



Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) at Northern State University

Reason for the Policy

In January 2010 the National Science Foundation (NSF) instituted a new certification requirement as part of its implementation of the 2007 America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act. NSF policy now states that the Authorized Organizational Representative submitting an application to the agency “is required to complete a certification that the institution has a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers who will be supported by NSF to conduct research.” Northern is responsible for certifying existence of this policy and verifying compliance with it.

Definition of RCR

Another federal agency, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has similar requirements and defines RCR as “the practice of scientific investigation with integrity. It involves the awareness and application of established professional norms and ethical principles in the performance of all activities related to scientific research.” The Office of Research Integrity further defines RCR as comprising nine areas of education and training –

- Data Acquisition, Management, Sharing and Ownership
- Conflict of Interest and Commitment
- Human Subjects
- Animal Welfare
- Research Misconduct
- Publication Practices and Responsible Authorship
- Mentor / Trainee Responsibilities
- Peer Review
- Collaborative Science

For decades training and compliance in several of these elements of RCR have been required by various federal funding agencies, and the South Dakota Board of Regents also has stated policies pertaining to some of them. Other areas have ethical standards established by scholarly professional societies.

At Northern we consider responsible conduct to apply to all disciplines. Indeed, one of our stated values is “Scholarship: We engage in research and creative activities in an innovative atmosphere of intellectual rigor, with academic freedom and integrity.”

RCR Policy at NSU

In compliance with federal regulations and BOR policies, and in keeping with our values, we have established the following RCR policy and responsibilities.

When a new grant or subaward from NSF is awarded, the Office of Grants and Sponsored Research will notify the faculty or staff principal investigator (PI), provide a copy of this policy, and discuss the policy with the PI as needed.

The PI will then be responsible for:

- completing the online RCR module through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI);
- communicating the RCR policy to all students (and postdoctoral researchers, if applicable) supported by the funded project and ensuring that they complete the CITI module within the first month of the grant-funded activities; and
- certifying to the grants office, with names and dates, that the participating students have completed the RCR training. For multiple year grants the PI will provide certification annually.

PIs are encouraged to discuss with their students the contents of the training and the applications of RCR both within the funded project and across their profession.

Additional RCR Resources for Faculty and Students

Office of Research Integrity’s RCR resources site:
http://ori.dhhs.gov/education/rcr_resources.shtml

RCR links to resources in the sciences: <https://www.msu.edu/~biomed/rcr/>

Links to professional societies’ codes of ethics for an array of academic disciplines:
<http://www.bc.edu/research/oric/rcr.html>