
PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT AND IRRESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

I. INTRODUCTION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT

These protocols codify the responsibilities of Lipscomb University (“**Lipscomb**”) in addressing **allegations of research misconduct** in non-**PHS** projects, as well as allegations of **irresponsible conduct of research** in any project at Lipscomb that is proposed, performed, reviewed, reported or generated by any **institutional member**, regardless of whether an application or proposal was externally funded.

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of these protocols is to:

- Establish the responsibilities and administrative actions of Lipscomb in reporting and responding to **research misconduct** (“**RM**”) and **irresponsible conduct of research** (“**ICR**”), including **allegations and proceedings**;
- Establish consistent procedures for reporting any and all occurrences of **RM** and/or **ICR** to a Lipscomb official;
- Define **RM** and **ICR** at Lipscomb;
- Protect the health and safety of the public and promote the integrity of **research** and the research process;
- Ensure that **institutional** protocols are publicly available and clearly identify the **Institutional Deciding Official** (“**IDO**”) and **Research Integrity Officer** (“**RIO**”); and
- Establish protocols for handling and securing the **institutional record** and **evidence** of possible **RM** and/or **ICR**.

C. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

These protocols require all **institutional members** to report observed, suspected, or apparent **RM** and/or **ICR** to Lipscomb’s **RIO**, whose contact information is available on Lipscomb’s Office of Research and Grants (“**ORG**”) [website](#). These protocols apply to any **institutional member** (including any student, faculty, staff, administrator) or third-party person (including contractor, subcontractor, and/or other partner) regarding any applicable **allegation** of **RM** and/or **ICR**. The protocols for **allegations** of **ICR** apply to PHS-supported **research misconduct** or any allegations within an award with reliance on the regulations enacted in [Title 42 CFR Part 93](#); the protocols for **RM** and/or **ICR** apply to any program at Lipscomb, whether or not the program is externally funded.

II. DEFINITIONS

Terms utilized in these protocols may be utilized in whole, in part, or be modified from those defined in [42 CFR Part 93 Subpart B—Definitions](#). Defined terms are in bold font throughout these protocols.

- A. **Accepted practices of the relevant research community** means commonly accepted professional codes or norms within the overarching community of researchers and institutions that conduct research, whether or not research is performed with external funding.
- B. **Allegation(s)** is a disclosure of possible research misconduct or irresponsible conduct of research, through any means of communication, and brought directly to the attention of Lipscomb’s RIO or another institutional official.
- C. **Assessment** means a consideration of whether an allegation of research misconduct or irresponsible conduct of research appears to fall within the definition of these protocols; appears to involve Lipscomb and/or its institutional members; and is sufficiently credible and specific so that potential evidence of research misconduct and/or irresponsible conduct of research may be identified. The assessment only involves the review of readily accessible information relevant to the allegation.
- D. **Complainant** means an individual who in good faith makes an allegation of research misconduct.
- E. **Evidence** means anything offered or obtained during a proceeding that tends to prove or disprove the existence of an alleged fact(s). Evidence includes documents, whether in hard copy or electronic form, information, tangible items, and testimony.
- F. **Fabrication** means making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
- G. **Falsification** means manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- H. **Good faith.** (a) Good faith as applied to a complainant or witness means having a reasonable belief in the truth of one’s allegation or testimony, based on the information known to the complainant or witness at the time. An allegation or cooperation with a proceeding is not in good faith if made with knowledge of or reckless disregard for information that would negate the allegation or testimony. (b) Good faith as applied to an institutional or committee member means cooperating with any proceeding by impartially carrying out the duties assigned for the purpose of helping Lipscomb meet its responsibilities under these protocols. An institutional or committee member does not act in good faith if their acts or omissions during proceedings are dishonest or influenced by personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest with those involved in the **research misconduct proceeding**.
- I. **Inquiry** means preliminary information-gathering and preliminary fact-finding activity.
- J. **Institution** means Lipscomb University, which may be used as an adjective, e.g., **institutional**, referring to, for example, institutional official or institutional records.
- K. **Institutional Deciding Official, or IDO**, means the institutional official who makes final determinations on allegations that have been investigated.
- L. **Institutional Member(s)** means an individual (or individuals) who is employed by, is an agent of, or is affiliated by contract or agreement with an institution. Institutional members may include, but are not limited to, officials, tenured and untenured faculty, teaching and support staff, researchers, research coordinators, technicians, postdoctoral and other fellows, students, volunteers, subject matter experts, consultants, or attorneys, or employees or agents of contractors, subcontractors, or sub-awardees.
- M. **Institutional Record** comprises: (a) The records that the institution compiled or generated during a proceeding, except records the institution did not consider or rely on. These records

include but are not limited to (1) documentation of the assessment; (2) if an inquiry is conducted, the inquiry report and all records (other than drafts of the report) considered or relied on during the inquiry, including, but not limited to, research records and the transcripts of any transcribed interviews conducted during the inquiry, information the respondent provided to the institution, and the documentation of any decision not to investigate; (3) if an investigation is conducted, the investigation report and all records (other than drafts of the report) considered or relied on during the investigation, including, but not limited to, research records, the transcripts of each interview conducted, and information the respondent provided to the institution; (4) decision(s) by the Institutional Deciding Official, such as the written decision from the Institutional Deciding Official; (5) the complete record of any institutional appeal; (b) a single index listing all the research records and evidence that the institution compiled during the proceeding, except records the institution did not consider or rely on; and (c) a general description of the records that were sequestered but not considered or relied on.

