committee will ensure periodic review and updates of this Statement of Professional Standards and Codes of Conduct at least once every three years, effective from the date of adoption.

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Code of Conduct at Officially Sanctioned Agricultural History Society Activities

The Agricultural History Society convenes its annual conference, graduate student workshop, business meeting, and other officially sanctioned activities for the purposes of professional development and scholarly and educational interchange in the spirit of free inquiry and free expression.

The AHS **expects** everyone to refrain from any behavior that could be construed as harassment, and to engage with students, colleagues, and meeting personnel in a respectful and professional way throughout the event/meeting/activity. All should be respectful with a goal toward encouraging free academic exchange and/or successful completion of the professional commitment. This expectation applies from beginning to end of any AHS activity and to AHS delegate interactions between scheduled activities. For instance, AHS delegates should drink responsibly and interact respectfully during AHS conferences, both during AHS receptions as well as during meals or other informal gatherings that occur between scheduled conference events.

The AHS **expects** attendees to be self-aware of and responsible for their own professional conduct.

The AHS **expects** attendees to take some action when they witness harassment or disrespectful behavior potentially harmful to a participant. The action should NOT exacerbate unprofessional behavior or escalate conflict. Instead, attendees can take direct action by diplomatically mitigating the incident or educating others who witness the behavior. Attendees should also alert AHS officers, board members, security personnel, or law enforcement to a situation in which someone might be in imminent physical danger. The AHS does not expect witnesses to face repercussions for their actions. Attendees (regardless of age, status, race, identity, etc.) can report harassment or disrespectful behavior to designated AHS officers who will follow protocols.

Misconduct undermines the professional standards and codes of conduct adopted by the Agricultural History Society. To maintain standards, the AHS will not tolerate the following **unacceptable behavior** (this list draws heavily on the AHA Code of Conduct):

- Persistent and unwelcome solicitation of emotional or physical intimacy.
- Persistent and unwelcome solicitation of emotional or physical intimacy accompanied by real or implied threat of professional harm.
- Intimidating, harassing, abusive, derogatory, or demeaning speech or actions by any participant in an officially sanctioned AHS activity. This can range from derogatory comments rather than critical analysis when commenting on a paper (either during a panel, student workshop, or in reviewing a paper for the journal) to an altercation over any issue.
- Prejudicial actions or comments related to actual or perceived sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, age, or religion that coerce others, foment broad hostility, or otherwise undermine professional equity or the principles of free academic exchange. Harassment might also include unprofessional and unethical behaviors, such as intentionally

misgendering someone, refusing to use a person's preferred pronouns, or making inappropriate remarks about a person's gender identity or sexual orientation.

- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following.
- Harassing photography or audio or video recording without permission.
- Harassment or inappropriate comments delivered via social media including email correspondence, text messages, tweets, Facebook messaging, and any other form of electronic or virtual communication.
- Sustained disruption of presentations or other events, including yelling at or threatening speakers or audience members (verbally or physically).
- Physical assault (including unwelcome touch or groping).
- Real or implied threat of physical harm.
- Sexual harassment [defined as behavior (speech or actions) that demeans, humiliates, or threatens an individual on the basis of their sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation, including, for example, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal comment or physical conduct of a sexual nature]. Sexual harassment can be committed by a person of any gender and can occur between people of the same or different genders. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature or consensual personal and social relationships without discriminatory effect. It refers to behavior that reasonably situated persons would regard as not welcome and as personally intimidating, hostile, or offensive. According to US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines, the victim of harassment can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct, not just the individual at whom the conduct is directed. A victim of sexual assault is not required to physically resist.
- Retaliation against a complainant also violates this policy.

Conflict of Interest Policy (Avoiding Unethical Behavior)

A conflict of interest arises when an individual's personal interest or bias threatens or appears to threaten or compromise their ability to act in accordance with professional obligations. Conduct need not be illegal, only unethical, to pose a conflict of interest and to compromise professional standards. Any AHS member who uses their AHS position to self-promote engages in unethical behavior, which is also serious professional misconduct.

Conflicts of interest most often arise during peer review (of manuscripts, annual conference paper and panel proposals, award submissions, etc.). In general, peer review must be done with objectivity. AHS members may find that submissions for peer review include the work of colleagues and former students. Conflicts of interest also arise when an AHS member takes advantage of their elected or appointed position to advance their scholarship or status over that of peers, colleagues, or students.

To avoid inappropriate behavior, AHS members must disclose conflicts of interest and, where appropriate, recuse themselves from any decisions or other action in which a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof arises. For example, reviewers should disclose when they are asked to consider submissions by current or former students, current institutional colleagues, or anyone with whom they have had a significant financial or other collaborative relationship. As a general rule, they should recuse themselves if their relationship with a paper presenter or author would prevent them from forming a fair and disinterested judgement.

