CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

On-line Grant Support

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UF Information Technology

UFIT

2046 NE Waldo Rd, Suite 2100
Gainesville Florida 32609-8942
(352) 392.2061
<editor@cns.ufl.edu>
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On-line Grant Support

By Dr. Michael Conlon, UF Director of Data Infrastructure and PeopleSoft Implementation Officer

The University of Florida is a very large public research university. Over $475 million dollars in grant support is awarded to our faculty each year in over 5,000 successful research proposals. Externally funded research accounts for 24% of all university revenue. Each grant has its own budget, accounts, sponsor spending rules, deadlines and performance requirements. Keeping track of all this is a large undertaking for the principal investigators (PIs) and their administrative assistants.

The grant administration capabilities of the myUFL systems are extensive. We are just beginning to exploit these capabilities to help PIs know more about their grants and their research funds.

The grant systems are organized into “pre-award” services -- capabilities to support the preparation of proposals, and “post-award” services -- capabilities to simplify the administration of research awards.

The pre-award system reduces the effort required to prepare a research proposal. The researcher can focus on the science – mechanical formatting details for the most popular sponsors are known to the system. Once the proposal information – key personnel information, budget and proposal text -- has been entered into the system, the entire proposal can be formatted according to requirements of various sponsors. The PI selects the sponsor and the proposal material is formatted according to the sponsor’s requirements. Gone are the days of “cut and paste” – working with a collection of document fragments and assembling them onto sponsor supplied forms with scissors, tape and a copying machine. Reformatting the proposal for another sponsor is a simple matter of selecting a different format. This ability to reformat a proposal for another sponsor is unique to UF.

When preparing budget information for a proposal, the system automatically enters the correct salary information for key personnel, fringe benefit calculations, indirect cost rates and other details which previously had to be calculated by hand. The pre-award system is integrated with the university human resources system and has access to current salary information for grant personnel. UF Bridges customized the pre-award process to streamline it, further reducing the effort required to prepare a proposal.

When a notice of award arrives at UF, the pre-award proposal is easily converted into the post award grant. Rather than re-entering material in the proposal, the material is converted automatically – accounts are created and the budget of the proposal becomes the budget of the grant. Adjustments to the budget are easily made following the conversion. Of course, if the proposal was not in the system, all proposal information needs to be entered when the award is made. This slows down processing and can lead to clerical errors as data is entered for the first time by the central offices.

The myUFL systems organize the award into “projects” – logical units of work that can be budgeted independently. Some awards have one project. Complex awards spanning departments and colleges may have many projects. Indirect rates can vary by project.

Budget and spending information regarding grants is available on-line through myUFL enterprise reporting. Grant ledgers provide complete spending history for all grants.
Additional reports provide budget information and budget vs. actual comparisons. This on-line information greatly expands the information available to PIs regarding their grants. To get started with the grant modules, please review the material available at the Bridges web site www.bridges.ufl.edu/grants and www.bridges.ufl.edu/reporting Faculty members may need additional security roles to gain access in myUFL to research information. Faculty can contact their departmental security administrators regarding their access. See www.bridges.ufl.edu/security.

The on-line grant support in the myUFL systems is extensive. The pre-award systems simplify proposal preparation. The post-award systems simplify grant budgeting and spending. The linkages between pre and post award preserve budget and project organization information to get grants up and running quickly. The reporting systems provide complete information regarding grant activity. Together, the myUFL systems improve access to information and simplify grant administration.

Many PIs and departments are just starting to take advantage of the new systems. As more faculty use the pre-award system, the benefits of faster turn around on notice of award, better budgeting in post-award and improved access to information will be realized. Together, we are just beginning.

Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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