- N. **Intentionally** means to act intentionally means to act with the aim of carrying out the act.
- O. **Investigation(s)** means the formal development of a factual record and the examination of that record.
- P. **Irresponsible Conduct of Research, or ICR**, means any intentional or non-intentional activity proposed, performed, reviewed, or reported (or data contained within any research record) that compromises the integrity of the research process and is detrimental to the institution, or places the institution at increased risk. ICR does not include plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication, but may include but not be limited to:
1. **Fraud** – a deceit, misrepresentation, or concealment (including but not limited to false claims, financial manipulation or impropriety, theft, or misuse of effort).
 2. **Waste** – the wasteful use of resources (including but not limited to financial or material mismanagement, careless use of resources, and unnecessary effort or costs).
 3. **Abuse** – wrongful use of power and other unauthorized use (including but not limited to non-adherence to institutional policy, protocols, guidelines, or award terms and conditions, using resources for personal use).
 4. **Poor data management practices**, including negligence of data management.
 5. **Questionable authorship practices**, including but not limited to ghost authorship (omitting contributors or adding the names of non-contributors to reports and other scientific and technical documents, whether or not such documents were published nationally).
 6. **Inadequate supervision**, or the failure to oversee personnel, students, or protect institutional resources, including data.
 7. **Other activities**, as determined by the Chief Research Officer (“CRO”), to be outside the norm of best practice in the conduct of research and exposes the institution to unnecessary risk or liability.
- Q. **Knowingly** means to act knowingly means to act with awareness of the act.
- R. **PHS** means the Public Health Service.
- S. **PHS support** means **PHS** funding, or applications or proposals for **PHS** funding, for biomedical or behavioral research, biomedical or behavioral research training, or activities related to that research or training, that may be provided through funding for **PHS** intramural research; **PHS** grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts; subawards, contracts, or subcontracts under those **PHS** funding instruments; or salary or other payments under **PHS** grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts.
- T. **Plagiarism** means the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words, without giving appropriate credit. (a) Plagiarism includes the unattributed verbatim or nearly verbatim copying of sentences and paragraphs from another’s work that materially

misleads the reader regarding the contributions of the author. It does not include the limited use of identical or nearly identical phrases that describe a commonly used methodology. (b) Plagiarism does not include self-plagiarism or authorship or credit disputes, including disputes among former collaborators who participated jointly in the development or conduct of a research project. Self-plagiarism and authorship disputes do not meet the definition of research misconduct.

- U. **Preponderance of the evidence** means proof by evidence that, compared with evidence opposing it, leads to the conclusion that the fact at issue is more likely true than not.
- V. **Recklessly** means to act recklessly means to propose, perform, or review research, or report research results, with indifference to a known risk of fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism.
- W. **Research** means a systematic experiment, study, evaluation, demonstration, or survey designed to develop or contribute to general knowledge (basic research) or specific knowledge (applied research) by establishing, discovering, developing, elucidating, or confirming information or underlying mechanisms related to biological causes, functions, or effects; diseases; treatments; or related matters to be studied.
- X. **Research Integrity Officer, or RIO**, refers to the institutional official responsible for administering the institution's written protocols for addressing allegations of research misconduct.
- Y. **Research misconduct** means only fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism, whether committed by an individual directly or through the use or assistance of other persons, entities, or tools, including artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools, in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.
- Z. **Research misconduct proceeding(s)** means any actions related to alleged research misconduct, including allegation assessments, inquiries, investigations, oversight reviews, and appeals.
- AA. **Research record(s)** means the record of data or results that embody the facts resulting from scientific inquiry. Data or results may be in physical or electronic form. Examples of items, materials, or information that may be considered part of the research record include, but are not limited to, research proposals, raw data, processed data, clinical research records, laboratory records, study records, laboratory notebooks, progress reports, manuscripts, abstracts, theses, records of oral presentations, online content, lab meeting reports, and journal articles.
- BB. **Respondent(s)** means the individual against whom an allegation of research misconduct is directed or who is the subject of a **research misconduct proceeding**.
- CC. **Retaliation** means an adverse action taken against a complainant, witness, or committee member by an institution or one of its members in response to (a) a good faith allegation of research misconduct or (b) good faith cooperation with a **research misconduct proceeding**.

III. GENERAL PROCEDURES

A. PRINCIPLES

All **institutional members** are expected to conduct research with honesty, rigor, and transparency. Each **institutional member** is responsible for contributing to an organizational culture that establishes, maintains, and promotes research integrity and disallows the **irresponsible conduct of research**.

Lipscomb strives to reduce the risk of **RM** and/or **ICR**, support all **good faith** efforts to report such activities, promptly and thoroughly address all **allegations** of **RM** and/or **ICR**, and seek to rectify the scientific record and/or restore researchers' reputations, as appropriate.

RM and/or **ICR** are contrary to the interests of Lipscomb, the health and safety of the public, the integrity of **research**, and, as applicable, the conservation of public funds. Both the **institution** and its **institutional members** have an affirmative duty to protect activities from misuse by ensuring the integrity of all **research** conducted at or on behalf of Lipscomb, whether or not that **research** is performed under external funding.

