

Roles & Responsibilities in Research Administration at UAB

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to identify best practices for many commonly encountered pre- and post-award activities at UAB and to provide guidance regarding the responsible parties for each. Please note that the below is not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive and is subject to change. While there may be some variations in processes from unit to unit (both central and campus), the below describes general roles for processes and identifies the appropriate party that has primary responsibility for different activities throughout the life cycle of a sponsored award.

Principal Investigators

Principal investigators (PI), as designated by the Institution and approved by the sponsor, are responsible for the scientific or technical direction as well as the budgetary and financial oversight of the project, with appropriate resources and support. While departmental administrators, grants managers, and unit accountants along with central accounting personnel provide PIs essential support in this area, it is the PI who must make the crucial financial decisions related to expenditures (under allowable guidelines by funding agency/sponsor and state of Alabama/UAB). Additionally, PIs have the primary responsibility to ensure that faculty, students, staff, post docs and visiting scholars receive the appropriate training, instruction and mentorship necessary to work safely in his/her laboratory. In addition, the PI shall ensure that equipment and supplies are in place so that research can be conducted safely. Moreover, the PI is responsible for taking the actions necessary for his/her laboratory to comply with UAB policies as well as with all federal, state and local laws.

Additionally, PI responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- identifying funding opportunities;
- initiating the grant submission process within their unit according to OSP and unit timing guidelines; following institutional and sponsor instructions as well as terms and conditions;
- submitting annual and final reports required by sponsoring agencies;
- ensuring the proper recording and storage of data;
- reporting of intellectual property;
- ensuring proper handling of hazardous materials;
- directing the use and care of equipment;
- identifying and addressing issues regarding research ethics and scientific misconduct;
- for research involving human subjects, the use of animals, or export control, ensuring that students, post docs and research staff receive information and complete the necessary training prior to conducting any research in these areas;
- obtaining required approvals from relevant research regulatory oversight boards and committees (including IRB, IACUC, CIRB, IBC, RRSC, CSEMC, etc.) prior to initiating the research, and complying with the approved protocol and the conflict of interest management plan, if any;
- informing their research staff, post docs and students of those University policies and procedures that may impact their research projects such as those regarding purchasing, travel, and intellectual property;
- timely reviewing, ensuring accuracy of, requesting necessary revisions and certifying effort reports, biosketch, and Other Support documents; working with unit to rectify and adjust effort as needed throughout the life of the award.
- informing members of their research teams, including students and post docs, of the source of support of the research and of their salary or stipend;

- having first-hand knowledge of the effort and amount and type of contribution each person makes to a research project;
- maintaining, timely updating and ensuring accuracy of all disclosures, including but not limited to external activity requests, financial interest disclosures, professional public service activities, Biosketches and Other Support documents, understanding/complying with applicable laws, regulations, UAB policy, sponsored guidelines/requirements and department/unit/center policy;
- reviewing all monthly statements and subawardee invoices to ensure expenditures are consistent with sponsor requirements and reflect a subawardee is meeting all contractual obligations.
- initiating and working with unit staff on all reporting to sponsor (annual and final).

Department/Centers/Unit Research Administrators

Department administrators and unit research administrators are responsible for supporting the PIs to ensure that research proposals are prepared completely and processed timely and that grant awards are administered in compliance with University policies, procedures and federal or state laws and regulations. Duties include, but are not limited to:

- along with PI, identifying funding opportunities;
- reviewing program guidelines in order to assist PIs with proposal submission and award upkeep/compliance;
- reviewing accounting statements to ensure that expenses are charged appropriately, making these available to the PI and bring any questions/concerns to their attention;
- initiating any requests from PI for amendments to funds (e.g., carryforward, NCE) via OSP;
- assisting the PI in planning grant expenditures to ensure timely close-out;
- assisting the PI on effort reporting and other reporting requirements;
- ensuring all vendors/subawardees are registered with UAB iSupplier System;
- assist PI and department with identifying funds to cover project cost overruns;
- processing subcontract invoices upon PI approval;
- assisting with ensuring compliance with existing University and departmental policies
- verifying and/or compiling business documents for proposals such as Other Support and Biosketches, according to department/unit/center practices and applicable sponsor requirements and confirm with the faculty member that the information is correct.