Anyone holding AHS elected or appointed positions affirm their responsibility to avoid conflicts of interest by signing a “Conflict of Interest Statement and Disclosure” form annually (Appendix A).

Procedures for Responding to Claims of Misconduct and Addressing Infractions

Ensuring a safe environment for all participants in meetings and events of the Agricultural History Society requires a clear overview of responsibilities and expectations for responding to instances of misconduct, both unacceptable and unethical behavior. AHS officials may have to exercise their professional judgment regarding effective enforcement because not all variables can be addressed in this document.

Any person experiencing physical assault or serious verbal abuse, or other violations of local, state, and federal laws should report incidents to law enforcement immediately.

Anyone participating in an official AHS activity may file a complaint according to the following procedures for reporting violations of the AHS Standards of Professional Conduct and its respective Codes. Reporting misconduct does not obligate the reporter to pursue any further action. Depending upon the severity and nature of the report, and in compliance with local, state, and federal laws, the AHS may be compelled to contact law enforcement and/or refer specifics to the AHS Officers and Executive Council.

Definitions

- **Participants:** anyone who is present at an AHS meeting or event including members, attendees, vendors, exhibitors, and venue staff
- **Target:** anyone who experiences unacceptable behavior that violates any standard in this Statement of Professional Conduct and its respective Codes
- **Witness:** anyone who witnesses an incident that allegedly violates any standard in this Statement of Professional Conduct and its respective Codes
- **Reporter:** anyone who contacts the Investigators to report an alleged incident of unacceptable behavior, including targets, witnesses, or bystanders
- **Alleged violator:** anyone who has been identified by a Reporter as having allegedly violated any standard in this Statement of Professional Conduct and its respective Codes
- **Investigators:** individuals who are assigned the duty of following up on reports of incidents that allegedly violate any standard in this Statement of Professional Conduct and its respective Codes
- **Formal Complaint:** a report of an incident to the investigator with a request to take action

Procedures

The following describes procedures for addressing reports of misconduct.

Claims of professional misconduct should be reported to a Team designated by the AHS Executive Committee to receive complaints from attendees and participants during the annual conference and any other AHS-sanctioned activity. Anyone who has experienced or witnessed professional misconduct should consult the website or conference program for contact

information. Team members will be on-site during conferences and available for other AHS activities. The Team can explain the procedures for reporting and access to relevant resources.

Note that no Team member nor any other AHS officer or affiliate can provide legal advice to individuals who make reports under this policy.

Note that the Team cannot act on reports of misconduct (unacceptable and unethical behavior) that occur at AHS members' workplaces or at activities NOT affiliated with AHS.

Note that anyone with professional or personal ties to the Alleged violator or Target, or with any other real or perceived conflict of interest in the decision, must recuse themselves from participation at any level in the reporting, investigating, or decision-making process.

Reporting and Investigating Allegations

Confidentiality

The names of Reporters will be kept confidential to the extent possible. However, neither the Reporter nor the Target can be guaranteed confidentiality.

Reporting and Investigating

The AHS Team consists of three AHS members appointed by the Executive Committee at the start of an event to receive Reports of alleged violations, investigate incidents, and submit a report of their findings.

- Reports of alleged violations may be submitted to the AHS Team via email aghistorysociety@gmail.com
- The Team will interview the Reporter. If the Reporter is a Witness and not the Target, the investigators will contact and interview the Target as well.
- The Target must consent to continued investigation by the Team.
- Further investigation might involve interviewing Witnesses, reviewing relevant evidence (emails, text messages, social media posts, etc.), interviewing the Alleged violator, and interviewing Witnesses identified by the Alleged violator.
- After the Team concludes its investigation, they submit a report summarizing their findings and their recommendation(s) for consequences, if any, for the Alleged Violator to the AHS Executive Secretary.

Decisions and Consequences

- The AHS Executive Secretary, in consultation with at least one member of the Executive Committee, makes decisions on consequences based on the Team report.
- The AHS Executive Secretary informs the Alleged violator and the Target and implements the decision.

Possible Consequences

If consequences are in order, they should be implemented at the meeting or event. These may include:

- Warn the Violator to cease their behavior and that any further reports will result in more serious consequences.

- Require that the Violator immediately leave the event and not return.
- Ban the Violator from future events (either indefinitely or for a certain time period).
- Immediately end any volunteer responsibilities and privileges the Violator holds.
- Require that the Violator not volunteer or serve the AHS either indefinitely or for a certain time period.
- Remove and ban the Violator from membership in AHS, following established procedures.

Appeals Procedure

A Violator who wishes to appeal the decision may contact the Executive Secretary in writing with further information regarding the incident. If necessary, the AHS Team of investigators will conduct additional interviews or other information gathering.

