

Business Process Redesign

Operational Excellence in Research Administration (OPERA)

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UD OPERA Project Overview

External funding for research at the University of Delaware has steadily increased over the past decade, and now exceeds **\$145 million** a year.

In accordance with the University's research growth strategy, we are reviewing and revamping research administration with a focus on the following initiatives:

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

Strengthen UD
Research Office
Partnership &
Support

Redesign Business
Processes &
Develop Standard
Operating
Procedures

Enhance Sponsored
Research Systems,
Data & Reporting

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Our mission is to advance high-quality research and scholarship at UD by promoting an environment that fosters creativity, collaboration, community, and commitment to the highest ethical values.

Close coordination between the Research Office, faculty and sponsored programs coordinators/administrators will be critical for enhancing UD research administration.

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Administrative functions performed by the Research Office were reviewed last year in collaboration with key stakeholders and leaders across the research community.

As a result, workgroups have been established to review processes in accordance with leading industry practices. Process changes impacting campus will undergo iterative feedback during implementation.

***We seek to gather your feedback on anticipated changes today!**

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UD aims to evaluate optimizing current technology use, future systems, and management of reporting tools, information, and metrics for research administration.

Efforts to clean-up financial and demographic award data are underway to support data integrity and performance metrics. This includes current interim support within the Research Office for effort reporting and award closeout processes.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION



The quality of administrative services provided by the Research Office is critical to creating an efficient and effective research environment at the University.

Our primary goals during the UD OPERA Project are to:

Improve service to faculty who participate in sponsored research

Increase process efficiency via enhanced policies, procedures, tools, and systems

Bolster institutional compliance with federal and sponsor requirements

Implement performance metrics to continuously review administrative effectiveness

UD OPERA Project Feedback

Workgroups have been established to review processes in accordance with leading industry practices. We seek to gather your feedback on the following areas today:

Redesign Business
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Award Setup

Proposal
Submission

Award Closeout

Accounts
Receivable

New COA Notice email templates will be used by the Research Office (reduced from 24 to 3 total):

From: C&G Specialist
To: Principal Investigator, Department/College Administrator
Subject: Chart of Accounts (COA) Notice: [PI Name], [Sponsor Name], [Sponsor Award Reference]
Attachments: COA, Award Notice/Agreement/Document

Dear [PI Name],

Congratulations on the successful funding of your project! Please review the following information as you begin work on this award:

- **Award Documentation (attached):** Review the official award document, including applicable terms and conditions, deliverables, and reporting requirements.
- **Chart of Account (COA) Notice (attached):** Review the financial chart field information per award setup in UD Financials.
- **UDDataGlance:** Access the award budget and expenditure information for direct sponsor funding and cost share.
 - **Access Request: UD Financials-Query/UDDataGlance:** Any PI or Co-PI not listed on the attached COA (first page, lower right box) must submit this webform to gain access to purpose code financials in UDDataGlance.
- **Grant Management Guide:** Access UD resources to complete administrative tasks throughout the award lifecycle.
- **Sponsor Terms & Conditions:** Review general sponsor guidelines, terms, and conditions applicable to the award.
- **Responsible Conduct of Research:** Review UD policies to ensure ethical and compliant research conduct.
- **Automated Closeout Reports (ACR):** Manage interim financial reports and closeout for the award.

Chart of Accounts (COA) Notice

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Sponsor Terms & Conditions resources are available online:

UT US • UNITS • MY RESEARCH • ENGAGEMENT • TRAINING •

Sponsor Terms & Conditions

Please reference the table below to access key guidelines, terms, and conditions based on the sponsor:

Sponsor Name	Applicable Guidelines, Terms
Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR)	• NSF Research Terms and Conditions • ASOFR Agency Specific Requirements
Army Research Laboratory (ARL)	• ARL Agency Specific Requirements
Army Research Office (ARO)	• ONR Grants Terms and Conditions • ARO Homepage • ARO Agency Specific Requirements

[Sponsor Terms & Conditions Webpage](#)

The **Proposal Deadline Policy** is being strengthened to clarify review aspects and expectations.

Proposal Package/Checklist:

1. Program Solicitation
2. Fully-Approved Proposal Webform
3. Statement of Work (SOW) and/or Abstract
 - a. Final Science may be omitted until 8:00am on the agency deadline
4. Budget
5. Budget Justification
6. Subaward Documents
 - a. Provider Determination Worksheet, SOW, Budget, Budget Justification, etc.
7. Up-to-Date Conflict of Interest Disclosure
8. Other Components (per Sponsor and UD requirements)

Proposal Deadline Policy

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“3 Business Day” Deadline

UD researchers must have their proposals to the Research Office by 8:00am, at least 3 Business Days prior to the agency deadline – or they are not guaranteed to be submitted to the sponsor. The Research Office will review proposal packages containing all other components while the technical content is finalized. **Final science is due by 8:00am on the agency deadline.**

Proposals received prior to the 3 Business Day Deadline will take precedence over others. After all proposals received on-time have been processed and submitted, the Research Office will review and submit others to the best of it's ability.

