

Professional Ethics Report



ADVANCING SCIENCE, SERVING SOCIETY

Publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Scientific Freedom, Responsibility & Law Program in collaboration with the Committee on Scientific Freedom & Responsibility, Professional Society Ethics Group

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The author is an experienced engineer who has “prevailed” multiple times as a whistleblower. At end of it, his self-sacrificing professional actions are faith-based in a Christian worldview. The author is scandalized that there is no collective and intentional Christian influence in the engineering profession (the same appears true for other major faiths, but the author thinks it would be presumptuous for him to speak for another faith). Absent one being developed, he is not optimistic for reform of engineering ethics.

Is Engineering Ethics “Ethical”?
Is “Engineering Ethics” at All?

A government loses legitimacy when it is unable or unwilling to protect law-abiding citizens from criminals – the “social contract” between the governing and the governed becomes “null and void” in such a circumstance. A similar legitimacy issue confronts the engineering profession because it is unable or unwilling to support its code of ethics when employers of engineers punish them for adhering to it. Leaders of the engineering profession are “in denial” about this basic legitimacy issue. The stakes are enormous, given that the engineering profession is arguably humankind’s largest and most global profession (about 20 million degreed members worldwide), with essential responsibilities for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the “built” environment we are all so dependent upon for our individual and collective functioning.

The following points are based on the author’s direct experiences and/or objectively verifiable facts :

1. Codes of Engineering Ethics of major engineering societies, just as legally binding rules of professional conduct for licensed professional engineers (P.E.’s), contain a positive requirement for engineers to “blow whistles” when necessary to protect others. Additionally, they are implemented on a “strict honor code basis.” They explicitly require an engineer to report reasonable knowledge of their violation by others to the appropriate professional body, even at risk of job loss and lasting career damage. The “one for all” aspects of “social contract” the engineer has with his profession and society are clearly delineated.
2. There are no corresponding “all for one” obligations on the profession to collectively honor its code of ethics, including protecting the engineer from employment retribution for adhering to his ethical obligations, thus making the social contract—i.e., engineering ethics—unethical and illegitimate.
3. State Engineering Boards exist to protect the public health, safety, and welfare, but in the author’s experience with two State Boards and what he has learned from others, they clearly state they have no obligations to protect the law-abiding engineer from employment retribution. In the author’s case, they have repeatedly declined to join neutral friend of the court briefs or requests “go on record” in criticism of the legally established record of wrongdoing.
4. Major engineering professional societies require compliance with a code of ethics as a condition of membership, but in the author’s experience and what he has learned from others demonstrate little, if any, collective response in defend

ing their codes of ethics when an ethical engineer alleges or experiences employment retribution. They have, in the author’s case, repeatedly declined to join neutral friend of the court briefs or requests “go on record” in criticism of the legally established record of wrongdoing. NSPE’s Board of Ethical Review (BER) has existed for over 50 years and issued a number of opinions related to the “one for all” aspect of the social contract, making clear the engineer is to risk job loss and lasting career damage to do his duty. Not once has it addressed what, if any, “all for one” collective responsibilities the profession has in such a circumstance.

5. Only about 20% of practicing engineers in America are licensed and, hence, subject to the jurisdiction of a State Engineering Board. This is because industrial employers of engineers generally oppose mandatory licensure of their engineers that would make them subject to State Board regulations. Their influence created the “industrial exemption” present in most licensure laws. Engineering ethics have no legal standing for non-licensed engineers. These engineers cannot say something as, “Boss, I respect you and want to please you, but I cannot do what you ask because I could lose my license, my job, and my career, please understand.”

6. Neither can an engineer invoke the “public policy exemption” to “at-will” employment doctrine to defend himself against employer retribution. An employer cannot punish employees required to be licensed, either by law and/or condition of employment, for complying with their licensure

requirements. (Industrial employers of engineers have the prerogative of waiving the industrial exemption and can legally require their engineer employees be licensed. Additionally, every engineer can waive exemptions, become licensed, and submit to the jurisdiction of the State Boards).

