

Memo to: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Max Castillo, President
Subject: Ethical Conduct in Research and Government-Sponsored Activities

UH-Downtown/PS 06.A.07
Issue No. 2
Effective Date: 4/30/01
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1. PURPOSE

This PS states the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) policy and procedures for promoting ethical behavior in all research, scholarly and creative activities, and government-sponsored activities, and outlines how to handle allegations of scientific misconduct. This policy does not address items such as differences in interpretation or judgment of data, scholarly or political disagreements, personal or professional opinions, or private, moral or ethical behavior or views.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Misconduct is defined as deliberate fabrication, falsification plagiarism, or other serious deviation from practices commonly accepted in the academic and scientific communities for proposing, conducting, or reporting results from education, research, and scholarly or creative activities. Misconduct also refers to retaliation against a person who, acting in good faith, reports or provides information about suspected or alleged misconduct.

2.2 Inquiry is defined as a stage of preliminary information-gathering and initial fact-finding to determine whether an allegation or apparent instance of misconduct warrants an investigation.

2.3 Investigation is a formal examination and evaluation of relevant facts to determine whether misconduct has taken place or, if misconduct has already been confirmed, to assess its extent and consequences and/or to determine appropriate action.

2.4 Relevant Parties is defined as the person(s) against whom the allegations were made, the person making the allegations, and the funding agency (if a government-sponsored activity).

3. POLICY/PROCEDURES

3.1 Policy

3.1.1 All research and government-sponsored activities in which members of the University community engage shall be conducted according to the recognized high ethical standards of collegiate education and research.

3.1.2 Ethical behavior includes, but is not limited to, faithful representation of data and accurate disclosure of all facts pertaining to all education and research activities.

3.1.3 Participants in research projects must be noted and persons listed as coauthors on research reports of any type must have a bona fide role in the research and accept responsibility for the quality of work reported.

3.1.4 All members of the University community have the responsibility to report those activities which they believe constitute unethical behavior.

3.1.5 All allegations of misconduct involving science and/or engineering activities funded by the Public Health Service, the National Institutes of Health, and/or the National Science Foundation, must be reported according to the steps delineated in Exhibit A.

3.2 Procedures for Investigating Allegations of Misconduct

3.2.1 Allegations of unethical behavior or misconduct shall be reported in writing to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost (VPAA) for review and action. If the

VPAA has a possible conflict of interest, the allegation shall be reported to the President. In such instances, duties assigned to the VPAA in implementing this policy will be implemented by the President.

3.2.2 The VPAA will authorize an inquiry into the suspected or alleged misconduct and determine whether the allegations warrant further examination as violations of University policy. The initial inquiry will last no longer than 60 calendar days and must include a meeting with the subject(s) of the allegation. This inquiry will result in the VPAA Inquiry Report containing the following information:

- a. Name of the person(s) against whom the allegations were made;
- b. General nature of the allegations;
- c. The application/grant number (if a government-funded activity);
- d. Evidence reviewed and persons interviewed; and
- e. Conclusions. (A decision to dismiss the allegation or proceed with a formal investigation.)

3.2.3 If the allegations are dismissed, the VPAA will notify the relevant parties within 10 working days. A detailed record of the inquiry shall be maintained in the Office of the Vice President for Administration to allow for a later assessment of the reasons for not conducting a formal investigation. These records shall be securely stored for a period of at least three years after termination of the inquiry.

3.2.4 If the decision is made to initiate a formal investigation, the VPAA will notify the relevant parties and appoint an Investigating Committee (IC). The VPAA will forward to the IC the initial report. The members of the IC will be appointed by the VPAA in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate. The IC will consist of at least two tenured faculty representatives from each of the three colleges.

3.2.5 At its first meeting, the IC will elect a chair to handle procedural and administrative matters. The investigative phase will begin within 10 days of completion of the inquiry and shall reach a disposition within 60 days of its initiation. The IC may request the advice or appearance of individuals familiar with the nature of the study while maintaining, to the extent allowed by law, their confidentiality.

3.2.6 The IC shall insure confidentiality of the proceedings and shall undertake diligent efforts to protect the position, anonymity, and reputation of all parties in the misconduct investigation.

