

The Building Blocks of a Research Integrity Culture in the University

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Living a research integrity (RI) culture means inserting RI values and practices into routine education, research, and communication. The challenge of building a RI culture in the university goes beyond creating policies and programs or establishing goals, methods, and metrics. Students, faculty, staff, administrators, external public, and partners need to understand the central role of RI to trust science and educate citizens. This requires a behavioral change in the daily life of the entire university community. An ideal situation to reach a RI culture is a comprehensive approach with transverse and vertical alignment of actions. In contrast with individual activities in an incremental approach, a multilevel and comprehensive model is more complex to design and articulate. The planning phase includes operational definitions, integration of specific action plans, allocation of resources, focus on continuous communication and dissemination, quality assurance of processes, and cost-effectiveness analysis of perceived outcomes. Some specific suggestions for training/engaging professors and/or students in a RI culture are: continuing education/training programs; online material for basic information also in local idiom (national/international regulations, glossary, flowcharts); information center/helpdesk/RI office with dedicated staff; starting-kit for incoming students and junior investigators; feedback and content analysis for continuing evaluation of processes and outcomes; and use of multipliers (student leadership, scientific committees).

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