Trifecta: Smoothing Administrative Hurdles

The “decentralized” model at MSU means that all colleges have different procedures and policies for managing pre-award and post-award processes. As we have collaborated across the TRIFECTA colleges (Communication Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Nursing), we have identified a couple of areas where differences commonly emerge. The deans and research deans from the 3 colleges have discussed these issues and have come to agreement on them. Questions about these issues can be directed to the research deans from any of the 3 colleges.

Who should serve as PI on a project and what that means for different colleges?

Each department within colleges has its own expectations about research productivity, leadership on grants, and expectations for collaborative proposals. The investigator’s chair is the person who can provide guidance on these issues. The decision of who should serve various roles on a project should be discussed early in the proposals development stage, a consensus-based decision with all investigators involved should occur, and the decision should be driven by the substance of the proposal rather than administrative issues. Importantly, the MSU Contracts and Grants database (driven by the electronic transmittal process) is used by all colleges and the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (VPRGS) for tracking proposal and award activity. The electronic transmittal form is an internal document and is not seen by funders; as such the “labels” on the MSU transmittal do not always match the labels used by funders (e.g. PI, CO-PI, Co-Investigator etc.). Any investigator who is a principle investigator, co-investigator, or key personnel on project proposal and/or award should be named on the MSU transmittal. When appropriate, faculty can consider multiple PI roles as enabled by National Institutes of Health and other agencies. (e.g., [http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/multi_pi/](http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/multi_pi/))

How should indirect cost (IDC) be distributed across the colleges on the project?

MSU convened a task force in 2007 to address the distribution of indirect cost (IDC) return (also called Facilities and Administrative costs) across units on collaborative grants. As a result of this task force, the “IDC Tasks Force Memo” aka the “Wilcox and Gray IDC Memo” was distributed in 2009. In it, a formula is provided for assignment of IDC based primarily on relative effort on projects. The 3 Trifecta colleges agree to use the IDC Task Force Memo as the basis for IDC calculation. This memo provides a formula for IDC distribution that is based on PI effort. The administering unit will generally be the home unit of the PI unless compelling reason is provided for another unit to serve this role.

Wilcox Memo
2-16-2009 - FINAL AL
Are college policies about pre-award and post-award administration and support the same?

In short, the 3 colleges and the units within them have different cultures when it comes to grant activity. The colleges and the departments within the colleges have different specific policies, practices and norms when it comes to both pre-award and post-award support. Investigators are encouraged to seek clarification. Examples of these policy issues include: nursing’s policy for pre-review of proposals, CAS’s policy of equal split between AY/Summer of grant budgets, College-specific rates for grad stipends, how the units report budgetary information to PI’s etc. MSU policy is that the PI is responsible for all aspects of an award. Lead pre-award admins from the three Colleges have met and discussed the administrative issues related to TRIFECTA, and have agreed to observe and accommodate the policies and practices of each College. In rare situations where these policies might conflict, administrators will work with investigators to find resolution.

What resources are in place to help navigate the challenges raised above and the other challenges of collaborative projects?

Across all levels of grant administration, the goal is to support faculty research endeavors as efficiently as possible. The deans, associate deans for research, and research administrators have discussed these issues above and will continue to address challenges that arise in the course of collaborative projects. Each of the colleges and MSU at large has significant research support infrastructure in place that can be used by faculty. These resources can be viewed here:

**College Research Websites**
- Communication Arts and Sciences: http://cas.msu.edu/research
- Engineering: http://www.egr.msu.edu/der/research-administration
- Nursing: http://nursing.msu.edu/Research/default.htm

**Other University Resources**
- Center for Statistical Training and Consulting (CSTAT): http://cstat.msu.edu/
- MSU Technologies: http://www.technologies.msu.edu/
- Division of Engineering Computing Services (DECS): http://www.egr.msu.edu/decs/
- Office for Survey Research (OSR): http://ippsr.msu.edu/osr/
- Institute for Cyber-Enabled Research (iCER): http://icer.msu.edu/
- MSU Scholars: http://scholars.opb.msu.edu/
- Office of Planning and Budgets: http://dev.opb.msu.edu/institution/index.asp?studies
- Research Data Management Guidance: http://www.lib.msu.edu/rdmg/index.jsp

**College Contacts:**

**Communication Arts & Sciences:**
- Pre-Award: Kelly Feinberg (krf@msu.edu)
- Post-Award: Shasta Mantyla-Pohl (mantylap@msu.edu)

**Engineering**
- Thomas, Teresa M. (thomaste@msu.edu)

**Nursing**
- Cindy Majeski (majeske@msu.edu)