

University of California, Berkeley



Pre-Council meeting on Trust & Accountability in Science

October 18, 2010

Beth Burnside

Vice Chancellor for Research, Emeritus
University of California, Berkeley



FACTORS THREATENING PUBLIC TRUST:

Challenges arising from Individual COI:

- Perceived credibility of findings and publications reduced by suspected bias
- Potential real influence of researcher COI on findings and publications
- Declarations not enough - does not prove PI not influenced, public can't judge
- Faculty ghost authors on articles ghost written by industry problematic
- Contract constraints on publication, content, timing
- Research on product assessment conducted in academia and sponsored by industry, use in marketing

Pressures on Students:

- Dependence on industry for funding for research and support
- Impacts of commercialism on thesis content, approach, and progress - COI committees to protect students
- In AMCs, impacts of gifts from pharmaceutical industry to students and faculty, and faculty involvement with industry
- Research sponsored by startup company in the university laboratory of faculty inventor



FACTORS THREATENING PUBLIC TRUST:

2

Challenges arising from Institutional COI:

- Universities and medical centers increasingly dependent on industry sponsorship of research, especially in Engineering and Medicine
- Concerns that commercial concerns overly influence research directions pursued to detriment of fundamental research
- Universities increasingly holding equity in startups, especially those founded by faculty
- Universities hold licenses to patented discoveries; possible influence on subsequent patenting and licensing decisions



Summary Conclusions from the 2009 IOM Report: Conflict of Interest in Medical Research Education and Practice:

- The goals of conflict of interest policies are primarily to protect the integrity of professional judgment and to preserve public trust rather than to try to remediate bias or mistrust after they occur.
- The disclosure of individual and institutional financial relationships is a critical but limited first step in the process of identifying and responding to conflicts of interest.
- Conflict of interest policies and procedures can be strengthened by engaging physicians, researchers, and institutions in developing conflict of interest policies and consensus standards.
- A range of supporting organizations - public and private - can promote the adoption and implementation of conflict of interest policies and help create a culture of accountability that sustains professional norms and public confidence in professional judgments.
- Research on conflicts of interest and conflict of interest policies can provide a stronger evidence base for policy design and implementation.
- If institutions do not act voluntarily to strengthen their conflict of interest policies and procedures, the pressure for external regulation is likely to increase.



Who are Potential Agents of change?

- **National Academies of Science**
 - Recommending policies
- **Professional Societies of various scientific disciplines**
 - Promulgating recommended policies to membership researchers
- **AAU, APLU, and AAMC**
 - Recommending policies to university and AMC leaders
- **Universities**
 - Leaders promote policy adoption
 - Faculty and faculty senates promote adoption
 - Administration operationalize
 - Tech Transfer Offices and COI Committees implement policies
- **Individual researchers and faculty**
 - Promote policies in their labs and in the classroom
- **Media and journalists**
 - Resist biased hype and over promising
 - Thoughtful not hysterical treatment of problems and challenges
 - Communicate complexity and benefits of university-industry relationships
- **NGOs**
 - Constructive and nuanced rather than inflammatory translation of unbiased science findings to public
- **Government-**
 - Setting reasonable and standardized reporting requirements
 - Not impeding beneficial research
- **CCST?**