Lipscomb is responsible for ensuring that these protocols for addressing **allegations** of **RM** and/or **ICR** meet best practices. The **institution** will establish and maintain these protocols, inform all **institutional members** about these protocols, and make these protocols publicly available. Lipscomb is committed to following these protocols when responding to **allegations** of **RM** and/or **ICR**.

B. ROLES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Lipscomb University

a. Lipscomb's General Responsibilities

To the extent possible, Lipscomb will limit disclosure of the identity of **respondents**, **complainants**, and witnesses while conducting **proceedings** to those who need to know and inform all **institutional members** about these protocols. This limitation on disclosure no longer applies once Lipscomb has made a final determination of **RM** and/or **ICR** findings. The **institution** will respond to each **allegation** of **RM** and/or **ICR** under these protocols in a thorough, competent, objective, and fair manner. The **institution** will take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure the cooperation of **respondents** and other **institutional members** with **proceedings**, including, but not limited to, their providing information, **research records**, and other **evidence**. Lipscomb agrees to cooperate with any applicable funding agency regulations or compliance review, including addressing deficiencies or additional **allegations** in the **institutional record** if directed by the funding agency and to assist in administering and enforcing any funding agency **actions** imposed on **institutional members**. The **institution** may also take steps to manage published data or acknowledge that data may be unreliable.

b. Lipscomb's Responsibilities During and After a Proceeding

Except as may otherwise be prescribed by applicable law, Lipscomb will maintain confidentiality for any records or **evidence** from which research subjects might be identified and will limit disclosure to those who need to know to carry out a **proceeding**. Before or at the time of notifying the **respondent** of the **allegation(s)** and whenever additional items become known or relevant, Lipscomb will promptly take all reasonable and practical steps to obtain all **research records** and other **evidence** and sequester them securely. The **institution** will ensure that the **institutional record** contains all required elements, i.e., **research records** that were compiled and considered during the **proceeding**, **assessment** documentation, and **inquiry** and/or **investigation** reports. Upon completion of the **inquiry**, the **institution** will provide Lipscomb's **CRO** with the complete **inquiry** report and add it to the **institutional record**. The **institution** will maintain the **institutional record**

and all sequestered **research records** and other **evidence** in a secure manner for seven years after completion of the **proceeding**.

Lipscomb will provide information related to the alleged **RM** and/or **ICR** and **proceedings** to any applicable funding agency upon request and transfer custody or provide copies of the **institutional record** or any component of it and any sequestered **evidence** to applicable external funding agencies, regardless of whether the **evidence** is included in the **institutional record**. Additionally, the **institution** will promptly notify applicable external funding agencies of any special circumstances that may arise.

Disclosure of the identity of **respondents**, **complainants**, and witnesses while the **institution** is conducting the **proceedings** is limited to those who need to know, which the **institution** will determine consistent with a thorough, competent, objective, and fair **proceeding**. Those who need to know may include **institutional** review boards, journals, editors, publishers, co-authors, and collaborating institutions.

c. Lipscomb's Responsibilities to the Complainant(s)

The **institution** will seek to provide confidentiality for all **complainants** in a **proceeding**. The **institution** will also take precautions to ensure that individuals responsible for carrying out any part of the **proceeding** do not have potential, perceived, or actual personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest with the **complainant(s)**. The **institution** agrees to take all reasonable and practical steps to protect the positions and reputations of **complainants** and to protect these individuals from **retaliation** by **respondents** and/or other **institutional members**. If Lipscomb chooses to notify a **complainant** of the **inquiry** results in a case, all **complainants** will be notified by the **institution**, to the extent possible.

d. Lipscomb's Responsibilities to the Respondent(s)

As with **complainants**, the **institution** will seek to provide confidentiality to all **respondents** in a **proceeding**. The **institution** will make a **good faith** effort to notify the **respondent(s)** in writing of the **allegations** being made against them. The **institution** will take precautions to ensure that individuals responsible for carrying out any part of the **proceeding** do not have unresolved personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest with the **respondent**. The **institution** will give the **respondent(s)** copies of (or supervised access to) sequestered **research records**. The **institution** will notify the **respondent** whether the **inquiry** found that an **investigation** is warranted, provide the **respondent** an opportunity to review and comment on the **inquiry** report, and attach their comments to the **inquiry** report. If an **investigation** is commenced, the **institution** will notify the **respondent**, give written notice of any additional **allegations** raised against them not previously addressed by the **inquiry** report, and allow the **respondent(s)** an opportunity to review the witness transcripts. The **institution** will give the **respondent(s)** an opportunity to read and comment on the draft **investigation** report and any information or **allegations** added to the **institutional record**. The **institution** will give due consideration to admissible, credible **evidence** of honest error or difference of opinion presented by the **respondent**.

The **institution** will bear the burden of proof, by a **preponderance of the evidence**,

for making a finding of **RM** and/or **ICR**. The **institution** will make all reasonable, practical efforts, if requested and as appropriate, to protect or restore the reputation of **respondents** against whom no finding of **RM** and/or **ICR** is made.

e. Lipscomb's Responsibilities to the Committee Members

Lipscomb will ensure that a committee, consortium, or person acting on the **institution's** behalf conducts **proceedings** in compliance with these protocols. Lipscomb will also take all reasonable and practical steps to protect the positions and reputations of good faith committee members and to protect these individuals from **retaliation**.

f. Lipscomb's Responsibilities to the Witness(es)

Lipscomb will seek to provide confidentiality for all witnesses and will take precautions to ensure that individuals responsible for carrying out any part of the **proceedings** do not have unresolved personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest with the witnesses. The **institution** will also take all reasonable and practical steps to protect the positions and reputations of witnesses and to protect these individuals from **retaliation**.

