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The Office of Research Affairs provides timely notices to the research community on important information, policies updates and regulatory initiatives and changes. See the Office of Research Affairs website at <http://blink.ucsd.edu/sponsor/ora/>.

Fostering Integrity in Research

In April, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) published a new report titled "[Fostering Integrity in Research](#)." Although still in draft form, this report highlights deficiencies widely recognized in science and calls for fundamental changes to enhance the research enterprise. The report returns to many issues addressed in earlier national reports dating back 30 years, but it is nonetheless a timely and important emphasis on the many ways in which we might do better in promoting and protecting research integrity.

Concerns raised in this report are increasingly familiar to observers of science. In many fields, reported rates are high for published research that cannot be reproduced by others. Retractions of research have continued to rise over the past 15 years. Reports of research misconduct (fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism) are at best stable and perhaps even increasing, despite increasing efforts to promote responsible conduct of research (RCR) through education and training. The evidence is compelling that far too many researchers engage in practices that are at least questionable if not detrimental to the integrity of science. In the face of these worrisome challenges, this NASEM reports suggests a diverse array of recommendations and "best practices" for researchers, research institutions, journals, sponsors and users of research, and scientific societies and professional organizations.

The first two of these domains (researchers and research institutions) are acutely relevant to our research community. The report cites six best practices for researchers, including a focus on research integrity per se, data handling, authorship, mentoring, peer review, and compliance with regulations. The good news is that none of these goals is surprising or novel. This has been a focus of teaching about responsible

conduct of research at UCSD for 25 years now, and for more than 15 years the same elements have been covered in publicly available documents of the [UCSD Research Ethics Program](#).

Regarding research institutions, the NASEM report recommends a responsibility to “maintain the highest standards for research conduct, going beyond simple compliance with federal regulations in undertaking research misconduct investigations and in other areas.” As with recommendations for researchers, three of the four best practices for research institutions focus on domains in which UCSD is recognized internationally as a leader: (1) “Integrate research integrity considerations into overall approaches to research, education, and institutional management”; (2) “Perform regular inventories of institutional policies, procedures, and capabilities for investigating and addressing research misconduct and address weaknesses that are identified.” and (3) “Strive for continuous improvement in RCR training and education.” However, the report adds a fourth element that is rarely addressed by institutions: (4) “Perform regular assessments of the climate for research integrity at the institutional and department levels and address weaknesses that are identified.”

One of the reasons that such assessments are done rarely is that it is notoriously difficult to develop reliable and valid measures of climate or culture, and until recently no such measures were available for research integrity. The one such measure that now exists, championed by two of the 13 members of the authors of this report, is the Survey of Organizational Research Climate (SOURCE). While the principle of assessing climate is a good one, it is expensive relative to the budgets of most research institutions. And one important cautionary note is that it is arguably still more of a tool for research. Data are not yet available to demonstrate that the tool can reliably track improvements or deficits in climate secondary to interventions. While such an assessment is of potential value, it may be that recommending widespread use of this particular tool is premature.

Although researchers might prefer to focus on their research rather than reading a lengthy science policy document, a case can be made that it is best to avoid that temptation. On the one hand, the report makes recommendations and observations that might be appreciated and useful to help strengthen the quality of science. On the other hand, in the absence of perspectives of working scientists, there is a risk that policies and approaches will be imposed that are incompatible with good science. We all have a stake in being part of the conversation about how best to foster integrity in research.

For additional information, please visit the [Research Ethics](#) website or contact Michael Kalichman, mkalichman@ucsd.edu.

International Memoranda of Understanding and Agreements

UC San Diego values strong international partnerships. Faculty engaging in work with institutions abroad may want to consider entering into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or collaboration agreement (agreement) with the partner institution. International Affairs has templates that simplify the drafting of these documents, and negotiates with both the international partner and UC San Diego administrative offices to obtain necessary reviews and approvals. Below is an overview of these documents and the MOU/agreement development process.

Memoranda of Understanding

An MOU is a non-binding document that states a general desire to collaborate in certain broad areas. MOUs make no promises on behalf of either party, and state that the parties may also enter into specific written agreements that define the nature and terms of proposed collaborations. The MOU format is recommended when the partners are in the initial stages of collaborative discussions or when they do not wish to commit to specific undertakings. Most international partnerships start with an MOU, then pursue a collaboration agreement after specific projects, programs and exchanges are defined or established.

