

September 4, 2020

TO: FSPH Faculty

FROM: Zuo-Feng Zhang, Associate Dean for Research
Cathy Lang, Director for Research Administration

RE: Research Submission Process during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are all doing our best to conduct normal business activities virtually. We report to you that our FSPH faculty have continued being active in submitting contract and grant proposals. Since the start of the new fiscal year, July 1 through August 31, 2020, there has been a 48% increase in proposal submissions compared to this same period last year (40 compared to 27 proposals). There have been 35 COVID-19 related proposals submitted since April 1st, with 8 (22.9%) awards, approximately \$3.4 million, with additional proposals under consideration.

With this increase in research proposals, we would like to remind faculty to consider the impact and special circumstances that the COVID-19 pandemic has created on the contract and grant submission process. Faculty and staff work from home and may not have the optimal workspace, equipment and environment compared to their office space on campus. It also can take time to reach someone by phone to ask questions/address problems, etc. Home internet connections can sometime fail and there can be many unforeseen issues that can occur during the proposal preparation and submission process. Last minute changes to proposals would not provide enough time for these processes and create extremely stressful conditions for both PIs and staff. With the current challenges, it can significantly decrease the chances of a successful submission.

Therefore, we would like to urge faculty to prepare proposal submissions earlier in order to give department, school research administration, and supporting staff adequate time to prepare, review, address any critical issues that may arise during the submission process, as well as enough time to correct errors and submit proposals successfully on time. Not only does department staff need sufficient time, but also the school research administration and OCGA need time to conduct reviews. Please adhere to the deadlines provided by the department MSO and staff for receipt of all final materials, including the final science, prior to the department's established deadlines. Please note that more complex proposals (e.g., those with many collaborators, subawards, program projects, center grants, training program proposals, and grants with international components, etc.) may need additional time before the specified OCGA and department deadlines.

Following these guidelines will help to ensure that there is sufficient time to address any unexpected issues in order to have a smooth and successful submission. Please plan ahead, submit a few days earlier if possible, and give the extra time needed for staff to prepare proposal submissions. Thank you for your support and understanding.