

May 2023 Research Administration Forum Q&A

Contents

Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost	1
Extramural Fund Management	2
Contract and Grant Administration	3

Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Q1: Where could I find more information about the study regarding how race shapes one’s perspective?

A1: Here’s a link to [Screening the Los Angeles ‘Riots’](#)

Q2: Data is an institution’s prized asset, particularly in the new era of open science. Workforce training in data literacy, in a socially conscious way, could help bring long-standing campus staffing silos together. Are there efforts underway to incorporate cross-campus data literacy training for staff?

A2: To my knowledge, there are currently no systemic efforts underway for training staff in data literacy. I do, however, think this is great idea and one that resonates strongly with our Data X initiative and the desire that Chancellor Block and I have for providing staff with continuing education opportunities. This could be a great project for University Extension.

Q3: What are your thoughts on how the campus will deal with the new contracts, especially for the GSRs and how that will impact Contracts and Grants and providing funding needed to support the increased costs?

A3: VC Roger Wakimoto led a task force in the aftermath of the strike to answer these very questions. In the short term, the task force recommended that the University set up \$5M in bridge funding to assist PI’s who are unable to absorb the increases in their current budgets. Longer term, VC Wakimoto and his counterparts throughout the UC system and other AAU universities plan to lobby federal agencies to increase grant awards to take into account the increased costs so that PI’s can budget for the increases. The UAW contracts UC is facing are sweeping across the higher education landscape, so there is an incentive for grantors to rethink award sizes.

Q4: You have done so much work with diversity. Thinking about the current cultural focus on AI such as ChatGPT, and knowing the problems of bias often found in technology, do you have any thoughts on the issue? AI is likely to infiltrate all our lives. How do we prevent subconscious bias from influencing us?

A4: This is a great question. Fortunately, we have some of the world’s leading experts on this question on faculty here at UCLA—like MacArthur “Genius” Award winner Safiya Noble and Ramesh Srinivasan. Professor Noble is interim director of our Data X initiative and will likely lead the data ethics/social justice research stream of Data X going forward. AI will certainly be a core focus of this effort for the reasons implied by this question. We held a campus-wide town hall on ChatGPT recently in which both Noble and Srinivasan participated. Stay tuned on these issues as UCLA is poised to be leader in the conversation.

Extramural Fund Management

Q1: May I make a suggestion on Reporting Format? This is based on my experience with DOPE and others that come from Oracle product. I would suggest to map Reporting Format from A2 to the current one we are seeing now, whatever it is about Payroll Ledger, GL (closed, open, detail; AR, Revenue). Furthermore, with current system, if I need a drilldown on a certain Transaction (e.g., who did a transaction on MY account; find who the FM is for a certain account outside MY department) the current reporting system albeit 'old' and 'not advanced' according to Campus Management, indeed provides what we can use at finger tip without going around to find DATA. Talking about DATA, which is the reason for A2 in Campus Management words. Take DOPE for example, a lot of what it provides are 'junks' to us, I am saying that it is the case to people from upstairs. What I am trying to drive at is a 'succinct' format in its current state that we can find what we need, not something like 'buffet'.

A1: We would appreciate an opportunity to better understand suggestions. Can you please contact [Katie Cadle](#) or [Yoon Lee](#) to discuss?

Q2: Will the new system allow input via PAMS, maybe, where research administrators can include "internal fund title/short names" so they automatically pull in all downstream systems? That way PIs and research administrators/central offices can talk apples to apples since the future COA/POETAF are quite different in the future.

Alternatively, we could also include the short name field in the EPASS and have it flow down (but editable in PAMS). Often when we work on proposals, PIs already have a short name for the project.

A2: I will share this feedback with the Project Team to look into possible solutions for this request.

Q3: Will Ascend be able to set internal controls and mark funds that are: carryforward restricted, salary cap, e-Verified, cost-sharing, etc.? This is to ensure departments from not being able to charge expenses past a budget period or to charge an employee who has not been e-Verified. In the current system, there are no internal controls aside from a small flag in the ORA reports, which does NOT talk to the financial system. With constant staff turnovers, it is difficult to keep track of funds with special requirements, so I am praying that Ascend will be able to improve this environment.