7. State Boards of Engineering have reactive investigation and enforcement postures—no complaint, no investigation is their operating procedure. As a result, in the author’s experience, including his conversations with investigators from several State Engineering Boards, even highly publicized engineering-related mishaps/misconduct will not be investigated without a signed complaint, making fear of retribution a real deterrent to such filing (State Boards justify this as preventing frivolous complaints). Additionally, the author is unaware of any engineer ever being disciplined for failing to file a complaint when one was warranted. (State Engineering Boards regularly communicate to their licensees all instances of disciplinary action taken.) The State Boards cite the “strict honor code” requirements of their regulations to justify their “no complaint, no investigation” posture.

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In the author’s experience, they do not want to objectively consider if their “strict honor code” enforcement system is viable in protecting the public health and safety.

8. The Columbia Space Shuttle Accident Investigation Board Report, in about 250 pages, contained over 400 expressions of some form of the word “engineer” and about 200 expressions of some form of word the “design.” Yet, engineering ethics and P.E. licensure were not mentioned as relevant considerations. So apparently they are not—engineering ethics just isn’t—as no major engineering society took any issue with this, despite the author’s prodding.

9. The same is true of the joint US-Canadian government report on the 2003 large-scale power black-out in the Northeast and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission report on the extraordinary amount of corrosion on the head of the nuclear reactor, Davis-Besse in Ohio. Engineering ethics and P.E. licensure got a “free pass,” and engineering professional societies took no issue in either case, despite the author’s efforts.

10. The National Academy of Engineering (NAE) has issued a number of reports involving significant public health and safety issues in the Department of Energy (where the author is employed) during the past 20 years, but none mention the existence or relevance of engineering ethics and P.E. licensure. The author has discussed this situation with staff of NAE and contributors to some of these reports. To the author’s knowledge, NAE has yet to implement policy regarding compliance with engineering ethics and its strict honor code implementation basis in NAE sponsored work (if engineering ethics were viable, why would it even need such a policy?).

11. The Science and Policy Directorate of AAAS includes the Program of Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion (DoSER) The author has, on several occasions, suggested to DoSER staff and volunteer

Letters to the Editor: The editors welcome comments from our readers. We reserve the right to edit and abridge letter as space permits. Please address all correspondence to the deputy editor.

leaders that it explore whether religious faith, at least in part for some engineers (and scientists), motivated their selfless actions to defend and uphold their profession’s code of ethics. DoSER has yet to express an interest.

Recommendations:

1. Engineering professional societies should acknowledge that faith-based motivations are valid, at least in part, for some of their members, to their efforts to uplift and defend the engineering profession, its code of ethics, and its service to society. They are voluntary associations that hold a public trust, reflected in their codes of ethics, but within them, somehow, “church-state” separation has morphed into a tacit position that religion must be deeply privatized and is irrelevant, in all cases, to one’s desire to advance and defend the public trust the profession and its members hold.

2. P.E. licensure exists to protect the public. If there is not a clear nexus between P.E. licensure and public health and safety, then it is an illegitimate restraint on trade for an employer to require an engineer to be licensed when not required by law. If the major engineering professional societies will not make this case, no one else will. Unless and until engineering licensure becomes the norm for employment by most industrial employers, the engineering profession and its code of ethics will remain significantly hobbled.

3. Engineering professional societies should adopt policies to collectively defend their codes of ethics when engineers allege or experience retribution from their employers for adhering to them. There should be three aspects: 1) file neutral friend of the court briefs that focus on the importance to public health and safety of engineers compliance with engineering ethics; 2) whenever an engineer is legally vindicated in her claims of workplace retribution, take strong action to de-legitimize the employer; that is, make clear to the employer and its stakeholders that not only was the individual engineer mistreated,

the engineering profession was offended, and the public health and safety were endangered: and 3) stress that any engineer who engages in workplace retribution against another engineer for complying with the profession's code of ethics betrays the profession and its public trust and will be subject to lifetime banishment from it.

IN THE NEWS

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON DRAFT GUIDANCE

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) seeks public comment on a draft guidance document for Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), investigators, research institutions, DHHS agencies and other involved parties entitled, "Guidance on Reporting and Reviewing Adverse Events and Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others."

