

Michael Vernick

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Areas of Focus

Education

Government Contractor
Litigation and Compliance

Congressional
Investigations

Culture Risk and Sensitive
Investigations

Investigations, Compliance,
and Defense



Overview

Michael J. Vernick is a leading authority on legal frameworks governing federal research funding, False Claims Act (FCA) enforcement and a dedicated advisor to universities, research institutions, and academic medical centers. His practice centers on compliance risk management, white-collar investigations, and enforcement matters for institutions receiving federal grants and contracts, as well as entities in the defense and life science sectors.

Mike guides clients through the increasingly demanding legal framework for scientific research funding and compliance, foreign-ties investigations, compliance with civil rights law and regulation, and disclosure enforcement. He is widely recognized for his accomplishments defending clients against FCA allegations and resolving issues related to grants and cooperative agreements. Mike has successfully handled many of the most significant FCA and qui tam matters involving federal research, research security, and Uniform Guidance compliance, including resolving the first reported FCA case focused on undisclosed researcher ties to a foreign government.

An influential voice on federal grant regulations, Mike regularly works with institutions on issues related to conflicts of interest, export controls, and cybersecurity requirements applicable to federal contractors and funding recipients. His experience responding to government investigations and audits includes those of the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Defense.

Mike's ability to defend institutions while advancing best-in-class capacity building and training initiatives makes him an invaluable resource for universities and colleges confronted by heightened regulatory scrutiny. His comprehensive understanding of government contracts coupled with his experience in research security and international collaboration compliance seamlessly positions him as an indispensable advisor to institutions and companies in numerous sectors doing business with the government. Mike's practice encompasses contracting and research funding compliance, including cost allowability, Federal Acquisition Regulation and Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement compliance, cybersecurity, and research security matters. He also handles suspension and debarment proceedings, contract claims and disputes, and Cost Accounting Standards audits and claims.

Mike's involvement with academic medical centers, research institutes, and clinical trials operations provides a significant strategic bridge to the life science sector.

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- Education
- Government Contractor Litigation and Compliance
- Congressional Investigations
- Culture Risk and Sensitive Investigations
- Investigations, Compliance, and Defense
- State Attorneys General
- Life Sciences

Representative Matters

- Defending a large health system in an FCA case alleging noncompliance with US government contract cybersecurity and cost allowability requirements.
- Advising a significant research university in its response to a Section 117 investigation being conducted by the Department of Education.
- Advising multiple research universities in FCA investigations targeting allegations of nondisclosure of foreign research support and other ties to institutions outside the US.
- Advising multiple research institutions on all aspects of federal research compliance, including financial, scientific, and socioeconomic requirements.

The matters described below reflect Mike's work prior to joining Jenner & Block.

- Successfully defended one of the country's preeminent research universities in a FCA investigation targeting allegations of undisclosed faculty ties to China. The Department of Justice (DOJ) dropped the matter without taking any adverse action.

- Persuaded the DOJ to decline an FCA qui tam case lodged against one of the most significant recipients of federal research funding in the U.S. The matter focused on improper allocation of unallowable compensation costs, including grant-writing and teaching, to National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards.
- Persuaded the DOJ to decline an FCA qui tam case filed against a major recipient of NIH funding. The case alleged that fabricated and/or falsified data resulted in the improper award of millions of dollars of research funding. Subsequently, obtained the full dismissal of the relator's complaint.
- Led teams which vetting the scientific integrity of the scholarship of candidates for the presidency of two preeminent academic institutions.
- Advised a leading academic medical center on a comprehensive assessment of its approach to financial conflicts of interest.
- Successfully resolved a prime/subcontractor dispute related to overhead and general and administrative rate calculation methodologies.
- Advised a leading university during an FCA investigation involving multiple federal agencies and over \$1 billion of funding.

Credentials

Admissions

- District of Columbia
- Maryland

Education

- George Mason University School of Law, JD, with high honors, 1997
- Tufts University, BA, *cum laude*, 1991

Clerkships

- US Court of Federal Claims

Service / Recognition

Awards

- *Chambers USA*, Higher Education, 2025-2026
- *The Legal 500 US*, Government contracts, 2016–2020 and 2022–2025; Education, 2022–2025; "Leading Lawyer," 2023–2024; and "Leading Partner," 2025
- BTI Consulting Group, Client Service All-Star, 2016