Chemistry Student Safety Committee Constitution

Last revised: February 2023

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Section 1: Goals and Vision

The purpose of the Chemistry Student Safety Committee (CSSC) is to create a better culture of safety in the academic research laboratories in the Department of Chemistry at Johns Hopkins Homewood campus. This group will provide a space where students can discuss safety concerns. The Committee will address these concerns and/or advocate for them to be addressed by the Department. Individual members will act as safety advocates for their corresponding labs.

1.1 Mission statement:
- Address safety hazards in individual labs as well as across the department facilities.
- Offer educational training resources for Safety Representatives as well as the general population of students in proper lab safety.
- Provide professional development opportunities for trainees in science laboratory management and conduct.

Section 2: Membership, Voting & Positions

2.1 Membership

Membership of this group is open to postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and undergraduate students (see 2.1.2 Undergraduate certificate program) affiliated with the JHU Chemistry Department. This group was founded within the chemistry department and will focus on improving internal lab safety culture. This group encourages participation from students in every research lab associated with the Chemistry Department, even if the students are not Chemistry majors. Each Chemistry Department lab is encouraged to have at least one representative; multiple representatives from the same lab are welcome.

Students will be considered members of the group after signing up via email correspondence with the active chair and attending regular meetings. A membership roll will be maintained by attending meetings and participating in subcommittee efforts. An individual seeking to withdraw from the group is encouraged to find a different safety representative from their affiliated lab.

Active members are expected to:
1. Participate in general group meetings to help determine the direction of the group's projects
2. Join a subcommittee and provide their expertise in executing the subgroup's projects.
3. Act as a safety advocate and good example to others in their lab.
4. Support group activities by helping set up or tear down events, write/edit documents, and participate in outreach to the public.
5. Read emails sent from the committee and communicate using the committee slack channel.

### 2.1.1 Time requirements

General committee members are expected to devote a total of 2-3 hours per month on committee-related work. A suggested breakdown is as follows:

- 1 hour attendance at monthly meeting
- 1 hour work with subcommittee members and Chair on subgroup tasks
- 1 hour as needed on initiatives or outreach in the individual’s lab

Executive Board members are expected to devote a total of 4-5 hours per month on committee-related work. A suggested breakdown is as follows:

- 1 hour attendance at monthly meeting
- 1 hour work with subcommittee members on subgroup tasks
- 1 hour administrative/organizational tasks
- 1 hour as needed on initiatives or outreach in the individual’s lab
- As-needed Executive Board meeting, at most monthly

### 2.1.2 Undergraduate certificate program

*Note: This section is actively being updated as we prepare to roll out the program.*

In an effort to increase undergraduate safety by providing a low-stakes option for them to report safety concerns, the CSSC is implementing an undergraduate Academic Lab Safety Captain program. Participants act as liaisons between the undergraduates and the CSSC so that we may be aware of any chemical lab safety concerns that might have otherwise been missed. This cohort of undergraduates serves to minimize any fear an undergraduate may have to voice concerns about things occurring in the lab that they would not have brought up to the professor or even TA.

The undergraduates serve for a total of one year. A cohort of 3-4 students is anticipated; one from each academic year. The cohort will meet regularly with other undergraduate students, their professors, and members of the CSSC’s Development subgroup. They must also give a chemical safety talk to at least one lab course in the beginning of the semester to introduce themselves and gain experience identifying and explaining safety hazards. At the end of the school year, each undergraduate will be given a certificate by the Department Chair to recognize their work in maintaining lab safety.
The Chemistry Department will send out an application in the Summer asking for students to apply to be a safety captain. Experience in common Chemistry Department lab classes is preferred. The Development Committee will go over the applications and pick the undergraduates best suited for the program and pick alternates in the case where the undergraduate is unable to fulfill their duties.

Non-certificate earning undergraduates are also welcome to participate in the CSSC. This may include future or former participants in the Safety Captain program. Undergraduate members are given full standing in the committee, equal to graduate students and postdocs, and are expected to fulfill the requirements laid out in 2.1 Membership and 2.1.1 Time requirements.