IRBs and researchers alike have asked federal regulatory agencies to provide harmonized guidelines and requirements for reporting adverse events in human subject research for many years. In March 2004, the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Subject Protections (SACHRP) approved a resolution recommending to DHHS that OHRP and the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) issue clear and consistent joint guidance on IRB review of both internal and external adverse event reports. This action is intended to enhance the protection of human subjects and reduce regulatory burden.

OHRP has developed a draft guidance regarding adverse event reporting. The primary goals of the guidance are to ensure that reporting occurs in a timely, efficient manner and protects human subjects from avoidable harm. OHRP will continue to work with the FDA to ensure that the guidelines from both agencies are harmonized to the maximum extent possible.

Public comments should be submitted by January 13, 2006 to OHRP by email at ohrp@osophs.dhhs.gov. All emails should include the subject line

line "Draft guidance on reporting adverse events." Further information can be found at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/requests/com101105.html>. *AKC

U.S. SENATE HEARING ON ECO-TERRORISM

On October 26, 2005, the U.S. Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works convened a hearing on "Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty" (SHAC), considered by some as a "radical animal rights organization that relies on crimes of violence and a campaign of fear to convey their message of animal liberation."

Witnesses testified to the violence and harassment committed by SHAC, the actions of federal law enforcement authorities to combat these activities, and the need for additional legal tools. The direct action campaigns launched by SHAC and others were described as "criminal activity designed to cause economic loss or to destroy property." Additionally, SHAC has been in the forefront of secondary or tertiary targeting, that is, targeting companies that have business or financial relationship with the principal target, Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), which conducts animal testing under contract to a variety of entities. Witnesses claimed that this strategy has resulted in the severance of ties with HLS by over 100 companies. A witness from the FBI stated that the FBI's efforts are "hindered by a lack of applicable federal criminal statutes." The current version of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act provides a means to prosecute only acts that result in "physical disruption" to the functioning of an institution or business that uses animals. The Department of Justice recommended broadening the statute's definition of "animal enterprise" to include new entities that have been targeted by animal rights terrorists, such as pet stores and shelters. Expanding the provision to allow this type of criminal activity to predicate electronic surveillance authority was recommended as well.

A representative from the North American Animal Liberation Press Office communicated the actions, strategies, philosophy and history of the underground animal liberation movement. The Animal Liberation Front objected to the press vilifying these activists as "violent" or "terrorist," "with no attention paid to

the needless and senseless suffering that industries and individuals gratuitously inflict on animals."

HLS was described as "only one representative of the Global Vivisection Complex, an outdated, inefficient and wasteful entity whose time has come and gone." Moreover, the representative claimed that "in the 21st century, there is absolutely no need to torture and kill non-human animals to advance human medicine."

One day after the hearing, Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) introduced the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (S. 1926). The purpose of the Act, which included input from the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI, is to provide the Department of Justice the necessary authority to apprehend, prosecute, and convict individuals committing animal enterprise terror. Witness List and Testimonies http://epw.senate.gov/hearing_statements.cfm?id=247470 The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (S.1926) <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c109:1:/temp/~c1095icp16::> *AKC

NIH EASES ETHICS RULES ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Following widespread criticism of an interim set of rules released on February to manage conflicts of interest among its staff scientists, on August 25, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued a final version of the rules, which have been revised to make them less-stringent.

Unlike the earlier draft, the new regulations allow the majority of NIH scientists and employees to own stock in pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and (subject to prior approval) to participate in teaching, speaking and writing activities with academic, professional and independent scientific associations. NIH staff will also be permitted to receive cash prizes for scientific achievement, if given through an established competition such as the Nobel Prize. However, a ban on outside consulting with drug, biotech and medical device companies remains in place for all employees.

The interim rules were criticized by senior intramural NIH scientists and

received more than 1,300 employee comments, suggesting that they would unnecessarily penalize employees, damage the agency's relationship with academia, and restrict its ability to recruit and retain talented scientists.

According to the final regulations, approximately 200 senior NIH staff members and their families will be prohibited from owning stock worth more than \$15,000 per company in drug, biotech and other "substantially affected organizations," far fewer than the 12,000 employees who would have been similar affected under the boarder interim rule. Other employees will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and may be required to divest their stock holdings "if, after review, a potential conflict resulting from their holdings or those of their spouses and minor children would impede their ability to do their government job."

