

May 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, Debi Galloway (administrative rep) and George Uetz (faculty rep) attended the Spring meeting of the **Federal Demonstration Partnership** (FDP)-- a group of nearly 100 research universities and federal funding agencies working together to streamline research administration. Here is an update of news and highlights:

1) Export controls – why universities care.

*Laws and regulations* - While it is easy to understand why the federal government creates laws and regulations to limit export of weapons and military technology, as well as non-military materials, computer hardware and software to foreign competitors and potential terrorists, concerns have also been raised about “deemed exports”. Deemed exports are any disclosure of information about these technologies to foreign nationals (e.g., non-native/non-green card visiting colleagues and graduate students). While restrictions on most university uses of technology are excluded from deemed export controls, as they are common educational and fundamental research activities, restrictions on certain other activities (e.g., shipping of materials to collaborators overseas, travel abroad w/laptops, access to proprietary hardware and software by foreign nationals) may have real impact on university research.

Universities lose their fundamental research exclusion by accepting publication restrictions (approval of publications, not review or delay of publications) and restrictions on employment of foreign students in sponsored agreements. Universities also lose their fundamental research exclusion when faculty members make “side deals” with sponsors to not publish without sponsor approval.

*University compliance issues* – Universities need policy statements and designated responsible individuals, usually within the Office of Research, to manage and oversee aspects of deemed export control. A program increasing faculty awareness, as well as written procedures, websites and training programs for staff are essential.

*Faculty issues* – The potential impact of deemed export regulations on recruiting graduate students, international collaboration, travel with laptops, controlling access to labs, and personal liability and sponsorship of research were all discussed at length.

*Action* – 1. The departments of Commerce and State have convened a joint Deemed Export Advisory Committee (DEAC) with advice from the academic community and the department of Homeland Security to reach a consensus on regulation of technology. This committee will review and streamline the categories of material on control lists, and improve the visa screening process to allow foreign nationals to participate fully in university research. 2. AAU and Council on Government Relations have asked FDP educational institutions to document the instances where sponsors are including publication restrictions and or foreign student employment restrictions in research agreements. The University of Cincinnati will participate in this demonstration.

## 2) Faculty Committee activities

*FDP Faculty Administrative Burden Survey* – The survey was conducted to assess how much of their research time faculty with federal funding spend on administrative activities associated with funded research. Results show that researchers must commit up to 28% - 40% of time that might be otherwise spent on research on administrative tasks (e.g., safety compliance, animal care, human subject regulations, etc.). Much discussion centered on further analyses and dissemination of the survey results. All federal agencies in FDP have been given a full copy, as well as the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and there has been great interest in the academic press (e.g., Chronicle of Higher Education, Science, etc.). At many FDP universities, results are being used to further discussion between faculty and research administrators as a means of identifying ways to reduce burdens. Efforts are being made to identify and widely incorporate “best practices” from universities whose faculty report lower levels of administrative burden.

*Alternate faculty reps* – A request was made to have each institution appoint an alternate faculty representative to assure attendance at all meetings across the year.

*NSF* – A new initiative in Social, Behavioral and economic Sciences Directorate is underway to examine the “value-added” aspects of scientific research, to understand the relationship between science and innovation, and to address critical issues such as over-regulation, animal rights activism, and administrative burdens.

## 3) Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR)

This initiative is directed at establishing a common reporting framework for all federal awards, with a uniform format for both progress reports and final reports. Ultimately, the outcome will resemble the reporting module of NSF FastLane, with the option of agency-specific modified fields.

#### 4) Post award reporting

The Grants Policy Committee has six draft forms and formats for post award reporting. The forms - federal financial report, performance progress report, performance program report, tangible property report, real property status report and invention report – are designed to help streamline grants reporting. NSF is one of three agencies that have been selected to provide the “store front” portal access these reports. They call this portal research.gov. NSF provided a demo of this sight to the FDP community.

#### 5) Cognizant Audit Agencies and the Single Audit Act of 1984

Office of Budget and Management (OMB) assigns a single federal cognizant agency to serve as the lead agency for audit oversight for educational institutions. In the past OMB usually assigned the same federal cognizant agency that negotiates an education institution’s indirect costs. Typically the federal agency assigned is the one providing the most direct funding to said institution. Recently there have been changes in some assignments resulting in two different federal cognizant agencies being assigned to one educational institution. When two audit agencies are involved there must be coordination and cooperation between the two agencies. Some of the challenges the federal government is facing include; timely sharing of audit reports (sometimes as late as 2 or 3

years ;) coordination of final audit determinations and disposition of audit findings; oversight of necessary corrective action plans. Is this really the most efficient and effective way to provide federal audit oversight? This question will be explored at future FDP meetings. UC currently has two different cognizant audit agencies: DHHS for indirect cost negotiation and US Department of Education for all else.

The most interesting information came out of the question and answer period for this session. Question posed to federal auditor was “What every happened to the single audit concept as established in the Single Audit Act”. The purposes of the act are to--(1) promote sound financial management, including effective internal controls, with respect to Federal awards administered by non-Federal entities;(2) establish uniform requirements for audits of Federal awards administered by non-Federal entities; (3) promote the efficient and effective use of audit resources; (4) reduce burdens on State and local governments, Indian tribes, and nonprofit organizations; and (5) ensure that Federal departments and agencies, to the maximum extent practicable, rely upon and use audit work done pursuant to chapter 75 of title 31, United States Code (as amended by this Act). The auditor answered by sharing comments made by NSF auditors from its Office of Inspector General. NSF will continue to audit the awardee community because the A-133 audit (Single Audit Act) currently performed at educational institutions is inadequate. Institutions can expect to see more agency specific audits performed on their campuses.

6) FDP Strategic Plan for Phase V – FDP is up for re-authorization, with expanded plans for the future:

### **Themes for Phase 5**

1. Maximize the time available for Principal Investigators and scientific staff to focus on research while reducing unnecessary administrative burden.
2. Increase the efficiency of administrative and compliance practices while reducing inefficient or redundant agency and institutional procedures and practices.

### **Goals for Phase 5**

1. Successfully complete a minimum of five internally generated high priority projects.
2. Maintain effective forum for ongoing collaboration to address current and emerging external issues
3. Develop and implement effective strategy for communicating and engaging key stakeholders
4. Ensure that the FDP has the right membership and structure to carry out its mission in Phase 5.

#### 5) NSF – new demonstrations and changes to grant proposal guidelines

Requirement of designated fonts (Helvetica, Arial Palatino) on proposals in

Fastlane

Cost-sharing only when *required* in RFP

Publication Citations Enhancement project – will allow researchers to upload citations directly from ISI database.

Pilot for budget-free proposals – Given that > 85% of proposals are not funded, it seems unreasonable to request budget details that would undergo review. Budget-free proposals will allow reviewers to concentrate on an evaluation of the scientific content rather than the budget. Therefore, NSF will test the submission of proposals without detailed budgets (only a “ballpark” estimate of total costs w/ minimal detail).

#### 6) Grants.gov update

Representatives of the Grants.gov team were on hand to solicit feedback on certain technical improvements that are underway. Much discussion centered on the transition from the PureEdge® based documents to Adobe® pdf file formats.