
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Office of Public Affairs • 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Md. 20814-3998 • www.faseb.org/opa

Contact: Howard H. Garrison, PhD
(301) 571-0657
hgarrison@opa.faseb.org

FASEB and AAMC Presidents Warn That Proposed Research Misconduct Survey Unlikely to Produce Useful or Accurate Results

Bethesda, Md. – Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) President Dr. Steven L. Teitelbaum has joined with Dr. Jordan J. Cohen, President of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), to strongly object to a survey instrument, proposed by the Office of Research Integrity (ORI), purporting to measure “Perceived Incidence of Misconduct in Biomedical Research.” In a [November 12 letter](#), addressed to the Department of Health and Human Services, they assert that the survey’s “expansive approach to the topic is very unlikely to provide accurate or useful data on the incidence of research misconduct.” The basis of FASEB and AAMC’s objection is the deviation of many of the questions from the definition of misconduct as stated in the Federal Research Misconduct Policy. According to Drs. Teitelbaum and Cohen, “This arbitrary expansion of the definition of research misconduct makes it likely that an inaccurate estimate of research misconduct will result, leaving ORI with invalid data obtained at great expense.”

Also troubling to FASEB and AAMC are the ambiguity and seemingly subjective nature of many of the survey questions. For example, respondents are asked if they have observed their colleagues citing an article that they had not read firsthand. Questions regarding utilization of university resources, formal training in ethics and giving peers access to material and data are unclear and open to multiple interpretations. As stated in the letter, many answers solicited in the survey “do not in any way fall under the federal definition of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism.”

Drs. Teitelbaum and Cohen made it very clear that FASEB and AAMC are committed to the conduct of ethical scientific research and strongly support efforts to mitigate occurrences of misconduct. However, they add, “ORI’s expansive approach to the topic will generate confusion, but not accurate, interpretable, or useful data on the incidence of research misconduct.”

FASEB is comprised of 21 societies with more than 60,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. FASEB’s mission is to enhance the ability of biomedical and life scientists to improve—through their research—the health, well-being and productivity of all people. FASEB serves the interests of these scientists in those areas related to public policy, facilitates coalition activities among Member Societies and disseminates information on biological research through scientific conferences and publications.