FIU FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Division of Research

Memorandum

To: Faculty, Research Administrators and Deans

From: Andrés G. Gil, Vice President for Research

Subject: Changes to Procedures for Processing of Grant Applications and Deadlines for Grant Applications

Date: April 20, 2011

As many of you know, the Division of Research (DoR) recently conducted the third annual Customer Satisfaction Survey. Results from the prior two annual surveys can be found at http://research.fiu.edu/aboutUs/sponsoredActivityReports/05042009_AnnualReport.pdf. Many of the changes in systems and procedures being implemented are based on the feedback we have received from these surveys. We are in the process of analyzing the results of this year's survey, and will provide reports in various venues, including our website, the Research Advisory Council, and the Faculty Senate's Research, Scholarship, Creative Activities and Engagement Committee.

While we have not completed the analyses of the survey, preliminary results point to an important issue that we have concluded needs to be addressed immediately. Many of the respondents to the survey expressed concerns over the fact that many grants that are submitted to the DoR well ahead of the 5-day deadline, are not reviewed and submitted to the funding agency by DoR staff until one or two days prior to the funding agency's submission deadline. This issue has been raised in past discussions with the Faculty Senate's Research, Scholarship, Creative Activities and Engagement Committee, and last year at the Faculty Senate. At that time, there was a recommendation for stricter enforcement of the 5-day deadline, and a suggestion that we begin to process applications based on a "first-come-first-served" basis. The challenge we have had is that too many applications arrive at DoR beyond the 5-day deadline and we truly want to submit all applications. For example, this past January, 18.9% of applications were received on the same day as the agency due date, 34% were received 24 hours prior to agency due date, and 83% were received with fewer days than the 5-day deadline. Therefore, in our efforts to submit all applications, those that arrived on time are set aside to cater to those that arrived late, and in essence, most applications are submitted within 24 hours of the agency's deadline. This is not a sound practice in terms of quality of work and it seriously compromises our ability to review the applications for all agency requirements. Moreover, with the electronic submission process to federal agencies, there is little room for errors, and the high volume of last minute submissions increases the possibility of errors in the submission process.

Based on the feedback from the survey, the discussions I have had with the Research Advisory Council, and with the Faculty Senate's Research, Scholarship, Creative Activities and Engagement Committee, I have determined that beginning on Wednesday, June 1, 2011, the DoR will establish new procedures for the submission of grant applications. The changes will be as follows:
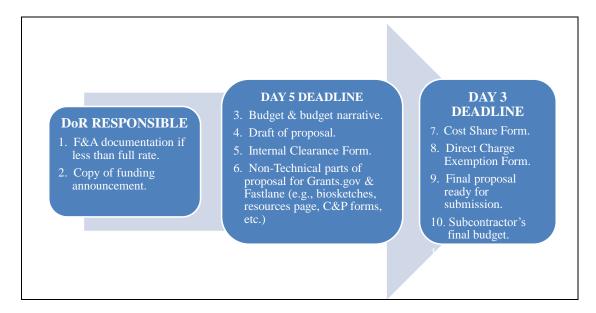
1. We will reduce the materials that are required to be submitted to the DoR within the 5-day deadline. Table 1 below shows the current requirements and Figure 1 illustrates the new requirements. As shown on the Table and Figure, the finalized proposal will have a 3-day, rather than the current 5-day deadline, and items 1 and 2 will no longer be needed, since DoR will obtain them.

Table 1 – Current requirements of documents due to DoR within 5-days of funding agency submission deadline

Item
1) F&A documentation if sponsor pays less than full F&A rate
2) Copy of announcement (e.g., RFP, RFA, FCOA)
3) Budget & budget narrative
4) Draft of proposal
5) Internal Clearance Form (ICF)
6) Non-technical sections of the proposal for Grants.gov, Fastlane, etc.
7) Cost Share Form
8) Direct Charge Exemption Form
9) Finalized proposal ready for submission
10) If there is a subcontractor, subcontractor's finalized proposal and budget
11) If there are external collaborators, letters from collaborators

Figure 1 – New (June 1, 2011) Timeline of Required Documents Due to DoR for Grant Submissions

2. *Center and large research team applications will require three additional days to those listed on Figure 1.*
3. Applications that do not meet the deadlines listed on Figure1 will not be processed unless the Dean provides a request to the Vice President for Research delineating the reasons for missing the deadlines. Based on the explanation provided by the Dean, the Vice President for Research will determine whether an exemption is warranted.
4. Within 24 hours of submission of materials to the DoR, the Principal Investigator will be notified via email of the name of the DoR Pre-Award staff member that will be working on the application.
5. The DoR staff member working on the application will notify the Principal Investigator via email at the end of each day regarding progress made in the submission of the application.

I am aware that there are many challenges in the preparation of grant applications, and that internal deadlines can be challenging when awareness of funding opportunities gives researchers very little time to prepare applications. We are committed to reducing administrative burdens on researchers and allowing them more time to focus on the science. I expect that the other changes we will have by July 1 (i.e., electronic routing of Internal Clearance for approvals, and placing of DoR staff in the Colleges) will begin to have a positive impact.