- If the AHS Executive Secretary finds that a reconsideration of the decision is warranted, the Executive Committee will be consulted.
- The Executive Secretary's decision can be appealed to the AHS President, who will consult with additional Executive Committee members as appropriate (excluding any involved in the original decision) and initiate additional investigation as necessary. The AHS Executive Secretary decision can be overturned by a majority of Executive Committee members.

The Executive Secretary will aggregate data about incidents and outcomes in an annual report, shared with the Executive Committee and available to members upon request.

Diversity in Nominations and Appointments

The AHS encourages and supports scholarship in the history of agriculture and rural life. The larger and more diverse the membership, the more sustained the sharing across time, space, and discipline. Given the different professional needs and concerns of members, the AHS requires a leadership committed to sustaining scholarship and practice as well as ensuring racial and ethnic diversity and working to include underrepresented groups in the Society's activities and within its leadership. The AHS Nominating Committee follows these guidelines when building a slate for elected positions and identifying individuals for appointed positions.

1. Nominations and appointments should be consistent with the parameters of the AHS Constitution and supportive of principle of diversity including such considerations as:
 1. Sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, and marital status
 2. Race and ethnicity
 3. Age
 4. Rank, including junior as well as senior scholars
 5. Regional distribution including international representation
 6. Area of specialization, where pertinent to the position
 7. Professional affiliations including individuals in academia, government agencies, independent scholars, private not-for-profit organizations, e.g., museums and archives, etc.
2. Issues of diversity and representation should be addressed within the context of the total composition of each committee or appointed position, not on a piecemeal or case-by-case basis.
3. All nominations and appointments should take into account the work of the committee or other duties as assigned as well as the individual's qualifications to contribute to that work.

4. Every effort should be made to involve as many different individuals as possible in AHS positions. Ideally, few if any individuals should serve simultaneously in more than one position or be nominated or appointed for more than one term in any capacity. Ideally, individuals should not assume a new position until their term of service ends or the individual agrees to resign from the first position before assuming the second.

Policy for Prizes and Awards

Members of AHS prize committees should be AHS members who honor rigorous scholarship with which they may disagree, and who are appropriately critical of work with which they agree. Historians should evaluate scholarship in a respectful and fair manner. To maintain the prestige of our field, the committees should not confer an award or prize if there are no worthy submissions or candidates.

Individuals who have violated AHS Professional Standards are not eligible for prizes or awards.

The AHS Executive Committee may choose, at its discretion, to revoke an award or prize should it become known that the recipient has been convicted of a relevant criminal offense or is confirmed to have engaged in professionally unethical behavior, as a result of which the ongoing association with the recipient is likely to negatively reflect on the AHS. Confirmation of such behavior must come in the form of a formal governmental, judicial, or institutional finding, such as an investigation by a university's ethics committee, or an admission by the individual. Consideration for revocation of a prize requires a direct relationship between the criteria for the prize and the offense in question.

The AHS may revoke an award or prize should it receive confirmation of prior misconduct on the part of the recipient, such as evidence of plagiarism or falsified citations, after the prize has been awarded.

Prizes may not be revoked posthumously.

Procedure for Revocation of Prizes and Awards

Any AHS member who reasonably believes that an AHS award should be revoked in accordance with this Policy on Revoking Prizes and Awards may make a request in writing to the AHS Executive Secretary. The communication should include supporting documentation such as institutional reports, public records, and personal testimonies from those who claim unethical behavior has transpired. The AHS Executive Secretary will consult with AHS Officers (in executive session). The officers will recommend either to:

1. Dismiss the revocation request;
2. Recommend revocation of the prize (confirmed with a vote of the Executive Committee); or
3. In cases of allegations of scholarly misconduct, request that the AHS President appoint an ad hoc committee of three specialists in the relevant field to investigate further. The findings of the ad hoc committee will be submitted to the AHS Executive Committee, which will then vote to revoke the award, effectively immediately, or will vote to retain the award.

Should steps 2 or 3 be initiated, the recipient of the prize or award will be notified that revocation of the prize is being considered and will be offered the opportunity to submit a written response for consideration by the AHS Executive Committee.

A prize may be revoked at any meeting of the AHS Executive Committee by a resolution adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Executive Committee.

Communication of a decision to revoke a prize will be handled on a case-by-case basis. At a minimum, the prize winner's name will be removed from the AHS's website and the decision will be recorded in the minutes of the Executive Committee.

Ethical Commitment

In conclusion, the Agricultural History Society is committed to ensuring a harassment-free environment and supporting professional development and sustaining scholarly and educational interchange in the spirit of free inquiry and free expression.

