

Southwestern University Research Data Management Policy Pertaining to NSF, NIH, and other Applicable Federally-Funded Programs

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New digital capabilities for the generation and storage of research data are enlarging the possibilities for both the management and sharing of data. Moreover, many external funders – including the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation – are concerned that the institutions they support maintain standards that facilitate preservation, dissemination, and possible collaborative use of research results.

A full-fledged data management plan is not necessary to support all forms of faculty scholarship. However, for those faculty engaged in research where a data management plan is appropriate, the following general standards will apply:

1. Raw data will be backed up regularly and frequently by project staff. Copies will be stored in an off-site safe location.
2. Not all project data will need to be saved indefinitely. The project's Principal Investigator will determine the appropriate time frame and amount of raw data to be stored.
3. Permanent records such as scanned project notebooks and final analyzed data will be reproduced under the PI's supervision for storage in at least two locations. Directory and file naming conventions will be maintained by the PI and at the departmental level.
4. One important aim of sponsored research is timely publication of research results. PIs will have a commitment to disseminate results through peer-reviewed journals, presentations at professional meetings and conferences, and other public formats. The structure of the research determines when outcomes will be available, and the PI will set and adhere to a reasonable time frame for disseminating results. These public channels are the primary venues for sharing data and research results with the external community.
5. When research yields information relevant to existing public databases (such as the protein data bank), the PI will take responsibility for making direct contributions to such databases. To ensure that the external academic community has the opportunity to learn about and share in Southwestern faculty research beyond published reports, up-to-date descriptions of faculty researchers' work will be maintained on the Southwestern University website's departmental pages. The PI named will be the point of contact and will determine formats and protocols for additional sharing of research results with interested external parties.
6. Upon receiving a request for release of data from an external entity, Southwestern University's Institutional Review Board will assess data involving human subjects to ensure there are no violations of confidentiality.

These general principles may be further elaborated and refined at the departmental level, to create data management plans that best meet the needs of specific disciplines for preserving and disseminating research results.