2. Research Integrity Officer

Lipscomb's **RIO** is the official responsible for administering's protocols for addressing **allegations** of **RM** and/or **ICR**. Unless otherwise indicated, Lipscomb's **RIO's** name and contact information is as follows:

Name:	Danielle Duke
Title:	Post-Award Specialist
Institution:	Lipscomb University
Office:	Office of Research and Grants
Office:	615-966-5736
Email:	danielle.duke@lipscomb.edu
Direct Supervisor:	Dr. Trace Hebert Associate Provost of Research and Graduate Studies

While a different **RIO** may be assigned or reassigned at any time by Lipscomb's executive leadership for any reason, at no time will the **IDO** also serve as the **RIO**, even on an interim basis. Lipscomb may choose to have the **RIO** or another designated **institutional** official conduct the **inquiry** in lieu of a committee, and, if needed, this individual may utilize a subject matter expert(s) to assist in the **inquiry**.

Upon receiving an **allegation** of **RM** and/or **ICR**, the **RIO** or another designated **institutional** official will promptly assess the **allegation** to determine whether the **allegation**: (a) is within the definition of **RM** and/or **ICR**; (b) is within the applicability criteria of these protocols; and (c) is sufficiently credible and specific so that potential **evidence** of **RM** and/or **ICR** may be identified. If the **RIO** or another designated **institutional** official determines that the requirements for an **inquiry** are met, they shall document the **assessment**, promptly sequester all **research records** and other **evidence**, and promptly initiate the **inquiry**. If the **RIO** or another designated **institutional** official determines that requirements for an **inquiry** are not met, they will keep sufficiently detailed documentation of the **assessment** to permit a later review by Lipscomb's **CRO** of the reasons why Lipscomb did not conduct an **inquiry**.

The **institution** will keep this documentation and related records in a secure manner for seven years.

3. **Complainant**

The **complainant** is the person who in **good faith** makes an **allegation**. The **complainant** will make **allegations** in **good faith**, as having a reasonable belief in the truth of one's **allegation** or testimony, based on the information known to the **complainant** at the time. The **complainant** brings **allegations** directly to the attention of an **institutional official** through any means of communication.

Lipscomb supports a clear and transparent complaint system, and encourages complaints to be directed to the **RIO**, unless the **complainant** believes there is a real or perceived conflict of interest in the role of the **RIO** with any **allegations**. Should there be any such circumstance, complaints may be directed to any executive-level administrator, including but not limited to Lipscomb's **CRO**, President, Provost, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Human Resources, or their immediate supervisor(s). Void of any such circumstance, any complaints alleging **RM** and/or **ICR** received by any **institutional member** shall be directed to the **RIO**.

In general, anonymous complaints are overly difficult for Lipscomb to administer, providing no mechanism to request additional information, conduct interviews, or provide accurate reporting to the Federal government. As such, Lipscomb requires that all complaints identify the **complainant(s)** unless the **institution** is otherwise directed.

4. **Respondent**

The **respondent** is the individual against whom an **allegation** of **RM** and/or **ICR** is directed or who is the subject of an official **proceeding**. The **respondent** has the burden of going forward with and proving, by a **preponderance of evidence**, affirmative defenses raised. The **respondent's** destruction of **research records** documenting the questioned research is **evidence** of **RM** and/or **ICR** where a **preponderance of evidence** establishes that the **respondent intentionally** or **knowingly** destroyed records after being informed of the **RM** and/or **ICR** **allegations**. The **respondent's** failure to provide **research records** documenting the questioned research is **evidence** of **RM** and/or **ICR** where the **respondent** claims to possess the records but refuses to provide them upon request.

The **respondent** will not be present during the witnesses' interviews but will be provided a transcript of the interview after it takes place. The **respondent** will have opportunities to: (a) view and comment on the **inquiry** report; (b) view and comment on the **investigation** report; and (c) submit any comments on the draft **investigation** report to Lipscomb within 30 days of receiving it.

If admitting to **RM** and/or **ICR**, the **respondent** will sign a written statement specifying the affected **research records** and confirming the misconduct was **RM** and/or **ICR** (as defined herein); committed **intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly**; and a significant departure from **accepted practices of the relevant research community**.

Respondents may consult with legal counsel or a non-lawyer personal adviser (who is not a principal or witness in the case) to seek advice, but such counsel and advisers may not be present at or accompany **respondents** to interviews or meetings.

5. **Committee and Consortium Members**

Committee members (and consortium members, where applicable) should act in **good faith** to cooperate with the **proceedings** by impartially carrying out their assigned duties for the purpose of helping Lipscomb meet its responsibilities under these protocols. Committee and consortium members will have relevant scientific expertise and be free of real or perceived conflicts of interest with any of the involved parties.

Committee or consortium members or anyone acting on behalf of Lipscomb will conduct **proceedings** consistent with these protocols. They will determine whether an **investigation** is warranted, documenting the decision in an **inquiry** report. During an **investigation**, committee or consortium members participate in recorded interviews of each **respondent**, **complainant**, and any other available person who has been reasonably identified as having information regarding any relevant aspects of the **investigation**, including witnesses identified by the **respondent(s)**. They will also determine whether or not the **respondent(s)** engaged in **RM** and/or **ICR** and document the decision in the **investigation** report. They consider **respondent** and/or **complainant** comments on the **inquiry/investigation** report(s) and document that consideration in the **investigation** report.

