

**ECU DIVISION OF RESEARCH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND ENGAGEMENT  
OFFICE OF GRANTS & CONTRACTS (OGC)**

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**NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES, CONSULTANTS, CONTRACTORS, SUBAGREEMENT ENTITIES AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS  
CONCERNING WHISTLEBLOWER RIGHTS AND REMEDIES UNDER FEDERAL PILOT PROGRAM FOR ENHANCEMENT  
OF EMPLOYEE WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION  
(41 U.S.C. 4712)**

**Background**

The federal government has enacted a pilot program, effective until January 1, 2017, to add protections for employees (and others) against reprisal for certain whistleblowing activities in connection with certain federal grants and contracts.

The pilot program is established at 41 U.S.C. 4712 by section 828 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Pub. L. 112-239) and Federal Acquisition Regulation 3.908. While the provisions of the program are summarized below, more detailed information about rights and remedies under the program may be found by consulting the new statute at [http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:41%20section:4712%20edition:prelim\)](http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:41%20section:4712%20edition:prelim)) and the implementing regulations at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-09-30/pdf/2013-23703.pdf>. The pilot program requires that ECU provide information to employees, consultants, contractors and subawardees about the program and that information is provided below.

**Protected Disclosures**

The Pilot Program requires that employers cannot discharge, demote, or otherwise discriminate against an employee (or others) as a reprisal for disclosing information (except for classified information) that the employee reasonably believes is evidence of any of the following:

- A gross mismanagement of a federal contract or grant;
- A gross waste of federal funds;
- An abuse of authority relating to a federal contract or grant (where “abuse of authority” is defined as an “arbitrary and capricious exercise of authority that is inconsistent with the mission of the executive agency . . . or the successful performance of a [federal] contract or grant . . . .”)
- A substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or
- A violation of law, rule, or regulation related to a federal contract (including competition for or negotiation of a contract) or grant.

Anyone who disclose these types of information to the following persons or entities are protected:

- A member of Congress or a representative of a committee of Congress;
- An Inspector General;
- The Government Accountability Office;

- A federal employee responsible for contract or grant oversight or management at the relevant federal agency;
- An authorized official of the Department of Justice or other law enforcement agency;
- A court or grand jury; or
- A management official or other employee of ECU who has the responsibility to investigate, discover, or address misconduct. (See how to make a complaint to ECU officials described below.)

The pilot program also protects an employee who initiates or provides evidence of misconduct in any judicial or administrative proceeding relating to waste, fraud, or abuse on a federal contract or grant.

### **ECU Policies and Procedures**

The State of North Carolina and ECU are committed to operating with integrity and in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies, and do not tolerate retaliation against individuals who report compliance concerns in good faith.

**Any ECU employee (or others) with concerns stemming from possible noncompliance with state or federal laws/regulations, safety concerns, irregularities, fraud, waste or abuse may report them without fear of retaliation or discrimination:**

- Directly to Stacie Tronto, Chief Audit Officer, [trontos@ecu.edu](mailto:trontos@ecu.edu), 1704-B East Arlington Blvd., Greenville, NC 27858 or
- Reports may be submitted 24 hours a day by phone to 252-328-9025 or
- Reports may be submitted 24 hours a day to the ECU Audit Hotline at <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/audit/Hotline.cfm>

### **Submitting Complaints Directly to Funding Agencies**

Whistleblowers may also file complaints with federal agencies if they believe they were discriminated against for their disclosure of information, provided those complaints are submitted within three years of the date of the alleged discrimination. Whistleblowers may submit complaints to the Inspector General of the federal agency involved. The Inspector General will generally perform an investigation and submit a report to the federal agency, which then determines whether sufficient basis exists to conclude that discrimination occurred. If the agency determines that discrimination has occurred, the pilot program sets out remedies that may be available, including ordering an institution to reverse the reprisal, reinstate the employee with compensatory damages and employment benefits, and/or pay costs reasonably incurred by the whistleblower in bringing the complaint. The institution has the right to appeal any agency order to the relevant United States court. The following links to the federal agency websites provide procedures for submitting complaints:

- Department of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov/oig/contractorform.htm>
- Department of Health and Human Services: <https://forms.oig.hhs.gov/hotlineoperations/>

- National Institutes of Health: <http://oma.od.nih.gov/public/DPI/Pages>
- National Science Foundation: <http://www.nsf.gov/oig/>

### **Additional Information**

The State of North Carolina and East Carolina University have also published whistleblower policy protections and policies that encompass all fund sources. Those policies are posted at the following websites:

- State of North Carolina - For additional information about the State of North Carolina whistleblower protections under NC General Statute 126-84 go to

[http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/HumanResources/upload/Whistleblower\\_Protection\\_-\\_NC\\_G-S-126-84\\_-2008-1.pdf](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/HumanResources/upload/Whistleblower_Protection_-_NC_G-S-126-84_-2008-1.pdf)

- For additional information about ECU whistleblower protections, go to ECU Policies, Regulations & Rules at <http://www.ecu.edu/prr/>

- For additional information about any policies, procedures or guidelines related to specific sponsored projects, contact your OGC representative or email [grantsc@ecu.edu](mailto:grantsc@ecu.edu)