

ORSP Policy: Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Policy (ver. July 2023)

***Adopted July 2023***

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Policy Statement:

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) is committed to promoting responsible and ethical conduct of research across all disciplines. This policy outlines our dedication to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and ethical behavior throughout the research process. We are committed to protecting the rights and welfare of research participants, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of research outcomes, and upholding the reputation of our organization.

1. Purpose:

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RECR) is critical for excellence and to build public trust regardless of discipline. This includes the responsibility to generate and disseminate knowledge with rigor and integrity; conduct peer review with the highest ethical standards; protect proprietary information and intellectual property from inappropriate disclosure; and treat colleagues and student fairly with respect and dignity.

The purpose of this policy, in compliance with the COMPETES Act (42 USC 1862o-1), is to establish guidelines and expectations for researchers, employees, and stakeholders engaged in research activities under the auspices of the University of Northern Colorado. As an institution, we aim to foster a culture of responsible conduct, integrity, and ethical decision-making in all aspects of research, including design, data collection, analysis, publication, and dissemination.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to all individuals involved in research activities<sup>a</sup> conducted under the auspices of UNC, including researchers, employees, volunteers, students, contractors, and collaborators. It encompasses all forms of research, regardless of funding source, methodology, or disciplinary focus.

3. Compliance with Laws, Regulations, and Policies:

3.1 The Associate Vice President of Research and the Director of Sponsored Programs are responsible for ensuring that the RECR policy and the RECR Professional Development Plan are compliant with federal regulations.

3.2. The Director of Research Compliance and Pre-Award Sponsored Projects Officer are responsible for ensuring all investigators<sup>b</sup> are compliant with RECR professional development requirements.

<sup>a</sup>Research activities defined as "[creative](#), systematic work, planned search, or critical investigation aimed at discovery of new knowledge or creative endeavors.

<sup>b</sup>Investigator defined as an individual involved in the development, implementation, and/or fiscal management of a sponsored project.

3.2 Legal and Regulatory Compliance: All research activities must adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and institutional policies governing research, including those related to human subjects protection, animal welfare, biosafety, data protection, intellectual property, and export controls.

3.3. Institutional Research Policies: Researchers must familiarize themselves with and comply with relevant institutional research policies and procedures, including those related to conflicts of interest, authorship, data management, research misconduct, and responsible publication practices. Relevant [UNC Board Policies](#) and [University Regulations](#) include:

- BP 1-1-502 (Conflict of Interest)
- BP 1-1-505 (Outside Activities)
- BP 1-1-506 (Copyright Law Compliance)
- BP 1-1-507 (Hazardous Materials)
- UReg 3-8-101(1)(2) (Research)
- UReg 3-8-102 (1-8) (Research, Scholarship and Creative Works Misconduct Policy)

#### 4. Responsible Conduct of Research:

4.1. Research Integrity: Researchers must uphold the highest standards of research integrity, including honesty, objectivity, and transparency. Fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or any other forms of research misconduct are strictly prohibited [see *University Regulations, 3-8-101(1)(2), 3-8-102(1)(2); Board Policy Part 6, 2-3-602*].

4.2. Authorship and Acknowledgment: Authorship should be based on substantial contributions to the research project, and all authors should take responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the reported work. Contributions that do not meet the criteria for authorship should be appropriately acknowledged.

4.3. Data Management and Integrity: Researchers are responsible for ensuring the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of research data. Good data management practices, including appropriate documentation, storage, backup, and retention, must be followed to facilitate transparency, reproducibility, and responsible data sharing.

4.4. Conflict of Interest (Financial and Other): Researchers must disclose and manage any potential or actual conflicts of interest that may influence the design, conduct, or reporting of research. Measures should be taken to mitigate conflicts of interest, including recusal, independent review, or the establishment of management plans [see *University Regulations 3-3-401 and 402; 3-8-106; Board Policy 1-1-502; 2-3-410 and 411*].

#### 5. Ethical Considerations:

5.1. Protection of Human Subjects: Research/scholarship involving human participants must prioritize the rights, welfare, privacy, and informed consent of participants. Researchers must obtain appropriate ethical approvals, ensure voluntary participation, minimize risks, protect confidentiality, and provide clear and accurate information about the study. Investigators must seek guidance and approval from the Institutional Review

Board (IRB) for all research involving human subjects prior to commencement of data collection.

5.2. Care and Use of Animals: Research involving animals must comply with ethical principles and applicable laws and regulations governing animal welfare. Researchers must minimize animal suffering, use appropriate alternatives when available, and obtain necessary approvals for the care, housing, and handling of animals. All animal studies must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) prior to commencing studies.

5.3. Responsible Use of Biological Materials: Researchers working with biological materials, including but not limited to human tissues, genetically modified organisms, and infectious agents, must follow established guidelines for their safe and responsible use, storage, transport, and disposal.

5.4. Privacy and Data Protection: Researchers must handle personal and sensitive data responsibly, ensuring compliance with data protection laws and regulations. Data collection, storage, processing, sharing, and disposal practices must prioritize privacy, confidentiality, and data security.

6. Professional Development and Education:

6.1 ORSP/UNC is committed to providing researchers and relevant personnel with professional development and education on responsible and ethical conduct of research. Regular workshops, seminars, and educational resources will be made available to enhance awareness, knowledge, and understanding of ethical considerations, professional standards, and best practices in research. *See the ORSP Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Professional Development and Education Plan located on the UNC website for more information.*

6.2 All faculty researchers supervising undergraduate students, graduate students, or post-doctoral fellows must complete mentor/mentorship training.

6.3 Successful completion of all RECR training, including mentor/mentorship training must be documented and on file with ORSP and included in the Streamlyne record for each grant submission.

7. Reporting and Investigation of Research Misconduct:

Any concerns, suspicions, or allegations of research misconduct should be promptly reported following established procedures. An impartial investigation will be conducted to address allegations of research misconduct, and appropriate actions will be taken in accordance with institutional policies and relevant regulations (*see University Regulations 3-8-102 inclusive*).

8. Policy Compliance and Consequences:

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary actions, including but not limited to loss of research privileges, termination of employment or collaboration, revocation of funding, and legal consequences as determined by the severity of the violation. Non-compliance with ethical standards and responsible conduct of research undermines the integrity of our organization and its research outcomes.

#### 9. Policy Review and Updates:

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Updates and revisions may be made to reflect changes in laws, regulations, ethical guidelines, and best practices in research. Researchers and stakeholders will be notified of any significant policy changes and provided with appropriate guidance and training.

This Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Policy shall be implemented upon approval and communicated to all individuals engaged in research activities under the auspices of the University of Northern Colorado.