An **investigation** into multiple **respondents** may convene with the same **investigation** committee or consortium members or anyone acting on behalf of Lipscomb, but there will be separate **investigation** reports and separate determinations for each **respondent**. Committee or consortium members may serve for more than one **investigation**, in cases with multiple **respondents**. Committee members may also serve for both the **inquiry** and the **investigation**.

Committee or consortium members may, at the discretion of Lipscomb, be provided extra compensation or release(d) time resulting from a directive to support any component of a **proceeding**. In the event that any external individual (e.g., physician, data scientist, etc.) is necessary to provide subject matter expertise as a committee or consortium member, compensation to the expert may be provided by the **institution** to the individual(s) at a fair-market hourly rate value for participation in any **proceeding** (which may include, as appropriate, both the **inquiry** and the **investigation**). In any such circumstance, estimated compensation budgets shall be approved by the **institution's CRO** and/or **IDO** prior to requesting such support, including identification of **institutional** fund or account number to be used for compensation.

No committee or consortium member shall have any real conflict of interest, whether personal, professional, or financial conflict of interest with any component of the **research misconduct proceeding** and shall provide a disclosure to the **RIO** promptly upon identification of any real or perceived conflict of interest.

6. Witnesses

Witnesses are individuals whom Lipscomb has reasonably identified as having information regarding any relevant aspects of the **investigation**. Witnesses are responsible to provide information for review during **proceedings**. Witnesses will cooperate with the **proceedings** in **good faith** and have a reasonable belief in the truth of their testimony, based on the information known to them at the time.

7. Institutional Deciding Official

The **IDO** makes the final determination of **research misconduct** findings. The **IDO** cannot serve as the **RIO**. The **IDO** documents their determination in a written decision that includes

whether **RM** and/or **ICR** occurred, and if so, what kind and who committed it, and a description of the relevant actions Lipscomb has taken or will take. The **IDO's** written decision becomes part of the **institutional record**.

Unless otherwise indicated, Lipscomb's **IDO** and contact information is as follows:

Name:	Dr. Jennifer Shewmaker
Title:	Provost
Institution:	Lipscomb University
Office:	Academic Affairs, Office of the Provost
Phone:	615-966-1789
Email:	jashewmaker@lipscomb.edu
Supervisor:	Dr. Candice McQueen, President

IV. PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT AND SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS

A. ASSESSMENT

The purpose of an **assessment** is to determine whether an **allegation** warrants an **inquiry**. An **assessment** is intended to be a review of readily accessible information relevant to the **allegation**.

Upon receiving an **allegation** of **RM** and/or **ICR**, the **RIO** or another designated **institutional** official will promptly determine whether the **allegation**: (a) falls within the definition of **RM** and/or **ICR**; (b) is within the applicability criteria of these protocols; and (c) is credible and specific enough to identify and sequester potential **evidence**.

If the **RIO** or another **institutional** official determines that the **allegation** meets these three criteria, they will promptly: (a) document the **assessment**; and (b) initiate an **inquiry** and sequester all **research records** and other **evidence**. The **RIO** or other **institutional** official must document the **assessment** and retain the **assessment** documentation securely for seven years after completion of the **proceedings**. If the **RIO** or another **institutional** official determines that the alleged misconduct does not meet the criteria to proceed to an **inquiry**, they will write sufficiently detailed documentation to document why Lipscomb did not proceed to an **inquiry** and securely retain this documentation for seven years.

B. INQUIRY

An **inquiry** is warranted if the **allegation**: (a) falls within the definition of **RM** and/or **ICR** herein; (b) is within the applicability criteria of these protocols; and (c) is sufficiently credible and specific so that potential **evidence** of **RM** and/or **ICR** may be identified. An **inquiry's** purpose is to conduct an initial review of the **evidence** to determine whether an **allegation** warrants an **investigation**. An **inquiry** does not require a full review of all related **evidence**. Lipscomb will complete the **inquiry** within ninety days of initiating it unless circumstances warrant a longer period, in which it will sufficiently document the reasons for exceeding the time limit in the **inquiry** report.

1. Sequestering Evidence and Notifying the Respondent

Before or at the time of notifying any **respondent(s)**, Lipscomb will obtain the original or substantially equivalent copies of all **research records** and other **evidence** that are pertinent to the **proceeding**, inventory these materials, sequester the materials in a

secure manner, and retain them for seven years. The **institution** has a duty to obtain, inventory, and securely sequester **evidence** that extends to whenever additional items become known or relevant to the **inquiry** or **investigation**.

At the time of or before beginning the **inquiry**, Lipscomb will make a **good faith** effort to notify the presumed **respondent(s)**, in writing, that an **allegation(s)** of **research misconduct** has been raised against them, the relevant **research records** have been sequestered, and an **inquiry** will be conducted to decide whether to proceed with an **investigation**. If additional **allegations** are raised, the **institution** will notify the **respondent(s)** in writing. When appropriate, the **institution** will give the **respondent(s)** copies of, or reasonable supervised access to, the sequestered materials.

If additional **respondents** are identified, Lipscomb will provide written notification to the new **respondent(s)**. All additional **respondents** will be given the same rights and opportunities as the initial **respondent**. Only **allegations** specific to a particular **respondent** will be included in the notification to that **respondent**.

