To: Deans, Department Chairs, Department Administrators, Faculty, and Staff
From: Robert Buhrman, Senior Vice Provost for Research
       Cathy Long, Associate Vice President for Research Administration
Date: December 6, 2010
Subject: Office of Sponsored Programs Realignment

Dear Colleagues:

We are writing to provide you with information regarding changes we are implementing in the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) beginning Monday, December 13, 2010, the reason for these changes, and to describe the resources available to assist you in becoming familiar with the realigned organization.

For the past two years the management team in the Office of the Vice Provost for Research has been working on creating a model for the administration of Cornell research that is forward-looking and ensures that Cornell is positioned to provide the services, staff skills, systems, and other administrative infrastructure necessary to support our researchers and their work. Our goal is to achieve a level of effectiveness that is as superb as our faculty and the research results they produce.

Initially, our efforts were focused internally and aimed at enhancing the ability of our offices to facilitate your research activities and provide appropriate compliance support for our investigators and the institution. These activities have included redefining necessary skills and qualifications and developing staff expertise, establishing and monitoring performance indicators, more actively obtaining stakeholder input, and addressing compliance gaps in our own offices. While you may already have experienced improvements in our services as a result of some of our ongoing internally focused initiatives, other initiatives will impact you more directly and we will need your assistance in implementing them.

Specifically in working with OSP, as part of this effort, we have identified areas where we need to realign our staffing structure and review process to be most effective in advancing Cornell’s research activities. This letter is to introduce the realignment that is occurring in OSP.

The environment in which you seek research support has changed markedly. Competition for research dollars has intensified as has the regulatory environment. We wish to be successful in obtaining research dollars from a wide variety of sponsors, nearly all of whom have increased the number and complexity of their contractual requirements. In order to best support your ability to successfully compete for these resources while upholding the institution’s principles and adhering to regulatory requirements, OSP staff must provide the expertise necessary to work successfully with these sponsors while advocating for our researchers and the institution. Our current OSP organization, which assigns Grant and Contract Officers (GCOs) to departments, requires that the GCOs be proficient in interacting with a wide variety of sponsors. This has resulted in a situation where GCOs have been able to gain general knowledge and proficiency that comes only from occasional interactions with many different types of sponsors rather than obtaining the in-depth expertise necessary to effectively work with certain types of sponsors.
In addition, we have experienced that as turnover occurs in OSP, we have had to randomly reassign GCOs to departments to balance workloads rather than assigning those who have the most experience with the sponsors from whom those department faculty seek funding. This has led to a less than optimal situation for our researchers, research administrators in departments, and our OSP staff. JoAnne Williams, Director of OSP, has carefully considered and gathered feedback on a number of means of addressing these issues, and we have determined that to achieve our goal of delivering superb services, we are realigning our OSP resources into Centers of Expertise, or three teams of staff, each with a primary sponsor focus on respectively: Federal Government, State and Foundation, and Industry Sponsors.

This realignment will better position GCOs in OSP to acquire an in-depth understanding of sponsor requirements, sponsor business practices and drivers, and applicable regulatory considerations. By building closer relationships with our sponsors’ administrative contacts, GCOs will be able to proactively support the faculty and the research administration needs of the departments, and will be better able to successfully and more quickly negotiate award documents that advance Cornell’s research while also upholding the Institution’s mission and complying with external regulations.

At an operational level, this means that some of you will be working with one or more different GCOs depending upon your sponsors. Although we have made regular changes in GCO assignments over the past year, any change, understandably, causes some concern. GCO contact lists can be found at http://www.osp.cornell.edu/Contacts/. We ask that you begin using these new contacts on December 13, 2010. All of our GCOs will, however, field your calls and ensure that you are supported appropriately, your questions are answered effectively, and your proposals and awards are handled in a timely manner. You will see in the portal that we are preparing for the change and that GCO assignments have been realigned, so please feel free to begin using your new contacts prior to December 13 if you choose. Please note that these changes will not impact support currently provided by local research offices that have been granted special transaction authority such as those in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Veterinary Medicine. For more information about the realignment and the changes to the organizational structure, please visit the OSP website at http://www.osp.cornell.edu. I am also providing you with contact information for JoAnne Williams, jw628@cornell.edu, 5-2939, who can answer questions and welcomes your suggestions and feedback. Contact information for each of the team leaders can be found on the OSP web site and is also provided below. JoAnne or any of the team leaders will assist you with questions.

