

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION WHEN APPLYING FOR EXTERNAL FUNDING

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.

Many funding sources (“sponsors”) accept proposals from *individuals* and make awards directly to students. However, other sponsors require that proposals come from an *institution* such as UNC or the UNC Foundation on behalf of the student. In those cases, sponsors will make awards only to the submitting institution.

Students must understand the differences between individual and institutional proposals. For example, awards made directly to the student may be taxable and students are responsible for following IRS rules. Awards made to UNC and the UNC Foundation must follow all grant procedures, including proper grant budgeting.

So, how do students and their faculty advisors know how to proceed with the grant proposal?

Students and their faculty advisors should review the grant application instructions carefully, and pay special attention to the eligibility criteria. If the guidelines are not clear, the student or the faculty advisor should contact the sponsor and ask whether proposals are accepted from individuals or from institutions.

If **only** institutions are eligible to apply, then further review is needed to find out whether the application should be submitted by UNC or by the UNC Foundation, a private 501(c)3 organization.

Students may call the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) at 970-351-1907 for assistance in contacting the sponsor on their behalf.

***"Where the
world ceases to
be the scene of
our personal
hopes and
wishes, where
we face it as free
beings admiring,
asking and
observing, there
we enter the
realm of Art and
Science."***

- Albert Einstein

In all cases, preparing a competitive grant proposal takes time, and students must plan to have a written narrative ready for faculty advisor review at least a month prior to the application deadline. Other components of preparing the grant application, such as getting the budget finalized, filling out application forms, getting letters of support, working with university offices on the submission (either OSP or the UNC Foundation) and circulating internal forms for Department/School, College and University approvals take time and must be factored into the grant preparation timeline. There is much more to preparing a grant proposal than simply writing up the research plan!

RESEARCH COMPLIANCE AND TRAINING

In all cases, grant proposals must follow university procedures related to research compliance and training. For example, when using human or animal subjects in research, students are reminded that review and approval of research protocols must be obtained from university committees established for this purpose prior to the conduct of ANY research activity. When using human subjects in research, the **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** procedures must be followed. When using animal subjects in research, the **Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)** procedures must be followed. These guidelines are outlined on OSP's website at <http://www.unco.edu/osp/ethics/index.html>

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 also facilitates options for additional in-person RCR training required by some sponsors. See the OSP website for CITI login and sign up information at <http://www.unco.edu/osp/ethics/citi.html>)

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION OPTIONS

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 three ways:

1. The proposal is submitted by the student and the award is made directly to the student
2. The proposal is submitted by the University and the award is made to the University of Northern Colorado
3. The proposal is submitted by the student or the UNC Foundation and the award is made to the UNC Foundation, in the case that the sponsor requires a private 501(c)(3).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. When the 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.

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 include an authorized signature from the University or the Foundation.

Award Acceptance: The award is made to the student directly; neither the University nor the Foundation will accept the award. The check is made out to the student and will not be accepted by the University or the Foundation.

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. The student is responsible for knowing and complying with any and all IRS regulations regarding the award (you may be required to pay taxes on the award).

2. When the proposal is submitted by the University and the award is made to the University of Northern Colorado

The student must follow all university procedures related to proposal submission and award acceptance. If students do not follow procedures (e.g. submit proposals on their own without institutional approval and expect the university to accept the award), the university may refuse to accept the award. University policies governing indirect costs apply to all student proposals.

Proposal Preparation:

- A. Go to the [Office of Sponsored Programs \(OSP\) website](#) and fill out a **Notice of Intent to Submit (NIS)**. On the NIS, list yourself as Principal Investigator, and name your faculty advisor as “other personnel”.
- B. You will be contacted by the OSP post-award specialist following your NIS submission for budget preparation and by the OSP submission specialist to coordinate your submission. The timing of this contact by OSP depends on your proposal deadline and other proposals in development in the office. This is one reason to start the process early.
- C. Work with your faculty advisor to write your proposal narrative. In some cases, your faculty advisor will be asked to write a letter of support for your proposal. Make sure you give your advisor ample time to write a strong letter of support.
- D. Figure out your budget needs for the proposed work and work with the OSP post-award specialist to finalize your budget. Your budget must be consistent with university regulations and sponsor requirements for externally-funded projects, and OSP will help assure a proper budget.
- E. After your budget is finalized, you will be sent a form (the PREF) that you must complete and obtain signatures (Chair/Director and Dean) and return to OSP. Gathering signatures may take several days so allow enough time for internal reviews and approvals.

Proposal Submission:

- A. The application will be submitted by the Office of Sponsored Programs at the University of Northern Colorado and only the university’s authorizing official may sign the proposal

- B. The OSP proposal submission specialist will work with you to finalize the proposal submission.
- C. The proposal will be submitted only after the internal approval form – the Proposal Review and Endorsement Form (PREF) – is completed, signed and returned to OSP; the budget is approved; the Financial Conflict of Interest disclosure form (see: <http://www.unco.edu/osp/doc/FCDIS.pdf>) is signed and returned to OSP and any other required information is provided.
- D. The sponsor may require that you are identified as the “Project Director” or “Principal Investigator” on the application cover sheet. However, for internal purposes, on the PREF your faculty advisor will be listed as the Project Director or Principal Investigator and you will be named the Co-Project Director or Co-Principal Investigator.

Award Acceptance:

- A. Any and all paperwork related to the award must be reviewed by the Office of Sponsored Programs prior to acceptance.
- B. If an authorizing signature is required, the University’s authorizing official will sign and return to the sponsor.

Conduct of the Award:

- A. 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. The student and the faculty advisor are responsible for closely managing the award and complying with all award terms and conditions are required.
- B. In the event of an award, your faculty advisor is responsible for all financial transactions and for overall project management. Financial authority to spend the grant funds is given to your faculty advisor, however, your School or Department may choose to also give you financial authority but permission is needed beforehand.

3. When the proposal is submitted by the student or the UNC Foundation and the award is made to the UNC Foundation in the case that the sponsor requires that the award be received by a private 501 (c)(3).

Prior to submitting the proposal, the student must notify the UNC Foundation of the intent to submit a proposal. The notification to the UNC Foundation must be emailed to unconfinformation@unco.edu. The notification must include the same information as required by the University in step 2A above, notice of intent to submit. The Foundation will evaluate the information in the intent to submit and advise the student of procedures to follow and next steps. If students do not follow the procedures then set forth by the Foundation before or after the award (e.g. submit proposals on their own prior to acceptance by the UNC Foundation), the Foundation may refuse to accept the award or return the award.

DEFINITIONS

Grant – Financial assistance mechanism providing money, property, or both to an eligible entity to carry out an approved project or activity. Grants are awarded to applicants on a competitive basis with very specific selection criteria.

Contract – A contract is generally 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 identified specifically with a particular sponsored project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity, or that can be directly assigned to such activities relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy.

Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A) - Costs that are incurred by a grantee for common or joint objectives which cannot be identified specifically with a particular project or program. UNC has a federally approved F&A cost rate. These costs are also known as "indirect costs."

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, terms and conditions vary by sponsor. Many graduate fellowship programs are targeted to a specific student group or field of study.

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at 970-351-1907.