December 17, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: John P. Holdren
Assistant to the President for Science and Technology and
Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy

SUBJECT: Scientific Integrity

On March 9, 2009, the President issued a Memorandum articulating six principles central to the preservation and promotion of scientific integrity and assigning to the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy the responsibility for ensuring the highest level of integrity in all aspects of the executive branch's involvement with scientific and technological processes.

Consistent with the President's memorandum, I am issuing this memorandum to provide further guidance to executive departments and agencies (agencies) to implement the Administration's policies on scientific integrity.

I. Foundations of Scientific Integrity in Government

Scientific and technological information is often a significant contributor to the development of sound policies. Thus it is important that policymakers involve science and technology experts where appropriate and that the scientific and technological information and processes relied upon in policymaking be of the highest integrity. Successful application of science in public policy depends on the integrity of the scientific process both to ensure the validity of the information itself and to engender public trust in Government. For this reason, agencies should develop policies that:

1. Ensure a culture of scientific integrity. Scientific progress depends upon honest investigation, open discussion, refined understanding, and a firm commitment to evidence. Science, and public trust in science, thrives in an environment that shields scientific data and analyses from inappropriate political influence; political officials should not suppress or alter scientific or technological findings.

2. Strengthen the actual and perceived credibility of Government research. Of particular importance are: a) ensuring that selection of candidates for scientific positions in the executive branch is based primarily on their scientific and technological knowledge, credentials, experience, and integrity, b) ensuring that data and research used to support

policy decisions undergo independent peer review by qualified experts, where feasible and appropriate, and consistent with law, c) setting clear standards governing conflicts of interest, and, d) adopting appropriate whistleblower protections.

3. Facilitate the free flow of scientific and technological information, consistent with privacy and classification standards. Open communication among scientists and engineers, and between these experts and the public, accelerates scientific and technological advancement, strengthens the economy, educates the Nation, and enhances democracy. Consistent with the Administration's Open Government Initiative, agencies should expand and promote access to scientific and technological information by making it available online in open formats. Where appropriate, this should include data and models underlying regulatory proposals and policy decisions.

4. Establish principles for conveying scientific and technological information to the public. The accurate presentation of scientific and technological information is critical to informed decision making by the public and policymakers. Agencies should communicate scientific and technological findings by including a clear explication of underlying assumptions; accurate contextualization of uncertainties; and a description of the probabilities associated with both optimistic and pessimistic projections, including best-case and worst-case scenarios where appropriate.

II. Public Communications

Agencies should develop public communications policies that promote and maximize, to the extent practicable, openness and transparency with the media and the American people while ensuring full compliance with limits on disclosure of classified information. Such policies should ensure that:

1. In response to media interview requests about the scientific and technological dimensions of their work, agencies will offer articulate and knowledgeable spokespersons who can, in an objective and nonpartisan fashion, describe and explain these dimensions to the media and the American people.

2. Federal scientists may speak to the media and the public about scientific and technological matters based on their official work, with appropriate coordination with their immediate supervisor and their public affairs office. In no circumstance may public affairs officers ask or direct Federal scientists to alter scientific findings.

3. Mechanisms are in place to resolve disputes that arise from decisions to proceed or not to proceed with proposed interviews or other public information-related activities.

III. Use of Federal Advisory Committees

Agencies should develop policies, in coordination with the General Services Administration and consistent with the Administration's guidance on lobbyists serving on Federal advisory committees (FACs)[1], for convening FACs tasked with giving scientific advice, consistent with the following:[2]

1. The recruitment process for new FAC members should be as transparent as practicable. Departments and agencies should, when practicable and appropriate, announce FAC member vacancies widely, including notification in the Federal Register with an invitation for the public to recommend individuals for consideration and for self-nominations to be submitted.

2. Professional biographical information (including current and past professional affiliations) for appointed committee members should be made widely available to the public (e.g., via a website) subject to Privacy Act and other statutory/regulatory considerations. Such information should clearly illustrate the individuals' qualifications for serving on the committee.

3. The selection of members to serve on a scientific or technical FAC should be based on expertise, knowledge, and contribution to the relevant subject area. Additional factors that may be considered are availability of the member to serve, diversity among members of the FAC, and the ability to work effectively on advisory committees. Committee membership should be fairly balanced in terms of points of view represented with respect to the functions to be performed by the FAC.

4. Except when prohibited by law, agencies should make all Conflict of Interest waivers granted to committee members publicly available.

5. Except when explicitly stated in a prior agreement between an agency and a FAC, all reports, recommendations, and products produced by FACs should be treated as solely the findings of such committees rather than of the U.S. Government, and thus are not subject to intra- or inter-agency revision.

IV. Professional Development of Government Scientists and Engineers

Agencies should establish policies that promote and facilitate, as permitted by law, the professional development of Government scientists and engineers. Such policies should, consistent with Federal ethics rules, job responsibilities, and existing agency policies regarding political appointees:

---

[1] http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-lobbyists-agency-boards-and-commissions

[2] Peer-review committees convened solely for the purpose of reviewing research proposals to provide input on intra- or extramural funding decisions are *not* covered by this recommendation.

1. Encourage publication of research findings in peer-reviewed, professional, or scholarly journals.

2. Encourage presentation of research findings at professional meetings.

3. Allow Government scientists and engineers to become editors or editorial board members of professional or scholarly journals.

4. Allow full participation in professional or scholarly societies, committees, task forces and other specialized bodies of professional societies, including removing barriers for serving as officers or on governing boards of such societies.

5. Allow Government scientists and engineers to receive honors and awards for their research and discoveries with the goal of minimizing, to the extent practicable, disparities in the potential for private-sector and public-sector scientists and engineers to accrue the professional benefits of such honors or awards.

V. Implementation

The scope of an agency's scientific work and its relationship to the mission of each department or agency may necessitate distinct mechanisms be used by each to implement this guidance. In addition, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will be issuing guidance to OMB staff concerning the review of draft executive branch testimony on scientific issues prepared for presentation to the Congress. That guidance will provide standards that are to be applied during the review of scientific testimony. I ask that all agencies report to me within 120 days the actions they have taken to develop and implement policies in the areas above.

Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

Any questions regarding this memorandum should be directed to integrity@ostp.gov.