2.1.3 Subcommittees

The Chemistry Student Safety Committee has four major subcommittees to accomplish their initiatives:

Operations

The Operations Subcommittee is responsible for outlining, planning, and executing the logistics of committee and department-wide safety-related events. The goal of the subcommittee is to raise awareness of the CSSC through these events, and encourage graduate students to think about safety issues, including those that may be considered trivial or unimportant, to ultimately create a stronger safety culture. The Subcommittee is tasked with determining which types of events or trainings are most beneficial to the department, and act as lead in planning of said events. An additional standing Subcommittee task is the creation of monthly Safety Moments on common safety issues to maintain continuous awareness, to be distributed in collaboration with the Media & Communications Subcommittee.

Development

The Development subcommittee serves to promote chemical lab safety amongst graduate students through providing support for SOP development and documents to ease transitions in/out of a lab. Additionally, the Development subcommittee seeks to bridge the gap between chemical safety and undergraduates through facilitating the Undergraduate Safety Captain Program (USCP). USCP gives undergraduates a platform to voice safety concerns that they otherwise would not have.

Facilities Liaison

The Facilities Liaison Subcommittee tasks itself with identifying potential improvements in the physical foundation of the chemistry department, such as a solution to potential safety hazards or unsafe operations and working towards achieving those improvements. We hope to promote a culture of safety through tangible changes to our department's space. This subcommittee is also responsible for scheduling and overseeing peer-to-peer lab walk-throughs to give fresh eyes to possible safety hazards.
Media & Communications

The Media and Communications Subcommittee is responsible for maintaining and distributing updates and announcements regarding CSSC events, safety moments, HSE safety “near-misses,” and other related news. The Subcommittee is responsible for maintaining the circulation of these announcements via departmental email, Twitter, departmental Slack, the CSSC website, and committee bulletin board (as appropriate). Committee details and information to be maintained include, but are not limited to: groups website content and formatting, member list and contact info, online safety moment repository, information on educational training opportunities, information and advertisements of upcoming committee events.

2.2 Voting

Active membership (see 2.1 Membership) gives individuals the right to vote on the projects/initiatives pursued as well as the leadership roles of the group over the course of the year. Every member will receive one vote. An executive board member will be responsible for overseeing voting with all voting outcomes recorded by the Chair. Voting will be conducted digitally (via email, online poll, etc.) so long as all members have the opportunity to respond.

There will be no quorum requirements. Instead, voting methods must be clearly communicated to the whole group membership, provide ample time for response (at least 3 days), include an equal number of executive and non-executive board member votes (if there are fewer members than executive board members then this requirement can be ignored), and have at least one executive board member present or set up the vote. Elections meeting these requirements will be considered binding by the entire group.

2.3 Executive Board Positions

The Executive Board shall consist of officers elected by active members present during the first meeting of each academic year. This meeting shall occur after the first day of scheduled classes. When Executive board members must leave the board before their term is up (e.g., graduating early), a replacement may be elected at the next committee meeting.

In order to ensure orderly execution of administrative duties and project goals, the group will elect seven (7) permanent executive positions on an annual basis:

1. President/Chair - 2.3.1
2. Vice Chair - 2.3.2
3. Treasurer - 2.3.3
4. Subcommittee Chairs (4) - 2.3.4

Broadly, these positions will be ultimately responsible for:

1. Scheduling and leading (sub)group meetings/voting
2. Managing projects chosen by the (sub)group collectively
3. Ensuring that (sub)group products (documents, events, etc.) meet the standards outlined in this policy document
4. Acting as a first point of contact for any party wishing to communicate with the (sub)group.

Eligibility to fill these positions is dependent on either:
1. Being an active group member.
2. Recommendation by an existing or prior executive board member either through their own personal experience or from colleagues.

Additional executive board positions will be created and dissolved on an ad-hoc basis to meet the goals of particular initiatives, execute events etc. Active members are eligible to be elected. The name, responsibility, and objectives of a position must be articulated and voted on by the majority of active group members present at the meeting at which such a position is proposed.

