

Procedure Title: Maintenance of Integrity in Research
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Purpose/Principle/Definitions:

BACKGROUND

Blue Mountain Community College expects the highest standards of ethical behavior of all members of the academic community involved in the conduct of research. This statement on "Maintenance of Integrity in Research" describes the procedures for dealing with suspected deviations from intellectual honesty and with ethical treatment of human subjects in research by faculty and staff conducting research at Blue Mountain Community College. The purpose of this procedure is to foster the maintenance of high standards in research in the college and to protect the rights and reputations of all parties involved in instances of alleged misconduct. This procedure also covers charges involving students employed on research grants or contracts. The college will handle allegations of academic dishonesty involving students engaged in research as part of their academic program in accordance with college academic policies and the student disciplinary procedures included in the student handbook.

DEFINITIONS

Fraud in research is defined as deliberate misrepresentation with intent to gain some advantage. While there is no list of examples of academic fraud that would be universally accepted, the AAU Committee on the Integrity of Research ("Report of the Association of the American Universities Committee on the Integrity of Research," May 19, 1983) has identified four types of fraud or deviance in academic research that will serve as broad guidelines in identifying research fraud.

Falsification of Data undermines the basic principle on which the scientific process depends. Since scientific advances depend on accurate collection, analysis, and reporting of information, dishonest reporting misleads others and results in the waste of resources, both human and monetary. If practiced in clinical research, falsification

could be directly dangerous to humans. Falsification of data ranges from sheer fabrication to selective reporting, including the omission of conflicting data.

Plagiarism is hurtful to individual researchers since it is an attempt by one individual to receive credit for the work of someone else.

Abuse of confidentiality is a significant act of fraud in an environment that depends on peer review. It is quite distinct from plagiarism and more difficult to detect, since such abuse does not usually involve verbatim duplication of another's work. In the present environment, researchers freely discuss their ideas in research proposals submitted to potential sponsors. Proposals usually include extensive data to support the ideas. The ideas and preliminary data may be reviewed by departmental colleagues, college committees, and administrators, as well as extramural professional colleagues long in advance of eventual publication. Opportunities to abuse confidentiality can occur not only by the actions of the primary reviewers, but also by the actions of those with whom confidentiality is the easiest research ethic to abuse and the most difficult to detect. Students, when engaged in research projects and acting as an agent of the faculty or staff person, shall agree in writing to abide by the appropriate conditions of confidentiality consistent with the BMCC Administrative Procedure for the Maintenance of Integrity in Research.

Instances of **violations of regulations** applicable to research also present a problem. Serious violations of rules adopted by appropriate mechanisms to protect research subjects and other persons and animals, while not fraudulent in the traditional sense, undermine the integrity of the research process. The BMCC procedure guiding the use of human subjects in research is clear. The college considers any deviation from that policy as a violation and will handle such a violation according to the procedures outlined below.

GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES

All initial reports and/or charges of this ethical misconduct or research fraud by faculty at Blue Mountain Community College should first be directed to the Vice President of Instruction for a preliminary review. The Vice President of Instruction shall inform the department chair and the research supervisors(s) (if any) of the allegations. The Vice President of Instruction shall also inform the involved faculty member(s) of the nature of the allegations, the nature of the review, and the rights of the parties involved, including contractual. Instances involving college staff should first be directed to the Vice President to whom the staff member's department reports. That Vice President shall also inform the involved staff member(s) of the nature of the allegations, the nature of the review, and the rights of the parties involved.

The applicable Vice President, after consultation with the department chair or appropriate research supervisor(s), shall within five business days conduct a preliminary review to determine whether there is sufficient *prima facie* evidence to merit a formal investigation of the charges and shall inform the President that a preliminary review is underway. The preliminary review process should be strictly confidential in order to protect the rights and reputations of all parties involved.

Since time is of the essence, the applicable Vice President should conduct the preliminary review promptly (within five business days) and report the outcome to the college President, as quickly as possible.

If the preliminary review process results in a determination that there is not sufficient *prima facie* evidence to support the charges, no further action needs to be taken, and the applicable vice president so informs the college President and the party or parties involved.

If the preliminary review process results in a determination that sufficient *prima facie* evidence exists to support the charges, the applicable Vice President shall so inform the college President, who shall appoint an *ad hoc* committee charged with the responsibility of conducting a formal investigation. The membership of the committee shall consist of no fewer than three knowledgeable individuals including one representative from the department or unit of the involved faculty member(s) or non-faculty employee(s). In instances where externally funded research is involved, the President may also appoint the Director of Grants to serve as an *ex officio* member of the committee to represent the interests and obligations of the college. In addition, the President may also appoint an additional member(s) from outside the institution in order to broaden the expertise of the committee.

At the time the committee is requested to conduct a formal investigation, the President shall notify the accused faculty member(s) or non-faculty employee(s) of the charges and the function of the committee. The President may determine that the research activities of the involved researcher(s) may be restricted or monitored during the course of the investigation. If so, then the department chair, and in the case of funded research, the Director of Grants, shall also be notified.

The President shall convene the committee, appoint one member of the committee to serve as chair, present the charges and allegations and discuss college policies and procedures pertinent to the investigation. The committee shall investigate all charges and facts and may interview any and all parties appropriate to reaching a decision regarding the merit of the charges. The chair of the committee shall meet with the appropriate personnel officer to review existing procedures and safeguards to protect the rights and reputation of all parties involved before carrying out the investigation. The committee shall begin its investigation promptly and shall provide a written report of its findings and recommendations to the President no later than 60 days after the initiation of the formal investigation. The President may accept the report or may return it to the committee for further information or clarification. The committee shall also forward the final copy of this report to the accused party or parties.

If, on the basis of the findings and recommendations of the committee, the President determines that no unethical or fraudulent acts have been committed, the President shall notify all parties accordingly. The President shall undertake all necessary efforts to restore fully the reputation and credibility of the researcher(s) under investigation. All interim restrictions on research activity will be removed.

If, on the basis of the report and recommendation of the committee, the President determines that unethical or fraudulent acts have been committed, the President may impose sanctions. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, written reprimand,

termination of current research activity, public disassociation of the college from any future unauthorized research activity, restriction from future research activities, and debarment from intramural-funded research programs. The President may also determine whether the matter warrants disciplinary action.

The President shall determine whether information about the charges, the investigation, or their disposition should be released to the public, the press, or specific parties, i.e., editors of journals in which papers or reports of research in question may have appeared. In cases involving externally funded research, the President will notify the sponsoring agency of the findings of the investigation and the final disposition of any sanction and/or disciplinary action, or restitution to be made.