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## **Sigma Xi Brings Research Ethics to the Forefront in 2011**

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC – Since its founding in 1886, Sigma Xi has stressed that integrity is vital to science. In light of the ongoing need to cultivate high standards of professional ethics among all scientists, Sigma Xi has declared the year 2011—the 125th anniversary of the Society’s founding—the Year of Ethics.

Throughout the year, *American Scientist* magazine will feature a series of special essays on research ethics with a focus on peer review and authorship. Expert columnists will examine authors’ and reviewers’ roles and responsibilities in contexts such as international research collaborations, developing ethical guidelines and improving the performance of peer review.

Sigma Xi aims to raise awareness of these issues because responsible peer review and authorship are crucial to the creation of a reliable scientific record in which researchers, policymakers and the public can trust.

Nevertheless, the range of actual and accepted practices in scientific publication—from author order to peer-review training—are not well documented across countries and disciplines. This information void was emphasized at Sigma Xi’s June Ethics Summit, when a group of advisors met at the Sigma Xi Center to discuss peer review and authorship.

The summit was the first step in developing a new program of research that will assess international and interdisciplinary norms. The results will form the basis of checklists and educational materials to help researchers successfully navigate scientific publication, especially in diverse collaborations.

If the project is funded, we anticipate holding pilot focus groups and discussions at the 2011 annual meeting, and ultimately providing Sigma Xi chapters with a workshop curriculum to help distribute the new materials in a meaningful context.