

The College of Idaho Integrity in Research and Scholarship

Policy Statement: The College of Idaho is committed to maintaining high standards of integrity in research and scholarship, and this policy statement applies to all research conducted by members of the College community, regardless of the source of funding.

Faculty or staff who direct research projects are responsible for monitoring and assuring the integrity of the research conducted under their direction and must set high standards in this regard.

The College of Idaho takes any allegation of research misconduct seriously: the College will strive to conduct full and fair investigations of any allegations with appropriate due process, to protect the rights of all concerned parties, to maintain confidentiality where possible, and to protect both researchers and persons making good-faith claims of research misconduct. Following an investigation, the College may refer any findings to its standing disciplinary processes. Furthermore, actions taken by the College do not preclude inquiry, investigation, or disciplinary action by a funding agency.

In addition, College of Idaho policy prohibits retaliatory actions against anyone for reporting or inquiring about potential breaches of College policy or for seeking guidance on how to handle suspected breaches. The identity of confidential sources will be protected to the extent consistent with the needs of an inquiry or investigation. Individuals who provide information in good faith about questionable conduct will be protected against reprisals.

The College provides copies of this policy to all students, faculty, and staff who participate in grant-funded research and publishes the policy in widely distributed and accessible forms.

Background: This policy statement is guided by principles outlined in the Framework for Institutional Policies and Procedures to Deal with Fraud in Research (November 4, 1988, reissued November 10, 1989; Association of American Universities, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and the Council of Graduate Schools), and in some instances, wording has been taken directly from these documents.

Accordingly, the College endorses the following statementⁱ:

Fraud in research undermines the scientific enterprise in ways that go far beyond the waste of public funds. Although an uncommon event relative to the large scientific literature, violations of accepted standards inevitably appear in this as in all human pursuits. Institutions engaged in research have a major responsibility, not only to provide an environment that promotes integrity, but also to establish and enforce policies that deal effectively and expeditiously with allegations or evidence of fraud.

In dealing with this problem it is important not to create an atmosphere that might discourage openness and creativity. Good and innovative science cannot flourish in an atmosphere of oppressive regulation. Moreover, it is particularly important to distinguish fraud from the honest error and ambiguities of interpretation that are inherent in the scientific process and are normally corrected by further research.

Recognizing the potential damage caused by misconduct in research, some federal agencies including the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), require that, to be eligible for research funding, institutions have a written policy for handling allegations of research

misconductⁱⁱ. Research misconduct is defined here as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other serious deviation from commonly accepted practices in the relevant academic community for proposing, performing or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences in opinion.

Procedures: If any member of the College community has concerns regarding potential research misconduct, they should contact their supervisor, department chair, or the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

If an official of the College receives an allegation of possible research misconduct, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) determines whether a formal investigation is warranted. Any allegation(s) must be submitted in writing to the VPAA.

If an investigation is deemed necessary, the VPAA shall form a panel of three faculty or staff with appropriate expertise and without conflict of interest in the case. In some circumstances experts from outside the College community may be members of the panel. The panel must complete its work within 60 days of the written allegations, unless there are unusual and extenuating circumstances, and the panel must submit its conclusions in writing to the VPAA, who then reviews the case. On the merits of the findings, the VPAA recommends appropriate action to the President of the College.

The person against whom the allegations were made shall receive copies of the written reports of the inquiry and investigation and shall have the right to appeal the decision to the President. Appeals must be filed in writing within 14 days of receipt of the written findings of the panel. Following any appeal, the President's decision is final.

In all cases regarding possible misconduct of researchers supported federal, state, or private grants, the College will follow the guidelines issued by the respective agencies or foundations and will submit written notification, as required.

Amendments and updates: The College of Idaho may amend this plan at any time after consultation with the Director of Foundations and Corporate Relations, Director of Student Research and Creative Activities (DSRCA), and the VPAA. Details of any amended plan will be sent to all faculty, the DSRCA, the VPAA, and amended plans will be posted on the College website. At a minimum, the plan will be reviewed and updated annually, no later than October 1 of each year.

ⁱ Association of American Universities, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, Council of Graduate Schools. Framework for Institutional Policies and Procedures to Deal with Fraud in Research (Washington, DC: Association of American Universities, 1988); <http://www.aau.edu/reports/FrwkRschFraud.html>

ⁱⁱ Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service. "Responsibilities of Awardee and Applicant Institution for Dealing with Reporting Possible Misconduct in Science," Federal Register, 54: 32446-32451, August 8, 1989.
Office of Research Integrity. Model Policies and Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Scientific Misconduct, Issued April 1995; revised February 1997.