



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

September 16, 2019

Letter to the United States Research Community

Dear Colleagues,

As a fellow researcher and former university vice president for research, I know firsthand that the open and internationally collaborative nature of the United States research enterprise has been critical to our success in research, and that this success has underpinned our Nation's prosperity and security. Indeed, the values we cherish as Americans are the ethos of research itself; namely, the freedom to explore new frontiers, the commitment to openness and transparency through the sharing of methods and results, the ability to debate difficult issues thoughtfully and with civility, and the passion to work with and improve the lives of others. By adhering to these values and operating with due regard to principles of integrity – including reciprocity, openness, and transparency – your work has made America the world leader in science and technology. The Nation is indebted to you.

Yet we must not take our research enterprise or its global leadership position for granted. Over the past several years, some nations have exhibited increasingly sophisticated efforts to exploit, influence, and undermine our research activities and environments. As researchers, we must acknowledge the changing geopolitical and international scientific landscape: United States policies and practices must evolve thoughtfully and appropriately to meet current and future challenges. The success of our research enterprise is dependent on *everyone* upholding the principles of research.

Some of those recent efforts to exploit America's research enterprise have come through foreign government-sponsored talent recruitment programs. Historically, researchers at United States institutions could in many cases participate in a talent program and simultaneously receive both foreign and United States government support. Under some circumstances, this may still be acceptable. However, it has become clear that features of some talent programs are unacceptable and inconsistent with our research values and research principles. Breaches of research ethics, both within talent programs and more generally, include the failure to disclose required information such as foreign funding, unapproved parallel foreign laboratories (so-called shadow labs), affiliations and appointments, and conflicting financial interests. Other inappropriate behaviors include conducting undisclosed research for foreign governments or companies on United States agency time or with United States agency funding, diversion of intellectual property or other legal rights, and breaches of contract and confidentiality in or surreptitious gaming of the peer-review process.

Ultimately, these inappropriate behaviors, whether or not they arise through participation in a foreign talent program, interfere with the allocation of Federal funding in a fair manner based on merit. As a result, these breaches of research security and integrity position others to reap the benefits of your hard work without bearing the associated risks or making the investments borne by American taxpayers and other funders. These activities ultimately undermine the integrity of the research enterprise and, thus, our economic and national security.

As Director of **The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)**, I see a significant opportunity for the Federal Government, research institutions, private companies, non-profit organizations, and law enforcement to come together to ensure the integrity and security of the American research enterprise in light of increasing threats. Striking the right balance between openness and security, using a risk-based framework, is especially important.

OSTP plays a unique role in this multi-sector activity by virtue of its formal authority to convene all research funding agencies on matters of policy through the **National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)**. Both OSTP and NSTC engage other elements of the research enterprise as well, and I write here to apprise you of the structure and progress of OSTP and NSTC activities.

Specifically, on May 6 of this year, NSTC, which I chair on behalf of President Donald J. Trump, formally established the Joint Committee on the Research Environment (JCORE). This top-priority committee contains four sub-committees: research security (the main topic of this letter), safe and inclusive research environments, research rigor and integrity, and coordinating administrative requirements for research. Each sub-committee consists of approximately two dozen top leaders across numerous Federal science, foreign affairs, and security agencies. These sub-committees collaborate on interrelated issues and are making exceptional progress. Additionally, JCORE is working closely with the Congress, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, private companies, non-profit organizations, and professional associations and societies to inform the work of its four sub-committees.

With regard to research security, JCORE is organizing its work along the following four lines of effort:

- **Coordinating outreach and engagement** with Federal agencies, academic research institutions, companies, non-governmental organizations, researchers, and students. In order to help relay the nature and scope of the challenges America faces, JCORE is assembling an array of examples in which our research enterprise was exploited or compromised.
- **Establishing and coordinating disclosure requirements** for participation in the federally-funded research enterprise. Disclosure is a central tenet of research integrity and a key mechanism for ensuring compliance with applicable policies and laws.
- **Developing best practices for academic research institutions**, in collaboration with academia, professional societies, and other organizations.
- **Developing methods for identification, assessment, and management of risk** in the research enterprise.

During the next few months, OSTP will be holding meetings at academic institutions across the Nation to converse with researchers and students on matters of research security and other topics within JCORE. I hope you will join in these discussions. Working together, we will ensure that our research environments are safe and inclusive; operate with maximum integrity; protect our research assets in a manner balanced with the openness and international collaboration that have been so critical to our success; and do not encumber researchers, agencies, or institutions with unnecessary administrative work. In doing so, we will ensure America continues to lead the world in science and technology. I look forward to working with you on these important issues!

Sincerely,



Kelvin K. Droegemeier
Director