The new regulations come in the wake of nearly two years of Congressional and media scrutiny over claims that existing rules were overly permissive and poorly enforced. Some senior NIH scientists reportedly received hundreds of thousands of dollars from pharmaceutical companies for consulting work related to their official duties, while other officials with oversight over NIH grants were awarded cash prizes from universities that had received significant amounts of grant money from the agency. Summary of NIH-Specific Amendments of Conflict of Interest Ethics Regulations

http://www.nih.gov/about/ethics/summary_amendments_08252005.htm

*RJE

SWISS APPROVE BAN ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

On November 27, 2005, 55.7 per cent of Swiss voters approved a 5-year ban on the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in agriculture. The moratorium was passed through a people's initiative, which is a rare political occurrence in Switzerland. Scientists in Switzerland disagreed over the risks and benefits of integrating GMOs into the country's agriculture. Some

scientists believe that GMOs could offer many benefits to the country in terms of productivity and the enhancement of crops. While others believe that transgenic food will demonstrate harmful effects for both the agriculture and population. Since long-term consequences have not been elucidated, many are critical of using GMOs in food.

An alliance between environmentalists, consumer organizations and farmers was credited for the passage of the moratorium. Those who agreed with the moratorium claimed no opposition to GMO research, but wanted more time to assess the potential risks associated with GMO usage. *AKC

AMA AND U.S. GOVERNMENT GEAR UP FOR POSSIBLE FLU PANDEMIC

Ethical guidelines issued by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the Executive Branch's release of the National Strategy for Pandemic Flu demonstrate that government officials and health care workers are taking preparations for this flu season very seriously. While controversies like flu shot shortages in recent years and the 2004 flu vaccine contamination scare have highlighted the need for careful monitoring of flu season preparation, the recent concern over human cases of avian flu have supplanted these previous fears.

Avian Flu, commonly referred to as "bird flu," is a type A influenza virus (H5N1) commonly carried by wild birds yet quite infectious to domesticated birds such as chickens. While this virus is normally only transmitted among other birds, over 100 cases in the past ten years from at least 16 countries have been found where the virus has leaped from its avian host to a human carrier.

Many of the symptoms of avian flu are similar to other strains of human flu, according to the CDC, and several current medical treatments for human flu viruses work on avian flu. Even so, the highly adaptive nature of flu viruses has some scientists and public health workers worried that this new strain may adapt to become more contagious, more easily transmitted from bird to human, or human to human, and develop into a serious pandemic. In light of these concerns, the

AMA and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) are laying ground work for the U.S. to deal with such possibilities.

The AMA issued new guidelines in November 2005 for ethical use of quarantine and isolation of patients during epidemics. Based on a report by the AMA's Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs, the guidelines aim to "help physicians adequately balance public health goals with the interests of individual patients during epidemics." They counsel health care providers to: "use valid scientific methods to assess public health risk; avoid arbitrary application of quarantine and isolation to a particular socioeconomic, racial or ethnic groups; advocate for access to public health services for timely detection of risks and implementation of quarantine and isolation; educate patients about the importance of their compliance with public health measures; and support mandatory quarantine and isolation for patients who fail to comply with such measures." Quarantine and isolation are likely to be major parts of any effort to control a bird flu outbreak and are specifically mentioned in President Bush's pandemic flu outbreak plan.

The AMA guidelines were released just as President Bush and DHHS released *The National Strategy for Pandemic Flu*. Responses to this report have been mixed. Bush has called for emergency funding to produce more flu vaccine, though there is the possibility that the vaccine would be ineffective against a mutated strain of the virus. Measures to reduce pharmaceutical companies' liability were also included to encourage more companies to enter the vaccine market. This strategy's success depends on a number of uncertain variables such as the capacity of the health care infrastructure, speed in diagnosis and response, and the severity of mutations in the strains, but still constitutes one of the largest and most expensive preventative flu efforts the U.S. has ever undertaken.

The release of the new AMA guidelines and the DHHS plan are just part of a number of efforts to anticipate the fall-out from a major pandemic.