2. Convening the Committee and Ensuring Neutrality

Lipscomb will ensure that all **inquiry** committee members understand their commission, keep the identities of **respondents**, **complainants**, and witnesses confidential, and conduct the **research misconduct proceedings**. In lieu of a committee, the **institution** may task the **RIO** or another designated **institutional** official to conduct the **inquiry**, provided this person utilizes subject matter experts as needed to assist in the **inquiry**.

3. Determining Whether an Investigation Is Warranted

The **inquiry** committee, **RIO**, or other designated **institutional** official will conduct a preliminary review of the **evidence**. In the process of fact-finding, the **inquiry** committee may interview the **respondent** and/or witnesses. An **investigation** is warranted if: (a) there is a reasonable basis for concluding that the **allegation** falls within the definition of **research misconduct**; and (b) preliminary information-gathering and fact-finding from the **inquiry** indicates that the **allegation** may have substance.

The **inquiry** committee will not determine if **RM** and/or **ICR** occurred, nor assess whether the alleged misconduct was intentional, knowing, or reckless; such a determination is not made until the case proceeds to an **investigation**.

4. Documenting the Inquiry

At the conclusion of the **inquiry**, regardless of whether an **investigation** is warranted, the **inquiry** committee, **RIO**, or other designated **institutional** official will prepare a written **inquiry** report. The contents of a complete **inquiry** report will include:

- The names, professional aliases, and positions of the **respondent** and **complainant(s)**.
- A description of the **allegation(s)** of **RM** and/or **ICR**.
- Details about any external funding, including any grant numbers, grant applications, contracts, and publications.
- The composition of the **inquiry** committee, if used, including name(s), position(s), and subject matter expertise.
- An inventory of sequestered **research records** and other **evidence** and description of how sequestration was conducted.
- Transcripts of interviews, if transcribed.

- **Inquiry** timeline and procedural history.
- Any scientific or forensic analyses conducted.
- The basis for recommending that the **allegation(s)** warrant an **investigation**.
- The basis on which any **allegation(s)** do not merit further **investigation**.
- Any comments on the **inquiry** report by the **respondent** or the **complainant(s)**.
- Any **institutional** actions implemented, including internal communications or external communications with journals or funding agencies.
- Documentation of potential **evidence** of honest error or difference of opinion.

5. Completing the Inquiry

Lipscomb will give the **respondent** a copy of the draft **inquiry** report for review and comment. The **institution** may, at the discretion of the **RIO** based on circumstances of the complaint, provide relevant portions of the report to a **complainant** for review/comment. Appeals may not be submitted by the **respondent(s)** during the **Inquiry** process but may be submitted after review of a draft report of the full **investigation**, should one be warranted.

Lipscomb will notify the **respondent** of the **inquiry's** final outcome and provide the **respondent** with copies of the final **inquiry** report and these protocols. The **institution** may, at the discretion of the **RIO** based on the circumstances of the complaint, notify all **complainants** whether the **inquiry** found that an **investigation** is warranted. If the **institution** provides notice to one **complainant** in a case, it must provide notice, to the extent possible, to all **complainants** in the case.

6. If an Investigation Is Not Warranted

If the **inquiry** committee, **RIO**, or other designated **institutional** official determines that an **investigation** is not warranted, Lipscomb will keep sufficiently detailed documentation to permit a later review of why the **institution** did not proceed to an **investigation**, store these records in a secure manner for at least seven years after the termination of the **inquiry**.

7. If an Investigation is Warranted

If the **inquiry** committee, **RIO**, or other designated **institutional** official determines that an **investigation** is warranted, Lipscomb must: (a) within a reasonable amount of time after this decision, provide written notice to the **respondent(s)** of the decision to conduct an **investigation** of the alleged misconduct, including any **allegations** of **research misconduct** not addressed during the **inquiry**; and (b) within 30 days of determining that an **investigation** is warranted, generate an **inquiry** report.

On a case-by-case basis, Lipscomb, at the discretion of the **RIO**, may notify the **complainant** that there will be an **investigation** of the alleged misconduct but is required to take the same notification action for all **complainants** in cases where there is more than one **complainant**.

C. **INVESTIGATION**

The purpose of an **investigation** is to formally develop a factual record, pursue leads, examine the record, and recommend finding(s) to the **IDO**, who will make the final decision, based on a **preponderance of evidence**, on each **allegation** and any **institutional** actions. As part of its **investigation**, the **institution** will pursue diligently all significant issues and relevant leads, including any **evidence** of additional instances of possible **RM** and/or **ICR**,

and continue the **investigation** to completion. Within 30 days after deciding an **investigation** is warranted, Lipscomb will notify the **institution's CRO** of the decision to investigate and begin the **investigation**.

1. Notifying the **Respondent** and Sequestering **Evidence**

Lipscomb will notify the **respondent(s)** of the **allegation(s)** within 30 days of determining that an **investigation** is warranted and before the **investigation** begins. If any additional **respondent(s)** are identified during the **investigation**, the **institution** will notify them of the **allegation(s)** and provide them an opportunity to respond. If the **institution** identifies additional **respondents** during the **investigation**, it may choose to either conduct a separate **inquiry** or add the new **respondent(s)** to the ongoing **investigation**. The **institution** will obtain the original or substantially equivalent copies of all **research records** and other **evidence**, inventory these materials, sequester them in a secure manner, and retain them for seven years after the **proceeding**.

