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University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture Sponsored Programs Office

2015 October

Office of Sponsored Programs Newsletter

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Message from the Director

This is the first issue to include an article written by two of our faculty. Drs. Jennifer DeBruyn and Sean Schaeffer's article *10 Tips for Successful NSF*

Proposals is a must read in this climate of reduced Federal funding. Thank you, Drs. DeBruyn and Schaeffer for your contribution. Please send articles regarding information you learned at sessions/conferences to Sponsored Programs to include in our newsletter.

Speaking of NSF, Cathy Creswell has included an article about a new NSF funding opportunity called *Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy and Water Systems (INFEWS)*.

I want to alert you to some important upcoming events. In **December** the University will replace PAMS, our electronic routing and approval system, with a new software program, **Evisions** (page 4). The Office of Sponsored Programs will be attending training on this new program **November 12 and 13** resulting in very limited availability from our staff.

Check out Jane's Compliance Info on page 5 to learn when the next learning opportunities will occur. Failure to have IRB and IACUC approval prior to award receipt has caused our sponsors to withhold over \$1 million in awards. Learn how to avoid funding delays on page 2.

It is Courtney Holbert's turn to share her bio with you. Hopefully, the bios enable you to get to know our Office of Sponsored Programs staff a little better.

Since our University-wide working group completed their review and modification of fiscal policies to align with the new Uniform Guidance we haven't seen much activity. However, the Uniform Guidance requiring a \$3000 bid limit has been pushed back to July 2017.

Our Office will be closed November 26 and 27 celebrating Thanksgiving and December 21 through 25. Please remember to submit early and stay in touch with your coordinator. Our next edition will be in January. Hope you have a safe holiday season.

Thank you,
Debbie Hampstead



> The UTK Office of Research and Engagement (ORE) has prepared a guide for communicating with federal program officers when seeking funding for research. This guide incorporates input from UT faculty who have experience with DoD, DOE, NIH, and NSF, including some who served as program officers.

Link: https://utworks.tennessee.edu/research/pdt/Toolkit/communicating_with_federal_program_officers.pdf

COMPLIANCE CORNER >>>

by Jane Burns



> Get Your Money! Handle Compliance Issues Early and Often

You and your team work tirelessly for months to put together a compelling proposal. Finally, it is submitted. You celebrate. You sleep. You move on to the rest of your life and work. And you anxiously wait to hear if it will be funded. Weeks later, you get the fantastic news your proposal is being funded!

Then comes the bad news – you have a list of items that must be done before you can get your award. You get calls from the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). The agency gives a deadline and threatens funds may be withheld. The pressure is on. You contact compliance officers (“How quickly can we get an IRB letter??”) and your research team (“Yes, all modules of the CITI training!”) Deadlines pass. Funds are withheld. Work is delayed.

To avoid headaches and get funding as soon as possible, handle compliance issues early. As soon as you submit a proposal:

- If your project involves animal or human subjects, start submission/amendment of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) or Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols. ***In the past month, USDA withheld \$1,300,000 on three UTIA awards due to IRB approval not yet being in place.***
- Determine who will be required to take Conflict of Interest (COI) or Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training. Take the training and remind your team members they will need to take it, too. Contact Jane Burns with questions and to help you keep up with these requirements. ***Public Health Service agencies (including NIH) require COI training before work takes place on their projects, and USDA NIFA now requires RCR training.***
- If your project involves biological or radioactive materials, safety issues, possible export-controlled items/technology, or any other compliance issues, visit the website and/or contact the compliance officer with any questions.

Touch base with your collaborators at other organizations to be sure they understand compliance requirements. Projects with sub-awards will require additional time to coordinate compliance issues, especially if the organizations do not have procedures in place and have to rely on UT procedures and committees.

As soon as you get any indication a project might be funded, contact OSP and compliance officers. Think through all of the compliance issues and take steps needed to be sure funds are not held up when an award is made.

For an existing project, don't forget about requirements. Notify Jane Burns when new people start working on the project, to be sure training requirements are met. When scope of work or time periods change, submit protocol amendments well in advance.

We are here to help you get and keep your funding.



> **The National Science Foundation fiscal year 2016 budget request continues commitment to discovery, innovation and learning.**

The FY16 NSF request calls for \$7.7 billion, an increase of \$379 million over FY15, which is an increase of 5.2 %

One new program is especially of interest to the Agricultural community.

Innovations at the **N**exus of **F**ood, **E**nergy and **W**ater **S**ystems (**INFEWS**), \$75 million, is an NSF-wide investment that aims to understand, design, and model the interconnected food, energy, and water system through an interdisciplinary research effort that incorporates all areas of science and engineering and addresses the natural, social, and human-built factors involved.

In March, NSF conducted workshops to invite and explore topics. It was one of the few times that NSF has asked the Agricultural Sciences for input.

In FY 2016, NSF will issue a multi-directorate INFEWS solicitation to support integrated research towards creating a comprehensive food-energy-water socio-technical systems model; to advance knowledge/technologies that foster more efficient, safe, and secure use of resources within the food-energy-water nexus; and to support an integrated approach to build the next-generation INFEWS workforce. INFEWS is planned to run from 2016 – 2021.

