

## COI Subcommittee Notes

September 24, 2019

Washington, D.C.

These notes supplement the PowerPoint slide deck.

1. How many institutions in the meeting room have a conflict of commitment policy? 50% of audience of about 60-70 attendees.
2. Is the COC policy part of the COI policy? Some said yes, but many said no.
3. 20% of the audience said that the Faculty Affairs Office had been engaged in the Foreign Influence discussion at their institutions (conflict of commitment is relevant for institutions that do not permit outside faculty appointments, especially if they receive an appointment at a foreign institution).
4. Do you include all foreign activities in your COI disclosure or only "related to institutional responsibilities"? The latter, per the PHS regs.
5. How many institutions permit part-time appointments? 50% of 60-70 representatives.
6. Nearly 1/3 of the room had employees deployed to foreign locations.
7. Johns Hopkins: If the outside activity is related to one's expertise, then must disclose.
8. How many institutions give their Sponsored Research Offices access to COI disclosure information? About 25% of the room provided a view to a red flag for COI but not the details. 10% of the room do not give the Sponsored Research Offices access to COI information.
9. Spontaneous discussion: Sponsored Research officers may not want access to the COI information b/c they say they don't know what to do with it. UC Davis says if the COI is flagged, they tell the PI to resolve the issue with the COI office, otherwise, they will not award. University of Tennessee says that they give Sponsored Research access to a Yes/No in the COI system. They can open up the COI disclosure to see if it matches with what has been disclosed in the proposal. The faculty have been informed of this greater scrutiny. It equally applies to faculty at ORNL who also have research at the UT campus.
10. Is there institutional liability by having the Office of Sponsored Research sign the proposal without diving deep to verify the COI? Johns Hopkins opines yes, as the certification is as to the institution.
11. Who owns Foreign Influence at your institution? 10% of audience say that a Foreign Influence committee has been formed of faculty and subject matter experts.
12. How often must a PI disclose their outside financial interests in relation to a pending proposal? Stanford and Johns Hopkins both have electronic COI systems that are integrated with their sponsored research proposal systems; trigger questions will flag a required update to their disclosures. Virginia Tech flags for Other Support.
13. How would a research administrator "force" a faculty member to disclose financial interests without damaging the relationship with the PI? Does the research administrator have to blow the whistle? One suggestion was to do random spot checks and ask the PI to remedy his failure to disclose. Another suggestion would be to update the disclosure form and ask the PI to re-disclose. A third suggestion would be to pair the research administrator with another faculty member, perhaps a senior associate dean, and have a frank conversation with the PI; the federal

government has come out with additional requirements for disclosure; there is greater scrutiny; failure to disclose could lead to criminal indictment; we are here to support you.

14. U.C. Davis shared that their regional FBI unit visited their campus without invitation and told them that bad actors may lie, and one cannot guard against it, so one must be generally vigilant in all circumstances; maybe we do need to question the faculty members. Contrast that experience with UNC-Chapel Hill's interaction with their regional FBI office where the messaging started out with "we respect research". Johns Hopkins advises to redirect and resolve; respect the faculty members.
15. Comment that the FBI cannot check folks coming into the country without a reason (watchlist, reported).
16. Another question asked how to engage leadership who ignores the foreign influence requirements? Advice from the audience was to save the emails, to look for another job, to partner with a powerful faculty member for messaging.
17. Pls have lots of requirements, and we cannot check everyone for no reason. We must also respect privacy.
18. Are research administrators really on the front lines? How best to handle foreign influence?
19. We are always to control/ police sphere of influence, tightening processes.

Thanks to Mary Hickman at University of Kentucky for taking notes!