



Developing an Ethical Framework for All Geoscientists: AGI Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct

Maeve A. Boland, P. Patrick Leahy, and Christopher M. Keane

American Geosciences Institute, Alexandria, United States (mboland@agiweb.org)

In 1997, a group of geoscientists and others recognized the need for a broad-based set of ethical standards for the geosciences that would be an expression of the highest common denominator of values for the profession. The American Geosciences Institute (AGI) coordinated the development of the 1999 AGI Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct and their subsequent revision in 2015.

AGI is a nonprofit federation of 51 geoscientific and professional organizations that span the geosciences and have approximately 250,000 members. AGI serves as a voice for shared interests in the geoscience community and one of its roles is to facilitate collaboration and discussion among its member societies on matters of common or overarching concern. In this capacity, AGI convened a working group to create the 1999 Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct and a further working group to revise the Guidelines in 2015 through a consensus process involving all member societies.

The Guidelines are an aspirational document, setting out ideals and high levels of achievement for the profession. They have no provision for disciplinary or enforcement action and they do not supersede the ethics statements or codes of any member society. The 1999 Guidelines pay considerable attention to the professional behavior of geoscientists. The 2015 Guidelines place greater emphasis on the societal context of the geosciences and the responsibilities of geoscientists in areas such as communication, education, and the challenges of understanding complex natural systems. The 2015 Guidelines have been endorsed by 29 member societies to date.

To translate the aspirations in the Guidelines into specific actions, AGI has facilitated discussions on the practical implications of aspects of the Guidelines. One outcome of these discussions has been a Consensus Statement Regarding Access and Inclusion of Individuals Living with Disabilities in the Geosciences.