Formalization of the relationship between ISCB and SIG Meetings at ISMB

These guidelines describe the relationship between ISMB / ISCB and the SIGs that are held at ISMB. The guidelines try to achieve several goals based on feedback from SIG organizers and attendees:

- Allow SIG delegates to move freely between simultaneous SIG sessions
- Provide more extensive logistical support to meeting organizers
- Give SIG organizers the flexibility to customize portions of their meetings
- Minimize financial risk to ISCB from SIGs that lose money
- Allow profitable SIGs to benefit from their success
- Provide ISCB a financial return on the logistical support it provides to help fund additional activities
- Clarify details of the relationship to prevent misunderstandings and disappointed expectations

What is a SIG?

ISMB SIGs are 1-2 day meetings held in conjunction with ISMB. SIG meetings are organized around a specialized area of interest which is relevant to ISCB members.

The organization of a SIG is generally initiated by a member/s of ISCB. The scientific content of the SIGs is the responsibility of the SIG organizers. ISCB is responsible for the logistical management of the meeting. Details of respective responsibilities are included below.

Each SIG should have at least one nominated chair who acts as the primary contact with the ISCB staff.

Prospective SIG organizers should address applications to co-ordinate a SIG to the Conferences and SIGs committees by 1st November in the year preceding the meeting. Application guidelines will be posted on the ISCB and ISMB websites. At minimum the organizers must provide the following information:

- Organizer name and affiliation.
- Topic area and a description of the scope of the SIG
- SIG duration. (1 or 2 days is standard)
- Whether or not the SIG has been organized previously, including in which year(s) and at which conference(s)
- Previous attendance statistics
- Minimum expected number of participants
- A list of any special requirements
- Potential sources of sponsorship for the SIG

Financial surpluses and deficits

One reason to revise the SIG structure is to avoid financial problems for ISCB. ISCB can only take on financial risk for a meeting over which it has budget control; otherwise, the Society cannot protect itself from budget overruns and other financial issues.

ISCB will take all the financial risk for SIG meetings. This includes providing startup funds, determining the budget, managing the budget and finances, approving all expenses and payments, and absorbing any losses.

The number of people who choose a SIG as their primary SIG will count as the SIG's attendance. This may differ from day to day, as some people may register for only one day of a two-day SIG. If a SIG has non-paying participants, such as keynote speakers, they are included in the total attendance.

Given a SIG's attendance, its base profit or loss will be its registration income less the fixed and per-person costs in the standard package portion of its budget. In the event of a base loss, ISCB will cover the difference. In the event of a base profit, 50% of the profit will go to the SIG's account and 50% will go to ISCB in return for covering the financial risks.

SIG organizers may obtain external financial support or sponsorships to cover activities beyond the standard SIG package (see below). They should coordinate with ISCB's Conference Liaison so that SIG fundraising does not conflict with ISMB fundraising. Sponsorships must fully cover the cost of

extra activities. If more funds are raised than are needed, the SIG retains all those funds; ISCB does not take a portion.

If a SIG has a base loss but excess sponsorship funds, the latter must be used to reduce or eliminate the former as much as possible. Furthermore, if a SIG has a base deficit and is held again in a later year, it must budget to repay the deficit.

If a SIG has excess funds (base + sponsorship), ISCB will hold those funds for the SIG. If the excess is more than 50% of the cost of holding the SIG meeting, the amount beyond the 50% are available surplus funds and SIG organizers may use them. The available surplus funds can be used either for SIG activities during the year or to fund extra activities at later SIG meetings at ISMB.

Fees

ISCB budgets ISMB to provide at least a 10% return to support the Society's year-round activities, and this applies to SIGs as well. This means that charges for ISCB staff and registration costs include a 10% management fee. This is modest compared to fees of similar societies; ACM, for example, includes in the budgets of its SIG conferences a 15% fee to cover conference deficits and a 16% fee for management services.

ISCB staff costs for coordinating activities other than those in the standard packages are currently charged at $55 per hour, including the 10% management fee. This fee may change from year to year.

ISCB will determine the registration fees for attending SIGs for one or two days. The fees will be as low as possible, taking into account the services to be provided. Rate classes will be the same as for ISMB; for 2005, these were academic (including postdoc) and government, student, and corporate. Discounts will be provided for ISCB members and early registration, as they are for the tutorials and main conference.

A SIG may secure external financial support (sponsorships) or may draw on its available surplus funds from previous years to fund activities that are outside the standard SIG package. Examples of such activities are honoraria, travel support, paper review software system, poster boards, additional meeting rooms, more extensive audio-visual equipment, and a reception or dinner. These activities must be fully funded by the external support or reserve funds. In the case of external sponsorships, the funds must be received before ISCB commits funds to arrange the logistics.

If a SIG requests additional logistical support beyond what is included in the standard SIG package, the hourly meeting planning fee will be charged for the time needed to coordinate the additional arrangements, and any direct costs will be charged at cost plus 10%. For instance, if a SIG adds a dinner, it will need to pay the meal charge plus 10% and the hourly charge for coordinating the event.

