

Compliance Corner - January 2007

Welcome to another exciting edition of the Compliance Corner! Recently, I read an article that stated that the “Word of the Year” for 2006 was the word “integrity.” As a Research Compliance Officer, the word “integrity” is part of my daily thought process. So I was quite pleased to see that the use of this word is important to individuals within and outside of the research environment and that this word is an important part of our culture and daily life. It is a word that I always keep in mind when reviewing research protocols and discussing research projects with faculty, staff and students. It is also a word that I am proud to say that those of you, as members of the Miami University community, also keep in mind as well.

In light of the term integrity, I would like to share with you some issues that are currently being examined both here at Miami and on the federal level that directly address the issue of integrity in research:

1. As you all know, we changed our training requirements so that as of September 30, 2006 all researchers will be required to complete our on-line human subjects training. This effort helps to ensure that everyone who has direct contact with human subjects will at minimum receive the same introduction to research ethics. Of course, this course is only an introduction and it is hoped that ethics in research is an ongoing effort.
2. Miami University also has a Responsible Conduct of Research Program (RCR). The focus of this program is to provide ongoing education to faculty, staff and students about the importance of maintaining integrity in a range of research-related efforts—human subjects, animal research, conflicts of interest and intellectual property. Currently, MU researchers are able to complete training on RCR on-line or through in-person workshops that I conduct on a regular basis.
3. On a federal level, the national policy on research misconduct is currently being evaluated. This effort is designed to provide clear guidelines that may be applied institution-wide for how issues of misconduct in research should be handled in university settings. Within this new policy are guidelines that address issues of educating researchers, defining exactly what constitutes misconduct in research, and ensuring fair treatment of all parties involved in allegations of research misconduct. I am excited to see how the new policy will unfold.

In closing, you will notice that I discussed the pleasure of knowing that the word integrity was valued by people all over the world. However, you will also notice that I did not define the term. Of course, there are federal and textbook definitions of the term that I could share. I, in turn, encourage you to think about how you define the term integrity and how it is used in your work as a member of Miami’s faculty, staff and student community. I invite you to share your definition with me as I always value your thoughts—I would love to hear your perspective.