MEMORANDUM

To: Deans, Department Chairs, Faculty, Principal Investigators and Grants and Contracts Staff

From: Louise Griffin, Associate Vice Chancellor, Administration & Finance
       Partha Chowdhury, Interim Vice Provost for Research

Subject: Proposal Submission Guidelines

Date: September 29, 2008

As many of you know, new regulations from the federal government and other funding agencies have mandated the use of electronic proposal submissions. Although we applaud the funders’ efforts to move from a paper process to an electronic process, the process of submitting proposals electronically is far more complex and time consuming.

For example, the federal government’s portal, Grants.gov, is still evolving and issuing rule changes often times directly prior to submission deadlines. The rule changes place additional stress on our ability to respond and react to these changes. In addition, it is taking much longer for agencies to acknowledge receipt of proposals, in some cases up to two days, leaving all of us with much less leeway for correcting and resubmitting proposals.

It is our common goal to increase our recognition and standing as a research university. The staff in the Office of Research Administration (ORA) has been making heroic efforts to get proposals in on time. While we are grateful for their efforts, functioning in crisis mode negatively impacts both the submission process, and the eventual success rate of obtaining competitive funding.

In performance of our due diligence, we reviewed the policies of many institutions across the country – internal deadlines tended to range from 3-7 business days. We are trying to be both liberal and practical and have set our internal deadline at three business days. Therefore, effective October 20, 2008, please submit all components of the proposals, except as provided below, electronic or paper, to ORA three working days before the relevant agency’s published submission deadline.

We do however realize that many PIs wish to work on the technical portion of their proposal until the last minute. Thus, a final version of the technical portion of the proposal will not be due until 9:00am the day of the deadline. The rest of the proposal (i.e., detailed budget, budget justification, abstract, proposal transmittal form, agency forms), however, must be submitted to ORA three working days prior to the agency deadline. We encourage PIs to send proposal items piecemeal well before the three day deadline. For example, if you have a detailed budget and budget justification (a.k.a. budget narrative) two weeks before the deadline but don’t have everything else, please go ahead and send it to ORA for review. That
will help prevent last minute revisions at a later date. Please note, however, that the PI or someone authorized by the PI needs to be available after submitting the proposal to ORA (whether piecemeal or all at once) in order to promptly make corrections, provide more information, etc.

ORA will guarantee an on-time submission for those proposals submitted three-business days prior to the sponsoring agency’s deadline. If your final proposal is not submitted by the three-day deadline, ORA will not be able to guarantee review and timely submission of your application. We want to assure you, however, that all proposals will be processed (even those not received 3 days in advance of the deadline) to the best of ORA’s ability in order to meet the sponsor’s deadline; however proposals received within the 3-day deadline window will be given priority. We fully recognize that faculty do not intentionally submit late proposals and we understand the pressure that you face in compiling a competitive proposal; however, this 3-day window is required for proper review and timely submission.

We welcome suggestions for improving our processes.