IACUC MEMBER CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Overview

Federal regulations do not permit an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) member to participate in the review of research in which he/she has a conflicting interest, except to provide information requested by the IACUC. This requirement helps to ensure that financial or other personal interests do not compromise the welfare of animals used in research or the objectivity of the IACUC review process.

This policy describes when IACUC members are considered to have conflicts of interest and the procedures that must be followed for disclosure and IACUC review of research when such conflicts exist.

2. Definitions

Conflict of Interest: A financial interest or other opportunity for tangible personal benefit of an individual or his/her immediate family that may exert a substantial and improper influence on the individual's professional judgment in exercising any University duty or responsibility, including the review of research. Note: For IACUC members, financial and non-financial interests/opportunities are included.

Financial Conflict of Interest: An interest of an individual (or his/her immediate family) of monetary value that would reasonably appear to be affected by the research or an individual’s interest in any entity whose financial interests would reasonably appear to be affected by the research. Note: Financial interests include (but are not limited to) salary or other payments for services (e.g., consulting fees or honoraria), equity interests (e.g., stocks, stock options, or other ownership interests), and intellectual property rights (e.g., patents, copyrights, and royalties from such rights).

Non-Financial Conflict of Interest: An interest other than monetary of an individual (or his/her immediate family) in the design, conduct, or reporting of the research or other interest that competes with an IACUC member’s obligation to protect animals and potentially compromises the objectivity and credibility of the research review process.

Organizational Conflict of Interest: The Institution acknowledges that IACUC members may have a potential conflict of interest in their role as part of their organizational unit and their oversight responsibilities as an IACUC member. These potential conflicts will be taken into account by the Institutional Official in determining appointments to the IACUC. IACUC members are asked to evaluate the safety and welfare issues for animals on research protocols independent of their departmental or unit affiliations.
3. General Information

A. Conflicts of interest must not compromise the welfare of research animals or the integrity of the research review process. Federal animal care and use regulations do not provide flexibility in the management of an IACUC member’s conflicting interest. Specifically, the regulations require that IACUC members must not participate in the review of research in which they have a potentially conflicting interest, except to provide specific information requested by the IACUC.

B. Financial relationships with entities involved in research and the financial interests these relationships create (e.g., equity interests, payments for services, etc.) may lead to financial conflicts of interest. Such conflicts of interest may affect the welfare of animal subjects. However, financial interests are not prohibited and not all financial interests cause conflicts of interest. For more information on financial conflicts of interest, see Ohio State University’s Financial Conflict of Interest Policy and Financial Conflict of Interest Policy Implementation Procedures.

C. Conflicts of interest may also be non-financial, such as when an IACUC member is asked to review research in which he/she is also participating as a member of the research team. Other “personal or professional” conflicting interests are described below. An individual may opt out of a review for any reason, including a conflicting interest not specifically described by this policy.

D. When a conflict of interest is identified, an IACUC member may not participate in any type of review of the research conducted by the IACUC, including initial or continuing reviews, review of amendments, or other reviews (e.g., event reports, potential noncompliance, etc.). This requirement applies to reviews conducted by the convened IACUC and those performed by designated member procedures.

4. Financial Conflict of Interest

A. An IACUC member to the IACUC is considered to have a conflicting financial interest when he/she (or a member of his/her immediate family) is receiving compensation for services or has financial interests or intellectual property rights that would reasonably appear to be affected by the research, including the following:

1. Ownership interest, equity or stock options, or other financial interest whose value (when aggregated for the immediate family) is:
   - $5,000 or greater when referenced to publicly traded prices or other measure of fair market value
   - Any amount when the value of the interest cannot be referenced to publicly traded prices or other measure of fair market value

Immediate Family: For purposes of IACUC policy, an IACUC member’s spouse or domestic partner and dependent children.
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- Any amount when the value of the interest would be affected by the outcome of the research
- 5% or more interest in any one single entity

2. Compensation whose value (when aggregated for the immediate family) is:
   - $5,000 or greater in the past year
   - Any amount when the compensation would be affected by the outcome of the research.

