Q&A
Research Proposal Town Halls
March 31 and April 27, 2021

From March 31

Q: There seems to be 3 days for SPS review. When will review happen during that period?
A: The SPS goal is to review within 2 business days. Any suggested changes will be provided back to the department as soon as the review is completed.

Q: How will holidays be handled?
A: Holidays do not count as business days.

Q: Will an email be sent to PIs and Department administrators reminding them of an upcoming holiday, including the specific due date for the final proposal?
A: Yes.

Q: I would like support preparing annual reports. For example, NSF wants a report on percentage of grant funds spent in foreign countries.
A: Currently, NSF annual reports do not flow through SPS. The OVPR will look into the situation. [Foreign Collaborations – International Relationships, Foreign Components, and SPS]

Q: A less flexible timeline for SPS submission deadlines, while not extremely detrimental, certainly doesn’t make the PI job easier. If we are to fulfill the goal of doubling the research output the load of the people in charge of creating, writing, managing, and executing research proposals should be taken into consideration across all aspects of a PI time. This includes reporting documents, graduate and undergraduate student support, infrastructure, procurement, etc. What other university-wide steps are being taken to expedite the research enterprise?
A: The OVPR is actively engaged with deans, the Provost, and President on university-wide initiatives. Some of the steps that we’ve taken so far include:

- Committed funds to eliminate the charge of tuition on grants
- Committing one-time funds to buydown the fringe rate
- Continuing to work with state legislators to reduce the negative impact of the cost of the unfunded liability on research
- Created a Research Development Services unit to support complex proposals
• Expanded grant writing support and trainings
• Significantly increased and broadened OVPR internal seed funding programs
• Making significant investments in core facilities

Q: To expedite the grant submission process, can we allow PIs to submit our own proposals? Is it possible to have shared ownership of partially completed proposals in grants.gov so that the PI can submit after review and potentially after the SPS deadline has passed?
A: No. Most proposal submission systems require that an authorized institutional official submit the proposal. Unlike a paper submission where you can sign a confirmed PI to submit, electronic systems contain internal controls that require an authorized university signatory to submit.

Q: For due dates, it says the complete application is submitted to SPS 5 business days before the deadline. If the deadline is at 5pm on May 25 for example, does May 25 count as a day?
A: No. The policy is 5 full business days before the deadline, so the day of submission does not count as one of the days.

Q: What happens if I don’t meet the 5-day deadline?
A: Except for short turnaround opportunities or when a one-time pass is used, your proposal will be considered late and will go to the back of the line of all the proposals received in SPS.

Q: What support is available for junior faculty who may not be looking at big grants?
A: Research Development Services (RDS) are available to all faculty; however, we are currently prioritizing large, complex grants. The OVPR also has other support services such as webinars, tool kits, grant writing workshops, and proofing and editing services for grant proposals.

Q: What review and processing tasks occur in submitting a proposal that prompt the need for submitting the project narrative early?
A: The final scientific components are due by noon the day before the sponsor deadline. If additional time is allowed, SPS will be able to check the scientific components for the administrative requirements like page counts, whether specific sections must be included, determining whether certain things are required as is the case for clinical trial work or previous work, etc.

Q: Does the OVPR have any data on the rate of errors on late submissions vs. early submissions?
A: At UConn as well as many other institutions, junior faculty proposal submissions fare worse
when they are received close to the submission due date. Senior faculty proposals fare about the same and in some cases better (those serving on panels may submit late, for instance).

**Q:** The dashboard is a great idea and I'm really looking forward to being able to track my proposal. When will it go live?
**A:** The dashboard will be live by May 5, 2021.

**Q:** Are the RDS services only available for large complex proposals, or are they available for smaller or single investigator proposals?
**A:** We are currently prioritizing large, complex proposals; however, a range of proposal support services will be made available to support proposals more broadly. For instance, basic editing and proofing of proposals for grammar and typos, to more in-depth reviews and editing. The university also facilitates utilization of Hanover Research for additional consulting support for both individual and multi-investigator proposals.

