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Backgrounder

Research in the public eye:

Engaged academic research and the ‘right to know’

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Preface

The journal *Issues in Science and Technology*, published by the US National Academy of Sciences and Arizona State University, published in June 2024 a piece I wrote on a controversy I become entangled with over the past decade.

> Phillips, Peter WB. 2024. Preparing Researchers for an Era of Freer Information. Issues in Science and Technology. www.issues.org

As the editors and I worked through the piece, much of the personal detail of the story was removed. For completeness, I offer the following as background to the story.

Peter W.B. Phillips, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus
Saskatoon, Canada

Backgrounder

Research in the public eye:

Engaged academic research and the 'right to know'

Peter WB Phillips[1]
Distinguished Professor, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy
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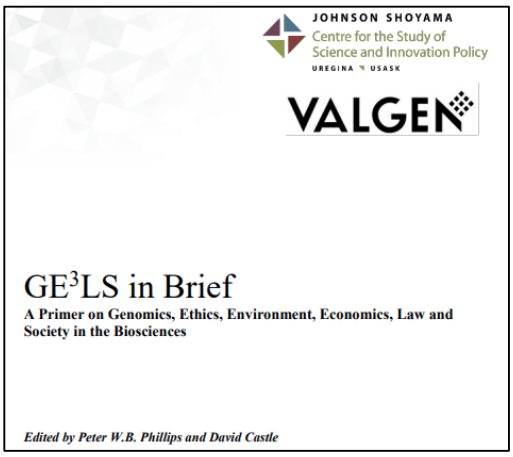
If you Google my name with the phrase 'Monsanto', you will find a series of allegations that my scholarly work is unduly influenced by corporations and that I have engaged secretly in promoting genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It is not and I have not. My experience offers an insight into the challenges of scholars working on matters of public interest.

The roots of my story date to 2013 when I was co-principal investigator of a project entitled Value Addition through Genomics and GE3LS (VALGEN), an internationally peer reviewed C$5.4 million Genome Canada grant administered by Genome Prairie.[2] My team was funded to explore governance of the suite of new biotechnologies being used in modern plant breeding. Beginning in the 1980s scientists in universities, industry and government developed and transferred gene-splicing tools into a range of applications, including plants, animals and microbes. Health and environmental applications are largely welcomed but those for the agricultural and food system raise significant concern for some. GM seeds, first used commercially in 1995, mostly offer insect resistance or herbicide tolerance. ISAAA[3] estimates that by 2018 (the latest data), 26 countries spanning six continents produced one or more GM crops (mostly maize, soybeans, cotton and canola) on an estimated 192 million hectares, while another 44 countries imported and consumed GM foodstuffs. An estimated 17 million farmers, 95% from developing countries, have gained an estimated US$186 billion in economic benefits from cultivating GM seeds over the past 22 years, and the ecological footprint of those crops is lower than crops based on older production methods, but there has been significant pushback against GMOs. Many countries ban cultivation or import while civil society has

[1] NOTE: To counter researcher bias, the author has searched files, consulted with other principals in the story and sent this for peer review to ensure as much bias is removed as possible.
[2] https://www.genomeprairie.ca/project/previous/value-addition-through-genomics-and-ge3ls/
[3] http://www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/54/default.asp

engaged in more than 20 years of campaigning against the technology based on concerns about its economic, environmental, health and ethical impacts. These campaigns have involved protests, destruction of seed trials, lobbying, petitions, plebiscites, ballot propositions, litigation and, most recently, freedom of information requests of public academics.

As a scholar interested in technological change in the global food system, I was drawn to explore the impact of biotechnology, as it has been one of the most significant changes in the production system in the past generation. My main interest is the evolution of the global rapeseed and canola industry; my hometown, Saskatoon, Canada, has generated many of the new traits that drive the market for that edible oil. Given that all the major GM crops are commercialized by large multinational chemical and seed conglomerates, it was inevitable that I would have to engage with them. For my efforts, I have been targeted for public review through freedom of information (FOI) requests by US Right to Know (USRTK), a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit food research organization founded in 2014 by Gary Ruskin, former campaign manager for Yes on Prop 37 (the mandatory GMO labeling ballot measure in California), using seed money from the Organic Consumers Association. A local group of activists in my hometown has allied with the USRTK effort.



