

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **NC State Gets \$250,000 NSF Award to Lead National Ethics Effort**

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Research and Professional Ethics Program at North Carolina State University has been awarded \$250,000 over three years from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop a model curriculum in research ethics.

Research ethics is an academic discipline that studies arguments about which actions are morally right or wrong in conducting scientific research. Many of these issues are regularly debated on the evening news, including the ethics of producing human embryonic stem cells for research, or genetically modifying organisms for food.

NC State is the lead institution for this national effort. The other schools are N.C. A&T State University, N.C. Central University, Fayetteville State University, Purdue University, Iowa State University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Hawaii. More than 100 faculty members at these universities are involved in the project known as “LANGURE” (Land Grant University Research Ethics). They will work together to develop a new course in responsible conduct of research.

“This award reaffirms NC State’s place as a national leader in research ethics and underscores our commitment to high ethical standards,” said NC State Chancellor James L. Oblinger. “As a research-extensive, land-grant university, NC State leads the way in this endeavor. Land-grant universities across the country are looking to us for innovative thinking in graduate ethics education.”

Rachelle Hollander, NSF program director for Ethics Education in Science and Engineering, said, “LANGURE is one of 11 projects that NSF is funding this year to improve ethics education for graduate students in the fields of science and engineering that NSF supports. While many universities with medical schools have instructional materials in responsible conduct of research, most land-grant universities – which typically do not have medical schools – have not created a similar set of instructional materials. LANGURE is an ambitious and well-planned initiative to address that need.”

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The principal investigator for the project is Dr. Gary Comstock, director of NC State's Research Ethics Program and professor of philosophy. Dr. Brenda Alston-Mills, assistant dean of diversity in NC State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and professor of animal science, and Dr. Christine Grant, professor of chemical engineering, join Comstock as co-principal investigators.

"This grant is unique and groundbreaking, a milestone in NC State's continuing efforts to provide state-of-the-art ethics education for graduate students," Comstock said. "Last spring the (NC State) University Graduate Students' Association passed a resolution recommending that all doctoral students be required to take a research ethics course. The NSF grant helps us respond to their request."

"We are excited about this extraordinary opportunity," said Alston-Mills. "The grant provides us with the funds to create a universitywide program involving graduate faculty and their students. Our ultimate aim is to institutionalize the teaching of research ethics at land-grant universities across the country."

The LANGURE course will include examples of ethical behavior from business and industry. Toward this end, the private software firm SAS, located in Cary, will collaborate with LANGURE's teams.

"SAS is enthusiastic about LANGURE because of its unusual potential," said Kathy Council, SAS's vice president for publications. "SAS, the market leader for a new generation of business intelligence software, has recently developed a code of ethics we require all employees to study and sign. LANGURE will produce additional materials that will be used widely by professionals around the world studying business ethics and appropriate ways to interpret statistics. We look forward to collaborating with NC State on this valuable initiative in the teaching of values."

Other SAS executives involved are: John Boswell (legal), Andreas Diggelmann (international strategy), Jeff Chambers (human resources), and Alan Eaton (research).

Robert Sowell, dean of the Graduate School at NC State, said, "The Graduate School is proud to be associated with LANGURE. In cooperation with faculty teams from LANGURE's seven partner schools, NC State graduate faculty will develop materials in several fields, including: nanotechnology, physics, computer science and engineering, chemical engineering, microbiology, nuclear engineering, plant biology, sustainable agriculture, business, public administration, agricultural extension, intellectual property, and use of animals. Faculty will also update modules previously developed at NC State to include: statistics, mentoring, authorship and peer review, and intellectual property. These are areas critical to the education of our graduate students."

More information on LANGURE is available on the Web at [www.ncsu.edu/langure](http://www.ncsu.edu/langure).