



Research Compliance Prepares for Super-Circular

Six weeks ago the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued their final guidance on grant reforms titled “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”, 72 Fed. Reg. 78590 (December 26, 2013). This new guidance has been nicknamed the “Super-circular” for its unprecedented significance in combining and altering eight existing federal circulars, including A-110, A-21 and A-133. The new guidance will become effective upon each federal agency’s adoption, and no later than December 26, 2014.

Notable changes to the administrative requirements of a federal grant include the reporting of performance measurements of an award to the sponsor to demonstrate cost-effective practices, while forbidding voluntary committed cost sharing as a consideration within research proposals and applications. The University will also be required to thoroughly evaluate certain risks of sub-recipients associated with potential awards, including the consideration of the sub’s financial stability, quality of their management systems, their performance history, reports & findings from audits, and their ability to effectively implement regulations. The University will be asked to define and manage “Organizational Conflicts of Interest” and will be allowed to create a new procurement method referred to as “micro-purchases” to sanction the purchase of supplies or services without soliciting competitive quotes for transactions less than \$3,000.

There were also several changes to the cost principles regulations which will likely have a considerable impact on the University’s research awards. The Super-circular more clearly allows pre-approved administrative costs to be charged directly to an award when certain conditions exist, such as administrative costs that are specifically allocated to one award, services that are integral to the project, individuals who are involved and can be specifically identified with the project. Obviously these costs may not also be recovered as indirect costs. Another significant change relates to the cost of computing devices, which will now be classified as a “Supply” if less than \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life.



The Super-circular includes a few changes to the audit requirements of institutions with federal awards such as raising the threshold for federal programs to \$750,000 before a single audit is required. This change is relevant only to institutions much smaller than Saint Louis University, although we will benefit from a higher threshold for reporting questioned costs, from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

The Research Division, Business and Finance, and General Counsel will continue to read about the new Super-circular and will create a transition plan for the University to adopt the new regulation when required to do so.



Please feel free to contact the Office of University Compliance at (314) 977-5545 or at slucompliance@slu.edu



If you need to reference past newsletters, upcoming education dates or need more information on Compliance visit our [website](#).

GRASSLEY IN THE NEWS

Republican Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa returns to research headlines this week in response to admitted research misconduct at Iowa State University (the topic of last month's [In the Dog House](#) commentary). Grassley is familiar with publicity, as he is well-known for his thunderous criticisms of misuse of tax dollars in the healthcare and research fields.

On February 11, 2014, Grassley asked the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service to take a closer look at the sanctions against former Iowa State University researcher, Dong-Pyou Han, who admitted last fall to purposefully faking his findings in AIDS vaccine research. Han received a three-year ban from participating in federally financed research and the agency found that his research team members, including principal investigator, Michael Cho, were not at fault. Grassley's letter to the HHS Office of Research Integrity (ORI) suggests that more should be done to penalize the research and recover the grant money. Grassley wrote, "When researchers abuse the public's trust by

tampering with trials, ORI should use all of the powers at its disposal to resolve the problem and recover federal grant money for that research." Grassley further challenged the ORI to consider holding the researcher's supervisor accountable for scientific misconduct by their subordinates.

Iowa State spokesman, John McCarroll, noted that Grassley's letter was addressed to the federal agency, and not the university. He welcomed any questions the Senator may have for the University and acknowledged Grassley's fervor by saying, "It certainly appears the senator is carrying out his oversight responsibilities."

Grassley's enthusiasm has also ignited discussion group dialogue in research compliance circles central to the question "**Should scientific fraud be treated as a crime?**" Please share your thoughts to that question with the University's Research Compliance Team at slucompliance@slu.edu.



This month we bring you a story from [Retraction Watch](#) in which a journal was forced to retract an article after the author found an error in the data.

The journal *Appetite* was forced to retract an article, "Relation of Parenting Styles, Feeding Styles, and Feeding Practices to Child Overweight and Obesity: Direct and Moderated Effects," after the author, Oklahoma State University professor Laura Hubbs-Tait, noticed an error in the data.

According to Hubbs-Tait, she "found an error in the data for the manuscript and had tracked down the source of the error to a column switching mistake in copying data from one spreadsheet to another by a research assistant. The error was difficult to detect because the coefficients for internal consistency of all measures were acceptable as were the descriptive statistics for all measures."

Hubbs-Tait acknowledges that, as the lead investigator, the responsibility for the error is hers.

This case highlights the importance of thoroughly checking (and re-checking) your data for errors.

Laura Hubbs-Tait warns, "This error and our retraction are a reminder to all researchers that even if others have checked every item for every subject for implausible values, the lead investigator should re-run those analyses."