The VALGEN grant painted a target on my back. Genome Canada requires each project have an international science advisory board (SAB), with at least one member from industry. After consultation with Genome Prairie, Dr. Eric Sachs, then Director of Regulatory Policy & Scientific Affairs with Monsanto Corporation from St. Louis, was appointed to the SAB. Monsanto then had a dominant market share worldwide. The SAB offered advice on research priorities, context for some of our findings and advice on knowledge mobilization, all as mandated by Genome Canada.[4] While SAB members were invited to comment on our methodological approaches, findings and conclusions, Sachs always deferred to the expertise of the researchers. At some point in SAB deliberations, there was discussion about how we could improve the translation of our academic findings to the policy and industrial community. We published monthly briefs on our work and compiled them into a public access volume at the end of the

[4] As partial compensation for his role on the SAB, VALGEN provided him a modest annual honorarium and paid for any out-of-pocket expenses incurred in traveling to our events and meetings.

project, but the SAB thought we could do more.[5] Near the end of the project, Sachs reported that the Genetic Literacy Project (GLP), a 501(c)(3) non-profit headquartered in Washington,[6] was interested in publishing a series of briefings about biotechnology in agriculture and asked if I would be interested in contributing. He extended a formal invitation on 7 August 2013 to nine scholars to produce policy briefs. Four of the nine invited authors produced reports; other authors were invited to undertake topics left vacant. I was given complete freedom to write what I thought was theoretically justified and empirically demonstrated[7]; I used as background a recent working paper I had done as part of VALGEN. While some of the other authors may have had financial engagements with Monsanto, there was no compensation for producing a GLP brief.

Between December 2 and 18, 2014, six policy briefs were published on-line by GLP under the title *GMOs Beyond the Science*: GMOs and Global food Security (David Zilberman, UC Berkeley); GMO Safety and Regulations (Alan McHughen, UC Riverside); Economic Consequences of Regulations of GM Crops (P. Phillips); Global Risks of Rejecting Agricultural Biotechnology (Calestous Juma, Harvard); Anti-GMO Activities and Its Impact on Food Security (Kevin Folta, Florida State); and Green Genes: Sustainability Advantages of HT and IR crops (Anthon Shelton, Cornell, and David Shaw, Mississippi State). Over the succeeding months, many of the papers were translated into Spanish. Two successive *GMO Beyond the Science* series were commissioned and published: 18 briefs in series II in 2017 and 16 briefs in series III in 2018.

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[5] Phillips, Peter W.B. and David Castle (eds). 2017. GE3LS in Brief: A Primer on Genomics, Ethics, Environment, Economics, Law and Society in the Biosciences. Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Science and Innovation Policy. Available at: https://www.schoolofpublicpolicy.sk.ca/csip/documents/2017_GE3LS%20Book.pdf (Accessed 1-12-1919).
[6] https://geneticliteracyproject.org/mission-financials-governorship/
[7] The formal invitation said: "Some background is included below but this is only a suggestion. As the author, you will know how to best approach the topic and are free to do so in your own way."

My story has involved five years of controversy in three interrelated streams of activity. Table 1 offers the key events. At times the media led, while at other times it simply reported on developments in the other streams. FOI requests moved on a separate track, following the guidelines and processes laid out in the governing Act. The activities on campus were less coherent, with preemptive planning juxtaposed with just-in-time, ad hoc responses in the governing councils of the university.

