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A national survey has shown that problems associated with grants administration are one impediment to seeking external funding. Undoubtedly, federal oversight of grants often results in stricter interpretations of grant budgeting rules and an increase in difficulties for PIs and departmental administrative staff.

New initiatives, in partnership between the OVPR and Grants and Contracts, will assist PIs and administrative staff with grant issues. The goal is to ease the award process and, whenever possible, improve communication between the PIs and grant administrators. For example, rather than saying “no” to requests the administrators will help the PIs determine how their requests for spending can be accomplished.

Grants and Contracts has begun a procedure where, at the time of the award, the PI and department administrative staff meet with their assigned G&C project analyst to talk about the award letter and what that specific agency requires. Beginning next semester, the OVPR and G&C will hold informational sessions on the basics of grant budgets and administration for staff and faculty, college by college. The first session will be with the College of Arts and Sciences. Check the OVPR calendar, available on the research website, for the dates.

Although streamlining the informational process, the awards process has always been a joint effort between G&C and the OVPR at WMU. For example, whenever PIs elect to change a major budget allocation, they notify their G&C project analyst. The analyst then contacts the appropriate research officer who then initiates contact with the funding source. Sounds complex, but the process of working together works well in serving the best interests of all PIs.

OVPR and G&C are open to suggestions on how to better serve University faculty and staff. Please send suggestions to:

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Dr. William Cobern, director of the Mallinson Institute for Science Education, WMU, was named a 2006 Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The award is issued to individuals who make excellent scientific or socially distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications. Cobern has been a major force in science education and has advanced the Mallinson Institute to one of the top five units for external funding at WMU. In September, the AAAS Council elected 376 members as Fellows of AAAS. Cobern will be recognized for his contributions to science on February 18, 2006 at a forum to be held during the AAAS annual meeting in St. Louis.

Dr. Daniel M. Litynski will serve as the acting division director of the Division of Undergraduate Education in the Directorate of Education and Human Resources at the National Science Foundation, effective Nov. 1. Make it a point to visit Dan next time you are in D.C.
NEW PROCESS FOR INDUSTRIAL CONTRACTS

The process of submitting or entering into a contract with industry differs significantly from a grant with a federal agency. The difference includes intellectual property issues and the need to often tailor a contract to a specific company. In the past, the OVPR research officers held primary responsibility for entering into industry contracts as well as grants. In an effort to improve tracking submissions and the progress of contracts, the OVPR and the WMU Research Foundation (WMURF) has initiated a new process for contract management.

The WMURF will administer corporate grants, with Dr. Paula Johnson-Roberts as the industry contract officer. She will work closely with Dr. Michael Sharer, acting director of the WMURF, to review contracts for a variety of issues including intellectual property.

The process has a number of benefits for the investigator including a better tracking of the contract. Often contracts are delayed because they get stuck somewhere between WMU or the company involved. Having a contact manager should help to speed the process, and will ultimately free up the research program officers to help with other grant related issues. Contact your program officer or Paula Johnson-Roberts.

GRANT SUBmissions

Each year, more than 350 grants are submitted, and faculty need to be recognized for their effort. The University appreciates the effort put forth by all its research and creative faculty and, while OVPR realizes that not every proposal submission will be funded, the faculty involved need to be recognized. The following list is a short sample of grants that were submitted over the past few months.


Henry, James. Social Work. “Children’s Trauma Assessment Center—Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Diagnostic Clinic,” $15,000, Michigan Department of Community Health.


Oh, Jun-Seok, Civil and Construction Engineering, Ro, Kapseong, Mechanical and Aeronautical Engineering and Dong, Liang, Electrical and Computer Engineering. “Application of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to Traffic and Emergency Surveillance: Demonstration and System Design,” $110,633, Michigan Department of Transportation.


Yehia, Sherif and Abudayyeh, Osama. Civil and Construction Engineering. “RET Site: Research Experiences for Teachers in Infrastructure Engineering and Management,” $273,279, NSF.
Development of the bio-artificial kidney was the topic of the first in a series of Research to Commercialization seminars held on October 19, 2005. The featured speaker, David Humes, M.D. and Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan School of Medicine, discussed his experience with the research to commercialization process. Humes talked about how his research into the growth of cells within fibers has led to a number of medical applications including artificial kidneys and pancreas. The bio-artificial kidney would be a breakthrough for patients with kidney disease and would have substantial commercial market.

The reception following Humes’ talk gave attendants an opportunity to network with individuals interested in undertaking collaborative efforts toward the commercialization of research. The series is sponsored by the Office of the V.P. for Research, the Biosciences and Commercialization Ctr., the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Engineering, the SW Michigan Innovations Ctr., the BTR Park and the WMU Research Foundation.

The next seminar in the series will be posted on the events calendar available through the research website at http://www.wich.edu/research.

GRANT AWARDS

In 2004-2005 WMU obtained approximately $31M in external funds, approximately $29M were traditional grants and contracts, the highest level achieved at WMU. From July-October of 2005 WMU was awarded over $21M in external grants and contracts. The following is a representative sample of awards.


Fredericks, Tycho, Butt, Steven and Choudhury, Alamgir. Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering. “Investigating the working postures and applied forces on nurses while placing (or removing) a maternity bed foot section onto a birthing bed for different bed designs,” $35,000, Stryker Medical.


Kujawski, Daniel. Mechanical and Aeronautical Engineering. “Key Experiments and Analyses to Develop Life Prediction Model for Spectrum Loading,” $60,000, Office of Naval Research.


ANNOUNCEMENTS

HSIRB Date Changes Due to Break
Deadline for submission of Human Subjects protocols will be November 30 for December and January 11 for the January Meeting.
The full board will meet December 4 and January 25.

Grant Submissions During Break
While the end of December is usually a quiet one for grant submissions, OVPR is asking faculty and staff who plan to submit a grant or contract during the University closure (December 19 through the first week in January) to contact their WMU research officer by December 12.

We are requesting that the signatures for the grant be completed by December 14. OVPR can help with this process. For electronic transmissions, the WMU research officers will assist in the submission process during the break, but we ask that the PI make arrangements in advance so that we make sure someone is on call to electronically submit the proposal.

For paper proposals, as long as the approval forms, etc. have been signed off by December 14, we will reimburse the PI for the cost of any external copying or Federal Express charges.

Staff
In its efforts to serve the best interests of research and creative faculty, and to proceed with the University’s overall mission to secure $80 million in research dollars, the OVPR has hired Gina Betcher, MFA, to serve the writing, editing, revision and grant development needs of the University. Please connect with Gina early or wherever you might be in the grant submission process, for assistance.

JOINING THE CTA HAS BENEFITS FOR WMU RESEARCHERS

WMU became a member of the Michigan Core Technology Alliance (CTA), on September 22. The WMU Biological Imaging Center and Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center (BRCC) will be added to the Alliance's roster of core technology facilities.

Each core facility provides specialized equipment and expertise to enable Michigan scientists and industry to undertake research that would not be possible at their own institutions otherwise.

One of the advantages CTA membership is that WMU faculty and students can access other member CTA facilities at reduced rates.

The University of Michigan Wayne State University, and Michigan State University provide core facilities for structural biology, genomics, bioinformatics, proteomics, and antibody technology. Another core, the Van Andel Institute in Grand Rapids, offers a transgenic mouse facility.

In addition to the Biological Imaging Center and BRCC facilities at WMU, the Michigan High Throughput Screen Center at Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) uses equipment obtained from WMU.

The OVPR encourages WMU researchers to take advantage of this opportunity.

For additional details on the Michigan Core Technology Alliance, visit: www.ctaalliance.org.