

**DePaul University
Institutional Biosafety Committee**

**MINUTES OF MEETING
March 13, 2026**

Members Present:	Members Absent:
1. Rima Barkauskas (Voting) 2. David George (Voting) 3. Jingjing Kipp (Voting) 4. Janine Kirin (Voting) 5. Justin Maresh (Chair) (Voting) 6. Nicolette Zielinski-Mozny (Voting) 7. Brian Henson Non-Voting Ex-Officios: Anna Bernadska (Non Voting) Melodie Fox (Non Voting)	Katie Abma (Voting) Jeremie Fant (Voting)

The meeting was called to order at 01:05 PM by J. Maresh, Chair. Nicolette joined at 1:30 PM.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Welcome**
2. **Current Protocols for Review**

IBC-2025-1807 (Terry Fitzpatrick) BIO 250 Lab Teaching Activities

The committee reviewed IBC-2025-1807 (Terry Fitzpatrick) for the inclusion of *Bacillus cereus* in BIO 250 teaching laboratory activities.

- Justin reported that several reputable references identify *B. cereus* as an opportunistic pathogen typically categorized as Risk Group 2. However, he noted that many academic institutions—including Cornell and other peer universities—work with *B. cereus* under BSL-1 conditions, provided that enhanced precautions are implemented. Justin emphasized the importance of minimizing splash and aerosol generation during handling and ensuring robust decontamination practices, given the organism's ability to form hardy endospores.
- Rima added that *B. cereus* is not central to the learning objectives of the BIO 250 course. She anticipated that Terry may choose to remove the organism entirely if its risk classification introduces unnecessary complexity for an introductory-level teaching lab.
- Janine inquired whether assigning *B. cereus* to Risk Group 2 would require any changes to the PPE expectations for students.
- Justin clarified that while *B. cereus* would be designated RG2 handled at BSL-1, the PPE requirements remain unchanged for this context. Instead, the emphasis is placed on procedural caution, particularly preventing spills, splashes, and aerosols, rather than

upgrading personal protective equipment.

Conclusions and Required Modifications

- *Bacillus cereus* must be classified in the protocol as Risk Group 2, handled under BSL-1 conditions.
- The protocol must be updated to include explicit language outlining enhanced exposure controls, including splash-avoidance techniques, careful handling practices, and attention to aerosol-generating steps.
- Because *B. cereus* forms resilient endospores, bleach must be used for surface and material decontamination. Conflikt is not appropriate for this purpose and should be removed from the protocol as a decontamination option.

Decision: Approve the protocol with these modifications by the primary reviewers. Votes: Yes – 7, No – 0, Abstained – 0, Recused – 0.

IBC-2025-1541 (William Gilliland) Bio 260 Teaching Labs

The committee reviewed William Gilliland's BIO 260 teaching lab protocol.

The committee commented on the outdated COVID-19 language.

- Justin noted that the Training and Safety section of the protocol still included language related to COVID-19, specifically referencing reduced room occupancy (half-capacity) and distancing expectations. These statements are no longer valid and should be removed to maintain an accurate and compliant protocol.
- Rima explained that the protocol appears to have been copied from an earlier version, and the outdated COVID-specific language was accidentally carried forward during the update.
- Nicolette shared that she initially did not comment on the COVID-related language, as she was uncertain about DePaul's current laboratory policy and did not want to incorrectly assume that the language was obsolete.

The committee reviewed the inclusion of corn in the sanitation and disposal section and questioned why it was being treated as a biohazard when it does not meet that classification.

- Justin asked why corn was singled out for special disposal procedures if it is not classified as a biohazard within the protocol.
- Rima clarified that the corn experiment involves counting kernels and silks and does not involve biological agents or materials that would constitute a biosafety concern.
- Nicolette suggested that mold growth on corn could theoretically present an issue but acknowledged that this concern was speculative and minimal in this context.
- Justin emphasized that if mold were considered a legitimate hazard, it would need to be explicitly listed in the biohazards table rather than addressed indirectly through disposal language.

The committee revisited the rationale for listing baker's yeast as a biohazard in the BIO 260 protocol.

- Justin referenced a previous committee decision explaining that yeast is listed as a biohazard specifically because mutant strains are generated during the course.
- He further clarified that the committee's intent is to review mutant phenotypes to ensure that genetic modifications do not elevate the organism's risk level.
- Nicolette questioned whether the committee still supports this classification approach and whether it remains appropriate.
- Justin confirmed that the mutants used in BIO 260—such as auxotrophic and temperature-sensitive strains—are well-characterized and safe, with no increased

biosafety risk.

- Yeast will remain classified as a biohazard in the BIO 260 protocol solely because mutant strains are generated.

The committee identified insufficient detail in the protocol's spill cleanup procedures.

