PROJECT SUMMARY

My project has been to examine how certain key works of investigative journalism in the 1970s stimulated public discourse about biomedical research ethics, led to policy reform, and contributed to the emergence of “bioethics” as a new field devoted to the study of ethical issues in clinical medicine and biomedical research. The project focuses specifically on investigative journalism that exposed the unethical treatment of human subjects in biomedical research. The project also connects the practice of investigative journalism to the emergence of bioethics as a field. My goal for this project, which is also the basis for my dissertation, has been to build vital conceptual and historical connections between investigative journalism and bioethics. As far as I am aware, this is the first such effort in either bioethics or the field of mass communication.

The Consortium award enabled me to conduct archival research essential to my project. In Boston, I examined documents at the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and at the Massachusetts Historical Society. In Washington, D.C., I visited the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health and the Bioethics Research Library at Georgetown University. I also visited the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin. In addition, the Consortium grant enabled me to attend the annual conference of the American Society for Bioethics & the Humanities in San Diego in October 2010, where I made contact with bioethics scholars for the purpose of conducting oral history interviews. I also presented a paper on physicians and social media. It was my first time attending an ASBH annual meeting.
RESULTS

*Dissertation progress:* The Consortium award has enabled me to make a strong start on my dissertation. My dissertation proposal was just approved this spring and I have already been able to carry out a significant amount of the necessary archival research by completing three Consortium-funded research trips between January and July 2011.

*Publications:* I plan to submit two chapters of my dissertation to academic journals—one to a bioethics journal and the other to a journal in mass communication/journalism history—by early fall 2011.

*Presentations:* My paper titled “Bioethics and the News Media: Ideas for Interdisciplinary Scholarship and Teaching” has been accepted for presentation at the ASBH annual meeting that will be held in Minneapolis in October 2011.

*Curriculum development:* During fall semester 2010 I co-taught a new interdisciplinary course called “Investigative Journalism and Bioethics” with Professor Carl Elliott of the Center for Bioethics. The 5000-level seminar was the first course ever cross-listed by the Center for Bioethics and the School of Journalism & Mass Communication. The course drew a wide variety of students, including law students; graduate students in bioethics, history of medicine, mass communication, and social pharmacology; a medical school graduate; and undergraduates majoring in journalism and philosophy.

FUTURE PROJECT PLANS

I intend to complete my dissertation, tentatively titled “Exposing Ethical Lapses in Biomedical Research: A Study of the Confluence of Investigative Journalism in the 1970s and the New ‘Bioethics,’” by June 2012. I also plan to convert my dissertation into a book manuscript following completion of the PhD.