December 21, 2009

TO: Deans, Directors, Department Chairs, and Faculty

FROM: Russ Lea, Ph.D.   Dusty Layton, B.S., CIP
            Vice-President for Research   Director, Research Compliance and Assurance

RE: Responsible Conduct of Research Training for Students and Postdoctoral Fellows

There is a growing recognition that education and training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is fundamental in the preparation of our future scientists and engineers. RCR is considered a widely accepted set of ethical standards for conducting research, while fostering the ability to recognize ethical choices that crosses all disciplines. The University of South Alabama views RCR training as part of an institution-wide focus on ethical concerns in all aspects of teaching and research and is committed to maintaining the integrity fundamental to research activities through the responsible and ethical conduct of its student's and postdoctoral fellows.

The Office of Research Compliance and Assurance, in concert with faculty input, has developed a comprehensive policy on RCR training for **all** students and postdoctoral fellows involved in research activities. Furthermore, while the Institution plans to continue to enhance its training resources and promote awareness and best practices in the responsible conduct of research, federal agencies such as NSF and NIH have implemented RCR training requirements. Compliance with this newly consolidated training plan will facilitate our ability to respond to federal audits, and individual investigations of the agencies for specific awards.

The institutional training plan requires the minimum educational requirements:

- Successful completion of selected student modules of the on-line RCR program hosted by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) at University of Miami available at: https://www.citiprogram.org/ or approved graduate course; and
- Successful completion of additional training which may be mandated by the specific research program (e.g., human subjects, animal use, biohazards)

The CITI online student modules is categorized by four discipline areas comprising Biomedical, Social and Behavioral, Physical Science and Engineering, and Humanities. Students will be able to incorporate this important information into their course work or research programs at the onset of their research experience. The CITI program takes about one hour to complete, allowing students to log on and off at their convenience so that course completion is not required during initial enrollment. Each student will receive an electronic certificate upon course completion.

It is expected that principal investigators, program directors, and course instructors will be responsible for fostering integrity in research and communicating these requirements. Consequently, these training practices will help our students and postdoctoral fellows respond to ethical challenges they may confront throughout their research experience.

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Attachment: Institutional Policy on RCR Training for Students and Fellows
                       http://www.southalabama.edu/researachcompliance/responsible.html