- David noted that the protocol does not distinguish between small spills and large spills, which is inconsistent with committee expectations.
- Justin confirmed that committee policy requires explicit procedures for both spill types.
- Rima explained that while students typically work with small volumes (approximately 1 mL of yeast), teaching assistants may handle significantly larger volumes (300–400 mL), necessitating differentiated procedures.
- Justin added that the protocol lacks detail regarding cleanup methods, including disinfectant application techniques and required contact times.

The committee engaged in an extended discussion regarding whether *Drosophila* (fruit flies) should be classified as a biohazard in teaching laboratory protocols.

- David referenced language in the lab manual cautioning that mutant flies should not be released into the environment.
- Justin initially expressed hesitation, noting that research laboratories do not submit fly protocols for IBC review.
- Nicolette suggested that if safety or containment concerns exist, flies should be explicitly listed in the protocol.
- Jingjing asked whether the primary concern was escape prevention and cross-contamination.
- Justin concluded that the issue is specific to teaching labs, where non-expert instructors and students require clear, explicit guidance.
- Rima noted that the specific mutants used (e.g., vestigial wings, yellow body) have reduced survival capacity, even under laboratory conditions.
- *Drosophila* will be listed as a biohazard for teaching lab protocols only to provide students with explicit containment guidance.

The committee discussed whether UV mutagenesis equipment requires formal safety documentation within the IBC protocol.

- David noted that UV light is used for yeast mutagenesis.
- Nicolette referenced typical UV safety measures, such as shields and protective eyewear.
- Rima clarified that the course uses a Stratalinker UV crosslinker, which includes a drawer-based design that prevents UV exposure when closed.
- Justin questioned whether UV safety falls under the IBC's mandate or is more appropriately addressed by Environmental Health and Safety (EHS).
- Jingjing suggested including a clarifying note describing the built-in safety features of the equipment.

Conclusions and Required Modifications

- All COVID–19–related language from the Training and Safety section of the BIO 260 protocol must be removed.
- Corn must be removed from the sanitation and disposal section of the protocol. Fresh grocery store corn does not constitute a biohazard and does not require special handling or disposal procedures.
- If mold is identified as a concern, it must be classified and documented as a biohazard within the protocol.
- The PI must clearly define what constitutes a large or small spill and explain procedures for containing spills. Spill cleanup instructions must include specific details, such as application method and contact time.
- The PI must include explicit procedures for containment and disposal of *Drosophila* in the

Training and Safety section.

- UV safety will be addressed as a recommendation rather than a requirement. The protocol should note that the UV crosslinker has built-in safety mechanisms that prevent user exposure.
- FlyNap must be removed from the protocol and replaced with CO₂ as the anesthetic method in Fly Lab #5.

Decision: Approve the protocol with these modifications by the primary reviewers.

Votes: Yes – 7, No – 0, Abstained – 0, Recused – 0.

IBC-2026-1867 (Joanna Brooke) BIO 320/420 Advanced Microbiology Phage Labs and Microbiology Activities

The committee discussed the absence of teaching assistant (TA) assignments in the submitted protocol and whether this omission required correction at this stage of review.

- Jingjing noted that project information shows the project as starting in the Spring quarter, but the course number is not on the Spring list.
- Jingjing noted that no TA was listed for the course in the protocol and asked whether this information was missing or expected to be added later.
- Justin asked whether TAs are typically included as protocol amendments once assignments are finalized closer to the start of the term.
- David recalled that other approved teaching protocols often include placeholder language such as “TAs to be added later”, reflecting the timing of TA assignments.
- Janine confirmed that it is standard practice for TAs to be added via amendment after assignments are finalized and before the course begins.

The committee raised significant concerns regarding the biosafety classification of *Branhamella catarrhalis* listed in the BIO 320/420 protocol.

- Justin reported that *Branhamella catarrhalis* is commonly classified as Risk Group 2 and BSL-2, rather than BSL-1 as listed in the protocol.
- Jingjing confirmed through review of multiple sources that the organism is designated BSL-2, reinforcing the concern.
- Justin noted that the organism is often sold under a deprecated name, which may contribute to confusion regarding its classification. He further noted that if the organism is confirmed as BSL-2, the entire protocol’s risk level changes, requiring different containment, training, and review procedures.

The committee identified additional bacterial strains in the protocol that require biosafety verification due to strain-dependent classifications.

- David raised concerns about *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, noting its classification as an opportunistic pathogen.
- Justin noted that *Enterobacter aerogenes* may be classified as RG-1 or RG-2, depending on the specific strain.
- Justin stated that all three organisms (*Branhamella catarrhalis*, *Enterobacter aerogenes*, and *Staphylococcus epidermidis*) require documentation supporting BSL-1 handling.
- The committee agreed that these organisms have strain-specific biosafety classifications and that vendor documentation is necessary to justify BSL-1 use.

The committee sought clarification regarding the use of environmental water samples in bacteriophage work.

- David noted that the protocol references a “novel *E. coli* bacteriophage from the Chicago River”, while environmental sampling was marked as “No.”
- Justin initially assumed that bacteriophages had been previously isolated and maintained

in-house.

