

## **Proposed Office of Research Policy Change Regarding the Submission of Research Proposals**

The Office of Research is responsible for submission of all applications for sponsored funding on behalf of the University of Florida. Last year, this office submitted over 5400 proposals to a range of sponsors including federal and state agencies, companies, and non-profit foundations, resulting in awards of over \$685 million. The Division of Sponsored Programs (DSP) is responsible for confirming institutional support for the application; verifying the accuracy and validity of all administrative, fiscal, and programmatic information; and ensuring the proposal is compliant with University and sponsor policy and other submission requirements.

Many of these proposals are in response to solicitations with specified deadlines. Submission of proposals at or near the sponsor deadline creates significant workflow issues for staff within DSP and the units, and increases the risk of not identifying non-compliant sections, of oversights or errors in formatting and budgeting, and of encountering technical glitches and bottlenecks. Staff within DSP and the units require sufficient time to review applications in advance of submission deadlines.

In the past, the Office of Research has strongly recommended that proposals be submitted to DSP at least two business days prior to the sponsor's published deadline. These two days provide DSP with time to identify and resolve any issues with the proposal that are inconsistent with University policy or sponsor submission requirements. This is important as these issues may result in the inability for the University to carry out the work within the budget submitted or in the proposal being rejected by the sponsor without review.

As the UF research enterprise has grown, it has become increasingly apparent that this internal submission timeline is necessary and needs to be adhered to. In response, the Office of Research is proposing a policy change whereby this two-day submission window will be strictly enforced. Under this new proposed policy, targeted to begin on June 22, 2018, any proposal responding to a published deadline ***must*** arrive in DSP submit-ready at least two UF business days prior to the Sponsor's published deadline. DSP will provide for a one-hour grace period to the deadline such that, for example, a proposal due to the sponsoring agency at 5 PM on a Friday could be submitted to DSP as late as 9 AM the preceding Thursday and still make the internal deadline. This policy would apply to any sponsored program whose solicitation is published by the sponsor at least 30 calendar days prior to the sponsor's due date. Note that this two-day deadline brings UF more closely in line with peer institutions that currently enforce deadlines of 2 days (Weill Cornell Medicine), 3 days (University of Washington, University of Minnesota), 4 days (University of Michigan) or 5 days (University of North Carolina, Stanford University, and Harvard University).

We are also considering a procedure whereby a PI and unit administration might petition DSP to process a proposal that is submitted after this internal deadline. The procedure would entail a mandatory late fee, presently proposed to be \$6000, to be paid by the PI, department, and/or college. The petition would require support from each of these entities. The objective of this is relatively simple: provide for a mechanism whereby late proposals could be submitted while providing a disincentive sufficient to make late submissions a rare event. In these cases, DSP would note that the proposal was submitted late and may not have undergone complete

administrative review. Should any part of that proposal be later found inconsistent with University, state, or federal requirements, the University may request a revised or corrected version be submitted to the sponsor or that the proposal be withdrawn. If a proposal is funded before changes could be made, the award may not be accepted unless the award meets UF's standards and DSP has department chair and dean approval.

Any late fees collected would be added to funds that directly benefit research needs within the units, including funds for the Opportunity Fund, faculty startup needs, or other college requests.

Given that this represents a significant change in how proposals are submitted here at UF, DSP will be soliciting comments on the proposed changes through March 30. We do hope that the research community recognizes the need to modify our current policy and practice so as to better utilize the support resources made available within DSP and the units. Any questions or comments should be directed to Stephanie Gray, Assistant Vice President of Research at [sgray@ufl.edu](mailto:sgray@ufl.edu).

Additional FAQs regarding sponsor submission system requirements, clarification on “submit ready” and “published deadline”, what to do when errors or omissions are found after the two-day deadline, and other details will be released soon.