

January 2026 Institutional Biosafety Committee Meeting Minutes

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Institution	Auburn University
Meeting Date	Wednesday, January 14, 2026
Meeting Time	1:14PM – 2:28PM
Meeting Type	Hybrid (In Person and Zoom)
IBC Members Present	Present: Kevin Huggins, IBC Member, IBC Chair Catherine Situma, IBC Secretary Deepika Suresh, BSO Kassie Conner, IBC Member, Plant Expert Julio Garcia, IBC Member, Local Non-Affiliated Ruediger Hauck, IBC Member, Faculty Rep Andrea Loewen, IBC Member, Institutional Policy Miranda Reed, IBC Member, Faculty Rep Pat Rynders, IBC Member, Veterinarian/Animal Expert David Acker, IBC Member, Alternate for Situma Niki Johnson, IBC Non-voting Member (<i>Ex officio</i>) Not Present: E.N. Burson, IBC Member, Local Non-Affiliated Zachary Noel, IBC Member, Plant Expert
Quorum	The IBC has 11 voting members, and 6 members are required to conduct business.
Other Individuals in Attendance	Valerie Riggins – IBC Administration Adrienne Booker – IBC Administration Nicholas May – Risk Management and Safety Neha Potnis – Faculty, Entomology & Plant Pathology Jean-Francois Louf – Faculty, Chemical Engineering
Call to Order	The IBC Chair called the meeting to order at 1:14 PM.
Conflicts of Interest, if Applicable	There were no conflicts of interest.
Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes	September 3, 2025 Motion: To approve the September 3, 2025 meeting’s minutes as written. • Votes for: 9 • Votes against: 0 • Abstain: 0 October 1, 2025 Motion: To approve the October 1, 2025 meeting’s minutes as written. • Votes for: 9 • Votes against: 0 • Abstain: 0

NEW IBC REGISTRATIONS	
PI Name(s)	Neha Potnis
BUA Number	New Registration - SPROTO202600000001
Project Overview	To understand the molecular mechanisms of pathogenesis in plant pathogenic bacteria that cause bacterial spot disease on tomato and pepper (<i>Xanthomonas</i> spp) and that cause disease on cucurbits and chenopods (<i>Pseudomonas</i> spp).
NIH Guidelines Section	Section III-E-2-a
Risk Assessment and Discussion	• The purpose of the study is to understand the gene function and its contribution to virulence. • Mutant bacterial strains (<i>Xanthomonas</i> spp and <i>Pseudomonas</i> spp) collected from the state of Alabama will be generated by homologous recombination. They are designated as RG-1 for plant-associated strains. • The plasmids used in this construction will integrate the gene into the chromosome, and no plasmid backbone remains in our bacterium. Therefore, there will be no attempt to express the product outside the pathogens. • The mutant strains will undergo a combination of in vitro assays (in the lab inside the BSC) and in planta functional assays in the actual plants that are contained only in the controlled growth chamber. • In-vitro assays - Growth or functional assays conducted under standard microbiological practices. • In Planta assays are conducted in growth chamber using leaf and dip inoculation methods, where the plants are maintained in trays and assessment endpoints will be disease severity and bacterial population (wild vs mutant) in plant tissue. • The room where the growth chambers are placed has restricted access. • No breeding or cloning of plants occurs. • No field trial experiments. • All Bacterial cultures, infected plant material, soil, and trays will be autoclaved before disposal. • No additional containment beyond standard BSL-1 laboratory safety procedures is required. Monitoring and periodic review will ensure continued compliance and safety.
Training	All lab personnel have completed the required Laboratory Safety, Biological Safety, Managing Regulated Waste and NIH Guidelines training. The PI will conduct any protocol-specific biosafety training and containment training.
Occupational Health Representative Review if Applicable	N/A
Biosafety Level Assignment	BL1-P
IBC Vote	A motion was made to approve the registration pending the following changes or conditions are met. • Include details about the re-insertion of the deleted genes.

