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Tools of Trade for the Department Administrator

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What is a Department Administrator?

• Definition

“Department administrators are administrative staff that work at the departmental level and coordinate with the department head, Principal Investigators, and school, department, and central administration personnel to support and provide guidance on the administration of compliance, financial, personnel, and other related aspects of research projects.”

“Department administrators report to supervisors in the department such as a department head, business manager, division administrator, or Principal Investigator.”

-Washington University in St Louis website

http://research.wustl.edu/Resources/Roles/Pages/DeptAdmin.aspx

Who are your Stakeholders

Those who rely on your services:
- Faculty / PI
- Research Staff
- Students
- Sponsored Research
- Procurement
- Funding source contacts
- Department staff
- Other Department Administrators in other parts of your college/university

Roles and Resources Available at Respective Universities-
Responsibilities In Order To Meet the Demands of the Department/Division

Roles can vary at different universities.

Our role at Caltech consists of:

Pre-Award (~20%)
- Proposal preparation (solicitation review, budget preparation)
- Electronic uploads (Grants.gov, NSF Fastlane, Cayuse, etc.)
- Agency/sponsor contact

Post Award – General (~45%)
- Budget monitoring and reconciliation
- Monthly/Quarterly projections
- Account setup
- Cost transfers
- Grant closeouts (coordinate with Project Accounting)
- Technical report tracking (NIH Commons, NSF Fastlane)

Post Award – Other (~35%)
- Labor scheduling and adjustments
- Personnel tracking (reappointments of postdocs, grad students)
- P-Card ordering and reconciliation
- Fabrication Accounts- tracking and monitoring
- Internal Division transfers
Management of major centers (Moore, NIH Cancer Center, KAUST, AROICB, CIRPAS)
Subawards (establish, monitor, approve)

Compliance
Familiarize yourself with compliance matters applicable to research grants.
  Donor terms and conditions
  NIH Cap
  Cost Sharing
  Allowable and allocable expenditures
  Effort Reporting
  Subcontracting flowdown of terms
  ARRA requirements
  Other
    IRB
    Clinical effort
    Facility agreements
    Animal/Human subjects
    Hazardous waste
    Proposal routing form
    Patient billing

Collaborating With Other Colleges and Universities
In the university setting, it is common to collaborate with other institutions (schools, hospitals, private entities)
There are various ways to collaborate via proposals, networking, etc.

College or University Procedural Rules
Procedural rules vary at each institution.
There are universal rules and authorities that apply to most institutions.
  Cost transfers
  Effort reporting
  Signature authority
  Allowable and allocable costs (A-21, A-110, A-133, etc.)

Department or Division Sources
There are various sources in which a Department Administrator would be exposed.
  Internal approvals of proposals
  Collaboration with other divisions/departments on campus in shared research
    Sharing PI’s, postdocs, grads
  Attending various meetings
  Committee participation for online systems
Faculty Sources (PIs)
- Faculty assistants
- Regular communication- keeping them informed of central administration changes, etc.
- Account updates and projections
- Proposal preparation
- Staffing issues

What tools does a department administrator need to cope with the added workload and the constantly changing proposal preparation and management requirements?
Due to economic factors resulting in decentralization, Department Administrators have added responsibilities, higher workloads and tighter deadlines.
It takes good organization skills and efficient time management to maintain changing daily workloads.
Keep up with your knowledge of the latest electronic systems- which may include Word, Excel, other database software that undergo updates and changes on a regular basis.

Proposals require the collaboration of various people in different departments/divisions.
Reading and understanding the proposal solicitations-
- Highlighting important information such as due dates, cost sharing, length of project, dollar limit, pages limits and additional information that if not followed may disqualify the proposal.
- If the solicitation is electronic, use Search to find keywords (“budget”, “cost share”, “period of performance”, etc.) in the document to save time.

Provide your Sponsored Research Office enough lead time to review proposal.
At Caltech, proposals are submitted, but have the right to pull them back if it is out of compliance with the Institute policy.

Resources and Tools Available to Achieve Success
- Familiarize yourself with tools that are available to you

• Electronic
  - Centralized financial management systems:
    - Oracle
    - PeopleSoft
    - Cognos
  - Federal Grant management systems:
    - NSF Fastlane
    - NIH Commons
    - NSPIRES (NASA)
    - Grants.gov
    - Cayuse
    - Etc.
  - Non Federal-
ProposalCentral
Company, websites
Department and Internal University Websites:
Sponsored Research (your own or other university)

• Other Tools
  Informal training discussion with colleagues
  Formal training conducted by Central Administration
  Formal training from NCURA-
    Fundamentals of Sponsored Research
    Regional meetings
    National meetings
  Working with other people in your department
    Communication
    Financial knowledge
    Professional courtesy
  We’re all professionals working in the same field of Research Administration trying to achieve similar goals.

Final Comments and Questions