2. Convening an **Investigation** Committee

After vetting **investigation** committee members for conflicts of interest and appropriate scientific expertise, Lipscomb will convene the committee and ensure that the members understand their responsibility to conduct the **proceedings** in compliance with these protocols. The **investigation** committee will conduct interviews, pursue leads, and examine all **research records** and other **evidence** relevant to reaching a decision on the merits of the **allegation(s)**. Lipscomb will use diligent efforts to ensure that the **investigation** is thorough, sufficiently documented, and impartial and unbiased to the maximum extent practicable. The **institution** will notify the **respondent** in writing of any additional **allegations** raised against them during the **investigation**.

3. Conducting Interviews

Lipscomb will interview each **respondent, complainant**, and any other available person who has been reasonably identified as having information regarding any relevant aspects of the **investigation**, including witnesses identified by the **respondent**. The **institution** will number all relevant exhibits and refer to any exhibits shown to the interviewee during the interview by that number. The **institution** will record and transcribe interviews during the **investigation** and make the transcripts available to the interviewee for correction. Lipscomb will include the transcript(s) with any corrections and exhibits in the **institutional record** of the **investigation**. The **respondent** will not be present during the witnesses' interviews, but the **institution** will provide the **respondent** with a transcript of each interview, with redactions as appropriate to maintain confidentiality.

To the greatest extent possible, Lipscomb will provide confidentiality to **respondents, complainants**, and witnesses and protect **complainants**, witnesses, and committee members from **retaliation**. It is the responsibility of the **RIO**, in consultation with the **CRO** and **IDO**, as applicable, to determine how to do so in practical terms.

4. Documenting the **Investigation**

Lipscomb will complete all aspects of the **investigation** within 180 days, to the greatest extent possible. The **institution**, under the administration of the **RIO**, will conduct the **investigation**, prepare the draft **investigation** report for each **respondent**, and provide the opportunity for **respondents** to comment.

The **investigation** report for each **respondent** will include:

- Description of the nature of the **allegation(s)** of **RM** and/or **ICR**, including any additional **allegation(s)** addressed during the **proceeding**.
- Description and documentation of any external funding, including any grant numbers, grant applications, contracts, and publications listing support. This documentation includes known applications or proposals for support that the **respondent** has pending with **PHS** and non-**PHS** Federal agencies.
- Description of the specific **allegation(s)** of **RM** and/or **ICR** for consideration in the **investigation** of the **respondent**.
- Composition of **investigation** committee, including name(s), position(s), and subject matter expertise.
- Inventory of sequestered **research records** and other **evidence**, except records the **institution** did not consider or rely on. This inventory will include manuscripts and funding proposals that were considered or relied on during the **investigation**. The inventory will also include a description of how any sequestration was conducted during the **investigation**.
- Transcripts of all interviews conducted.
- Identification of the specific published papers, manuscripts submitted but not accepted for publication (including online publication), funding applications, progress reports, presentations, posters, or other **research records** that contain the alleged **RM** and/or **ICR** material.
- Any scientific or forensic analyses conducted.
- A copy of these protocols.
- Any comments made by the **respondent** and **complainant(s)** on the draft **investigation** report and the committee's consideration of those comments.
- A statement for each separate **allegation** of whether the committee recommends a finding of **RM** and/or **ICR**.

If the committee recommends a finding of **RM** and/or **ICR** for an **allegation**, the **investigation** report will present a finding for each **allegation**. These findings will (a) identify the individual(s) who committed the **RM** and/or **ICR**; (b) indicate the type of action, with sufficient detail to identify the action as **RM** or **ICR** or both; (c) indicate whether the misconduct was committed **intentionally**, **knowingly**, or **recklessly**; (d) identify any significant departure from the **accepted practices of the relevant research community** and that the **allegation** was proven by a **preponderance of the evidence**; (e) summarize the facts and analysis supporting the conclusion and consider the merits of any explanation by the **respondent**; (f) identify any specific external funding; and (g) state whether any publications need correction or retraction.

If the **investigation** committee does not recommend a finding of **RM** and/or **ICR** for an **allegation**, the **investigation** report will provide a detailed rationale for its conclusion.

The **investigation** committee should also provide a list of any current support or known applications or proposals for support that the **respondent** has pending with any granting agencies.

5. Completing the Investigation

Lipscomb will give the **respondent** a copy of the draft **investigation** report and, concurrently, a copy of, or supervised access to, the **research records** and other **evidence** that the **investigation** committee considered or relied on. The **respondent** will

submit any comments on the draft report to the **institution** within 30 days of receiving the draft **investigation** report and the **respondent(s)** may file an appeal at this time, should they so choose. Should an appeal be filed, the **RIO** will address all information and documentation promptly, including convening any subsequent committee meeting(s) for full consideration of appeal documentation. The final outcome of an appeal will be made by the committee, with appropriate consultation by the **IDO**. If Lipscomb chooses to share a copy of the draft **investigation** report or relevant portions of it with the **complainant(s)** for comment, at the discretion of the **RIO**, the **complainant's** comments will be submitted within 30 days of the date on which they received the report. Appeals are not accepted by the **institution** from **complainants**. The **institution** will add any comments received to the **investigation** report.

