

Increasing the Visibility and Outreach of the Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity Profession to Enhance Policymaker and Public Support of Bio-Innovation

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Abstract

ABSA International has existed since 1984 as a professional organization dedicated to promoting and expanding laboratory biosafety and biosecurity expertise. Our members work in universities, pharmaceutical companies, government agencies and laboratories, and non-governmental organizations within human, animal, plant, and environmental sectors around the world. Biosafety and biosecurity professionals have been key collaborators in areas of bio-innovation and serve as liaisons between the public and researchers where there are questions on safety and security in emerging biotechnology. However, our profession is largely invisible to the public. There are few academic degree programs and most of our membership have found their way to the profession through unstructured pathways. The current strategic goals for ABSA International focus on better defining both the laboratory biosafety and biosecurity professions to create more awareness for the work we do. A higher and more defined profile should garner more attention from regulators and policymakers and allow our profession the opportunity to contribute while oversight and governance are under discussion. Likewise, more visibility in the public and academia for laboratory biosafety and biosecurity as a legitimate profession should help to build public confidence in the safety and security of bio-innovation.

Key words: laboratory biosafety, laboratory biosecurity, laboratory biosafety and biosecurity profession, ABSA International