We considered the possibility of allowing a SIG to charge an extra fee for a separate event, such as a dinner that is open only to those who pay for it. This is too complicated for our current registration and financial systems; we may consider it again in the future.

ISCB reserves the right to cancel a SIG meeting if not enough people register to cover the meeting's costs. Cancellation decisions will be taken immediately after the early-registration deadline, by which time registration trends are generally apparent. Information about the cancellation policy will appear on the registration website.

Attending simultaneous sessions

Delegates will register and pay for one or two days of SIG meetings. When registering, a delegate will specify a primary SIG (or two, if registering for different SIGs on different days). Attendees may move freely between sessions on the day(s) of their primary meeting(s).

In order to be fair to SIGs while allowing people to move freely between session, the meetings will share a common budget format and fee structure (i.e., all one-day meetings will have the same price, as will all two-day meetings). The primary registrations will be used to determine room assignments and areas of interest.

Responsibilities of coordinators of each SIG meeting

- Scientific materials: SIG coordinators will arrange all scientific portions of the meeting. They will give ISMB conference organizers handout materials for reproduction by the established deadline. Print materials should be in PDF format, with a page size to be specified by ISCB. Handouts will be provided to delegates as they register on-site.

- Meeting description: SIG coordinators will supply ISMB organizers with a description of their meeting for posting on the ISMB website before registration opens.

- Website: SIG coordinators are responsible to host and maintain their own website, which typically provides more detailed information about the meeting. They will provide the URL to the ISMB conference organizers by the established deadline so that it can be posted on the ISMB website before registration opens.

- Deadlines: SIG coordinators are responsible for meeting deadlines established by the ISMB conference organizers.

- ISMB Report: SIGs may be offered concurrent-session timeslots of approximately 15-30 minutes during ISMB to report to ISMB delegates about the SIG meetings.

- SIG Review Meeting during ISMB: Meeting coordinators are highly encouraged to attend a review meeting during ISMB to discuss the current year's SIG process, including its strengths and weaknesses. These comments will be used to improve future interactions and meetings.

Services that ISCB provides to each SIG

Each SIG meeting will receive the following services from ISCB. The SIG budget will include the cost of these services, including the ISCB fees to provide the services.

- Conference registration, which includes meeting registration via the ISMB conference website, collecting registration fees, receipts, name badges for delegates, liability insurance, and a list of registrant names and e-mail addresses (when available)

- Financial management

- Meeting planning services, which includes coordinating or arranging appropriate space at the venue; registration; food and beverages; audio-visual services; handouts; and liaison with the SIG, ISCB, and the meeting venue

- General promotion via the ISCB website and newsletters, on the ISMB conference website, and via two e-mail announcements to ISCB members and the list of prospective conference attendees. Each SIG is expected to do additional promotion on its own.

- Six complimentary SIG registrations for the day(s) of the SIG meeting (i.e., not for other SIG days and not for the main ISMB meeting) for speakers or organizers

- Delegate handouts. Each SIG will be able to supply up to 25 pages of handouts. They will be photocopied in black and white on double-sided pages. The cover will be stock paper with die cut.

- Each delegate will receive handouts from all SIGs to facilitate moving between sessions. In addition, all SIGs will have the same starting and ending times for their sessions.

- Cybercafe access. This depends on ISMB receiving Cybercafe sponsorship that includes SIG days, and only applies to meetings held in the main conference venue.

- Meeting room space, consisting of one room to accommodate the expected attendance, based on previous years' attendance or on projections that are agreed to by ISCB and the SIG coordinators.

- Audio-visual services, which consist of the following.

    - High-speed Internet connection in the meeting room. Wireless access may be available, but possibly only in public areas.
    - Data projector and projection screen
    - One cable to connect computer to projector (groups need to supply their own computer)
    - Podium or lectern with wired microphone
    - One wireless lapel microphone

- One wireless microphone for questions from the audience
- One laser pointer

- Food and beverage services, which consist of the following.

    - Water in session room
    - Morning break with coffee and tea (no food)
    - Lunch
    - Afternoon break with the same refreshments as for the morning break

- The SIG budget will include funds for the above detailed SIG-specific expenses

- The SIG budget will not include rental of a computer, breakfast food, or dinner; these items can be arranged through use of surplus funds or sponsorships.

Criteria for SIG acceptance

- A maximum number of 6-10 SIGs will be accepted each year (this is dependent on the venue, and subject to change from year to year).

- All SIGs must apply for acceptance whether or not they have been held in previous years. SIGs which have run successfully in previous years will be favorably considered. SIGs which have run at a loss in previous years will have to provide strong motivation and an indication that there will be significant interest in the topic to warrant being reconsidered.

- Topics should be non-overlapping. Should two SIGs with overlapping content be proposed the ISCB Conferences/SIGs committee will liaise with the organizers to determine the extent of overlap. It may be recommended that such SIGs be combined.