Deans, Department Chairs, Units, Divisions (Leaders)

In supporting sponsored research activities by their faculty, post docs, students, and research staff, schools and departments assume certain responsibilities. When deans (or their designee) and department chairs (or their designee) approve a proposal via the OSP Checklist(s) or applicable system, they are acknowledging the PI will have access to the adequate facilities as well as provide the scientific, technical, administrative, and financial leadership required for the proper conduct of the project or program including submission of all required reports. In doing so, they are responsible for the ensuring following:

- the PI has resources for review of scholarly merit of the project;
- the competence of the PI in the area of research;
- the recognition of applicable safety standards and regulations and the existence of plans for appropriate action to comply with them;
- the ability of the PI to successfully manage the financial/budgetary and scientific aspects of the proposed research project;
- compliance with existing University and departmental policies;
- acknowledgment that, to the extent possible, the research project relates to the academic objectives of the department and provides opportunities for graduate and/or undergraduate education or research training;

- the availability of University and department space, facilities, and equipment including information technology resources to fulfill project needs;
- adequate review of financial commitments (e.g., grants budget, determination of the department to prevent cost overruns, external activities)
- the capability of the department to provide necessary administrative support (personnel and supplies) including monthly analysis of statements, burn rate calculations, biosketch and Other Support assistance
- assurance that the project will be conducted with appropriate management and oversight.
- provide necessary resources for Dept. Research Admin/delegate to provide timely information on expenditures and “burn rate”
- provide necessary resources for Dept. Research Admin/delegate to verify and/or compile business documents for proposals such as Other Support and Biosketches

Research Personnel

- All personnel are responsible for following the [UAB Enterprise Code of Conduct](#), including following rules, laws, regulations, contracts, and UAB policies and procedures applicable to one’s UAB work or activities, being proactive to prevent and detect compliance violations, and reporting suspected compliance violations.
- Research personnel are responsible for complying with the approved protocol and the conflict of interest management plan, if any, of relevant research regulatory oversight boards and committees (including IRB, IACUC, CIRB, IBC, RRSC, CSEMC, etc.).
- Staff are responsible for successfully completing required training and adhering to safe practices while working or doing research in laboratories. They must follow the required work practices and use personal protective equipment and engineering controls. Additionally, they are responsible for properly using university-supplied materials and equipment and for exercising good judgment in safely carrying out their work by following established procedures.
- All staff members are responsible for promptly notifying and reporting potentially unsafe conditions and environmental health hazards, as well as injuries and illnesses in the laboratory, to the PI and the PI’s designated laboratory representative according the [UAB Safety Manual](#) and the [UAB General Safety Work Manual](#).

Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)

Under the leadership of the Associate Vice President for Research Business Operations, OSP reviews, approves, and provides institutional signature for proposals, awards, and contracts as these documents relate to externally sponsored research and projects. In addition, OSP is responsible for monitoring compliance with federal regulations, UAB policies and SOPs, along with sponsoring agencies’ policies and procedures regarding the management of non-financial aspects of sponsored research and projects. OSP takes responsibility for training of researchers and staff in preparation of grant/contract applications and in the non-financial management of sponsored programs. OSP functions as a liaison between sponsors and the Principal Investigator in matters of policy, procedures, and regulations and provides communication, guidance, education, and training on proposals, awards, and contracts to the UAB research community. The following activities are examples of OSP responsibilities:

- creates, and consistently implements, well-documented procedures that facilitate the conduct of sponsored activities, while ensuring compliance with sponsor and university requirements
- ensures seamless research administration from proposal review/submission through timely award closeout
- provides effective stewardship of sponsor policies and promotes positive sponsor interactions
- partners with other university entities to develop a shared agreement on practices and procedures
- provides college and department support staff with the necessary tools, resources and training so they can also enable investigators to successfully engage in scholarly activities

