SPRING Quarter

Thursday, May 14, 2026

11am-12pm

Zoom link

Voting Attendees: C. Stephens, S. Collins, D. Baker, T. Yang, E.Mitsunaga, S.Suljak, E. Araci
Non-Voting Attendees: E. Pham, K. Strelnikova, Y. Tan

1. **Team Introduction**
2. **Approval of minutes from last meeting**: Approved by all committee members.

3. **No protocol required for review by the Committee**

4. **Regulatory update: NIH Biosafety Modernization Initiative (Fall 2026)**

   - To strengthen biosafety policies, practices, and oversight to keep pace with the evolving risks posed by today's rapidly advancing science and technology.
   -As part of this initiative, NIH will modernize existing biosafety policies to holistically address the emergent biosafety needs of today.
   The Initiatives launched in Fall 2025 to overhaul Institutional Biosafety policies and to have a final policy late 2026.
   Core Changes Under Consideration (2026 Outlook)
   1.) expanding oversight to non-recombinant risks,
   Expansion of Scope: Future policies may cover wild-type agents, prions, toxin genes, and non-recombinant genetic modifications like radiation mutagenesis.
   2) reducing administrative burdens for low-risk research,
   Risk-Based Tiering: Plans to implement a tiering system for studies, including human gene transfer, to lower the IBC review burden for low-risk work.
   Empowering IBCs: NIH is exploring ways to empower local IBCs to lower containment levels without needing direct approval from the NIH.
   -NIH will also strengthen partnerships with institutional oversight bodies to empower Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBC) reinforcing their position as the front line of local oversight,
   - A close connection to other oversight structures like Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUC) required for ensuring a safe, responsible research ecosystem.

3) enhancing transparency, with stakeholder engagement ongoing through 2026. Listening sessions across the country.

Transparency Mandates: Following a 2025 policy, institutions must publicly post IBC meeting minutes on their websites for meetings occurring on or after June 1, 2025

The goal is to fulfill NIH's commitment to ensuring that gold standard science is conducted under gold standard biosafety conditions, ushering in a more effective, transparent, and modern biosafety system.

Members discussed whether the new policy expanding to non-recombinant will have any impact on SCU. Members seem to agree not much impact on SCU as compared to other institutions with higher risk research.

5. **Active protocols**.
    a. We don't use AI in biochemistry, only to explore larger spaces but no high risk AI usage. If we use it, it will fall under the already existing safety protocols
    b. The majority of the protocols are blood and urine, or purchased recombinant DNA from AddGene.
    c. Discussion of an expedited review of a protocol involving blood (finger stick) and urine. Generally, this is not a high-risk activity when performed in a controlled environment, however since this will occur in another county, the PI will need to 1) have adequate safety protocols are in place to minimize the risk of a potential bloodborne pathogen exposure and 2) have a formal response plan in-place should an exposure occur. EHS will be training the PI and their students on bloodborne pathogen safety. The protocol also requires review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and guidance provided by the general counsel office on Export controls of the blood analyzer.
6. **Updates on Medical Surveillance Program**
    a. EHS provided an update on the now well established lab animal medical surveillance program. It's a risk-based program, primarily based on exposure potential and duration of exposure. The surveillance program may include all or some of the following: health questionnaire, physical exam, vaccination, training, pulmonary fit test, respirator fit test. There are 4 active PIs and 2 full time medical care staff currently in the surveillance program. We believe the program is operating effectively.

7. **Update on Training:**

a. Each year, lab faculty in Bio-Engineering and Biology undergo in-person biosafety training presented by EHS as part of a larger annual lab safety training program. Bloodborne pathogen training is conducted on a protocol-specific basis. The lab operations team supports the program by identifying the population that requires training. There is also a CITI biosafety training available online for SCU community.
b. Recently, laboratory access restrictions have been implemented in SCDI's high risk labs. This includes limiting after hours lab access for students unless requested by the PI, which then is reviewed and approved.

8. **Any other business**
    a. The current Biosafety Officer Sean Collins has proposed Yizheng Tan to become Biosafety officer – All IBC members approved the proposal. Sean Collins will be the Alternate Biosafety Officer.
9. **Action items**:
    a. Opportunity to collaborate with the AI center on safety related protocol the center is in operation.
    b. Request for the biosafety officer changes for the SCU IBC will be submitted to NIH.