The World Health Organization is helping to coordinate this effort on an international level, providing updates to various health organizations and disease centers to track cases as they are diagnosed.

Not since the release of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" have our avian neighbors seemed such a threat.

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/HEALTH/conditions/11/01/us.flu.plan/>
<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/print/15726.html>
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051101-1.html>

*EAW

CHANGING FACES: NEW CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON BIOETHICS

As a part of his assent to the chair of the President's Council on Bioethics (PCoB) Dr. Edmund Pellegrino challenged council members to define their conception of human dignity in order to support their as a justification for its policy positions. The first step in that direction was made during the PCoB December meeting, at which Paul Weithman from the University of Notre Dame and James Childress from the University of Virginia pointed out areas for development in the concept of human dignity, and placed human dignity in context with other moral and political philosophies.

Dr. Childress, a professor of Religious Studies and Biomedical Ethics at UVA, reviewed criticism of the notion of human dignity, and suggested a course of action for the PCoB to refine its definition of human dignity to address critics' concerns. He pointed out that human dignity seems to be invoked in the papers published by the PCoB rather than rationally argued. This tendency of invocation rather than explication hurts public discourse by serving as conversation stopper. Instead, human dignity needs to be used as a conversation starter, by encouraging a dialogue from within the community on the merits or failings of human dignity arguments. Clarification of the PCoB use of human dignity might reveal that human dignity is not the best articulation of points the Council seeks to make. Dr. Childress pointed out that human dignity arguments are great for philosophy and moral

reasoning, but as they stand, they "do not enhance the public policy discourse." Respect for persons, respect for autonomy, and even stewardship are ideas that are better developed in philosophical and ethical thought, and may better express Council ideas than the murky concept of human dignity. Finally, Childress suggested the Council work on placing human dignity in a clear framework of other ideas so that it can be considered in bioethics analysis. This would entail establishing human dignity in a priority order with other values, setting parameters for its application, determining whether it is a right or a duty, and identifying what would constitute a violation or insult to human dignity.

Dr. Paul Weithman echoed many of the sentiments of Dr. Childress, explaining the difficulty in using human dignity as a justification for ethical arguments. Human dignity is typically invoked in Judeo-Christian teaching through the notion that man is made in God's image, which elevates the human form to hold special meaning or dignity. Yet, if one does not accept divine creation as the source of human dignity, the notion falls apart. It is then unclear who possesses human dignity, how it is conferred upon an individual, and under what, if any, circumstances it can be taken away. Weithman suggests that human dignity is instead an intermediary concept that can add something to discussions of autonomy, respect for persons, and justice, but should not stand alone as an ethical justification. He expressed particular concern about the validity of the human dignity argument in the case of children and bioethics (the topic of the December meeting), because it does not express the complexity behind the rights of children and the rights of parents.

In the next session's discussion of a working paper on human dignity, Council members suggested using a concept of human dignity derived from the ideas embedded in the U. S. Constitution. However, no definitive plans were set to explore this avenue further. PCoB members expressed general satisfaction with the bulk of the working paper, but the conclusion sparked debate. Some members expressed dissatisfaction with the conclusion that did not follow from

the argument expressed earlier in the paper. Additional revisions will be made, but no date was set for the public release of the report. *EAW

IAP STATEMENT ON BIOSECURITY

Regulation of dual-use technology represents a tricky challenge for both government and scientists. Due to a changing global environment and rapid advances in all areas of science, stakeholders are becoming more aware of the sensitive nature of biosecurity. Every stakeholder involved in or supporting research must take part in the global effort to preserve the safe use and integrity of science.

The Interacademy Panel (IAP), a global network of science academies, has released a Statement on Biosecurity. The statement was released on December 1, 2005, with the support of over sixty-five National Academies of Science from across the globe. IAP suggests fundamental principles that scientific communities and individuals should use when constructing a code of conduct. They include:

A. Awareness: Scientists should do no harm. Scientists should refuse to participate in research that has only harmful consequences.

B. Safety & Security: Scientists have a responsibility to use safe and secure procedures in line with national and international law and common practice,

C. Education & Information: Scientists should be aware of laws and regulations aimed at preventing the misuse of biological research.

