

Ethics Training Policy for Student Researchers Funded by NSF

Purpose

To provide the University community guidance on how to comply with the NSF requirement to provide funded students with training on responsible (and ethical) conduct of research (RCR).

Background

Section 7009 of the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act requires that “each institution that applies for financial assistance from the Foundation for science and engineering research or education describe in its grant proposal a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers participating in the proposed research project.” This requirement goes into effect on January 4, 2010 and affects all NSF proposals submitted on or after that date.

Rules require that each institution have:

- a plan in place and be able to produce such plan on demand
- a designated individual(s) to oversee compliance
- a verification system to demonstrate who has received the training

Implementation

The Office of Academic Research (OAR), under the direction of the Associate Vice President for Research, will administer the Norwich RCR program.

The program comprises two formal elements: an online, discipline-oriented RCR training course, and a classroom-based training seminar. Students must complete both phases during the academic year in which they work on the NSF-funded project.

Students must complete the most appropriate RCR course at the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative site: options include subjects such as Biomedical, Social & Behavioral Research, Physical Sciences, Humanities, or Engineers. Upon successful completion, they should forward their certificate documenting successful completion to the OAR.

Students must also attend a training seminar that will focus on ethical issues associated with key research concepts. Seminars will be led by faculty or staff members with expertise in the given topic, and will include case studies and directed discussion. At the conclusion of the seminar, each student will sign a pledge to ethical conduct in research, countersigned by their research mentor and the seminar facilitator. These documents will be stored with the OAR.