- David reported that the protocol does not describe procedures for collecting or processing river water samples.
- Justin noted that handling river water would require Risk Group 2 precautions, which are not currently described in the protocol.

Several minor technical issues were identified during review.

- Justin identified a misspelling of *Bacillus subtilis* as “*subtitilis*” in one section.
- David noted that the same organism was listed multiple times from different vendors.
- Justin confirmed the correct spelling is “*subtilis*.”

The committee discussed the appropriate review pathway for the BIO 320/420 protocol given the outstanding biosafety questions.

- Melodie asked whether the protocol could proceed via DMR if any organisms are confirmed as BSL-2.
- Justin clarified that BSL-2 classification elevates the overall protocol risk, requiring full committee review.
- Anna suggested deferring final approval until biosafety classifications are clarified.
- Jingjing proposed conditional DMR approval, allowing primary reviewers to escalate if necessary.
- David agreed that reviewers should have discretion to accept documentation or elevate concerns.
- Janine confirmed that any DMR can be returned to full committee review if warranted.

Conclusions and Required Modifications

- Confirm when the project will start.
- TA information does not need to be included in the initial protocol submission. TA assignments may be added later as an amendment, consistent with standard teaching-protocol practice. TA training and qualifications will be reviewed when the amendment is submitted.
- The PI must provide documentation verifying that the specific strain can be safely handled at BSL-1. Acceptable documentation must demonstrate that the strain is a special educational or attenuated strain certified for BSL-1 use. As an alternative, the PI may remove this organism from the protocol.
- The following organisms require biosafety level verification:
 - *Branhamella catarrhalis*
 - *Enterobacter aerogenes*
 - *Staphylococcus epidermidis*
- The PI must provide supplier documentation confirming that each strain is appropriate for BSL-1 handling. Primary reviewers will evaluate the documentation during the DMR process.
- If any organism is confirmed as BSL-2, the protocol must return to full committee review.
- The PI must clarify whether students collect environmental water samples.
- If river water is used, the protocol must include appropriate RG-2 safety precautions.
- The protocol should clearly describe sample sources, collection methods, and handling procedures.
- Correct the spelling of *Bacillus subtilis* throughout the protocol.
- Multiple vendor listings are acceptable, provided all information is accurate and consistent.

Decision: The protocol is conditionally approved for DMR, pending biosafety verification. Primary reviewers may approve if the documentation is satisfactory. Primary reviewers may elevate the protocol to full committee review if concerns remain. This approach

aligns with standard DMR procedures and allows reviewer discretion. Votes: Yes – 7, No – 0, Abstained – 0, Recused – 0.

3. Discussion of Other Items

eProtocol System Navigation and Access Issues

Committee members discussed challenges navigating the eProtocol system and identifying reviewer assignments under the new streamlined agenda format.

- Justin reported difficulty viewing reviewer assignments in the meeting agenda and noted unfamiliarity with accessing protocols through the reviewer dashboard.
- Rima demonstrated how reviewer information can be accessed via the “Events Assigned as Reviewer” section within eProtocol.
- Anna acknowledged that system functionality is inconsistent across compliance boards (IRB, IBC, IACUC).
- David confirmed similar access limitations for committee members who are not assigned as primary or secondary reviewers.
- Melodie explained that the VIEWER function allows seeing everything except Reviewer Comment history and Staff Notes.

Project Summary Display Glitch

The committee identified multiple technical issues with the project summary section in the teaching protocols.

- Justin observed that project summary fields were missing or inconsistently displayed.
- Janine discovered that project summaries do not carry over when protocols are cloned.
- Melodie suggested the issue may have arisen during recent PDF print formatting updates.
- Anna emphasized the need for consistent display of project summaries in both the electronic interface and PDF output.
- Committee members noted that the project summary may appear initially, but disappears when navigating between tabs.

Improving Research Compliance Resource Accessibility

The committee discussed strategies to improve access to research compliance resources for faculty and committee members.

- Jingjing suggested adding a link to the research compliance website in office staff email signatures.
- Justin proposed integrating research compliance resources into the MyDePaul CSH Operations Hub under the research category.
- Melodie noted that not all faculty belong to CSH, emphasizing the need for institution-wide accessibility.
- Anna expressed support for implementing the email signature approach.
- Janine supported exploring MyDePaul integration options.

Conclusion

- Anna will coordinate with Kirthi to address system inconsistencies across boards.
- The project summary display issue will be reported to Key Solutions for investigation and correction.
- Project summaries must display correctly in both electronic and PDF versions of the protocol.
- A link to the research compliance website will be added to office staff email signatures.
- The team will investigate adding research compliance resources to the MyDePaul Operations Hub.

The meeting was adjourned at 03:00 P.M.

Justin J
Maresh

 Digitally signed by
Justin J Maresh
Date: 2026.05.04
16:11:33 -05'00'

(Signature) (Chair) (Date)

(Signature) (Manager) (Date)