D. Accountability: Scientists who become aware of violations of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention or international law should alert the proper authorities.

E. Oversight: Scientists responsible for research oversight should promote adherence to these principles and act as role models.

The full IAP statement can be found <http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/document.asp?id=3948>. *AKC

UNESCO DECLARATION ON SCIENCE ETHICS

The UNESCO Science Commission has formally recognized that the responsible use of science should be a fundamental part

of the training of all scientists. It has recommended that the UN Director-General assist Member States in developing and implementing national policy frameworks in the field of bioethics, that there be more emphasis placed on ethics education activities, and that the UN undertake a feasibility study, in cooperation with the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), for drafting an international declaration on science ethics that would serve as a basis for an ethical code of conduct for scientists. The full Commission report can be found at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001408/140822e.pdf>.

RESOURCES

MISSION CREEP REDUCES EFFECTIVENESS OF IRBs

The odds are good that researchers conducting any kind of research involving talking to people have experienced or heard about misguiding oversight by an institution's IRB. One cause of this crisis is what is called "mission creep" in a new report originating from a conference at the University of Illinois. IRBs experiencing mission creep misdirect their energies and other resources to low-risk research and often unnecessarily reject proposals, which threatens academic freedom and divert resources away from truly risky research that needs oversight. The report makes clear that it is time to bring to light the problems created by overzealous and misguided attempts to force different types of research into the biomedical framework and to recognize that, while it is critical to protect human subjects from harm, it is also time to step back and make sure IRBs are doing what they were intended to.

Researcher and IRB professionals are beginning to recognize the negative consequences of mission creep. The DHHS Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections (SACHRP) has appointed a committee to investigate the situation and make recommendations.

An invitational conference at

U. of Illinois on *Human Subject Protection Regulations and Research Outside the Biomedical Sphere*, analyzed much of this dialogue. A recently released White Paper (<http://www.law.uiuc.edu/conferences/whitepaper>) emanating from this conference examines the problem and proposes some solutions, many of which can be implemented at the local IRB level within existing regulations.

The White Paper recommends collecting data to obtain concrete information about the scope of the problem; reclassifying the proposals submitted to IRBs according to degree of risk, so not all projects have to be reviewed with the same degree of scrutiny; and suggests that some methodologies are not well served by being in the IRB purview.

BIOETHICS CONVERSATION STARTER

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) has compiled a collection of conversations with more than thirty scientists, ethicists and patients regarding ethics into a DVD. "Ethics in Biomedical Research" addresses ethical questions related to animal research, stem cell research, genetic alteration and scientific integrity. Designed as a teaching tool, this DVD can be used by both teachers and researchers. Information about ordering this free DVD is available at the HHMI website, www.hhmi.org/bioethics.

PRIM&R THROUGH THE YEARS

The Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research center (PRIM&R) has released a comprehensive compilation of key talks delivered at past PRIM&R conferences entitled "PRIM&R Through the Years: Three Decades of Protecting Human Subjects." This anthology includes over 120 presentations on such topics as Moral Relativism vs. Cultural Imperialism, the Belmont Principles, Human Experimentation with Human Rights, the Role of Deception of Research and the Changing Face of AIDS. Information on purchasing the compilation can be found at http://www.primr.org/resources/through_the_years.html.

BIOSECURITY & CODES OF CONDUCT WEBSITES

Two websites are sources of information on codes of conduct related to biosecurity. The UK Economic and Social Research Council website features a chronologic narrative addressing major past and current events pertaining to a code of conduct. The chronology begins in 2001, referencing the US Anthrax attacks and continues up to 2005, citing the U.S. National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity and the UK Royal Society report, to name a few. Additionally, the website features links to existing codes of conduct. Links to conferences and seminars, both past and present, where biological weapons codes of conduct were discussed, are also featured. The site contains a wealth of publications that can be consulted for information regarding security threats, biological weapons and science ethics. <http://www.projects.ex.ac.uk/codesofconduct/Chronology/index.htm>