Table 1: Three streams of controversy

Media	**FOI activity**	**Administrative activities on campus**
05-09-15: NYT 03-10-15: Star Phoenix 08-10-15: Mother Jones		
		17-10-15: USask Senate request for review
		02-12-15: Symposium on Research management and the Right to Know
	30-12-15: FOI 2016-001	
	05-07-16: disclosure 2016-001	25-02-16: Personal attacks in University Council during review of CSIP 23-04-16: VPR response to Senate Feb-May-16: three town halls for CSIP and further ad hominem attacks 18-05-16: Council decision on CSIP; further ad hominin attacks
	18-11-16: FOI 2016-015 05-01-17: disclosure 2016-015	
07-05-17 to 10-05-17: lead story on CBC 540		10-05-17: Leadership response to CBC 18-05-17: Leadership response in Council 18-05-17: Learned of VPR review; provided copy
	06-07-17: FOI 2017-014 14-08-17: disclosure 2017-014 23-08-17: FOI 2017-015 08-09-17: appeal to OIPC 2017-014 13-09-17: disclosure in response to appeal of 2016-014 14-11-17: disclosure 2017-015 22-11-17: appeal to OIPC 2017-015 02-08-18: appeal to QB 2017-015 17-09-18: FOI 2018-008 17-09-18: FOI 2018-010 15-10-18: disclosure 2018-008 23-10-2018: disclosure 2018-010	
27-11-18: Leadnow campaign began 06-12-18: Leadnow petition promoted on PAWS		06-12-18: Leadnow petition removed from PAWS
	21-05-19: QB ruling on 2017-015	
16-09-19: Sheaf story of QB ruling		

The launch of the six policy papers by GLP initially generated little public interest. Then in March-April 2015 USRTK petitioned under the US Freedom of Information Act, 1967, for the email communications between 14 scholars working in US universities and a list of agricultural and bioscience companies, industry associations and public intellectuals. This first tranche of disclosures was reported on 5 September 2015 in a front-page story in *The New York Times* by Eric Lipton entitled "Emails Reveal Academic Ties in a Food War."[8] That story made vague references to other scientists; I was one of them. On October 3, *The Star Phoenix*, the local paper in Saskatoon, published a front-page story entitled: "Group questions U of S prof's Monsanto link."[9] The University provost was asked to comment but, given lack of preparation, his response focused on the nature of university policy rather than any comments on the complaint. Mother Jones magazine also contacted me and included some of my responses in an October article by Tom Philpott entitled "These Emails Show Monsanto Leaning on Professors to Fight the GMO PR War."[10]


Local News

Group questions U of S prof's Monsanto link

A University of Saskatchewan professor is one of several prominent North American academics under fire for undeclared connections to agri-business giant Monsanto.

Jason Warick, Saskatoon StarPhoenix · Saskatoon StarPhoenix

Published Oct 03, 2015 · Last updated Jun 02, 2020 · 4 minute read

Join the conversation

Oblivious of what was to follow, I took the initiative as a policy scholar to hold a symposium in December to explore strategies for more effective research management. I invited about 45 people and 29 participated, representing research managers, research funders and research communicators from the campus and broader community. The event was planned to take advantage of participation of John Entine, head of GLP, and Dr. Folta, another GLP author, who were in town for another event. The event was held under the Chatham House Rule[11] but was audiotaped for research purposes. The roundtable discussion focused on: strategies for designing more effective research contracts and

[8] https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/06/us/food-industry-enlisted-academics-in-gmo-lobbying-war-emails-show.html
[9] https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/group-questions-u-of-s-profs-monsanto-link
[10] https://www.motherjones.com/food/2015/10/monsanto-professors-gmo-pr/
[11] "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

partnerships to avoid conflicts of interest; strategies for managing information flow to properly anticipate and fulfil FOI interventions; and risk communications plans to deal with controversy.

I had no way of knowing that I was at the center of a larger controversy. The first of what ended up being six FOI requests directed to University of Saskatchewan about my work was only filed in late December 2015, three months after the allegations in the media. As professor at a public university incorporated by provincial Act, my communications fell under The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The petition requested "all email correspondence – including email attachments – to or from Professor Phillips with any staff or employees of any of the following corporations or organizations" for the period from January 1, 2012, to 30 December 2015. The request identified 18 organizations, including all the major biotechnology companies, BIO, GLP, a range of industry associations and consultancies in the sector, and six individuals (including four other GLP authors). The university FOI officer arranged for computer services to do a full search of archived emails. Initially >900 pages were found which was culled to ~700 by limiting the release to the final exchanges in long email chains. The FOI officer then removed ~100 pages due to legal exemptions and redacted the files to remove material outside the request (esp. names of third parties not covered by the request). On 23 June 2016, 618 pages were released. The only known media coverage of the release of the first results from the FOI request came 8 September 2016, when Lorraine Chow published on Alternet an article entitled "13 Academics who have become Shills for Corporate Giants in the Food, Agrochemical and Fossil Fuel Industries."[12] I was named as 'lucky' #13.

