



**Status Update on NSF Implementation of
Section 7009 of the America COMPETES Act (ACA):
Responsible Conduct of Research
Advisory Committee for Business and Operations
Spring Meeting, May 29-30, 2008**

Section 7009 of the America COMPETES Act mandates that the Director “require each institution that applies for financial assistance from the Foundation for science and engineering research or education describe in its grant proposal a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers participating in the proposed research project.”

NSF views the Congressional directive as an important opportunity to further engage with the research community on the important issue of responsible research conduct. Ethics education is particularly critical to the science and engineering community as it faces an increasingly competitive funding environment; rising collaboration with international colleagues who may follow different guidelines; and growing recognition of the relevance of science and engineering to social, economic, and ethical issues of wide public and political interest.

Since the enactment of the America COMPETES Act, NSF has been actively engaged in developing appropriate implementation strategies for section 7009. Specific plans include the addition of a new certification requirement to be provided by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) at the time of proposal submission. The AOR certification would stipulate that the institution has a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in responsible and ethical conduct to researchers participating in the NSF-funded projects.

In addition, NSF has conducted significant outreach to the research community on the responsible conduct of research requirement through groups such as the Council on Governmental Relations, the Federal Demonstration Partnership, as well as the National Council of University Research Administrators, and the Society of Research Administrators, International. A web chat was held on this topic with NCURA on May 21st.

NSF will implement a range of activities to alert grantee institutions to this new requirement, as well as to provide quality resources to assist them. For example:

- In summer 2008, the Ethics Education in Science and Engineering (EERE) program will sponsor a workshop to address RCR and responsible professional practices. The goals of this workshop are to: (1) identify best practices and gaps in existing knowledge; (2) discuss potential benefits of on-line resources; and (3) identify quality materials and resources for the community.

- The Foundation's merit review criteria, *Intellectual Merit* and *Broader Impacts*, raise levels of awareness to essential characteristics of successful proposals to both reviewers and prospective Principal Investigators. To highlight the importance of ethics and responsible conduct of research, NSF plans to revise the Broader Impacts Representative Activities document to specifically identify training in the responsible and ethical conduct of research.

NSF is committed to completing its draft implementation plan and soliciting comment from the grantee community via the Federal Register. The request for comment will not only provide the community with a sense of the direction that the Foundation plans to take in implementing RCR, but also provide institutions with an important opportunity to prepare their own institutional implementation plans; re-allocate resources as appropriate; make any necessary enhancement to information systems; and the like.

The Foundation believes that this thoughtful approach will improve the quality of the institution's implementation, as well as, to the extent possible, enable the scientific community to consider the financial impacts that these requirements will have on institutions, and to minimize such impacts accordingly.