

August 29, 2016

TO: Deans, Directors, Chairs

FROM: June Pierce Youatt, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Stephen Hsu, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies

RE: Responsible Conduct of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities

In 2009 the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies required that all departments and programs involved in graduate education develop a Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training Plan. Those plans were intended in part to respond to federal requirements for training set out in the “America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act.” Although the immediate concern was with federally funded projects, all academic units at MSU were expected to implement similar training, as teaching responsible practices in research, scholarship, and creative activities is fundamental to the integrity of every graduate program.

Several federal agencies have recently revised their RCR requirements. In light of these changes, of MSU’s responsibility for tracking compliance with these requirements, and of improved resources for providing training to the MSU community, RCR requirements for training graduate students at MSU and tracking that training will be streamlined. The updated requirements will also provide a common core of online courses across campus. We need to provide accurate and consistent information to all graduate students about basic RCR issues. The number of reported academic misconduct cases has been steadily increasing, and research misconduct cases involving graduate students have resulted in the revocation of degrees. The same common approach is being taken with other groups (e.g., post-doctoral fellows, undergraduates, etc.) that need to meet federal agency training requirements.

The attached model plan for RCR training was worked out between the Graduate School and the Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies, in consultation with the college associate deans for graduate education. It will provide the template for all academic units at MSU, replacing the template developed by the Graduate School and OVPRGS in 2009. As in the past, departments, programs, and/or colleges will be expected to provide their own more specific plans building from this template.

The Graduate School has the responsibility of ensuring that all plans are updated and posted on the Graduate School website. Draft program or unit plans for formal education and training in the responsible conduct of research should be submitted and approved by the appropriate collegiate dean’s office by October 15, 2016. These will be forwarded to the Graduate School for discussion, if needed, and approval, which will be completed no later than December 1, 2016. The new plans will start on January 1, 2017.

Tracking through Saba LMS of required courses will begin in fall 2016. New graduate students entering in fall 2016 will have the option of following the academic unit’s current plan, or of starting to complete the university-wide requirements. All graduate students enrolling for the first time in spring 2017 will follow the new plans.