During 2016, the topic resurfaced on campus when I worked to develop a new institute, the Center for the Study of Science and Innovation Policy (CSIP). There had been a long-standing debate about the role of big science and contract research on campus, partly focused on the decision of the university to host the Canadian Light Source Inc., an expensive third-generation synchrotron. When the CSIP proposal went to University Council for decision on February 26, a small number of members engaged in *ad hominem* attacks against me and successfully moved a motion to defer the vote until after further campus-wide consultations. During March-May 2016, the CSIP management team and I organized three town halls, where one or more Council members attended and continued their *ad*

[12] https://www.alternet.org/2016/08/13-academics-who-have-become-shills-corporate-giants-food-agrochemical-and-fossil/

hominem attacks. The centre proposal returned to University Council May 18 and, after a rancorous debate, was passed by a small majority.

On 18 November 2016, USRTK made a second FOI filing (#2016-015), requesting all my email correspondence to or from staff or employees of 18 organizations and 13 named individuals for the period 30 December 2015 to date of filing. The release of that information in 2017 set the stage for a flurry of media and university activity, when the story resurfaced as the lead for the local CBC news feed on the morning show for four days straight (May 7-10), a period I likened to the wake-up scene in the movie Groundhog Day. In response, the VPR formed an internal communications group to frame the university response.

It was in this process that I learned of an earlier secret administrative review of my scholarly practice. Unknown to me, questions at the 17 October 2015 meeting of University Senate triggered an informal review by an Associate VP of Research of three basic concerns: “Has there been a breach of our Responsible Conduct of Research Policy? Has there been a breach of any other U of S policy? In the context of ethical guidelines for authors, editors, and publishers, was there an obligation on the part of Dr. Phillips for disclosure of a role by Monsanto in the publication of the article?” The VP Research had reported to Senate in early 2016 that “there has been no wrongdoing” and that my right to publish the policy brief “gets to the hub of academic freedom, which the University strongly upholds.” I only got to know of the review and received a copy of the review in May 2017, more than 18 months after it was presented to Senate.

Despite strong support from the Director of my home unit and, eventually, senior administration, the controversy continued on campus. D’Arcy Hande, retired University archivist, and a long-time opponent of engagements between the university and the uranium industry, launched a series of FOI requests in 2017 and 2018. On 6 July 2017 he filed a request for documents relating to the December 2015 Symposium (#2017-014), seeking any approvals, budget and agenda; some material was released in August and the rest in September following an appeal to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC). Then on 23 August 2017 (#2017-015) Hande requested a transcript of the Symposium. The university secured and transcribed the tape, redacted a significant portion of the text as exempt from disclosure under the Act and released the material 14 November 2017. Hande on 22 November 2017 appealed to OIPC (#2017-015) for a review of the University decision to redact the transcript. OIPC on 5 June 2018 recommended the University remove

many of the redactions but the University refused to comply (as permitted by the Act). Hande then launched on 2 August 2018 an appeal of the University decision to the Court of Queen's Bench. While awaiting the judgement, Hande on 17 September 2018 made two further FOI requests. First, he asked (#2018-008) for any emails to, from or about the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), which had recently ruled glyphosate (trademarked Roundup™) as "probably carcinogenic to humans." I had received a few emails from others about this topic but had not engaged with the issue; those emails were released (with redactions) and there was no follow-up of any kind. Second, he requested (#2018-010) all travel authorities and expense claims for any trips I made to St. Louis after 2011. I had gone once, 1-4 May 2016, to meet some research colleagues from Missouri, to tour the Monsanto facility and to present research findings to Monsanto and other industry partners. The travel documents were found and released; ironically they revealed that while I had filed a proper claim for expenses to be paid from VALGEN, it had not been processed (I was repaid shortly afterwards).

