

PROPOSED Responsible Conduct of Research Charge

Investigate and make recommendations with regard to the establishment and implementation of a University-wide policy on training and oversight in the responsible conduct of research (RCR) at Rutgers. If deemed appropriate, make specific recommendations for different training tracks, e.g. NSF- and NIH- compliant programs. Identify gaps in current resources, the intended recipients of RCR training (e.g. graduate students, undergraduate researchers, postdocs, faculty, etc.), the expected costs (if known) and benefits of implementing recommendations, and the unit(s) responsible for implementing and tracking compliance. Provide a report to the University Senate by December 2016.

Background

The responsible and ethical conduct of research is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in scientific and other scholarly endeavors. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training involves learning topics such as ethical data acquisition, management, sharing and ownership; research misconduct; preventing and managing conflicts of interest; academic integrity, responsible authorship and peer review; and the ethical treatment of human and vertebrate animal subjects; among others. Key funding organizations, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have different requirements for an institution's training on RCR. For example, NIH requirements are more rigorous and specific, and include face-to-face interactions with RCR trainees (online training is insufficient). Training plans are subject to review and audit by these funding organizations. Rutgers does not have a University-wide policy on training for RCR.

In January 2015, the NSF notified Rutgers Office of Research Regulatory Affairs that a review would be conducted during the same month of the Rutgers RCR training program. In preparation for this visit, it was discovered that while numerous courses and workshops are established to address RCR at the various schools within Rutgers, some of the courses were compliant with NIH policies and others with NSF policies, and this level of compliance was not always readily apparent. Also, there is no central repository of information about these programs (such as a website). Furthermore, there is no consistent and readily auditable system for tracking those who have completed RCR training at a University level, even though the Rutgers Division of Contracts and Grants Accounting is responsible to ensure that this requirement has been met.

The University Senate may help to address these issues by: 1) investigating the "best practices" for RCR in place at similar Universities, 2) creating a baseline University-wide policy on training and oversight of RCR to improve consistency and compliance with the requirements of major funders which could be made more rigorous within schools as appropriate, 3) considering the need for different "tracks" and whatever flexibility is needed to meet the needs of the various schools, 4) making recommendations for the creation of a central repository of information and other resources relevant to RCR, and 5) develop an effective and efficient means of tracking and communicating what training has been completed and by whom.