

Report on Research Compliance Volume 20, Number 5. April 27, 2023 JASON Urges NSF to Guard Against Racial, Ethnic Profiling in Research Security Program

By Jane Anderson

If the National Science Foundation (NSF) creates a research program on research security, it should make every effort to ensure the United States remains “the premier destination for top scholars around the world [and] must avoid creating a reputation of racial profiling or injustice,” the independent science advisory group known as JASON concluded in a recent report considering what such a research program might entail.^[1]

“The products of a research program on research security must not be used to disadvantage anyone based on their ethnic background or country of origin,” JASON wrote in the report, in which the NSF asked the group to consider the definition of research security, how that definition might differ from discipline to discipline, what central research themes should be addressed as well as which are most urgent, what critical research communities must be engaged and what data and privacy controls will be required for research on research security.

In the report, released March 30, JASON developed definitions of research security and research integrity to distinguish between the two disciplines. JASON also provided topic areas for a possible NSF program solicitation; it noted that the social sciences will be important for a successful research program on research security.^[2]

Overall, JASON found the concept of such a research program to be valuable.

NSF Urged to Guard Against Profiling

“JASON concludes that an NSF research program on research security would be useful in addressing many of the concerns about foreign influence and the security of the US fundamental research ecosystem,” the group said. “There are many topics that could be the subject of such a research program and most of these will benefit from strong engagement with social scientists, and collaboration of those social scientists with practicing natural scientists in the fields of interest. Access to data will be a serious challenge to the success of a research program, but one that likely can be mitigated by application of appropriate anonymization methods.”

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