

## TEACHING RESEARCH ETHICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: AN INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE MODEL

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In 2001, Western Michigan University's Center for the Study of Ethics in Society (Ethics Center) received a two year grant from the National Science Foundation entitled, "Teaching Research Ethics: An Institutional Change Model." This program was given the endorsement of WMU's Office of the Vice-President for Research and Sponsored Programs, which committed further support for the program once the grant period ended. That additional support resulted in the formation of a Research Ethics Resource Center (RERC), within the Ethics Center.

A central aim of the NSF grant was to bring together faculty and graduate students from across the curriculum to develop courses, modules, or workshops devoted to teaching research ethics within their programs, and to discuss together generic issues in research ethics in a university setting and pedagogical strategies that might prove effective in both the short and long run. A key notion was that the entire university community would benefit from giving research ethics cross-disciplinary attention by creating a forum for critical discussion of both specific issues in research ethics and the teaching of research ethics.

For each of the two years of the grant, teams of faculty and graduate students were invited to participate in the NSF program as Research Ethics Fellows. Disciplines represented included: Anthropology, Biology, Africana Studies, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Chemistry, Communication, Engineering and Applied Sciences, Environmental Studies, Evaluation, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Philosophy, Psychology, Public Administration, Social Work, and Sociology. In addition to having a series of programs for all participants, the project joined teams from different disciplines in study groups focusing on particular areas of concern (e.g., intellectual property, conflicts of interest, research involving human participants, research misconduct, university/industry relations). Also, each individual team (faculty member/graduate

student from the same discipline) was expected to develop a teaching module to be presented within its specific discipline. Finally, each year concluded with a conference featuring outside speakers and presentations by the Research Ethics Fellows highlighting summary reflections of the study groups and the modules prepared by the individual teams.

One of the goals of the NSF project was to help establish an enduring community of researchers who are accustomed to engaging in serious discussion of issues in research ethics both within their respective disciplines and across disciplines. In part, such discussions reflect the commonality of problems of research ethics across a variety of disciplines. But, equally important, they reflect the fact that many research projects involve more than one discipline (e.g., engineers and occupational therapists), thus making it important for them to be able to address research ethics issues together.

With the continued support of the Office of the Vice President for Research, we believe we have made significant strides in accomplishing the basic aims of our original NSF grant. The establishment of the Research Ethics Resource Center (with the active involvement of the Associate Vice President for Research and the Compliance Coordinator for research involving human participants, animal research, and other areas) provides university-wide credibility to the Ethics Center's efforts to support the study and teaching of research ethics.