**Q:** What are the upcoming plans for expanding Research Development Services (RDS) staff and therefore support for faculty proposal preparation?
**A:** Our plans are to scale up RDS services as we see the need for large scale proposal support increase. One of the areas that we do hope to add to the RDS services is a graphic designer to support proposals, and we are already adding several freelance writers to provide proofing and editing services.

**Q:** Do Research Development Services (RDS) services include development of work breakdown structure, resource-loaded schedules, cost books, etc.?
**A:** No, not at this time.

**Q:** It seems there is a difference between reviewing proposal components to be sure they meet university policy requirements and reviewing components to make the proposals more competitive. Could these be separated, so that early submissions get the advantage of a review to help increase the chances of funding, while late ones don’t, but all could be submitted?
**A:** As Research Development Services (RDS) grows, there will be more opportunities for early submissions to receive reviews to increase proposal competitiveness. You can review their available services available by visiting the [RDS webpage](#). However, RDS services would not replace the reviews and compliance checks required by SPS Pre-Award.

**Q:** If there isn’t a cost share component, why require an IPR?
**A:** Cost Share is one potential aspect of the IPR. The IPR also includes key information about the proposal, PI certifications, distribution of credit and approvals to proceed. It provides a
record that any additional faculty are cognizant of their participation, roles, and responsibilities in the proposed work, and that the department heads and deans are aware of and approve the work as outlined. Note, pre-proposals only require minimal information on the IPR and no signatures. Please visit the SPS website for additional guidance.

Q: What is the penalty for SPS if they do not return feedback by their deadline?
A: The proposed policy implementation does not change the expectation that SPS staff should provide timely reviews and responsive feedback. Internal dashboards have been established to actively manage proposal review to the new procedures. In the event SPS does not provide feedback in accordance with the new procedures, SPS will work to accommodate department responses which may be delayed with no penalty or pass being required. Furthermore, specific situations will be assessed and appropriate steps taken to address them.

Q: How is this new submission proposal deadline different from the current/previous proposal deadline requirements?
A: We have more clearly defined the submission process in terms of what is due when, and we are changing our review process to order-of-receipt instead of sponsor deadline.

Q: Do all my cost share/match commitments have to be finalized 5 days in advance as well?
A: Yes, but we understand that it may be difficult to get full documentation/signatures and we will work with the PIs and support staff to advance the proposal.

Q: How will you handle a submission that is not complete but is made within the 5-day deadline?
A: We’re reviewing proposals in order-of-receipt and will notify faculty/PI of missing components. Faculty/PI will be asked to provide the missing components and if received prior to the 5-day deadline, the proposal will be advanced. If received after the 5-day deadline, the proposal will be considered late and will go to the back of the line of all the proposals received in SPS unless it is a short turnaround opportunity or a one-time pass is used.

Q: When you say effective by May 5, does this mean proposals will be due beginning April 30?
A: No, administrative components are due on May 5th for any proposals with a May 12th deadline.

Q: One of the concerns I have is about the support in preparation of large infrastructure grants. They require a lot of data collection and supporting documents including potential financial commitments. It seems that the grant support offices are not familiar with how to deal with
such proposals, so it is left to PIs to do the work/navigate the system that at our peers is done by the supporting staff. This means that PIs have less time and energy to prepare the proposal itself. What are you going to do to have the support staff to be more prepared for such proposals?

A: Such support may be available through Research Development Services (RDS) as an infrastructure grant may constitute a large/complex proposal. RDS is also working to create templates related to university resources, such as core facilities, relevant educational programs, broader impacts, and cross-campus resources.

Q: Will we retain the option to revise the research text in the 7-10 days before the submission date?

A: Yes. the research project narratives can continue to be revised until noon the day prior to the sponsor due date. However, draft project narratives (scientific content) should be included with the administrative components required five business days in advance of the sponsor deadline.

Q: How many of those 66% of proposals submitted at the last minute were only lacking a final project description?