3. Proprietary interest related to the research of any value, including (but not limited to) a patent, trademark, copyright, or licensing agreement

4. Board or executive position (regardless of compensation) related to the research.

B. The financial interests that are considered conflicting interests for IACUC members are the same as those for investigators and key personnel involved in research. For additional information on financial conflict of interest for faculty and research personnel, see The Ohio State University’s Financial Conflict of Interest Policy and Financial Conflict of Interest Policy Implementation Procedures.

5. Non-Financial Conflict of Interest

An IACUC member is considered to have conflicting interest (other than monetary) in any of the following circumstances:

- IACUC member (or member of his/her immediate family) is a member of the research team or advisory committee involved in the design, conduct, or reporting of the research
- IACUC member (or member of his/her immediate family) is related to a member of the research team or advisory committee involved in the design, conduct, or reporting of the research
- Principal investigator of the research is the IACUC member’s immediate supervisor or the supervisor of the member’s immediate family member
- IACUC member (or member of his/her immediate family) has an interest in competing research or is competing directly for resources such as funding or sponsorship
- IACUC member personal biases may interfere with an impartial judgement. A Principal Investigator (PI) submitting a protocol may request that a member be excluded from review if the PI believes the IACUC member has a potential conflict.
- Other conflicting interest that appears to preclude objective assessment, at the IACUC Chair’s discretion.

Note: Departmental affiliation is not automatically considered to be a conflicting interest, except as described above. ULAR veterinary consultation would not be considered a conflicting interest.
6. IACUC Member Disclosure

A. IACUC members are asked to complete the University’s electronic Financial Conflict of Interest Screening/Disclosure process when they are appointed to the Board if a current disclosure is not already on file. Members are required to update the disclosure annually and whenever there are changes in their (or their immediate family members’) financial interests. IACUC members will refer to the IACUC policy for information about financial and non-financial conflicts of interest.

B. ORRP staff utilizes Board members’ CVs and financial disclosure forms when assisting in making reviewer assignments to avoid assigning research review to an IACUC member with an identified financial or non-financial conflict of interest. IACUC Administrators will select IACUC members without apparent conflicting interests as primary or secondary reviewers for convened meeting review or will inform the IACUC Chair of apparent conflicts for designated member review; however, IACUC members are ultimately responsible for final identification of conflicts. The IACUC Chair will not assign reviewers to any protocols that he/she is involved with the conduct of the study.

C. IACUC members will examine the materials assigned to them upon receipt to identify any financial and/or non-financial conflicts of interest. If a conflict exists, the member should immediately decline the review assignment and provide an explanation to the IACUC Chair so that the review can be reassigned to another IACUC member.

D. IACUC members may contact the University’s Conflict of Interest Administrator or IACUC Chair for information or assistance with conflict of interest questions. The IACUC Chair or Vice-Chair will make the final determination about whether a conflict of interest as defined by Ohio State policy exists.

7. Identification of Conflicts – IACUC Review

A. At the start of each convened meeting, the IACUC Chair (or acting Chair) reminds all IACUC members that anyone with a conflict of interest must excuse himself/herself before the discussion of the research begins, unless asked to be present to answer questions or provide information to the IACUC.

B. IACUC members are asked to self-identify research in which they have a conflicting interest, inform the IACUC Chair (or acting Chair), and excuse themselves before convened discussion begins. Although IACUC members are asked to self-identify conflicts, the Chair has the final authority to determine when there is a conflict as defined by Ohio State policy and to ask a member to leave the room as necessary.

C. If questions arise during the discussion, the IACUC Chair may invite the IACUC member with the conflicting interest back into the room to provide information but will excuse him/her again before final deliberation and voting.
D. Prior to participating in any IACUC review conducted by designated member or convened meeting procedures, IACUC members will be asked to document (in writing or electronically) that they have reviewed the policy and will inform the appropriate person of any potential conflict of interest.

8. Documentation of Conflicts of Interest

ORRP staff are responsible for documenting that an IACUC member did not participate in the convened review of research in which the member had a conflicting interest. IACUC minutes will record when the member left the room, with the reason noted as being because of a “conflict of interest.” IACUC members out of the room due to a conflict of interest are not counted toward the meeting quorum. ORRP staff are responsible for monitoring IACUC meeting attendance to ensure that quorum is maintained. If an alternate is present for the IACUC member with the conflict, that person can vote and be counted toward the meeting quorum for that review item only.

9. Applicable Regulations/Guidance