



On Appropriate Engagement between the Geoscience Community and Corporate Actors

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The private sector has long played an integral role in the geoscience community. Corporations and other commercial interests regularly fund scientific research, sponsor events, and support university programs, departments and researchers. As public science funding options have become more limited and competitive, researchers increasingly look to the private sector for both funding and collaboration opportunities, leading to closer ties between companies and researchers. Such connections have raised ethical questions and scientific integrity concerns in recent cases where contracts were overly restrictive or funding relationships were not fully disclosed to the public, for example. A funder's inappropriate involvement in research for which they have a financial stake can produce inaccurate or misleading results that may translate into unreasonable and potentially harmful policy decisions. The scientific community—through scientific journals, scientific societies, and academic institutions—has also begun to implement stronger standards for governing concerns around conflict of interest, financial disclosure, and scientific misconduct. How should the scientific community engage with the private sector in order to maintain scientific integrity and public trust, while taking advantage of useful partnerships with corporate actors? What policies and practices can be put in place to foster greater transparency and clarity around corporate involvement in the scientific enterprise and to protect against malfeasance? This talk will discuss recent cases of scientific integrity violations related to corporate involvement and offer solutions to advancing independent scientific work amidst an increasingly complex and interconnected relationship between the scientific community and commercial interests.