3.2.7 The subject of the allegation has the right to submit information to the committee and/or appear personally before the IC to present his/her case. Prior to such appearance, the subject of the allegation has the right to receive a written report from the IC detailing all the evidence relevant to the allegation. At this appearance, he/she may bring legal counsel or an advisor but must speak for himself/herself. If either the IC or the subject of the allegation wishes to have legal counsel or an advisor present during the hearing, the chair of the IC and/or the subject of the allegation must be notified at least one week in advance. This meeting shall be conducted informally.

3.2.8 A record of the proceedings and all related

documentation shall be maintained by the IC's chair throughout the investigative process. Breach of confidentiality will be grounds for a charge of misconduct or other appropriate personnel action.

3.2.9 Once the investigation has been completed, the IC shall issue a formal report summarizing its findings and conclusions which may include a majority and minority report. Copies of the investigative report, the record of the proceedings and all related documentation will be forwarded to the VPAA. Within 10 working days of receiving this report, the VPAA will forward copies of the report to the relevant parties.

3.2.10 All documentation related to the inquiry and investigation proceedings shall be stored in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

3.3 Penalties and Appeals

3.3.1 Within 10 working days of receipt of the report, the VPAA, consonant with the seriousness of the offense, shall impose disciplinary measures which include, but are not limited to, a written reprimand to be placed in the employee's personnel file, withholding of pay raises for a period of time, notification of the offense to pertinent organizations and publishers, or initiating dismissal procedures within the regulations of the University.

3.3.2 Sanctions imposed by the funding agency, if misconduct occurs in a government-sponsored activity, range from minimal restrictions to suspension or termination of an active award, loss of funding and/or debarment or suspension of an individual, a department, or the University from participating in government-sponsored programs.

3.3.3 Retaliation against the person(s) reporting the allegations of misconduct is prohibited and shall be dealt with as misconduct.

3.3.4 Interim administrative action may be taken by the university and/or the awarding agency upon receipt of allegations of misconduct in research or government-sponsored activities.

3.3.5 The subject of the investigation may appeal the IC's ruling and/or sanctions imposed by the VPAA to the President. This appeal must occur within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the ruling and/or sanctions being appealed. The President's decision will be final and binding.

4. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Vice President for Academic Affairs

Review: Biennial

President

Policy History

Issue #1: 10/16/95

STEPS FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT
(Science and Engineering Government-Sponsored Activities)

The University of Houston-Downtown has established an administrative process for promoting ethical behavior in education, research and government-sponsored activities and for handling allegations of scientific misconduct. To this end, the procedures stipulated in PS 06.A.07 and the steps outlined below will be followed.

1. Inform the funding agency if an initial inquiry into suspected or alleged scientific misconduct warrants a formal investigation. A copy of the written report resulting from the inquiry shall be received by the funding agency prior to the commencement of the investigation.
2. Keep the funding agency informed throughout the investigation.
3. Provide the funding agency with a copy of the investigation report including the sanctions imposed on the individual(s) against whom the allegations of scientific misconduct were made.
4. Notify the funding agency at any point during the inquiry and/or investigation phase(s) of the alleged misconduct if it involves any of the following:
 - a. Immediate health hazards;
 - b. Resources, reputation, or other interests of the funding agency which need to be protected;
 - c. Federal action may be needed to protect the interests of the subject of the investigation or of others potentially affected;
 - d. The scientific community or the public should be informed, or will be informed; or
 - e. There is a reasonable indication of a criminal violation. In that instance, the funding agency must be notified within 24 hours of obtaining that information.
5. Science and engineering proposals, for activities funded by the Public Health Service, the National Institutes of Health, and/or the National Science Foundation, must include a copy of the "Certification of Scientific Integrity" executed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. This form may be obtained in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-DOWNTOWN

CERTIFICATION OF SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY
(Certification for Science or Engineering Proposals)

The undersigned certifies that the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) will ensure protection of the integrity of all education and research activities, research subjects, and the public; observance of legal requirements and responsibilities; an impartial process for receipt and disposition of allegations of scientific misconduct; prompt notification to the agency if allegations of scientific misconduct occur; protection of the person(s) bringing the allegation; and proper maintenance of a complete and accurate record of the misconduct proceedings for all government-sponsored science and engineering activities.

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Date