

OSTP Releases Report from Scientific Integrity Task Force on Protecting Integrity of Government Science

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On January 11, 2022, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) released the [report](#) of its Scientific Integrity Task Force on protecting the integrity of government science. According to OSTP, the scientific integrity principles and best practices identified in the report “aim to ensure that science is conducted, managed, communicated, and used in ways that preserve its accuracy and objectivity and protect it from suppression, manipulation, and inappropriate influence -- including political interference.” The report finds that:

- While violations of scientific integrity are small in number compared to the magnitude of the federal government’s scientific enterprise, they can significantly undermine federal decision-making and public trust in science;
- Existing federal scientific integrity policies are responsive to previous Executive actions but need to be strengthened to deter better inappropriate influence in the conduct, management, communication, and use of science; and
- Supporting scientific integrity requires attention to other policy areas, including greater transparency into research processes and outputs; clear guidelines for data and information that agencies release; and policies that promote safe, equitable workplaces free from harassment and discrimination.

OSTP notes that the Obama Administration identified six principles of scientific integrity in 2009. To not only restore, but to strengthen the integrity of federal science beyond the efforts of any previous Administration, the Task Force makes the following additional recommendations to guide policymaking and foster a culture of scientific integrity in federal agencies:

- All federal agencies -- not just those that fund and conduct scientific research -- should develop, implement, and periodically update scientific integrity policies. Protecting scientific integrity is essential for any federal agency or entity that communicates or makes use of scientific and technical information in decision-making;

- Scientific integrity policies should apply to all those in federal agencies who manage, communicate, or use science, not just to scientists and engineers who conduct research, and not just to career employees, but contractors and political appointees as well. All must be trained in scientific integrity and their roles in upholding it;
- Scientific integrity policies should be modernized to address important, emergent issues. They must advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; address new concerns arising from the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning; and apply to emerging modes of science, such as citizen science and community-engaged research with federal involvement;
- There should be broader dissemination and adoption of good scientific integrity practices across the federal government, a task that could be facilitated by more formalized interagency collaboration; and
- There should be widespread training for agency scientists so they can communicate scientific findings effectively to nonscientists in their agencies and to lay audiences, with the idea of helping to ensure that policies and actions are based on an accurate understanding of the science.

OSTP states that in the coming months, it will draw upon the findings of the Task Force to develop a plan for the regular assessment and iterative improvement of scientific integrity policies and practices. In addition, agency leadership, working closely with OSTP, will deploy this framework to ensure that their scientific integrity policies are informed by the Task Force report and adhere to scientific integrity principles.

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