	• Double check locations and mention what occurs in each specific room. • Add the concentration in CFU/ml. • Add specific strain of E. Coli under appropriate sections. • Provide a reason for adding genes. • List the complete length of the project. • Describe information about what will occur in the event of an unintentional release. Include what the risks are if the strains get out into the environment. • Elaborate on why these agents are not covered by DURC. • Votes for: 9 • Votes against: 0 • Abstain: 0
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DEFERRED IBC REGISTRATIONS	
PI Name(s)	Jean-Francois Louf
BUA Number	Deferred Registration - SPROTO202500000062
Project Overview	This research involves growing and analyzing genetically modified Arabidopsis thaliana lines to investigate how plants perceive and respond to mechanical stimuli, particularly sound.
NIH Guidelines Section	Section III-E-2-a
Risk Assessment and Discussion	• The transgenic Arabidopsis thaliana lines were not created at AU. It is procured from the external entity ABRC – Arabidopsis Biological Resource Center. • The transgenic Arabidopsis lines express fluorescent molecular reporters that help to monitor real-time cellular and biochemical responses. • The project also examines whether high-frequency airborne acoustic waves (≥ 100 kHz) can mimic gravity and guide root orientation. • Plants are grown on sterile agar media or in growth chambers under controlled environmental conditions in BL1 containment. • Acoustic treatments are performed inside closed acoustic chambers or within the growth chamber, with plants placed at defined distances from the transducers. • The room where the growth chambers are placed has restricted access. • Confocal and widefield microscopy are used to monitor subcellular dynamics and gene expression. • No breeding or cloning of plants occurs. • No microbial agents, animal tissues, or human-derived materials are used during these procedures. • Transgenic seeds are stored and labeled in sealed microcentrifuge tubes or seed envelopes inside locked laboratory storage units. • All transgenic lines are tracked in a digital inventory with identifiers, transformation details, and antibiotic selection markers. • After the experiments, all materials will be autoclaved or bleached and disposed of. • No additional containment beyond standard BSL-1 laboratory safety procedures is required. Monitoring and periodic review will ensure continued compliance and safety.

Training	All lab personnel have completed the required Laboratory Safety, Biological Safety, Managing Regulated Waste and NIH Guidelines training. The PI will conduct any protocol-specific biosafety training and containment training.
Occupational Health Representative Review if Applicable	N/A
Biosafety Level Assignment	BL1-P
IBC Vote	A motion was made to approve the registration pending the following changes or conditions are met. • Add information about BRS permit exemption. • Provide the locations where the acoustic treatments and microscopy will occur. • Add a sentence that quarterly lab inspections will occur. • Review personnel and ensure that a plant subject matter expert is part of the project team. • Include information about use of a secondary container when growth trays and petri dishes are moved between locations. • Describe autoclave parameters (temperature, psi, and duration). • Include information about disposal of plant waste and media at the end of each experiment. • Include information about gene activity. • Include ABRC catalogue information under supporting documents. • Votes for: 9 • Votes against: 0 • Abstain: 0

ADDITIONAL IBC TOPICS	
Review of Prior Business	None
New Business/Additional Topics	None
Review of Incidents if Applicable	Registration #1125 This project aims to conduct field trials that will evaluate growth, resilience, and phenotype of CRISPR-edited low lignin elite Populus varieties and compare greenhouse vs field phenotypes. The IBC discussed an incident of accidental release of trees in which a set of unhealthy seedlings without flowers or seeds were discarded as plant waste instead of being autoclaved. Once the situation was identified, the PI notified both Risk Management & Safety and the USDA APHIS permitting office about the release. As part of the reporting process, the PI listed corrective actions that were taken, including increasing communication, targeted retraining of students and staff, implementing a formal verification step requiring documentation of autoclaving and written disposal checklist, and enhanced signage.

	The IBC discussed the corrective actions and requested additional information and corrective actions (involvement of BSO in retraining session(s), copy of immediate communication that occurred with personnel, reviewing and, if necessary, updating personnel listed on BUA). Periodic compliance self-audits will be conducted quarterly in conjunction with RMS. A motion was made to send the PI a memo outlining the requested additional corrective actions and that a BUA modification incorporating the revised plan be submitted for IBC review. • Votes for: 9 • Votes against: 0 • Abstain: 0
Inspections/Ongoing Oversight	Not Discussed During This Meeting. This Will Be Discussed Quarterly.
IBC Training if Applicable	N/A
Public Comments if Applicable	There were no public comments.
Adjournment	The IBC Chair moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:28PM. • Votes for: 9 • Votes against: 0 • Abstain: 0