Guidelines for Student Proposals and Awards

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Purpose

Applying for and receiving external funding for student research and creative projects may finance some or all of the costs of the proposed work. External funding usually comes in the form of a grant, contract, or fellowship/scholarship.

Some funding agencies may accept proposals from **individual**s and make awards directly to students. Awards made directly to a student may be taxable and students are responsible for following applicable IRS rules. Other sponsors may require that proposals come from a particular type of **institution,** such as UNC (a public institution of higher education) or the UNC Foundation (a private 501c3 organization) on behalf of the student, in which case a sponsor will make the award only to the submitting institution.

This guidance document outlines the two routes of student proposal submission and the main policies/procedures that apply to each.

Applicability

These guidelines apply to all UNC students proposing <u>externally funded</u> projects. Faculty advisors should also fully understand and promote these guidelines.

Definitions

Authorizing Official –an individual authorized to act for the institution, and to assume the obligations imposed by federal, state and local laws, regulations, requirements and conditions, as well as institutional policy that applies to a proposal and award. The Authorizing Official endorses, signs and submits proposals to sponsors on behalf of the institution. At UNC, proposal authorization rests with the Office of Research and Office of Sponsored Programs.

Award – the provision of funds from a sponsor to an entity for the purpose of conducting research or other sponsored activities.

Contract – an agreement to provide a product or service that is of direct benefit to the awarding agency. Contracts provide for payments to the university, which cover allowable project costs or payment of a fixed price for satisfactory completion of the project.

Direct Costs –costs that can be specifically attributed to a particular sponsored project, a particular university-funded research project, an instructional activity (including departmental research), any other institutional activity, or that can be directly assigned to such activities relatively easily and with a high degree of accuracy, without exceptions or "unless" statements.

Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A) - F&A costs are synonymous with "indirect" costs, which are costs incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity. UNC has a federally approved F&A cost rate (contact OSP for current rate). Deviation from the negotiated rate requires review and approval from Office of Research.

Fellowship – A fellowship is a financial award given to graduate students designed to cover academic and personal expenses while working on advanced degrees. Fellowship responsibilities and conditions vary by sponsor. Fellowships may target a specific student group or field of study.

Grant – an agreement to accomplish something for the public good in exchange for money, property or services from a sponsor. Most agencies use a grant document for research awards to universities.

Project – the scope of work an investigator conducts or proposes to conduct. For the purposes of student projects at UNC, a project will be considered 'new' if there is not a signed *Proposal Review and Endorsement Form* (PREF) on file with Office of Sponsored Programs, or if the overall budget or scope of the Project changes from what was originally approved in the PREF.

Proposal – synonymous with 'grant application'; a formal request for funding/support of a project/activity, submitted to a potential sponsor.

Scholarship - A form of financial assistance that typically does not require repayment or employment and is usually made to students who demonstrate or show potential for distinction, usually in academic performance.

Sponsor – an entity (e.g.: federal agency; state agency; non-profit/foundation; individual, etc.) financing the research project or other sponsored activity.

Sponsored Research - research and development activities sponsored by Federal and non-Federal agencies and organizations. This term includes activities involving the training of individuals in research techniques (commonly called research training) where such activities utilize the same facilities as other research and development activities and where such activities are not included in the instruction function.

Guidelines

Applying for External Funding

Students and their faculty advisors should review the grant application instructions carefully, and pay special attention to the eligibility criteria. Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) at 970-351-1907 or osp@unco.edu for assistance in determining if a proposal can/should/must be submitted by the student as an individual, through UNC OSP, or through UNC Foundation. OSP will contact a sponsor on behalf of a student to seek clarifications on funding program guidelines and eligibility.

In all cases, preparing a competitive proposal takes time, and students should plan to have a written narrative ready for faculty advisor review at least one month prior to the sponsor's deadline. Other components of preparing the grant application can take time and must be factored into the preparation

timeline, such as getting the budget finalized, filling out forms, getting letters of support, working with university offices on the submission (OSP or UNC Foundation) and obtaining any required approvals.

Research Compliance and Training

Human and Animal Subjects Research

All proposals and awards must follow university procedures related to research compliance and training, regardless of method of proposal submission. For student projects, students must work through their faculty advisors to submit protocol(s) for approval to the applicable review boards.

When using human or animal subjects in research, review and approval of research protocols must be obtained from the applicable university committees *prior* to the conduct of ANY research activity. When using **human subjects** in research, the *Institutional Review Board (IRB)* procedures apply. When using **animal subjects** in research, the *Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)* procedures apply.

Training in human and animal subjects research is available through a free online resource made possible by UNC's membership in CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) from the University of Miami. Some grant applications require training in the ***Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)***, another free CITI module. OSP provides access to CITI training and facilitates options for additional in-person RCR training required by some sponsors.

Financial Conflict of Interest

UNC's Policy on Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) Pertaining to Sponsored Programs (University Regulations 3-3-402) establishes standards to provide a reasonable expectation that work supported by externally funded awards will be free from bias resulting from financial conflicts of interest of project personnel.

