

Topic for Discussion: Conflicts of Interest

Cross-Cutting Themes: collaboration, power relationships, scientific responsibility

Overview questions: What is at stake with conflicts of interest? Are there interests that do not create conflicts? How can you distinguish the difference? Where within the scientific process (e.g. study design, data collection, data interpretation, analysis, publication) are researchers vulnerable to conflicts of interest that will impact their judgment? What can you do as a researcher to mitigate against bias in your work?

Process for Thinking through Difficult Ethical Dilemmas

Recognition: *What are the issues being raised? What is the underlying ethical concern? How does this issue impact me?*

Reasoning: *What values are at stake? Are there competing points of view? What are the potential benefits and harms of different actions? Are there any rules or guidelines that can help?*

Responsibility: *What are my responsibilities? Do others have responsibilities also?*

Response: *What should I do – and why?*

Assigned Reading:

- Grinnell F. The interrelationship between research integrity, conflict of interest, and the research environment. *J Microbiology & Biology Education*. Dec 2014; 15(2):162-164.
- Munafò, M. R. et al. A manifesto for reproducible science. *Nat. Hum. Behav.* 1, 0021 (2017).

Additional Resource:

- Conflict of Interest Resources, US Department of Health and Human Services, <http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/policy/coi/resources.htm>
- Significant Financial Interest Disclosure Policy, UW Grants Information Memo 10, <http://www.washington.edu/research/osp/gim/gim10.html>

Backpocket Case Study:

As a new assistant professor, you are about to begin working part-time on a research contract with a biotechnology company. The work is cutting edge and you expect there will be several high-profile publications that could mean very good publicity for the company and for you if research results are positive. You have just learned that the contract you are asked to sign contains a clause that mandates any material undergo company review before publication.