

Responsible Conduct of Research Policy

Background

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, education in RCR is considered essential in the preparation of future scientists and engineers. Section 7009 of the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act (42 U.S.C. 1862o–1 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.”

Purpose

This policy seeks to ensure compliance with Section 7009 of the America COMPETES Act of 2007. Further, training in responsible conduct of research is intended to encourage best practices in the conduct of all research and scientific investigations and to foster an ability to recognize an ethical choice and the ability to make a principled decision.

Policy

All undergraduate and graduate students participating in NSF- or NIH-funded research, must complete training in the responsible conduct of research. The responsibility for compliance rests primarily with the Principle Investigator of the funded project. An exemption to the policy include travel grants including conference, symposium, and workshop travel which are exempt from the RCT training requirement.

Definitions

- *Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)* is defined as the practice of scientific investigation with integrity. The NIH has specified nine areas for instruction in RCR: data acquisition, management, sharing and ownership; mentor/trainee responsibilities; publication practices and responsible authorship; peer review; collaborative science; human subjects; research involving animals; research misconduct; and conflict of interest and commitment.
- *Participants* are defined as follows for the purpose of this policy: All undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral researchers who receive wages for, or academic credit, or who otherwise work on either a National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded or National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded project will be counts as participating in NSF- or NIH-funded research.
- *Principal Investigator (PI)* is the lead faculty member on a research project and is the primary individual responsible for an external grant.
- *Responsible Stewardship* is the obligation to use public resources effectively and efficiently.
- *Public Trust* is the right of the public to have confidence in the reliability of research results.
- *Respect for living beings* includes respect for human and animal subjects as well as colleagues and students.

Procedure

The Principal Investigator is required to provide ongoing RCR training and oversight appropriate to the discipline, research project, and level of involvement of students. At a minimum, students must complete one of the free courses offered by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).

The basic course options are:

- Biomedical Sciences RCR Course for the Unaffiliated Learner, Basic Course
- Physical Sciences RCR Course for the Unaffiliated Learner, Basic Course
- Responsible Conduct of Research for Science Administrators, Basic Course
- Social and Behavioral Sciences RCR Course for the Unaffiliated Learner, Basic Course
- The CITI RCR Course for Students and Investigators in the Humanities, Basic Course

Tracking and Verification of RCR Training

Berry College must meet the oversight portion of the RCR requirement, i.e., tracking and verifying that the requirement has been met. As such, the PI must send a copy of the CITI completion report to the Director of Research and Sponsored Programs before the student can begin work on the project.

Administration of the Policy

The Office of Research and Sponsored programs will be the office of record for overseeing this policy and review of it at least every five years.