Another website established by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) features a number of resources related to codes of conduct. The site features information about mechanisms of biosecurity oversight, specifically codes of conduct for the research community. It includes a "Who's Who" section that identifies the various players, including government, industry, associations, and research institutes that are actively involved in biosecurity codes. There are definitions and examples of codes of conduct, including current biosecurity codes. The site also lists information about conferences and events related to biosecurity. Background information listed on the site provides links to legislation, treaties, international law and statements regarding biosecurity. http://www.biosecurity_codes.org

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

GENTLE ALTERNATIVES TO WHISTLE-BLOWING

We disparage those who engage in scientific misconduct, but what do we do about it? We know that whistle-blowing usually results in serious harm to the whistleblower. Caught off guard by the sudden knowledge that a student or colleague has breached scientific ethics, do we sadly do nothing, thinking that discretion is the better part of valor? Or do we find a way to guide the person back to ethical conduct without creating all manner of destruction to ourselves and others?

Have you ever observed a colleague or student committing a breach of research ethics? Perhaps it was as serious as making up data or claiming as one's own ideas taken from the work of someone else (a professor claiming a student's work; a grant reviewer "lifting" ideas from a proposal). Or perhaps it was as simple, and perhaps naïve, as using the wrong statistic to troll for significance, or making up hypotheses to fit the data. Perhaps a student of yours engaged in an overly coercive approach to recruiting subjects. You get the idea: there are innumerable variations of research misconduct.

Did you curb your impulse to tell someone in authority lest you start the academic equivalent of World War III? Did you or others attempt to deter the ignoble researcher from committing misconduct? Mindful of the delicacy of confrontation or going to an authority, did you take a more subtle, or more collegial approach? What did you do and why? How did it work out? Do you believe you succeeded or failed to prevent scientific misconduct? Why do you think your approach worked out as it did? Would you like to know what others have done in similar situations? Would you like to have an online guide suggesting approaches you might take, depending on such factors as the power differential between you and the miscreant, the nature of the misconduct, and whether you observed it directly or were told about it by someone else?

Two colleagues (Gerald Koocher and Patricia Keith-Spiegel) and I are studying "gentle alternatives to whistle-blowing." In Part I of the project, we seek to learn the kinds and frequency of scientific misconduct scientists observe and the frequency with which they do something about it. We will conduct that research via an online survey of scientists who currently hold certain NIH research grants. In Part II, the part described below, we will interview researchers who have an informative account to share about their experience(s) of seeking a "gentler" approach to deterring scientific misconduct. The purpose of this work is to produce an online manual describing effective and ineffective strategies.

Most researchers have a relevant experience to share. Do you? Would you be willing to be interviewed? If so, here is how the interview would be conducted:

The accounts will be gathered anonymously. You should plan to use pseudonyms, or if you disclose your identity or that of places or persons, those details will not be recorded. Data will be coded as to strategies and circumstances, to determine the contexts that spell success or failure for given strategies. We will then use combinations of related accounts and create fictitious cases to include in the manual. In other words, no names or other identifiers will be recorded and no cases, only fictionalized versions, will appear in the manual. We will keep your name and email address so that we can send you an early draft of the manual, unless you wish otherwise.

How would the interview work? First, I will send you a list of the kinds of information we seek, and ask you to plan to present your story in your own terms. You will then phone or email me to arrange for a phone interview, which may take as few as 10 minutes or as long as you want. I may ask a few probing questions if I feel you have left out important details, but the story is yours to tell on your terms. Nothing will be tape recorded. I will wear a phone headset and take notes, gathering only those kinds of details that will be useful in an analysis of factors leading to success or failure and that will help us construct fictitious cases.

If you are interested in participating, please email me at joan.sieber@csueastbay.edu or phone me at (510) 538-5424. All who contact me, participants as well as non-participants, will receive a copy of the "Gentle Alternatives to Whistle-Blowing" manual.

* Joan E. Sieber

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Papers

The Communication Ethics Division of the National Communication Association seeks papers and panel proposals for its Ninth National Conference. The conference is June 8-11, 2006 at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. The theme of the conference is "Globalization and Provinciality: Communication Ethics and Culture." Papers addressing a variety of issues such as applied, intercultural or religious communication, culture wars and current conflicts in global ethics are welcomed. Proposals are due January 15, 2006. For further information, contact Dr. Kathleen Glenister Roberts, Director of the Communication Ethics Center, at robertskg@duq.edu.