The food-energy-water theme may be emphasized in NSF-wide programs, such as Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU), Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems (CNH), Macrosystems biology, and those related to data science (e.g., BIGDATA and Data Infrastructure Building Blocks (DIBBs)). In FY 2016, INFEWS will also be one of the priority research theme areas for the NSF Research Traineeship (NRT) program as part of an effort to create innovative graduate education efforts in areas of national need. In addition, NEON (National Ecological Observatory Network) will continue to phase into operations, including full implementation of the stream ecology experiment (STREON) with the potential for broad impact on this NSF-wide investment.

Each year, NSF receives about 48,000 proposals, and through its competitive merit review process, awards about 11,000 grants that engage the talents of about 300,000 researchers, postdoctoral fellows, trainees, teachers and students.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

NOVEMBER 26th and 27th ♦ DECEMBER 21st through the 25th

> **Office of Sponsored Programs spotlight is on Courtney Holbert**

Hi, I am Courtney Holbert. I have been working as a Coordinator in our Office for 4 years. I handle various proposals, as well as issuing all subawards for the Institute and FFATA reporting. I earned my Master's Degree from the University of Tennessee in Social Work with a concentration in Management and Community Practice. This degree has proven to be useful in my career where I started out by writing a winning grant application for a local nonprofit whom later employed me to manage the award. Proposal development, reporting and award management has been my passion ever since. In my spare time, I enjoy leading worship at OneLife Church in Powell, running, reading and spending time with my husband, Jason, and 2 boys, Cody and Collin.





- 1. Find the right program(s) for your research.** You could have the best proposal in the world, but if it doesn't fit the program, it won't get funded. Use the NSF.gov website to browse the various directorates and find the program(s) that best match your research area. Don't limit yourself to one directorate. For example, biology research is funded not just by the Biology directorate, but also Engineering, Geosciences, etc. depending on the system and questions. Look carefully at the awards previously funded from that program to see examples of what they fund.
- 2. Consider multiple programs.** Contrary to popular belief, a proposal co-reviewed by two programs is not necessarily more likely to be rejected. In fact, they can have a higher success rate, since the costs are split and it is a smaller investment for each program. If you think your program fits more than one program, contact both program directors to gauge their interest. When you submit your proposal, you can indicate on the coversheet the primary and secondary programs where it should be considered. Pre-proposals are only reviewed by the primary program, so as a heads up, send the program director an email saying that you ultimately would like this to be co-reviewed with a secondary program.
- 3. Contact a Program Director.** Program directors are not an obstacle to be overcome, they are a valuable resource! Contact the program director with a 1 page (or less!) description of your research. They'll tell you if it fits. And if it doesn't, they often suggest other programs where it may. What should your 1 page description look like? The first paragraph should give enough general introduction to your field that the program director will know what you are studying, and the second should outline the specific aims and hypotheses you plan to address. If possible, meet a program director in person: It can only help when your proposal is being reviewed if the program director remembers you and your science.
- 4. Special proposals: EAGER (Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research) and RAPID (Rapid Response Grants).** These are special grants that can be given out by any program. They are internally reviewed (i.e. the program directors decide to award at their discretion), and have no set deadline. If your research fits one of these, contact your program director with your 1 page idea to see if it would be appropriate. (Don't send in an unsolicited proposal – the program director should know it's coming.)
- 5. Special proposals: Small Grants** In the Division of Environmental Biology (DEB), grants requesting <\$150,000 for 1-2 years qualify as "small grants". Indicate this with 'SG:' at the start of the title. These have a slightly higher probability of getting funded as the investment is much smaller. Consider this for new or seed ideas to get something going. Once you demonstrate to the program director that you're a good return on their investment, you can go after the bigger pots of money.
- 6. Read the instructions.** NSF has specific instructions in both their general Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) as well as the proposal solicitation for your chosen program. Pay close attention and follow all instructions or your proposal will be returned without review. The OSP staff is an incredible resource in helping you decipher proposal guidelines – use them!
- 7. Craft a winning preproposal.** Some programs, including DEB, have moved to a pre-proposal system. Your pre-proposal should focus on selling the scientific ideas and intellectual merit of your work. Since you have limited space, reduce the amount of methodological detail or description of broader impacts (but don't skip entirely – reviewers need to see you have thought out the approach and impacts). Use your space instead to focus on the overarching research questions, the specific questions addressed in this proposal and why we NEED to answer these questions.

