Food for Thought

“The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has become aware of systematic, inappropriate attempts to manipulate the peer review processes of several journals across different publishers.”

— COPE statement on inappropriate manipulation of peer review processes. www.publicationethics.org

See page 2 for more about this

What’s new at the ORP?

Please join us in congratulating Clinton Schmidt, who has been promoted to Assistant Director. Clint now has responsibility for managing the Individual Conflict of Interest and Institutional Conflict of Interest programs, as well as our newest responsibility, the Faculty Consulting Program.

Please welcome Sara Verti, who will be working with Clint on development and implementation of the new Faculty Consulting Program. Sara has a background in legal conflict of interest and business intake risk analysis, and will be starting with ORP on April 1.

Please welcome Christian Irizarry, who has joined the CATS team as a Technical Analyst. His work will enable the CATS team to support the new faculty consulting program in COINS as well as the existing COI workflow and all of the CATS modules. Christian has worked with Penn State ITS for the past three years, and is currently pursuing his master’s degree in software engineering at Penn State.

Our office is dynamic and growing!
To see our organizational structure, and put a face to the name you see in your email, check out www.research.psu.edu/offices/orp

Congratulations to the Penn State Human Research Protections Program (HRPP), which was recently awarded full re-accreditation for another five-year period by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protections Programs (AAHRPP). Penn State’s HRPP has received full accreditation three times, beginning in 2006. The AAHRPP process includes review of all HRPP policies and procedures and a multi-day re-accreditation site visit that occurred in early November 2014.

According to AAHRPP’s website, “AAHRPP accreditation indicates that your organization follows rigorous standards for ethics, quality, and protections for human research. When you earn the AAHRPP seal, you earn a place among the world’s most respected, trustworthy research organizations.”

We’d like to thank everyone who was a part of this effort for their support of Penn State’s HRPP.

The Annual Financial Disclosure period for conflict of interest is currently in progress. All individuals responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of University research are required to complete a financial disclosure in COINS no later than April 30, even if they have nothing to disclose. For questions about the disclosure process or COINS, contact coistaff@psu.edu.

To report concerns about research or scholarship at Penn State: Contact the Office for Research Protections (814) 865-1775; fax (814) 863-8699; email: ORProtections@psu.edu; or call the Penn State Ethics and Compliance Hotline at 1-800-560-1637.
March’s Scoundrel
From the “What were they thinking??” archives comes this gem:

An editor at Nature, after rejecting a manuscript, received an email from the paper’s author appealing the decision.

“I request that you withdraw from handling our manuscript and transfer it to a male editor.”

According to Chris Gunter (another Nature editor at the time, circa 2005), the author did not feel the editor “could understand the importance of the work because it was on prostate cancer and she was a female.”

Dr. Gunter notes that “This approach was not successful.”

In case you were wondering.

Source: aplus.com/a/female-editor-rejects-scientist-sexist-response

Which Sara(h)?
The ORP is a popular place for folks named Sara/Sarah, and with the addition of Sara Verti we will have four.
Over the last 100 years in the US, the name “Sarah” ranked 11th in popularity, while “Sara” scores 76th. Sara/Sarah peaked in popularity during the 1980s, close to the time our Sara(h)s were born.

In case you’re confused about which Sara(h) is which, Here’s a quick orientation to the Sara(h)s at ORP:

Sara Dries works with the Education Team to manage workshops, classes, and the SARI@PSU program.

Sara Horn leads and manages the Human Research Protection Program.

Sarah Matthews provides support for the Institutional Conflict of Interest committee as well as for research misconduct processes.

Sara Verti (starting in April 2015) will work to establish ORP’s new Faculty Consulting Program.

Sources: US Social Security Administration (www.ssa.gov); www.babynamewizard.com

The Office for Research Protections
814-865-1775 www.research.psu.edu/orp
Candy Yekel, Director cay3@psu.edu
Sharon Shriver, aegis editor sps10@psu.edu

Upcoming CATS IRB Training Sessions
Sessions are recommended for new CATS users and provide an overview of the CATS system, tips for easy access, and an opportunity to ask questions.

Adobe Connect Sessions
Wednesday, April 1 3-4 PM
Tuesday, April 21 12-1 PM
Wednesday, May 13 12-1 PM
Thursday, May 28 9-10 AM
Register for Adobe Connect sessions: catsirbadobe.eventbrite.com

In-Person Sessions
(held at The 330 Building, Innovation Park)
Thursday, April 16 3-4:30 PM
Tuesday, May 5 9-10:30 AM
Wednesday, June 10 1-2:30 PM
Register for upcoming training sessions: catsirb.eventbrite.com

“Fake” Peer Review in the News
In recent years there has been much discussion about the effectiveness of the peer review system typically used in scientific and scholarly publishing. Several related scandals, however, threaten to eclipse any discussion of the finer points of peer review. Last year, the Journal of Vibration and Control retracted 60 papers following a 14-month investigation of a “peer review and citation ring.” In December, publisher Elsevier retracted 16 papers due to “faked reviewer report[s].” And just this month, open-access publisher BioMed Central retracted 43 articles published this year, because “the peer-review process was inappropriately influenced and compromised...a third party was involved in supplying fabricated details of potential peer reviewers.”

According to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), “These manipulations appear to have been orchestrated by a number of third party agencies offering services to authors.”

It is not clear whether all authors of the retracted papers were aware of the deception.

Sources: www.the-scientist.com; publicationethics.org; retractionwatch.com

Policy Locations Changing Online
Selected Research Administration policies and guidelines are in the process of being moved into a new Research Protections section in GURU. Until URLs and other references can be updated, current policies and guidelines will be linked with their new locations. Watch for additional information as the transition progresses.