

About the Scientific Integrity Report Card and Disclaimer

July 2013

On March 9, 2009, President Obama issued a directive for the heads of executive branch departments and agencies regarding scientific integrity within the administration. Specifically, President Obama “assign[ed] 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.” You can read the President’s directive here: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/memorandum-heads-executive-departments-and-agencies-3-9-09>.

On December 17, 2010, the Office of Science and Technology Policy issued a memorandum to guide agencies in drafting their respective scientific integrity policies. This memorandum provides guidance on four areas: (I) Foundations of Scientific Integrity in Government, (II) Public Communications, (III) The Use of Federal Advisory Committees, and (IV) Professional Development of Government Scientists and Engineers. You can read OSTP’s memorandum here: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/scientific-integrity-memo-12172010.pdf>.

To date, fifteen agencies have released final scientific integrity policies. A number of agencies have released drafts, and some have made no progress at all. **This report card is meant to provide a basis for comparing the agencies’ progress in shielding science from improper political manipulation through their scientific integrity policies.** Accordingly, agencies’ scientific integrity policies were scored in three major areas of interest to PEER’s work: (I) Scientific Misconduct, (II) Public Communications of Science, and (III) Transparency of Policy Decision-Making.

- I. **Scientific Misconduct** regards whether the agency has prohibited political manipulation of science, has in place a defined process for investigating allegations of such misconduct, as well as protections for complainants and sanctions for those who have engaged in misconduct.
- II. **Public Communications of Science** regards generally how free agency scientists are to speak to peers and the public regarding their work.
- III. **Transparency of Policy Decision-Making** regards to what extent the public, external scientists, or a legal challenger to a policy might become aware of any political manipulation of science.

This report card is not meant to score the agencies' scientific integrity policies for compliance with the executive directive or OSTP guidance. For example, the Use of Federal Advisory Committees was not considered in this report card because Federal Advisory Committees are already heavily regulated by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. Appendix, and its executive branch-wide implementing regulations, 41 C.F.R. Part 102-3. PEER also recognizes—and this report card reflects—that scientific integrity policies are just one small part of a constellation of preexisting laws, regulations, and rules regarding scientific integrity in government.

Important Disclaimer

This report card is based almost solely upon the provisions of each agency's scientific integrity policy, not case law, other superseding agency rules, or administrative interpretations. PEER hopes to incorporate more of these legal materials in future editions of the report card.

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No warranty whatsoever is made that any of these scores are current or precise. Agency policies can change, sometimes quite quickly. In addition, a law may have been modified or overturned by subsequent development since the entry was made.

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