The date a proposal is received dictates the level of Research Office review provided:

Full Review 3+ Business Days	Limited Review 2 Business Days	Minimal Review 1 Business Day
PI Eligibility		
Fully-Approved Proposal Webform		
Institutional, Federal, & State Compliances		
Sponsor Guidelines, Terms, & Conditions		
Consultation with Other UD Offices		
Proposal Details		
Management Plans		



Proposals submitted without “Full Review” are subject to the following:

- If any grave errors are found (i.e. budget and/or compliance) post-submission, the application will be withdrawn by the Research Office.
- The submitting department/unit agrees to assume responsibility for any budget errors/omissions made in the proposal.
- The submitting department/unit acknowledges that proposals may contain terms and conditions that may be non-negotiable and, if not resolved, may require UD to decline an award.

Standard Closeout Timeline & Escalations for Automated Closeout Reports (ACRs) are being updated and reinstated.

The Research Office will only send escalations for past-due ACRs if no response is received from the Principal Investigator or the Department/College Administrator.

If the Research Office does not receive any response by the sponsor deadline:

- The final report/invoice will be submitted according to the Research Office's final financial reconciliation, and
- Any unallowable or excess costs will be transferred to the department.

Closeout Timeline & Escalations

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Award End Date	ACR Due Date	Closeout Period End Date		
Preparation	Closeout Period (Total Days After Award End Date)			
ACRs Issued	ACR Due Date	Initial Escalation*	Final Escalation*	Final Report/Invoice Due Date
For Expiring Awards	Per Closeout Period End	5-10 Days After ACR Due	15 Days Prior to Deadline	Per Sponsor/Award Terms
-90, -30, +1	45	55	75	Most Common: 90
(automatic ACR	30	40	45	60
notification sent prior	20	25	30	45
to award expiration)	5	10	15	30

From: Sponsored Research Accountant
To: PI, Department/College Administrator, Current ACR Holder
Copy: CFO, Assistant Director of Sponsored Research Accounting, Research Dean, Department Chair
Subject: IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED: Overdue Automated Closeout Report
Attachments: Copy of Initial Escalation Email
Importance: High

Final Escalation: Overdue Automated Closeout Report

The Automated Closeout Report (ACR) for the below referenced award is currently [X Days] overdue:

Principal Investigator:	
Sponsor Name:	
Sponsor Reference Number:	
Project Number:	
Purpose Code:	
Current Award Balance:	\$X,XXX.XX

Please respond immediately with a status update regarding award closeout activities, including any concerns regarding award financials. If no response is received by the sponsor deadline of [MM/DD/YYYY], the final report/invoice will be submitted per the final financial reconciliation completed by the Research Office, and any excess/unallowable costs will be the responsibility of the PI/Department.

Please complete the [ACR Webform](#) and return it to the Research Office ASAP. The [ACR Job Aid](#) contains instructions on how to complete the ACR Webform.

Please contact me for additional assistance and/or any questions regarding the above.

Closeout Timeline & Escalations (Continued)

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Sample Final Escalation Email

The updated **AR Monitoring, Collections, & Write-Offs Procedure** will clarify roles, responsibilities, and actions for aging grants accounts receivables.

AR Monitoring, Collections, & Write-Offs Procedure

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Standard AR Follow-Up Actions based on AR Aging Category (#Days):

AR Aging	AR Collection/Follow-Up Action
30 Days	Current AR; no action required.
31-90 Days	Interim Invoicing Follow-Up by Research Office Billing Team
91-120 Days	Additional Phone Calls, Emails, and Dunning Letters to Sponsor
121-180 Days	Escalation to the PI and Department Administrator
181-365 Days	Escalation to PI, Department Administrator, College Financial Officer, Research Dean, Associate VP Research Administration, Finance, and General Counsel as applicable
>365 Days	If all collections efforts fail, including applicable legal recourse, the University will complete Write-Offs for Uncollectible AR.

Escalations will be sent from the Research Office to Principal Investigators, Department Administrators, and others to ensure timely follow-up for outstanding grants payments, especially during high-risk scenarios (ex: if a sponsor indicates refusal/inability to pay).