- creates valid metrics that measure performance and progress toward OSP goals
- streamlines administrative processes and minimizes the administrative burden for investigators conducting sponsored programs, by providing easily accessible and intuitive administrative information systems
- Populates and updates sponsored research database, including regular status updates for all awards
- Works with PI or Unit staff on developing a compliant submission and signs/submits proposals to sponsor
- Audits and provides feedback of annual reports, Other Support, Biosketches, Budgets, and other award materials
- Coordinates with other Central offices on study start up compliance approvals (IRB, CIRB, etc)
- Provides guidance and answers to PI/unit on questions about sponsor policies and submission requirements

Vice President for Research

The Vice President for Research (VPR) is UAB's chief official responsible for providing effective leadership for all central administrative research units/centers serving the research enterprise at UAB, nurturing excellent research, scholarship and creative activity by faculty, staff, and students. Works with the university and school administrations along with city and state leaders to establish new programs and research directions that promote and enhance the university's contribution to new knowledge and the growth of the economies of the city and state. The VPRs office ensures the financial base of support for Center/Core activities to maintain the university's research infrastructure. The Office of Research under the VPR also has responsibilities for purchasing and maintaining a research and compliance portal for faculty and staff to use as a research management dashboard. The system should also include access to research opportunities updated on a routing and ongoing basis.

Provide the structure and guidance to submit specialized institutional grants, or those that require an internal selection process (one per institution). Through the formulation of compliance entities, policies, procedures, systems, and educational programs that support research and related activities, the VPR supports the development and implementation of high quality research initiatives and establishes and maintains a culture of compliance among faculty, students, and staff involved in research and related activities. Lastly, in this capacity, s/he provides direction, resources, and oversight to help ensure that allegations of research misconduct are managed in accordance with federal regulations and university and sponsoring agency policies and procedures.

Grants and Contracts Accounting/Financial Affairs

Under the leadership of the Senior Vice President for Financial Affairs, the Grants and Contracts Accounting assures that the University is in compliance with federal laws and regulations related to financial responsibilities for the management of externally sponsored research and other sponsored programs. Grants and Contracts Accounting responsibilities include the following:

- When designated by the PI (via the extramural checklist) prepares invoices and letter of credit draws to sponsors on a timely basis.
- prepares financial reports for federal agencies as required
- prepares interim and final financial reports in coordination with PI/units
- performs risk analysis for certain categories of expenditures to ensure compliance with applicable regulations
- identifies reportability of program income
- monitors levels of program income
- provides institutional oversight on cost transfers
- in accordance with sponsor approval and guidelines, oversees the implementation of carry forward of unexpended funds
- resolves payment problems with sponsors, in conjunction with PI/units

- prepares, negotiates and administers the institution's indirect cost and fringe benefit rates in conjunction with the Department of Finance and other university departments
- assists departments in the proper development and administration of service center rates
- provides training as it pertains to the financial administration of sponsored projects to different constituencies
- provides oversight regarding financial compliance
- works with Compliance Officer and others to resolve instances of discovered financial noncompliance
- provides oversight and coordination of financial audits related to sponsored grants/projects. This includes audits associated with the UAB Annual Report, funding agency desk reviews, and federally required uniform guidance report
- provides equipment tracking for instruments purchased with federal funds
- Oversees the institutional financial and HR databases (Oracle)
- Reviews and approves all PO and Check Request purchases

Office of Counsel

The Office of the Counsel provides legal counsel, representation, and oversight of work on the wide range of legal matters affecting UAB. Under the leadership of the General Counsel, professional attorneys advise institutional leadership, central offices, administrators, and school/college leadership on legal and regulatory questions related to UAB's activities, including transactional matters, dispute resolution, and policy formulation. They also represent the interests of the University in administrative and judicial proceedings.