

## From the Board of Directors



What a tumultuous 15 months this has been for science! After decades as a leader in scientific funding and support of innovation, the United States government took an abrupt turn in 2025, cutting personnel, rewriting standards, and cancelling grants and grant programs.

We here at BELS have a vested interest in science. Not only do we recognize its importance to the world, it is also the source of our livelihoods. So the question arose as to whether BELS should speak out about what is occurring.

There was lively debate within the Board of Directors, and strong opinions were expressed on the BELS [Email Discussion List](#) when the topic was raised there. To make sure we got the broadest possible input from our members, we distributed a survey in Fall 2025. Of the 151 respondents, the overwhelming majority (88%) wanted us to do *something*, although others raised very valid issues about whether this was even with our mandate. We also recognize that we are an international organization and that those outside the United States might not feel that this is a relevant topic at all, although we like to think that science is a global endeavor.

In the end, we decided that we, as an organization, at least need to state our position clearly, so that is what we have done. A [Position Statement on Scientific Integrity](#) is now on the BELS website and is printed in its entirety below. We will also continue the conversation and consider other possible actions in the future.

Do you have thoughts on the statement or on how current events are affecting editors in the life sciences? [Share them](#) on the Email Discussion List!

—Naomi Ruff

## 2026 BELS Position Statement on Scientific Integrity

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was founded in 1991 with a statement of its vision: “To improve communication in the life sciences through certification that supports the role and value of editorial professionals.”

### The Problem

As editors whose job is to facilitate clear communication about science, we are tasked with maintaining the integrity of the scientist's voice. That task has become harder in recent years.

As the universe of information becomes ever more fragmented, misinformation and disinformation have become increasingly prevalent. The increasing use of generative AI, with its readily available but unreliable output, combined with the near-instantaneous spread of content through social media, has made it difficult at times to know what is and isn't real. Our siloed news sources only contribute to the confusion.

Scientists and physicians around the world used to rely on the authenticity of data and statistics provided by the government of the United States. Recently, however, science conducted within or funded by the US government has been subjected to cuts in funding and personnel and the exclusion of foreign students and scientists, eroding research continuity (through the loss of laboratories, training pipelines, and longitudinal data) and reducing the ability of the government to produce reliable data. Furthermore, research on selected topics and language that could be associated with unfavored points of view have been blocked, defunded, or censored, and key advice on issues such as vaccines and nutrition has been dramatically altered, apparently based on political whim rather than scientific evidence.

### Our Position

The second principle of the BELS [Code of Ethics](#) is that “Editors in the life sciences should maintain and apply **objectivity, accuracy, fair balance, accessibility, and transparency** in their work, regardless of the medium, format, or purpose of the information and materials.” [Bolding added]

All of these goals are under threat, as are those of our third principle of ethics: “Editors in the life sciences should make every reasonable effort to avoid or prevent the communication of incorrect or misleading information in the materials they review or edit by communicating clearly and thoroughly the issues or concerns that they identify and the changes that they recommend.”

BELS opposes any intentional publication or distribution of information that is misleading or known to be incorrect and fully supports the free practice of scientific inquiry in all disciplines, with funding based on scientific merit and not solely on political priorities. We further support the restoration of full and robust funding of the scientific enterprise as being fundamental to the enormous progress society has made to date and must continue to make in the future.

As certified scientific editors, we can be a stabilizing force in the world's scientific infrastructure. Therefore, we pledge not to engage in work that cannot be supported by evidence or whose intent is to propagandize, and we pledge to make every effort to ensure that scientific communications of all types are clear and factual.

## Congratulations to Our Newly Certified BELS Editors!



In the April exam cycle, 6 editors passed the BELS exam to earn their Editor in the Life Sciences (ELS) certification. Congratulations to this group of editors!

Alexandra Brown  
Andre Lee-Moye  
Alyssa Luck

Kristen Mussack  
Manisha Sharma  
Anna Williams

# Annual BELS Member Survey

Greetings BELS Members!

We need your input to make BELS even better! Please help us by participating in the upcoming annual BELS member survey. This survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and will collect information on a variety of topics, such as membership benefits, events, volunteering, certification maintenance, and more. We will share a summary of the survey responses and ways to add value to your BELS membership in a future newsletter. Stay tuned!



## Upcoming Events

Please visit the [BELS calendar of events](#) for the most up-to-date meeting schedule and information about registering for meetings. (Note: all times below are presented in Central Time unless otherwise noted.)



- 21 May, 3:00-4:00 pm: Editing Education SIG
- 28 May, 4:00-5:00 pm: Grants SIG
- 29 May, 17:00 UTC+8: East & Southeast Asia SIG
- 9 June, 5:00 pm: Publications SIG

### **BELS Officers**

**Erica Goodoff, ELS(D)**

President

**Michelle Sauer Gehring, PhD, ELS**

Secretary

**Christine Wogan, MS, ELS**

Treasurer

**Stephen N. Palmer, PhD, ELS**

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Chair, Professional Development

**Wim DHaeze, PhD, ELS**

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**Yateendra Joshi, ELS(D)**

Chair, Distinguished Editor Exam Development

**Lisa Kisner, ELS, CAE**

Chair, Certification Maintenance

**Kim Mankiewicz, PhD, ELS**

Chair, Marketing

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was founded in 1991 to evaluate the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences and to award credentials similar to those obtainable in other professions.

Potential employers and clients of manuscript editors usually have no objective way to assess the proficiency of editors. For their part, editors are frustrated by the difficulty of demonstrating their ability. That is why both employers and editors so often resort to personal references or ad hoc tests, not always with satisfactory results. The need for an objective test of editorial skill has long been recognized.

To meet that need, BELS developed a process for testing and evaluating proficiency in editing in the life sciences. The Board administers two examinations—one for certification and one for Distinguished status. The examinations, written

**Margaret Mathes, ELS**

Newsletter Editor

**Leslie Neistadt, ELS**

Registrar

**Naomi Ruff, PhD, ELS**

Director, Certification Exam Development

**Sheryle Hazard, CAE**

Executive Director (nonvoting member)

by senior life-science editors assisted by testing experts, focus on the principles and practices of scientific editing in English.