Call for Proposals

The U.S. Office of Research Integrity (ORI) seeks proposals for a Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Resource Development Program. The deadline for submissions is February 24, 2006. Proposals that develop competencies in RCR and tools to facilitate the RCR work of research administrators are needed. Proposal requirements can be found on the ORI web site at <http://ori.hhs.gov/contracts>. Please address all inquiries to Loc Nguyen-Khoa (Lnguyen-Khoa@osophs.dhhs.gov)

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Conferences

The Center for the Study of Law, Science & Technology at Arizona State University will host "Forbidding Science? Balancing Freedom, Security, Innovation and Precaution." The conference will be held on January 12-13, 2006 in Tempe, AZ. Topics such as preventing the misuse of nanotechnology, ethical concerns with cognitive enhancement, and the prohibition of pathogen research will be discussed. For conference and registration information, visit www.law.asu.edu/forbiddingscience.

The Annual Meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics is hosting a Mini Conference entitled "Ethical Issues for Social Workers and the Counseling Professions." The conference will be held March 4-5, 2006 in Jacksonville, FL. Social workers who attend the conference will be eligible for CEU credit. The Mini Conference program and registration information are listed at <http://www.indiana.edu/~appe/annualmeeting.html#mini>.

On March 14-17, 2006, the James Martin Institute for Science and Civilization along with the Arizona State University Consortium for Science and Policy Outcomes will sponsor the "First World Forum on Science and Civilization: Tomorrow's People: The Challenges of Technologies for Life Extension and Enhancement." This conference in

Oxford, UK, will examine the proposed next stage of evolution that some characterize as conscious efforts by humans to reshape their inherited physical, cognitive and emotional identities by extending lifespan and human capacities. The range of technologies associated with the potential for a longer, stronger, smarter and happier life will be examined. Additional conference information can be found at <http://www.martininstitute.ox.ac.uk/JMI/Forum2006/>.

On June 12-14, 2006, the 13th Annual Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics (AAPAE) conference will be held in Sydney, Australia. Papers are invited in any area of ethics, either professional or applied. The conference will feature lectures on topics such as business ethics, healthcare ethics, public sector ethics, environmental ethics and defense ethics. Preliminary information about the conference can be found at <http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/aapae/>.

The Health Communication Research Centre at Cardiff University is hosting the 4th International Interdisciplinary Conference on Communication, Medicine and Ethics. The conference will be held June 29-July 1, 2006 in Cardiff, UK. Researchers, practitioners and administrators from a variety of fields will speak on issues of communication and ethics. Topics such as end-of life ethics, healthcare interaction and assessments will be presented during the colloquia. The Cardiff Lecture will be delivered by Daniel Callahan of the Hastings Center. Further details about this conference can be found at www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/hcrc/comet2006.

Indiana University will host its 13th Annual Teaching Research Ethics Workshop on May 13-16, 2006 in Bloomington, IN. Topics include an overview of ethical theory, conflicts of interest, responsible data management, and authorship issues. Additionally, many sessions will include strategies for teaching the responsible conduct of research. Registration information is available at <http://poynter.indiana.edu>.

The 21st ACM Symposium on Applied Computing (SAC) will convene April 23-27, 2006 in Dijon, France. There will be a track on computer ethics. Topics of interest include human values and the development of new computing application, ethical analyses of cybercrimes and the relationship between human trust and network protocols. Further information about the conference is at <http://people/uis.edu/kmill2/sac2006>.

The 6th Congress of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics will take place June 22-24, 2006. The conference entitled "Eursafe 2006: Ethics and Politics of Food" will be held in Oslo, Norway. Topics to be discussed include the politics of consumption, animal welfare and production, ethics and safety in food discourses, and foundational issues in ethics. Additional information can be found at <http://Eursafe2006.etikkom.no>.

Support From the Following Societies and Organizations is Gratefully Acknowledged:

American Anthropological Association
American Association of University Professors
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychological Society
American Society for Engineering Education
American Sociological Association
Botanical Society of America