A3: Awards in Ascend will include keywords which will allow users to see when an award is subject to specific terms and conditions such as Salary Cap, E-Verify, mandatory Cost Sharing, Restricted Carryforward, among others. There will also be a feature enabled which will prevent expenses from being charged to an award after the liquidation period at the end of an award. Beyond that, expenditures will require approval by a Departmental Approver, referred to as the Project Manager, and more information will be shared on this process as it is finalized.

Q4: Is there any departmental-level staff on these subcommittees? Often they only include leadership, but it's the fund managers and dept personnel who often have perspectives that are ignored.

A4: We recognize the importance of getting the department perspectives to design reports that meet the business needs of both departments and central offices. With that, we ensured to include departmental representatives across campus at various level (including fund managers and managerial positions) in the research reporting subcommittee. The research reporting subcommittee currently includes 10 departmental representatives and 2 individuals from the central office.

Q5: Is there a website where we can find a list of each of the Ascend Teams, and a technical summary showing exactly what each team is working on and where they are in the process? For instance, at yesterday's Town Hall they mentioned there is a cross-functional team working on UCPATH enhancements. It would be nice to see who is on that team and what enhancements they are considering. It would also be nice to see workups of prototype user interfaces. That would help us to provide feedback. I've not been able to find that at the [Ascend website](#).

A5: We will share the feedback regarding the Ascend website with the OCM team. Additionally, the sprint process includes system demos for campus Subject Matter Experts. These demos will focus on validating the design for specific requirements. To nominate yourself or others as a Subject Matter Expert email [Derek Lee](#) by Wednesday, June 7th.

Q6: In the Ascend environment, will there be a database that will store all incoming and outgoing MCA and subaward documents? Currently, it's strings of emails between departments, OCGA, Purchasing for agreement and amendments, which is difficult to track with staff turnovers.

A6: Oracle is not expected to store copies of MCA Subaward documents as it is not the system of record for these documents. I will share this feedback with the appropriate departments to look into possible future solutions.

Note: This question is also answered in Q&A #15 in the Contract and Grant Administration section below.

Contract and Grant Administration

Q1: Will the proposals team be able to provide more thorough reviews of our outgoing proposals, and actually tell us things that they see as needing to be fixed before submitting to the sponsor? Example: If someone finds a hyperlink that we had no idea existed, they only tell us to review the hyperlink policy, and provide a link to the policy stating where they're allowed. This is completely unhelpful when the expectation is for us to now review a 150+ page grant to find what exactly they are talking about, instead of having someone tell us where they found the questionable hyperlink from the start.

A1: Proposal review is a shared responsibility between the PI/ dept and OCGA. OCGA is primarily reviewing for institutional compliance. We do not review for hyperlinks. We include the comment on hyperlinks if we know that the sponsor has a policy against it, just in case the PI/ dept isn't aware. Inclusion of the comment does not mean that we have found a link. If we happen to notice a link during our review and if there is time to flag before the deadline, we will reference it but make no guarantees that there are not other links in the document.

Q2: Will we go back to the assignment of specific proposal review officers for specific departments/units? Round Robin is not very effective.

Some reasons why Round Robin is not effective: if you have an assigned person, they have a deep understanding of the types of C&G that the specific unit submits and are better able to provide a review. Also, an assigned individual can be contacted for questions. For proposal submissions, you need to indicate a specific contact. So who should you list if your reviewer will not be the same person as the awards. Pre-award and Award analyst should also be the same as they will have more experience and expertise and understanding during the award stage if they were also involved with the proposal review side (especially for contracts and complex grand submissions).

A2: Thank you for your perspective. We agree that when it's a complex proposal that it's good to try have continuity between the proposal reviewer and the negotiator. That's why the contracts team is keeping proposals. However, the majority of proposals we submit are for unilateral agreements (no-negotiation required) and it has long been the case at UCLA that the proposal reviewer is different from the individual setting up the award. We do note your comments on building up experience with department / sponsor knowledge and will take that into consideration as we finesse our teams.