6. **IDO Review of the Investigation Report**

The **IDO** will review the **investigation** report and make a final written determination of whether the **institution** found **RM**, **ICR**, or both and, if so, who committed the misconduct. In this statement, the **IDO** will include a description of relevant **institutional** actions taken or to be taken.

7. **Creating and Transmitting the Institutional Record**

After the **IDO** has made a final determination of **research misconduct** findings, Lipscomb will add the **IDO's** written decision to the **investigation** report and organize the **institutional record** in a logical manner.

The **institutional record** consists of the records that were compiled or generated during the **proceeding**, except records the **institution** did not rely on. These records include documentation of the **assessment**, a single index listing all **research records** and **evidence**, the **inquiry** report and **investigation** report, and all records considered or relied on during the **investigation**. The **institutional record** also includes the **IDO's** final decision and any information the **respondent** provided to the **institution**. The **institutional record** must also include a general description of the records that were sequestered but not considered or relied on.

If the **respondent** filed an appeal during the 30-day review/comment period after reviewing the draft final **investigation** report, the complete record of any **institutional** appeal also becomes part of the **institutional record**.

D. OTHER PROCEDURES AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1. **Multiple Institutions and Multiple Respondents**

If the alleged **research misconduct** involves multiple **institutions**, Lipscomb may work closely with the other affected **institutions** to determine whether a joint **proceeding** will be conducted. If so, the cooperating **institutions** will choose an **institution** to serve as the lead **institution**. In a joint **proceeding**, the lead institution will obtain **research records** and other **evidence** pertinent to the **proceeding**, including witness testimony, from the other relevant **institutions**. By mutual agreement, the joint **proceeding** may include committee members from the **institutions** involved. The determination of whether further **inquiry** and/or **investigation** is warranted, whether **research misconduct** occurred, and the **institutional** actions to be taken may be made by the **institutions** jointly or tasked to the lead **institution**.

If the alleged **RM** and/or **ICR** involves multiple **respondents**, Lipscomb may either conduct a separate **inquiry** for each new **respondent** or add them to the ongoing **proceedings**. The **institution** must give additional **respondent(s)** notice of and an opportunity to respond to the **allegations**.

2. **Respondent Admissions**

Lipscomb will promptly notify the institution's **CRO** in advance if at any point during the **proceedings** (including the **assessment, inquiry, investigation**, or appeal stage) it plans to close a case because the **respondent** has admitted to committing **RM** and/or **ICR** or a settlement with the **respondent** has been reached. If the **respondent** admits to **RM** and/or **ICR**, Lipscomb will not close the case until providing the institution's **CRO** with the **respondent's** signed, written admission. The admission must state the specific **RM** and/or **ICR** that occurred, which **research records** were affected, and that it constituted a significant departure from **accepted practices of the relevant research community**. The **institution** will not close the case until giving the **CRO** a written statement confirming the **respondent's** culpability and explaining how the **institution** determined that the **respondent's** admission fully addresses the scope of the **RM** and/or **ICR**.

3. **Other Special Circumstances**

At any time during the **proceedings**, Lipscomb will immediately notify the institution's **CRO** if any of the following circumstances arise:

- Health or safety of the public is at risk, including an immediate need to protect human or animal subjects.
- Externally funded resources or interests are threatened.
- Research activities should be suspended.
- There is reasonable indication of possible violations of civil or criminal law.
- Federal action is required to protect the interests of those involved in the **proceeding**.
- Any other entity may need to take appropriate steps to safeguard **evidence** and protect the rights of those involved.

E. **RECORDS RETENTION**

Under the direction of the **RIO**, Lipscomb will maintain the **institutional record** and all sequestered **evidence**, including physical and digital objects (regardless of whether the **evidence** is part of the **institutional record**), in a secure manner for seven years after the completion of any **proceeding**.

V. **DISSEMINATION OF THESE PROTOCOLS**

These protocols may be disseminated to the Lipscomb community by numerous means, including but not limited to:

- Notice to faculty of the adoption of the protocols;
- Reference to the protocols in the Faculty Handbook; and
- Maintenance of the protocols on Lipscomb's website.

VI. **CONFLICT**

For the purpose of maximizing **institutional** compliance, these protocols utilize the template provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Office of Research Integrity ("**ORI**"), entitled "*Sample Policies and Procedures for Addressing Allegations of Research Misconduct for Public Health Service Policies on Research Misconduct*" (2025, as provided online by ORI at <https://ori.hhs.gov/>). This template has been

modified appropriately for **institutional** use, including but not limited to identifying key personnel and the utilizing headings to improve readability. These protocols, and/or any procedures contained herein, are not intended to and do not supersede **PHS** regulations as outlined in [42 CFR Part 93](#) or establish any alternative to any applicable statutes, regulations, policies, protocols, or procedures for handling fiscal improprieties, the ethical treatment of human or animal subjects, criminal matters, personnel actions against Federal employees, addressing whistleblowers and/or **retaliation**, or any **institutional** process to address misconduct that does not involve **PHS support**. In the event of any conflict in interpretation between these protocols and applicable Federal regulations, applicable Federal regulations shall prevail. Any question related to any conflict(s) within these protocols may be addressed to the **institution's RIO**.

VII. CONTACT

For additional information or questions regarding these protocols, contact the Office of Research and Grants, which can be reached at 615.966.5907 or researchandgrants@lipscomb.edu.

VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

These protocols were approved by the Office of the Provost on December 15, 2025.