As part of the OSP realignment, we are also modifying and formalizing our policy regarding the deadlines for submission of proposals to OSP. Effective January 1, 2011, OSP will provide departments and their Principal Investigators (PI) the flexibility to determine the level of review each proposal will receive. This change recognizes the fact that for a number of reasons there are sometimes near-deadline proposal submissions, and that we have in the past, and need to in the future, allow such flexibility. The change also seeks to ensure that departments and PIs understand the risks that they are assuming, and the loss of OSP services they will be experiencing, when proposals are submitted to OSP so close to the sponsor’s deadline that the GCOs do not have time for a full review. This change does not affect the proposal submission policies already in place in the College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences nor those established in individual departments.

- If a proposal is submitted five business days or more in advance of the sponsor’s deadline, OSP will conduct a full review of the proposal to identify potential administrative, compliance and policy issues that might prevent award of the proposal, and will recommend changes. This full OSP review will confirm that all components of the proposal are in accord with the sponsor’s known guidelines/requirements, federal and/or state regulations, Cornell policies, and that the budget and other financial details are correct.
- If, with department approval, the proposal is submitted four or three business days in advance of the deadline, only a limited review will be performed for conformance with sponsor’s guidelines/requirements and to identify applicable federal and/or state regulations and Cornell policies to assess compliance therewith.
Finally, with department approval, if a PI submits a proposal to OSP two business days or less prior to the proposal submission deadline, there will be no review (or referred to as institutional review only) – which will only confirm that the institution is in compliance with federal regulations and Cornell required protocols, including required assertions in the Form 10.

In submitting a proposal to OSP under the second option, the PI and department should be aware that there is the possibility that the PI and/or department might incur financial burdens due to budget errors or omissions since the budget will not be reviewed. For OSP to submit a proposal under the two business days or less, institutional review option it will be required that an Authorized Department Representative (ADR), such as the Department Chair or the Department or College Business Officer, provide written approval for the submission, via a new Form-10 addendum. By signing the form, the PI and his/her department ADR will be agreeing to assume full responsibility for any financial risks associated with budget shortfalls if the proposal is funded, and/or is assuming responsibility for the existence of any terms and conditions in the proposal that are incompatible with Cornell policy and practices that may subsequently require withdrawal of the proposal. In the latter case, there is also the risk that government systems submission issues or errors will preclude successful submission by the deadline. The various elements of a full review, limited, and institutional review are listed in the “Proposal Review Guidelines” document which can be found on the OSP Website at [http://www.osp.cornell.edu](http://www.osp.cornell.edu).

Departments and PIs must be aware that formalizing these options does not decrease the effort required on the part of department staff to support proposal submissions and that competing priorities in the department may preclude staff from being able to support late proposal submission. Departments may wish to establish pre-submission schedules that allow adequate time for staff to develop accurate budgets and provide other information and review, and to ensure thorough review and approval by department directors and chairs.

Looking beyond these immediate changes in OSP, we have also been working on developing new systems that when deployed over the next several years will much more effectively support our researchers and departmental research administrators, and which will provide improved and integrated functionality for the preparation and submission of proposals and protocols, and for the acceptance and execution of sponsored awards. Some of these systems will address immediate issues and others are intended to realize our strategic goals of reducing the overall burden of research administration on our faculty and staff as much as possible. One such major system implementation, currently in the development and testing stage, is a new research administration system, Kuali-Coeus (KC), which will eventually replace our current research administration and compliance systems. This is a complex project that we firmly believe must meet the needs of our faculty and research administrators, therefore it has required and will continue to require coordination with many stakeholders across campus. As this project continues to evolve, we will be providing you with regular updates and engaging with you as we approach the early phases of KC implementation this coming year.

We would like to ask for your continued support of OSP and this realignment as well as our other research administration initiatives, invite your feedback and suggestions, and, as always, to thank you for your essential contributions to the success and national leadership of Cornell research.

Contact information for questions and feedback:

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OSP contact list  [http://www.osp.cornell.edu/Contacts/](http://www.osp.cornell.edu/Contacts/)