Honesty in Academic Research

Policy/Procedure

General Statement

Dickinson College expects its faculty to adhere to the highest ethical and professional standards in the conduct and management of research. Federal law requires the College to maintain uniform policies and procedures for investigating and reporting instances of alleged or apparent misconduct involved in research supported by certain federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health. This requirement is met by the College’s expectation that all persons conducting research will avoid fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other practices that undermine the integrity of an academic institution. Honest error or differences of opinion in the evaluation or interpretation of research is not misconduct. Any person whose research is supported by funding either from external sources or from the College is responsible for compliance with College policies and with federal regulations where appropriate in the disposition of funds.

Procedures to Follow Should Allegations of Misconduct Be Made

Allegations of fraud or misconduct in research must be reported to the Associate Dean of the College, who shall protect, to the maximum extent possible, the privacy of all affected persons. The Associate Dean will immediately inform the faculty member involved of the specifics of the charge and will then conduct an informal investigation to be completed within two months of its initiation. The Associate Dean will prepare a written report, indicating what evidence was reviewed, summarizing relevant interviews, and setting out the conclusion of the inquiry.

The faculty member against whom the allegation was made shall be provided with a copy of this report and the opportunity to submit comments which will be made part of the record. The report and the response will be submitted to the Dean of the College who, after consultation with the Faculty Personnel Committee, will decide whether or not to proceed to a formal investigation. If that is not warranted, sufficient documentation to permit later assessment of the reasons for this conclusion shall be retained for at least three years.

If a formal investigation is called for, the Dean of the College, within one month of the completion of the informal investigation, shall appoint an ad hoc committee for this purpose, and shall inform the accused faculty member of the committee’s membership and its specific charge. The committee will include two faculty members from departments other than that of the individual against whom the allegation has been made and one from that person’s department. If it is deemed advisable, one of the non-department members of the ad hoc committee may be an individual with relevant expertise and high professional standing from beyond Dickinson. Neither members of FPC nor members of the Appeals Committee are eligible to serve on this committee; the Dean will sit without vote on the committee.
The ad hoc committee’s investigation will be concluded within four months and will normally include examination and assessment of all relevant documentation, including research data, proposals, and correspondence. Whenever possible, interviews shall be conducted with all individuals who may have significant information bearing on the investigation. Summaries of these interviews, certified as accurate by the parties involved, shall be entered into the record and provided to the accused faculty member. The faculty member shall have an opportunity to comment, both orally and in writing, on the committee’s tentative findings before it makes its final report.

A formal report of the investigation will be made to the President and to the Faculty Personnel Committee. If the committee finds the allegation of misconduct substantiated, its formal report will include any recommendations regarding actions to be taken. The faculty member involved has the opportunity to respond to the report and the recommendations. If formal action is then taken by the President or by FPC, normal College procedures will be followed.

Throughout the course of these proceedings, the Associate Dean will be responsible for providing appropriate information to the officers of any federal, state or private agency which may be involved in support of the research in question, following the guidelines for such reporting that may be specified by the agency. All efforts will be made to preserve the confidentiality of all proceedings until any report imposed by law and by sound practice must be made. Should the faculty member against whom the allegations were made request it, however, a statement of the results of the investigation will be made public. It is inappropriate for anyone involved in these internal College proceedings to be represented by legal counsel.

Allegations of fraud or misconduct in scholarly research undertaken by administrators will follow the same procedures except that the ad hoc committee undertaking the formal investigation will include one administrator.

### Related Information

### History/Revision Information

**Responsible Office/Division:**

**Effective Date:**

**Last Amended Date:**

**Next Review Date:**

**Also Found In:** Academic Handbook