Prior to submitting a proposal to an external funding agency (and at other times as specified in the UNC FCOI Policy and Implementing Procedures), all persons involved in the design, conduct, and reporting of the proposed project must disclose any significant financial interests they hold that are related to their institutional responsibilities. Should any significant financial interest be deemed by the university to create a financial conflict of interest, a plan will be developed and implemented to manage or remove the conflict. In some instances, training in FCOI is require of project personnel prior to beginning work on the project.

Proposal Submission Routes

The submission process depends on sponsor guidelines as to who may submit the proposal and how the sponsor will make the award. A student proposal may be submitted in one of two ways:

1. **Proposal is submitted by the University or the Foundation (via OSP) and the award is made to the** *University of Northern Colorado* **or** *University of Northern Colorado Foundation, Inc.*

   Proposal Preparation:

A. Notice of Intent to Submit (NOI) - The student must fill out the NOI via the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) website. Enter student name as Principal Investigator and faculty advisor name as Co-Principal Investigator. Enter all other known information, as applicable. OSP will contact the student and/or faculty advisor to confirm if it is a proposal for a *new* project or simply a new proposal to a new sponsor for an *existing* project.

B. Proposal elements - The student should work with his/her faculty advisor to write the proposal narrative and gather letters of support if required by the funding agency. Student must work with OSP to develop a project budget that is consistent with university policies and Sponsor requirements for externally funded projects. University policies governing F&A (indirect) costs apply to all student proposals.

C. PI/Co-PI Status – if a Sponsor requires that the student is identified in the proposal as the Principal Investigator (PI), UNC will allow this on paper only. Because students do not have eligibility for PI status at UNC, the student's faculty advisor is required to assume responsibility for providing internal guidance and leadership for the scientific, technical, administrative, and financial aspects of a sponsored project. For this reason, the student's faculty advisor will be automatically recorded as Co-PI for the student's project(s).

D. Proposal Review and Endorsement Form (PREF):
   - *If the proposal is for a **new project**,* OSP will send the student a PREF for review, completion, and signatures, and return to OSP.
   - *If the proposal is for an **existing project***, but seeking funding from a *new* sponsor, a new PREF is not required. The prior approved PREF will apply for the life of a student project, so long as budget and scope remain unchanged.

Proposal Submission: The proposal will be submitted by OSP and only an Authorizing Official of UNC or UNC Foundation (as applicable) may sign-off on a proposal. If the sponsor requires the student to submit the proposal via a members-only portal, this is acceptable only after the student has cleared all OSP processes. A proposal is not authorized for submission until after the PREF is completed, signed and returned to OSP (or, confirmed to be on-file for existing projects) and the FCOI disclosure form for student and faculty advisor (required for each proposal, by UR 3-3-402) are signed and returned to OSP.

Award Acceptance: All paperwork related to the award must be reviewed by the Office of Sponsored Programs prior to acceptance. If an authorizing signature is required, an Authorizing Official of UNC or UNC Foundation (as applicable) will sign and return to the sponsor directly.

Conduct of the Award:

A. The student and the faculty advisor are responsible for closely managing the award and complying with all award terms and conditions, including submission of any required reports.

B. Awards made to the university on behalf of the student are considered "restricted funds". All university procedures governing use of the funds (e.g. state travel procedures, purchasing procedures, etc.) must be followed.

C. The student and faculty advisor will be notified of the fund number and/or activity code to use for project expenses. OSP will process an Approval Queue Authorization (if update is needed) to give the faculty advisor financial authority on the fund. Faculty advisor is responsible for all financial transactions on his/her respective students' projects.

NOTE: Students must follow all university policies and procedures related to proposal submission and award acceptance if the university will administer the award. If students do not follow applicable policies and procedures (e.g. submit proposals without institutional approval), the university may refuse to accept the award.

2. **Proposal is submitted by the student and the award is made directly to the student**

Proposal Preparation: the student should work with their faculty advisor to prepare the application. The student should obtain express prior permission from his/her faculty advisor to conduct the project on UNC property and/or using UNC resources.
Proposal Submission: The student submits the proposal directly to the sponsor without involvement of the Office of Sponsored Programs or the UNC Foundation. The application does not require or include any authorized institutional signature from either the University or the Foundation.
Award Acceptance: The award and check are made to the student directly; neither the university nor the Foundation will accept the award or funds.
Conduct of the work: The student is responsible for conducting the work, spending the funds in accordance with the approved budget, and submitting all reports required by the sponsor. It is expected that the student's faculty advisor will maintain oversight of all work conducted on UNC property and/or using UNC resources.

TAX NOTE: Grant funds (either the award in whole if accepted by a student directly, or stipends/wages received by a student for work on grant-funded projects at UNC) may be considered taxable income; student is responsible for understanding applicable IRS rules and reporting as required.

Contact Information
Office of Sponsored Programs: 970-351-1907; osp@unco.edu

Revision History

Version	Published	Author	Description
1	2014-April 11	Arlene Hansen	
2	2014-Nov 17	Arlene Hansen	
3	2017-Sept 19	Cira Mathis	Revised with new streamlined PREF procedure information; additional definitions and edits for clarity