UCLA

MEMORANDUM

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING MEMO SUPERSEDES THE VERSION DISTRIBUTED ON AUGUST 6, 2004

August 11, 2004

Dear colleagues:

The campus recently became aware of a situation in which a proposal for extramural funding was prepared by a trainee and then submitted to the sponsoring agency, with almost no review, by the trainee's mentor. When the application was found to have contained plagiarized materials, the result was embarrassing for all involved. This incident prompts me to remind you of the critical role of the principal investigator (PI) not only in the conduct of research, but also as a role model and mentor.

UCLA researchers are among the most productive researchers in the world. Last year, the campus received over $750 million dollar in extramural funding. As a measure of our success, UCLA is currently ranked by the National Science Foundation as the largest recipient of research support in the nation. Along with this success, however, comes responsibility.

With the submission of proposals and acceptance of awards, the campus agrees not only to provide expertise in conducting the proposed research, but also to manage each resulting award in conformance with various federal and state laws, fiscal and administrative regulations, sponsor requirements, and University and campus policies. Various offices and administrative structures have been designated to comply with these myriad obligations. Nonetheless, much of the responsibility rests with the principal investigator.

While management of contracts and grants is shared by other investigators, department chairs and deans, and central administrative units, PIs are fundamentally responsible for the design, conduct, and reporting of their research. Supervision of employees, and mentoring of students and postdoctoral fellows are axiomatic. Upholding high ethical standards, protection of human and animal research subjects, avoiding obvious conflicts of interest, ensuring that recombinant DNA and infectious agents are used safely, and expending funds in accordance with federally mandated cost principles are among he many issues for which PIs are held accountable.

I would like to remind you of a statement incorporated into the University of California policy on integrity. This policy, issued in 1990 by then-President David Gardner, reads, in part, "...Integrity in research includes not just the avoidance of wrong doing, but also the rigor, carefulness, and accountability that are hallmarks of good scholarship. All persons engaged in research at the University are responsible for adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity in research. Faculty and other supervisors of research activities have a responsibility to create an environment which encourages those high standards and integrity in research..." (http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/coordrev/policy/6-19-90.html).

Other relevant policies, including the UCLA policies on Principal Investigator Eligibility, and the Management of Sponsored Projects, are available at: http://www.adminvc.ucla.edu/appm/_entry_900.html. A statement on Academic Excellence issued by the UCLA Academic Senate Graduate Council in May 2003 addresses issues related to mentoring students and can be found at http://www.senate.ucla.edu/ProgramReviews/process0203/Excellence.htm.

If you have any questions about any research-related policies, please contact Ann Pollack, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research at ext. 40387, or Laura Crowley, Research Policy and Compliance Coordinator, at ext. 42642.

Sincerely,

Roberto Peccei
Vice Chancellor for Research