Collaboration Agreements

A collaboration agreement is a legally-binding document that contains detailed information about the proposed forms of collaboration. Agreements spell out the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the parties. Because they are binding, agreements contain legal clauses and provisions that protect the people participating in the collaboration as well as the institutional partners. Agreements must be entered into with careful consideration, as they define commitments of resources and acceptance of obligations.

MOU/Agreement Development Process

1. Faculty Requirement and Responsibilities

- MOUs and agreements require a faculty member who agrees to champion the collaboration and obtain their direct leadership approval
- Contact [International Affairs](#) as early as possible to receive expert consultation, the [Guidelines on the International Agreement Development Process](#) and the International Agreement Review Sheet (required form to request the MOU or agreement)

2. International Affairs Responsibilities

- Conduct [restricted party screening](#)
- Use information in the Review Sheet and consultation with the faculty champion to draft the document of choice
- Negotiate the terms with relevant UC San Diego administrative offices and the international partner
- Ensure compliance with campus and UC policies
- Submit documents for formal review and approval
- Obtain signatures on the document, according to appropriate delegations of authority
- Disseminate the final document to stakeholders
- Enter information into International Affairs' [public database of MOUs and agreements](#)

For questions or additional information, please contact Michelle Hermas, International Affairs Director, mhermas@ucsd.edu or (858) 822-4739.

Information for New Researchers Using Animal Model

The UC San Diego Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) oversees the University's Animal Care and Use Program and is responsible for reviewing all animal use protocols, ensuring compliance with federal regulations, inspecting animal facilities and laboratories, and overseeing training and educational programs.

When using animal models in research at UC San Diego, there is a great deal of information that the Principal Investigator and research staff are responsible for knowing. The [Registration Guide for New Animal Researchers](#) contains the information necessary to initiate research with animal subjects at UC San Diego. The Registration Guide explains how to:

- Obtain access to the IACUC's online Animal Use Protocol System (AUPS)
- Complete the required Personnel Qualification (PQ) form
- Add personnel to a protocol
- Register for training classes
- Obtain access to the vivarium

Additional helpful information can be found on the [IACUC](#) website:

- [Letter to New Investigators](#)
- [Top 10 Things You Must Know to Care for and Use Animals at UCSD](#)
- [Principal Investigator Responsibilities](#)

The IACUC Office staff is here to help! For questions or assistance, please contact the IACUC Office at iacuc@ucsd.edu or 858-534-6069.

Public Health Service (PHS) Conflict of Interest Training Requirements

All investigators, including senior-key personnel, are required to take PHS-compliant training prior to engaging in [PHS-funded research](#). The training is also required immediately if an Investigator is new to the institution, if the UC policies change in a way that affects Investigator requirements, if UC finds that an Investigator is noncompliant with any policy or management plan and at least every four years. This training requirement also applies for other funding agencies that have adopted the PHS regulations. In addition, the UC Office of the President requires University employees who received a portion of their salary from extramural funding sources to complete the UC Compliance and Conflict of Interest for Researchers (COIR) Briefing. This COIR briefing also satisfies the PHS training requirement.

All identified UC San Diego employees who are required to complete the COIR training have already received an email from the Learning Center with a link to the online training (emails were sent in January of this year). To determine if you need to complete the COIR training, search on Blink select "Personal Tools", select the UC Learning Center and then log in with your single sign-on. The "Compliance & Conflict of Interest for Researchers Briefing (COIR)" training will be listed in your "To Do List/Assigned Training." To access the Briefing, click on the course.

Investigators and senior/key personnel with PHS funding (or from funding agencies that have adopted the PHS regulations), that are not required to complete the UC COIR training, must complete the UC Conflict of Interest Training for Public Health Service Investigators in order to satisfy the PHS-funded research training requirements. To complete the training, on Blink select "Personal Tools," select the UC Learning Center and then log in with your single sign-on. In the search field of the UC Learning Center website, enter "COI-PHS."

If you have any questions regarding the requirement to complete PHS or COIR training, please contact the Conflict of Interest Office at coitraining@ucsd.edu or (858) 534-6465.

Guidance Document on Accepting Personal Gifts

In an effort to provide additional guidance regarding the acceptance of personal gifts, the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) has created a guidance document titled, "[Acceptance of Personal Gifts and Gratuities by Employees Under California's Political Reform Act](#)." This guidance document will provide answers to some common questions regarding the receipt of personal gifts by University employees. For additional questions or information, please contact the Conflict of Interest Office at info-coi@ucsd.edu or (858) 534-6465.

Additional information is also available on the Conflict of Interest Office website at <http://blink.ucsd.edu/sponsor/coi/employees.html>.

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