A: Most of the proposals submitted on the sponsor due date lack components other than the project description.

Q: Please define the one time pass as during tenure at UHC vs once a year. Some researchers still think they get a pass each year.

A: During the course of their employment at the University (Storrs/regionals/UCH), each PI/faculty only has one pass that they can use to advance a late proposal. One-time passes are not provided annually.

Q: What criteria are used to decide whether or not a proposal qualifies for RDS help?

A: The RDS webpage provides information on the services available, what qualifies for support, and process for requesting services.

Q: All parts of the proposal have to be certified? That must not include the proposed research. Can the university certify the proposal without the research description prior to the PI finishing the research description? Why does everything need to be done before the review starts? The university could certify the parts of the proposal that could cause legal issues for the university without having to have everything ready and in early. Let the PI get the budgets and justifications certified a head of time, and then submit once the PI says the research description is done.
A: The administrative components of the proposal are due 5-business days before the submission due date. The scientific narrative is due by noon the day before the submission due date.

Q: How about certifying administrators outside of SPS to approve parts of the proposal?
A: Because the OVPR serves as the delegated authority to fulfill the University’s legal responsibility for proposals and any subsequent awards, SPS staff are responsible for the final approval of the proposal documents.

Q: Thanks for the presentations. Like every other policy, the challenge is in the rules governing its gatekeeping. Undoubtedly we will arrive in situations where a grant submission is extremely important for the institution, and for whatever reason—many times beyond our control, we have missed the policy deadlines. What are the policies governing those situations?
A: Exceptions to the 5-business day deadline are short turnaround opportunities or if a pass is used.

Q: If we submit the final narrative by noon the day before the deadline, and later realize that some additional minor edits are needed, is that possible, or is the noon submission 1.5 days before the deadline the last time that PIs can access the narrative?
A: SPS aims to submit proposals one day prior to the submission deadline. SPS will work with faculty when minor revisions to narratives are required prior to the submission deadline.

Q: Are the research development services free or is there a charge? I looked at the website and it wasn't clear to me. If there's a charge, what is it?
A: There are no fees or costs to faculty to use RDS services.

Q: As far as getting good applications submitted, sending a scientifically sound and good competitive proposal is responsibility of the PI, and Department/Centers to approve. Sometimes, I think there should be a push to develop/support/even mandate some internal checkup systems to get approvals of application based on the quality of science. This is not procedure related question, but important in developing aspects of our own internal development/pre-review of proposals.
A: Some schools/colleges, departments, and centers/institutes provide this type of internal review as well as mock panels. The OVPR has expanded its grant writing trainings, seminars, and toolkits as well as consultation services available to faculty. The RDS can also provide services such as in-depth review of a draft proposal.
Q: I can foresee instances when the last 1.5 days before a submission deadline will be needed for final proposal narrative polishing. Will the new policy strictly prevent PIs from finalizing the scientific parts of the proposal after noon the day before the submission deadline? If so, can you please explain why? Thank you
A: SPS aims to submit proposals the day prior to the sponsor deadline to allow unforeseen issues, including technical issues with the submission process, to be addressed by staff. In the past few months, we have experienced issues where we received all component parts of a large and complex proposal on the due date. Technical difficulties with the platform resulted in a late submission. By submitting early, SPS will have time to troubleshoot these problems without compromising the submission.

Q: There seem to be two very different parts here. One is reviewing for legal reasons, and the other is reviewing for competitive reasons. Why not separate these with the hard deadlines only for the legal review and the competitive part be available if the PI wants it.
A: SPS reviews for compliance (legal reasons), which is also called an “administrative review” elsewhere in this Q&A., and this review is subject to the hard deadlines described in our submission policy. PIs can request a competitive review through RDS services.

Q: Is there an intent to remove the 'ink on paper' requirement for IPR forms, and be replaced with an electronic approval through email?
A: Yes. We have transitioned to electronic signatures and approval for IPR forms.