10 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL NSF PROPOSALS (continued) >>>

8. **Selling your science for NSF: focus on the HOW and WHY, not the WHAT.** NSF is different from USDA and NIH. NSF is interested in foundational, transformational science that will advance the field. So focus less on the system you are working on, and more on how your work could apply across systems. For example, if you study a tick-borne pathogen that causes human illness, focus on the mechanics of the system that would inform other pathogen-host systems (e.g. how do evolutionary processes contribute to vector range expansion), rather than system-specific questions (e.g. does factor X reduce infection rates of this pathogen in humans). System specific outputs (e.g. human health, crop yield) should be listed as broader impacts of your work. Too much emphasis on these outputs, however, will flag your proposal as more USDA or NIH jurisdiction, and NSF won't fund it.
9. **Don't forget broader impacts!** While a great broader impacts statement won't float a proposal with poor science, a poor statement can sink a proposal with great science. At UTIA, I think we have a huge advantage here. We work on real-world problems and are actively involved outreach and engagement through UT Extension – think about how you can tap into our existing programs (e.g. county agents, inservice training, field days, 4-H) to get your science into the hands of stakeholders. If you don't regularly do these things, considering including your extension colleagues as co-PIs, which will demonstrate to NSF that you are serious about outreach. When writing a full proposal, include specifics in your broader impacts statement. For example, don't just say "students will be trained in bioinformatics." Give as many details as you can: how many students, what type of students, how will they be recruited, trained and evaluated etc.
10. **Participate in a review panel.** The best way to understand how reviewers think is to be one yourself! Contact a program director with your 2 page biosketch to let them know you are willing to serve as a reviewer on a panel. Not only will you see what successful proposals look like, you will also be able to meet and interact with the program director. It is a significant time commitment, but worth the payoff if it helps you write a successful proposal!

UPDATES >>>

> Uniform Guidance Update

We are pleased to announce that, at the request of the Council on Government Relations (COGR), the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP), other representative organizations, and many universities, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has delayed implementation of some sections of Uniform Guidance (UG). Specifically, the Procurement Standards, §200.317 through §200.326, has been **extended** for one year. For most Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) including The University of Tennessee, this means the effective date will be July 1, 2017 (i.e., FY2018) unless it is modified or delayed again. The sections that have been postponed set a threshold for purchases without a competitive process at \$3,000, which—for most institutions—is not consistent with current institutional and state purchasing regulations. COGR and our other representative organizations are trying to get the threshold raised to \$10,000, which is consistent with most institutional and state purchasing regulations. The year-long delay in implementation of the current proposed threshold will allow the community to engage with OMB to address issues such as the micropurchase threshold and other related issues.

EVISIONS: Evisions will look and work much like PAMS. There are two parts to the Evisions program:

1. SP is the routing system which will look much like PAMS, and
2. 424 the grants.gov package that can be submitted directly to the sponsor.

All University campuses will be using the same system, so all components of a multi-campus proposal will be visible to all the investigators and department admin staff. All PAMS information will be migrated to Evisions prior to the conversion.

Grant Workshop >>>

> SAVE THE DATE:

Grant Writers' Seminar and Workshops LLC (<http://www.grantcentral.com/>) will present a one-day grantsmanship seminar

Write Winning Grant Proposals February 3, 2016 ♦ 8:00 am to 5:00 pm in Hollingsworth Auditorium

All UTIA faculty (teaching, research, extension, veterinary college) are invited to attend. The seminar is being supported by AgResearch, Extension, CASNR and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Please visit their website for additional information. We will be working with Grant Writers' Seminar and Workshops in several ways. The Phase I seminar on February 3rd will be followed by the Phase II workshop in which 15 to 30 faculty will be selected for one-on-one work with their consultants in the development and submission of a proposal to a federal agency. The Phase II workshop takes place over several months; additional information can be found on their website. Phase I participation is required for participation in Phase II.

Additional information will be forthcoming as February 3rd approaches!

COMPLIANCE INFO >>>

by Jane Burns

UTIA provides compliance learning sessions, usually provided at lunchtime, to help UTIA faculty, staff, and students. Please join us for the following scheduled sessions:

- Tuesday, October 13, 2015, 12:00 - 1:00 pm
Human Subjects Research and the IRB (UT IRB Coordinator and Chair)
- Tuesday, November 10, 2015, 12:00 - 1:00 pm
Agricultural Economic Espionage – A Growing Threat (Special Agent Beth O'Brien, FBI Knoxville)



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES >>>

- **NIH:** http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/funding_program.htm
- **USDA AFRI:** <http://nifa.usda.gov/afri-request-applications>
- **NSF:** <http://www.nsf.gov/funding/index.jsp>
- **Grants.gov:** <http://www.grants.gov/>
- **Rural Assistance Center:** Various TNFunding Opportunities at <http://www.raconline.org/states/tennessee/funding>
- **Philanthropy News Digest (Foundation Center):** <http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/>
- **Morris Animal Foundation:** <http://www.morrisanimalfoundation.org/researchers/>
- **2016 NRA Foundation Grants now being accepted! DUE to aggrant@utk.edu by **DECEMBER 7, 2015** ([LINK](#))**
- **2016 Tennessee Soybean Promotion Board Funding!**
 - * Email aggrant@utk.edu with your intent to apply
 - * December 1—Finalized in TERA PAMS including Progress Report
 - * January 20-21st—TSPB meeting in Pigeon Forge

UTIA Office of Sponsored Programs Facebook & Twitters pages are avenues we use to keep you up to date with the ever changing events in Research Administration.

An additional source of information is our web page. ([link](#))

You may submit questions, ideas or suggestions for improvements of our newsletter to aggrant@utk.edu.