While awaiting judgement from the Court, the issue percolated both on and off campus. In University Council during fall and winter 2018-19 the case was raised at virtually every monthly meeting. After the first few interventions, the administration struck a team to craft a strategic response. The President and Provost thereafter explained at each meeting that the issue of disclosure was at heart about academic freedom but that the matter was before the courts.

The low point came in November 2018 when an anonymous group called Academic Integrity launched an on-line petition on Leadnow, calling for "the Chancellor to direct the university administration to comply with recommendations from the Information and Privacy Commissioner."[13] Early on December 6 a university faculty member used the password-protected university computer system called PAWS to promote the petition. This was reported to the office of the President, judged contrary to PAWS bulletin guidelines and university computer-use policy and removed by early evening. The petition closed shortly afterwards with 1,862 of the targeted 2,000 signatures.

The Court of Queen's Bench on 21 May 2019 ruled that the University redactions were consistent with the Act and not subject to open access. The appellant served a motion for leave to appeal on the University but did not file it with the Court of Appeal in time, so the matter was effectively closed. Since then there have been articles in The Sheaf, the University of Saskatchewan student newspaper, and on the USRTK website, but the rest of the story has gone quiet.

[13] https://you.leadnow.ca/petitions/stop-the-university-of-saskatchewan-monsanto-cover-up.

While my story may not elicit sympathy from some, it does raise a series of important matters that warrant discussion.[14] Like many other scholars, I have found that being targeted in these proceedings contributed to a chill—some colleagues, students and partners have given me wide berth to avoid being implicated by association. While I have not changed my research practices, others in the public eye report they have changed what they research, how they work and how they communicate, often in ways that frustrate the intent of transparency laws, stifle valuable scholarly exchanges and work against efforts to improve uptake and use of research findings.

But this is more than just a personal story. The trigger for this controversy is the changing nature of academic research. In the past century, universities everywhere have been transformed from cloistered centers of knowledge conservation and training to multifaceted research enterprises. Sociologist Henry Etzkowitz asserts we have created the 'entrepreneurial university' with an almost unbounded scope of activity.[15] Funders and researchers now seek to advance knowledge in ways that can be applied in the economy or society. Research is more mission-oriented than curiosity-led; merit review is replacing peer evaluation[16]; programs are becoming more interdisciplinary; projects must leverage funds from potential users; and pro-active knowledge translation beyond publication in academic journals is required.

In practice, individual scholars are increasingly encouraged to link up with disease groups, social communities, commercial enterprises and governments to design and fund their research programs. Proponents of this approach argue that involving end users in research priority setting, research design and dissemination should improve the focus and impact of the resulting research. While this is largely uncontroversial when it involves scholars working with disadvantaged or at-risk communities, as it usually empowers those actors in new ways, it raises red flags when the external partner is industry or government. Opponents fear the imbalance of power between investigators and

[14] I am not alone. An informal search identified as many as 80 academics who have had FOI requests related to GM foods, mostly in the US, but also in Canada, England, Netherlands and Brazil. They are not the only group targeted by these activities. There is evidence of FOI actions to interrogate research into the causes of environmental disease, the safety of abortions performed by clinicians rather than doctors, the infrastructure necessary to scale green energy production and a variety of other contemporary science, technology and social science topics of public concern.

[15] Etzkowitz, H. 2016. The Entrepreneurial University: Vision and Metrics. Industry and Higher Education 30(2): 83-97. https://doi.org/10.5367/ihe.2016.0303.

[16] Doern, DB, P. Phillips., and D. Castle. 2016. Canadian Science, Technology and Innovation Policy: The Innovation Economy and Society Nexus. MQUP.

industry or government—and the inducement of money—will bend research to the will of the user, leading to uneven allocations of both efforts and benefits.

