

Report on Research Compliance Volume 15, Number 9. September 30, 2018

NIH Warns Institutions to be Vigilant Against Threats to U.S. Research From 'Foreign Entities'

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NIH Director Francis Collins is urging institutions to take seriously “threats to the integrity of U.S. biomedical research” through “inappropriate influence,” which could result in theft of intellectual property and acquisition of confidential study information by foreign governments and entities.

Testifying before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee on Aug. 23, Collins announced that, the day before the hearing, NIH had distributed to “representatives of more than 10,000 grantee institutions” a letter asking for their help and explaining specific “concerns.”

Collins told the HELP committee that the letter, a copy of which RRC obtained, requests that institutions “review their records for evidence of malfeasance” in three areas of concern. However, the language in the letter itself is somewhat more passive and makes no mention of a “review” for “malfeasance,” or any other new requirements or reporting—though these could certainly come in the future.

As Collins explained to the committee, the areas of concern are:

- ◆ “failure by some researchers at NIH-funded institutions to disclose substantial contributions of resources from other organizations, including foreign governments, which threatens to distort decisions about the appropriate use of NIH funds;
- ◆ diversion of intellectual property in grant applications or produced by NIH-supported biomedical research to other entities, including other countries;

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