AHS members and participants in AHS activities should respect co-members and participants. They should report suspected wrongdoing that compromises AHS professional standards and codes of conduct. In return, the AHS is committed to ensuring that members do not suffer reprisals from acting in good faith to uphold standards and conduct.

Resources

American Historical Association – comprehensive statement of values of historians, standards of scholarship, trust, public engagement, inclusion, and accuracy (the opposite of plagiarism). See Statement of Standards on Professional Conduct:

<https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct>

AHA Code of Conduct at Officially Sanctioned Events (2019): <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/governance/policies-and-documents-of-the-association/code-of-professional-conduct-at-officially-sanctioned-aha-activities>

AHA Prizes policy (2019): <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/governance/policies-and-documents-of-the-association/aha-prizes-policy>

AHA Policy on Revoking Prizes and Awards (2019) - <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/governance/policies-and-documents-of-the-association/aha-policy-on-revoking-prizes-and-awards>

National Council on Public History – Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2007)

<https://ncph.org/about/governance-committees/code-of-ethics-and-professional-conduct/>

Under review late 2019: <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/code-of-ethics-feedback/>

Organization of American Historians – focused on honesty, integrity, historical advocacy, as well as faculty and student academic freedom. See Academic Freedom Guidelines and Best Practices: <https://www.oah.org/about/>

Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations--SHA FR policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct <http://shafr.org>

Society for History in the Federal Government – Code of Conduct (applicable to annual meetings, and in line with other professional organizations)<http://shfg.org/Code-of-Conduct>

Southern Historical Association – mission, inclusivity statement, sexual harassment policy, constitution and bylaws [no overt statement on controversies such as Confederate States of America or institution of slavery]. <https://thesha.org/about>

Western History Association – mission of the association and support of diverse history, including acknowledgement of violence perpetrated against Indigenous people in the name of westward expansion. <https://westernhistoryassociation.wildapricot.org/#diversity>

NOTE: Debra A. Reid attended a meeting of American Historical Association (AHA) affiliates during the AHA annual conference (January 2020) on the topic of Codes of Conduct. She drafted this document, drawing heavily on AHA Resources (see Resources above). An AHS ad hoc committee reviewed and comment on the draft, including Kristin Ahlberg, Tom Okie, Adrienne Petty, and Karen-Beth Scholthof (April-May 2020). Reid then refined the documents based on this feedback and submitted the documents for discussion during the June 2020 AHS Executive Committee Meeting (June 2, 2020).

APPENDIX A
 Agricultural History Society
 CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT & DISCLOSURE FORM

A conflict of interest (defined in the Agricultural History Society's Professional Standards) arises when an individual's personal interest or bias threatens or appears to threaten or compromise their ability to act in accordance with professional obligations. Conduct need not be illegal, only unethical, to pose a conflict of interest and to compromise professional standards. Any member who uses their AHS position to self-promote engages in unethical behavior, which is also serious professional misconduct.

Conflicts of interest most often arise during peer review (of manuscripts, session proposals, award submissions, etc.). AHS members should identify and recuse themselves from decisions or actions that pose a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof. They should avoid situations when they personally benefit or appear to benefit financially at the expense of their professional obligations. Not all conflicts of interest are necessarily prohibited or harmful. Yet, full disclosure of all actual and potential conflicts is required, and the interested member(s) should recuse themselves from debates and voting on matters that pose a potential conflict.

Anyone in an appointed or elected position within AHS shall complete this form to affirm that they have read and will abide by the AHS Statement of Professional Standards and Code of Conduct, and to disclose possible conflicts of interest prior to accepting a committee appointment or other responsibility that might pose a conflict at the time of their assumption of duties. They shall review the form and revise as needed at least once a year. All completed forms shall be retained by the AHS Executive Secretary.

In the case of perceived or real conflicts of interest, AHS officers will confer and appoint a committee of disinterested AHS Executive Committee members. The committee shall determine whether a conflict exists and what subsequent action is appropriate (if any). They shall inform the Executive Committee of such determination and action. The Executive Committee shall retain the right to modify or reverse such determination and action and shall retain the ultimate enforcement authority with respect to the interpretation and application of this policy.

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I have read the AHS Statement of Professional Standards and Code of Conduct, and the AHS Conflict of Interest Statement and agree to comply with these terms and conditions during my service to the AHS. If at any time I become aware of actual or potential conflicts of interest, or if the information provided below becomes inaccurate or incomplete, I will promptly submit a new form to the AHS Executive Secretary.

I disclose the following Actual or Potential Conflicts of Interest (mark N/A to affirm that no actual or potential conflicts exist) (please continue on reverse):

\_\_\_\_\_

Board Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Board Member Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Adopted by the AHS Executive Committee, June 2, 2020.*

*Based on the American Historical Association's Conflict of Interest Policy (2012) & the History of Science Society Conflict of Interest Statement (2012)*