This has triggered a backlash in some quarters. Many scholars are worried that the academy is becoming commercialized and losing its 'soul' while many advocacy groups are concerned that tying research to purpose creates conflicts of interest. While there are significant ethical norms and safety rules, [17] many fear that internal oversight of research itself is inadequate. The actual internal mechanics of research remains largely beyond scrutiny. Some journals require authors to place research materials and data in repositories to enable others to more effectively judge their results but data and processes not directly related to the published results are generally exempt from release. Few disclosures explain how research choices are made and implemented. The desire to see the activities, communications and engagements inside a research effort has led to the use of freedom of information provisions in various national, provincial or state acts. These laws allow for public access to information including, in most jurisdictions, universities.

Few scholars believe they should be exempt from FOI entirely but the concern is that USRTK effort focuses on 'the raw materials of scholarship, the undistilled, unedited, back and forth between scientists that leads to published, peer-reviewed scholarship"[18] which many assert are at the heart of research and innovation. UCLA's "Statement on the Principles of Scholarly Research and Public Records Request" asserts:

> Frank exchange among scholars is essential to advancing knowledge. Scholars frequently test ideas in extreme form, explore possibilities through hypotheticals, or play 'devil's advocate,' making claims they may not themselves believe in edgy, casual language not intended for public circulation or publication. These communications are frequent and diverse in nature because scholarship is a competitive and fast-paced

[17] Academics have a fulsome set of norms and processes for researchers to address the evolving nature of research and social expectations. Universities establish research ethics boards to engage with researchers to balance the necessary protection of participants and the legitimate requirements of research, including free, informed and ongoing consent throughout the research process and sharing the benefits of research as a way "to build and maintain the trust of participants and the public in the research process." The policies set out a range of practical expectations for scholarship, especially acknowledgement of all and only those who have contributed to research, including funders and sponsors, and appropriately identifying and addressing any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest. In addition to the Tri-Council effort, researchers in Canada are bound by the Canadian Council on Animal Care Policies and Guidelines, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, licenses for research in the field, laboratory biosafety guidelines, the Controlled Goods Program, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) Regulations and Canada's Food and Drugs Act.

[18] American Tradition Institution v. Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia, cited by Polsky 2019, 249.

> process, requiring intensive communication among a diverse array of participants… Robust, frequent, and frank intellectual exchange is essential to research and teaching at the university level. It is therefore a matter of great concern that faculty at public universities throughout the country are increasingly the objects of requests through… public records acts for emails, notes, drafts, and other documents… faculty scholarly communications must be protected from PRA and FOIA requests to guard the principle of academic freedom, the integrity of the research process and peer review, and the broader teaching and research mission of the university… these requests have increasingly been used for political purposes or to intimidate faculty working on controversial issues. These onerous, politically motivated, or frivolous requests may inhibit the very communications that nourish excellence in research and teaching, threatening the long-established principles of scholarly research." [19]

Making good on these principles is the major challenge facing scholars and academic administrators alike. Some practical action is both possible and necessary.

Our ethics rules and processes are good as far as they go, but they are largely silent on many of the challenges facing scholars and institutions engaged with research that leverages private resources and seeks to translate findings to users. Right now, the boundaries are vague. What parts of the research process should be protected and which should be open to the full scrutiny of both peers and the broader community is subject to interpretation. Ultimately, this entails clarifying the principles of academic freedom and then developing processes and institutions to protect it.

A good first step to addressing this challenge is to develop new standards for research contracts and partnerships that explicitly acknowledge the power dynamics and identify how the researcher and partners will manage potential conflicts. Some scholars have responded with aggressive proactive disclosure of all engagements, which can read like the boilerplate risk statements in direct-to-consumer drug advertising or the risks section of a financial prospectus. While these disclosures may be comprehensive, they offer little or no insight into any specific links related to any specific research activities done in collaboration with others. Rather than every researcher making up their own declarations, guidelines would go a long way to creating transparent and auditable disclosures.

[19] https://www.apo.ucla.edu/policies-forms/academic-freedom

It also would be valuable for research funders to think more carefully about the roles they assign to community or industrial partners. While scholars instinctively know where the boundaries are and ought to be, and granting agencies assert they want to protect those boundaries, partners could see themselves as having unique privileges to drive the research. Expectations management is critical within and beyond the projects themselves. Guidelines to set roles and expectations for partners are needed.

