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Office of the Vice President
RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To: Faculty members, department chairs, and college deans
From: Dr. Tom McCoy, Vice President for Research and Economic Development
Date: August 14, 2015
Re: Updated Best Business Practices for proposal submission

This memorandum updates and extends the “Best Business Practices” memorandum of September 11, 2014 that set policy and procedures for grant and contract proposal submission to external sponsors. In particular, it formalizes adoption of actions suggested by a committee of grant-active faculty members, and from numerous comments received from individual faculty members.

The specific aim of these actions is to improve the proposal submission process and to enhance the service provided by the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration (OGCA) and the other proposal development supporting staff of departments and colleges. These actions also acknowledge that OGCA will maintain an appropriate and prudent level of review for compliance with UNT and sponsor guidelines.

Therefore, the overarching goal of the Best Business Practices guidance and this update and extension is to better achieve a balance of the assistance faculty members receive in proposal submission and the requirements for review before submission.

Timeline for proposal elements to be received by OGCA: We maintain the four business day deadline for receipt of all elements of the proposal by OGCA but respond to the request expressed most often by faculty members, namely, that edits to the narrative be accepted until 5:00 pm on the day before the sponsor submission deadline. A reasonable draft of the narrative must be provided to OGCA in lieu of the final narrative for format and compliance review to meet the four-day deadline.

Reduction in the level of internal reviews of proposal materials: Principal investigators (PIs) may submit proposal materials directly to OGCA without department and college review if they certify on the proposal routing that they are not requesting from the department or college (i) any cost share or match, (ii) buy-out or release from teaching, (iii) new or renovated space, or (iv) modification of indirect cost (IDC) distribution. (Cost share or match, and modification of IDC at the university level, will still require advance approval - before the four-day OGCA deadline - by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.) Therefore, departments and colleges will be required to approve proposals only when any of these items are noted on the routing form, or, by implication, stated or implied in the proposal documents.

Assistance by departments and colleges: Departments and colleges that have staff available for assisting in the development of the proposal narrative and/or the preparation of budgets and other forms should

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continue to provide this help before the four-day deadline for transmittal of complete proposal packages to OGCA. Requests for such assistance are to be made at the discretion of the PI, are voluntary assistance on the part of the departments and colleges, and should be carried out prior to the four-day deadline. Without PI disclosure on the routing form of the four triggers for department and/or college approval listed above (or explicit or implicit inclusion in the proposal documents), proposals may be directly routed to OGCA.

Assistance by OGCA: OGCA will assist PIs prior to the four-day deadline on a “first come / first served” basis as workload allows with other items such as translation of budget items in to the sponsor forms and completion of other forms required by sponsors. In addition, during the four-day review period before the sponsor submission deadline, OGCA will check the proposal package for all required elements and for compliance with UNT and sponsor requirements, provided that a complete proposal package was received by the four-day deadline.

Roles for Principal Investigators: PIs remain responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the final proposal package and for approving submission to the sponsor. PIs will provide draft budgets and budget justifications, drafts of other forms required by sponsors, and completed biosketch and current/pending support documents. Draft proposal narratives are required at the OGCA four-day deadline in sufficient form to be able to review for formatting and compliance, and the final edits must be complete by 5:00 pm on the day before the sponsor submission deadline. Before the four-day deadline, PIs are responsible for requesting and receiving approval for cost share and matching, teaching buyouts or releases, new space or renovations, and any variance from standard IDC distribution.

Electronic proposal routing: Following software implementation over the past six months, electronic routing of proposals will begin September 1, 2015. The software system Cayuse SP will allow PIs to enter proposal-related information into a web-based form and submit it to the appropriate approvers and reviewers electronically, avoiding paper copies with signatures, and facilitating enhanced electronic record management. During the fall semester OGCA will still accept paper routing forms and enter them upon receipt in to Cayuse SP, but early adoption of electronic routing by all PIs is strongly encouraged. Beginning January 1, 2016, only Cayuse SP routing of proposal-related information will be accepted. Training for the use of Cayuse SP will be available on the web, through training sessions led by OGCA staff, and on an individual basis.

With the announcement and implementation of these updates and extensions to the Best Business Practices adopted last year, the roll-out of electronic proposal package routing and approval, clarified and streamlined responsibilities with voluntary assistance provided by departments and colleges, and the OGCA’s efforts to provide additional “customer service” in balance with UNT and sponsor compliance reviews, we hope to improve the proposal submission process for faculty members.