Research Misconduct Threatens the Validity of Science and Academia and Can Cause the Public to Mistrust Research and Truth. It Also Demeans Your Noble Goal of Generating Knowledge. Researchers Bear a Responsibility to Behave Ethically and to Report Unethical Behavior.

Research Misconduct refers to a category of unethical behaviors. The US Office of Science and Technology policy defines misconduct as “fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research or in reporting research results.” This definition has been adopted by most federal agencies.

Other Forms of Research Misconduct

- Abuse of confidentiality in peer review
- Failure to allocate proper credit in authorship
- Not observing regulations governing research
- Failure to report misconduct
- Retaliation against whistle blowers
- Any behaviors that seriously deviate from commonly accepted research practices

Real-Life Examples

Visit ori.hhs.gov for recent cases of research misconduct

The Bottom Line

RESEARCH MISCONDUCT IS:

- Intentional and deceptive
- Violates standards and reliable practices
- Undermines basic human values and the public trust
All institutions that receive federal funding, including UNM, must have a process for reporting and investigating research misconduct. We follow a published policy called UNM policy E:40, which details assessment of allegation, inquiry, and investigation processes.

READ POLICY E:40: handbook.unm.edu/e40/

**How to Report**

- Contact the Office of Research and Compliance (researchcompliance.unm.edu)
- Send an email to rcgeneral@unm.edu
- Call the UNM Hotline (1-888-899-6092). To anonymously report, block your phone number before calling
- Report at unm.ethicspoint.edu, UNM’s EthicsPoint portal. You can choose to leave your contact information or report anonymously.
- To discuss your concerns with someone before making an official claim, you can contact Academic Integrity & Research Ethics (aireunm@unm.edu)

**Tips for a Successful Report**

Be sure to make any claim of misconduct professionally and with the understanding that there are protections for the person who files the complaint. However, be aware that reprisals against whistle blowers can still occur in ways that are hard to enforce.

When reporting research misconduct, try to gather irrefutable evidence, such as a figure before it was manipulated along with the manipulated figure, email correspondence, or original lab notes along with back-up copies. It is also helpful to have a trusted person corroborate evidence.

Once a claim of research misconduct is made, a committee is formed to determine if misconduct has occurred. Evidence is collected and sequestered, which could include items such as hard drives, data sheets, photos, interviews.

If the committee determines that research misconduct has occurred, the respondent is notified and has an opportunity to appeal any decision.

Once the case is settled, the decision may go to the funding agency, or the Office of the Inspector General, or the Office of Research Integrity. All decisions are reviewed. In fact, every institution that receives federal money, including UNM, must report misconduct cases to these federal offices on an annual basis.