

Pivarnik, James - RIO

[REDACTED]

On Tue, Sep 7, 2010 at 11:19 AM, Pivarnik, James - RIO <rio@msu.edu> wrote:

Craig,

Yes, I saw that, thanks.

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On Mon, Sep 6, 2010 at 8:50 AM, Pivarnik, James - RIO <rio@msu.edu> wrote:

Dr. Douglas,

This is Jim Pivarnik, I am the Research Integrity Officer (RIO) here at MSU. Dr. Simon asked me if I could brief you a bit on a recent allegation that showed up in the Grand Rapids Press a couple weeks ago. I would start by saying that in the nearly four years that I have been the RIO, this is the first time that an allegation has been made public before my office heard about it. Ordinarily, we do not discuss anything related to ongoing cases, but this one is obviously different, so I will try to let you know a bit about how we are proceeding.

A bit of background that you may be familiar with already. Last Spring, the Grand Rapids Press approached Dr. Shakrani (at that time, he was Director of the Education Policy Center) to do a "what if" type of model re: school consolidation and cost savings for 10 MI Counties. These were counties that were served by the Booth Newspaper group in MI. Dr. Shakrani eventually did this work, and also expanded it a bit to model the entire state. His report came out in mid-August, and received some positive publicity. At that time, Mr. VanBeek of the Mackinaw Center read the report, and also the one source that Dr. Shakrani mentioned. This source (a NY Study) was what Dr. Shakrani used for the basis of his model. In reviewing the model, Mr. VanBeek read what he believed to be large sections of text (little to none of it related to the actual methodology) that were lifted verbatim from the NY report. At that time, Mr. VanBeek reported an allegation of plagiarism to the Grand Rapids Press, who subsequently published it in their paper on August 18. You have probably seen a number of follow-up stories/blogs since then. I would say most of the follow-up rhetoric has been focused on the study methodology, not the plagiarism aspect of this issue.

Whenever our office receives a research misconduct allegation (plagiarism is an example of research misconduct), no matter how we receive it, we take it very seriously and begin a preliminary investigation. That is what I am doing at the moment. There are a number of other steps that may occur, depending on what the evidence tells us, and I can fill you in on details later if you wish. Suffice it to say that we are aware of the publicity that this case has received, and we are proceeding as quickly as our Procedures permit.

What I would like to make clear is that there are two issues here. First, there is the issue of a plagiarism allegation, which is what we are reviewing. But there is also an issue of study methodology, which we are NOT reviewing. There has NOT been any allegation of Dr. Shakrani fabricating or falsifying anything in his model. Rather, some are questioning the assumptions that he has made, and their relevance to Michigan. That is an academic argument, and not related to the plagiarism allegation. Obviously, since we are talking about a model, no one knows the answer, unless the model is put into action. Moreover, nothing about the model methodology argument will be settled based on the findings of the plagiarism allegation, as they are two different issues. Our only charge is to address the plagiarism issue, not the study methodology assumptions.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions about our process. You can reach me at 517-432-6698, or rio@msu.edu

Thank you

Jim Pivarnik