



Research Integrity Officer
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Assessment of Research Integrity Action 19-003

October 31, 2019

On October 18, 2019, a complaint was received by the Director of Virginia Tech's Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) about possible allegations of research misconduct by current faculty members, Marc Edwards and Amy Pruden, (hereinafter referred to as the Respondents). The allegations were prompted by the Complainant's review of several manuscripts for which the Respondents are listed as authors. The manuscripts are associated with grants administered by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSF Award Numbers associated with the grants referenced in the allegation are 1556258, 1855567, and 1706733. The Complainant alleged that while the research appeared to have involved human subjects, there was no mention of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval cited in any of the manuscripts.

Upon receiving the Complainant's allegation, each manuscript associated with NSF Award 1556258 was reviewed. After review it was determined that the research described in the manuscripts did not involve human subjects and therefore IRB review was not required. NSF Award 1556258 was also reviewed and it was determined that the Award was used appropriately for non-human subjects research.

After review it was also determined that the research associated with Award 1706733 did not involve human subjects and therefore IRB review was not required.

The research associated with NSF Award number 1855567 was reviewed and two IRB protocols (IRB#16-918, and IRB#19-149) were identified. Both protocols were reviewed by HRPP prior to the start of the research. HRPP determined that the protocols met the requirements for exempt research under the Common Rule. Both exempt research projects are being conducted in accordance with the terms of Award 1855567. No published manuscripts associated with Awards 1855567, and 1706733 were identified.

The Complainant's email referenced prior correspondence with the head of Civil Engineering, and the President of Virginia Tech. Those communications were reviewed, and it was confirmed that that the Complainant had contacted Mark Widdowson, the Interim Department head of Civil Engineering at Virginia Tech, by email on September 18, 2019. The Complainant also contacted Jack Finney, the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, by email on October 31, 2019.

Based on the review of the complaint and the information provided, there is insufficient evidence to support the allegation of research misconduct and it was determined that no human subjects research was conducted without the required approvals. Based on the information described above, this assessment is complete.

Kory Trott, JD, MPH

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kory T.' followed by a period.

Director of Research Integrity and Consultation
Research Integrity Officer