For the purposes of institutional memory, Executive Board members of the previous year may participate on the Board as Honorary Members and are encouraged when possible to run for reelection. There will be a four-year term limit for Board members.

2.3.1 Description of Chair/President:

The President of the CSSC shall:
   a) Chair all group meetings of the CSSC
   b) Serve as the primary liaisons between the CSSC and Chemistry administration and all other University and non-University bodies or representatives...
   c) Be responsible for seeing that the duties of all subcommittee Chairs (and their respective committees) are carried out...
   d) Maintain CSSC documentation, such as this constitution and varying policy documents....
   e) Train the Vice Chair for 1 year term in preparation for their succession.

2.3.2 Description of Vice Chair:

The Vice Chair of the CSSC shall:
   a) Be responsible for maintaining the records of CSSC affairs, including but not limited to the minutes of all CSSC meetings (group meetings, committee meetings, Executive Board meetings, and meetings between CSSC members and University administrators)...
   b) Assist the Chair in organization and facilitation of the logistics of CSSC meetings...
   c) Take attendance at all CSSC meetings and events...
d) Count the votes at all CSSC meetings, except for regular elections as described in section 2.2 above, and maintain a record of all votes taken electronically.

e) Distribute announcements and information to members of CSSC, including group meeting minutes, and voting materials…

f) Maintain open communication and facilitate marketing, recruitment, outreach, and other necessary communication between committees, the Executives, active members…

g) Prepare to succeed the Chair position in the following term.

2.3.3 Description of Treasurer:

The Treasurer of the CSSC shall:

a) Communicate with the administration to determine an approximate CSSC budget each semester…

b) Draft itemized budget proposals for all CSSC events requiring funding and submit to the department (email to chem-admin@lists.johnshopkins.edu) for approval…

c) Supply food for monthly CSSC meetings and submit for reimbursement through OpenRequest.

2.3.4 Description of Subcommittee Chair:

The Subcommittee Chair(s) of the CSSC shall:

a) Take the lead on and delegate all subcommittee projects and goals…

b) Communicate regularly and openly with subgroup members…

c) Communicate with other Executive Board Positions…

d) Brainstorm new ideas and projects for individual subcommittee.

2.4 Impeachment

Members of the Executive Board who (1) conduct themselves or the business of the group in a manner inconsistent with the substance or intent of this document; or (2) fail to complete work necessary for fulfilling the mission of this group as stated here are subject to disciplinary censure. Such a decision, and supporting evidence, must be brought before the group of all current Chairs, or barring that a majority of active members (51%). All those members must cast a yes, no, or abstain vote, in absentia if necessary. If a two-thirds majority of those members involved in this vote cast ‘yes’ votes, the executive member will be dismissed and barred from holding an executive position in the future but may still participate as an active general body member.
Section 3: Amendments

In order to make amendments to this document all members holding Executive positions must cast a yes, no, or abstain vote. All other active members must also be given the opportunity to vote, including in absentia. An amendment will be enacted only if two-thirds of all those members eligible to vote cast yes votes.

Section 4: Financing

Funds will be requested from and approved by the department or other funding source (e.g. Graduate Representative Organization, Homewood Laboratory Safety Advocate, a third-party industry representative, etc.) on a case by case basis. The treasurer will be responsible for approving any financial requests made by members on behalf of the group.

Section 5: Relationship to the Broader Chemistry Community

The CSSC represents and advocates for members of the larger Chemistry Department community at Johns Hopkins. All events and initiatives organized by the CSSC are open to all students of the Chemistry Department and related groups, including monthly meetings. The CSSC welcomes collaborations from other organizations, such as ChemDNA, NOBCChE at JHU, CAFS, and the Chemistry Student Liaison Committee. The CSSC’s Undergraduate Lab Safety Captain program also serves as a bridge between researcher lab safety and academic lab safety.

The committee is represented regularly at faculty meetings by its faculty liaison(s). The faculty liaison may also attend CSSC meetings and provide reports to the Chemistry Department faculty and administration about its activities. On occasion, members of the CSSC may give presentations to the faculty with the permission of the Chair of the Chemistry Department.

Current Faculty Liaison:
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