Once engaged research programs and projects are approved and launched, researchers and their institutions should think more carefully about their internal communications. Many of us have got lazy or sloppy in our informal communications, sometimes to the point of using ambiguous, slanderous or inflammatory language. When these exchanges are disclosed, either by hackers or by FOI actions, it is easy to select words, phrases, sentences or exchanges, take them out of context, and use them to denounce the work of scholars involved in the communications. Most scholars until recently viewed emails as another medium for banter, a bit as one might engage in over a pint of beer or on a sports field. By now, most should realize that emails are as enduring and important as more formal communications. A good rule of thumb is to think about whether the exchange would look amiss if quoted on the front page of a newspaper. To help scholars, institutions could offer technical assistance. Proactive assessments of internal communications, either voluntary or undertaken as risk management exercises, could identify areas of concern. Then institutions could offer remedial support to assist investigators and teams to communicate more clearly and effectively. This would both manage risk of controversy if accessed and enhance efficient and effective communications within and among research teams, their partners and the public.

It is unreasonable to expect that these actions will fully resolve all conflicts and challenges about the integrity of engaged research. Institutions need processes that can anticipate and respond with a coherent plan of action when challenged. Right now individual scholars must manage their own reputations. In my case, the early interventions by my employer were less than helpful. When the first story emerged, there was no way to brief senior administrators of the background and context, so the early comments were disconnected from the questions raised by the press, which failed to satisfy the reporter or the broader community. Then when the issue was raised in internal committees, the administration was in catch-up mode. Part of the solution is to manage risk communications. Universities need to engage proactively with plans and processes that motivate communications within

and between units, in the university governance system (e.g. Senate, Council), among the senior administration (President, Provost, VPs, Deans and Heads) and with granting bodies themselves.

Reviews of cases also need to be better structured. In response to questions about my research integrity, my university's administration empowered a senior administrator to secretly evaluate and render a judgment, with no formal or acknowledged process or rules of evidence and ultimately without disclosing the review to me. Due process is critical in all contexts where reputations are at stake. Ad hoc, informal and secret processes are never the answer to controversy. Anyone accused of academic misconduct should be duly informed about any charges, know who the accuser is and have a clear and contestable process that allows for representation. None of this was offered to me.

A largely unacknowledged difficulty in these types of situations is that there is a profound imbalance of power. University administrations, funders and partners almost always define the operating context for research. Individual scholars have little in the way of authority or capacity to respond to challenges to their reputations resulting from the partnerships they are required to enter. In many ways, these types of challenges to individual investigators are often proxy fights with our institutions. Everyone who shares in the benefits should step up and share in supporting the system when challenged. That includes the universities and granting agencies.

A little bit of planning and a lot more design and structure would go a long way to handling these types of controversies more efficiently and effectively. Polsky asserts that unconstrained use of FOI laws are 'essentially deputizing an unbounded number of third parties to do what the university as employer is itself barred from doing – interrupting, exposing and through publicity de facto policing what scholars say, what they research, and how they communicate." [20]

I firmly believe engaged scholarship is the right thing to do. I continue to engage with industry, government and civil society to deliver evidence-based policy analysis of the challenges and opportunities arising from technological change in agriculture. Many of the compelling challenges facing our world, such as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals articulated in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1, The 2030 Agenda, all require linked-up thinking that only

[20] Polsky, C. 2019. Open Records, Shuttered Labs: Ending Political Harassment of Public University Researchers. 66 UCLA L. Rev.208, pp. 237.

comes from engaging scholars working within real world contexts and problems.[21] If we fail to fix the current mismatch of expectation and processes in our research system, we will miss this opportunity.

The onus is on the academy, and its partners, to find a way to deliver engaged scholarship that respects and defends the unique strengths of each actor. In the words of the University of Chicago Statement on Freedom of Expression: “without a vibrant commitment to free and open inquiry, a university ceases to be a university. The… long-standing commitment to this principle lies at the very core of our... greatness. That is our inheritance, and it is our promise to the future.”[22]

[21] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs.
[22] https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf