Dual Use Research of Concern Policy

Regulatory Reference: United States Government Policy for Institutional Oversight of Life Sciences Dual Use Research of Concern. Released September 24, 2014 Effective September 24, 2015. The policy can be found here.

Definitions:

Dual Use Research: Research conducted for legitimate purposes that despite its value and benefits, can be utilized for both benevolent and harmful purposes.

Dual Use Research of Concern (DURC): A subset of Dual Use Research that is defined as: "life sciences research that, based on current understanding, can be reasonably anticipated to provide knowledge, information, products, or technologies that could be directly misapplied to pose a significant threat with broad potential consequences to public health and safety, agricultural crops and other plants, animals, the environment, material, or national security".

The United States Government has limited the scope of the above definition to research that involves 15 specific agents and toxins and seven categories of experiments. Specifically, research that uses one or more of the agents or toxins listed below and produces, aims to produce, or can be reasonably anticipated to produce one or more of the effects listed below must be evaluated for DURC potential.

Agents and Toxins:

a) Avian influenza virus (highly pathogenic)
b) *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax)
c) Botulinum neurotoxins (For the purposes of this Policy, there are no exempt quantities of botulinum neurotoxin. Research involving any quantity of botulinum neurotoxin should be evaluated for DURC potential.)
d) *Burkholderia mallei*
e) *Burkholderia pseudomallei*
f) Ebola virus
g) Foot-and-mouth disease virus
h) *Francisella tularensis*
i) Marburg virus
j) Reconstructed 1918 Influenza virus
k) Rinderpest virus
l) Toxin-producing strains of *Clostridium botulinum*
m) Variola major virus
n) Variola minor virus
o) *Yersinia pestis*

Categories of Experiments:

a) Enhances the harmful consequences of the agent or toxin
b) Disrupts immunity or the effectiveness of an immunization against the agent or toxin without clinical and/or agricultural justification
c) Confers to the agent or toxin resistance to clinically and/or agriculturally useful prophylactic or therapeutic interventions against that agent or toxin or facilitates their ability to evade detection methodologies
d) Increases the stability, transmissibility, or the ability to disseminate the agent or toxin
e) Alters the host range or tropism of the agent of toxin
f) Enhances the susceptibility of a host population to the agent or toxin
g) Generates or reconstitutes an eradicated or extinct agent or toxin listed above.

Policy:

It is currently Whitworth University's policy to prohibit all research that could be considered "Dual Use Research of Concern", as defined above and in the United States Government Policy referenced above. This prohibition is based on two major factors. First, research with the agents and toxins listed above poses a significant health risk. To properly mitigate that risk these agents and toxins would need to be used in a Biosafety Level 3 or Biosafety Level 4 facility. Whitworth does not currently have a Biosafety Level 3 or Biosafety Level 4 facility. Second, oversight of DURC must holistically address the risks that knowledge, information, products or technologies generated could be used for harmful purposes. This oversight would require internal institutional processes and personnel as well as mechanisms to interface with external oversight (an individual designated as the Institutional Contact for Dual Use Research at minimum). Whitworth does not currently have such institutional processes. Therefore, since we possess neither the facilities to conduct this type of research safely, nor the mechanisms to oversee it properly, DURC is prohibited.