Q3: When we have questions in advance of submitting a new NIH or other proposal for review, what is the procedure? When I've asked the intake team, they say "submit the proposal for review and the person assigned will respond", but if we're not even at that point yet, who do we ask?

A3: Proposal Intake will generally wait for a proposal, but if something really requires a review before proposal, the question is sent by Intake to the Proposals team.

Q4: Is there distinction who would be POC for sub contract vs. sub grant? Who would handle the federal flowthrough sub contract (incoming to UCLA)?

A4: Incoming subcontracts are always handled by the Contracts team. Incoming subgrants are almost always handled by the Awards team however clinical trial subgrants and some other particularly complex subgrants may be handled by the Contracts team too. Outgoing subcontracts are handled through Purchasing. Outgoing Subgrants are handled by OCGA's Outgoing Subawards Team.

Q5: The turnaround time for subaward issues (including set-ups and additional funds) is slower than it's ever been in the past. Is there any plan to adjust their structure or add to their team? It's taking months to set up subs which is really delaying important research and makes it hard for us to comply with invoicing restrictions.

A5: The standard time for new subaward agreement drafting is between 6-8 weeks from the point that we receive a **complete** package from the department. We encourage departments to take this into account and to submit the subaward package as soon as possible after the main award has been established. There are many mandatory Federal compliance requirements that have to be addressed before we can start drafting a sub. Once the draft has been submitted to the subrecipient for review/signature, we have no control over how long it takes for the subawardee to review the agreement, negotiate, or route for signature. However, a significant reason for delays in UCLA issuing subawards is that requests for subawards are not being submitted until after the subawardee starts work and the OST is receiving incomplete subaward packages.

Q6: Not having an assigned Analyst to our department has been frustrating. e.g. I've asked about a situation regarding NIH overhead when a PI transfers from another country and now they are at UCLA with our rates. The response included 2 assistant directors and they never responded even after following-up. I contacted NIH directly and they did not respond.

A6: UCLA will generally honor the rate from the prior institution.

Q7: The online EPASS system is really great. One of the few "new" systems that UCLA has rolled out that actually is running well and is an improvement on the old way.

A7: Thank you, we are thrilled to hear it works well for departments too.

Q8: Why does it take so long for outgoing subawards when the documents are submitted at the proposal stage?

A8: Because the vast majority of proposals are not funded, we try to limit the amount of subaward paperwork required at proposal submission to the bare minimum needed for compliance. UCLA is also unable to proceed without first having its prime award funding and sponsor terms in place. Doing so would put the university at a financial risk and at risk of being in compliance with our sponsor terms. If you would like to provide all of the documentation / forms at proposal time you can do that, but the subawardee institution has to provide some of it and they may not be willing to do so if and until a funding decision has been made. Subrecipient budgets are also prone to change at pre-award due to UCLA prime sponsor reductions in the awarded budget (which could also impact the scope of work). Documents may also be submitted at proposal stage, but the Outgoing Subawards Team (OST) does not initiate the subaward process. We depend on the department, to let the OST know when they are ready to proceed with their subaward. This is especially important because the department, as the project manager, is the main point of contact for subaward changes -- has the budget been revised? was there a change to the scope of work? has the PI decided not to go forward with the subrecipient? etc. When the department is ready to proceed with its subaward request, an OCGA Subaward Checklist (our request form which can be found at the [Required Forms for Outgoing Subawards](#) web page) is required to be submitted to the OST's central e-mail box ocgasubawards@research.ucla.edu. If the documentation listed as 'required'

on the OCGA Subaward Checklist was already submitted at proposal stage, you can let the OST know on page 2 of the Checklist (checkbox available at the bottom of section VII Required Documents).

Q9: Do you think OCGA Master Training on subawards could be useful if complete packets are rarely submitted to OCGA?

A9: Agree that this is an area where training helps. In addition to information being available on the OCGA website, we covered this at the [March 2022 RAF](#) last year and we do provide a session as part of the OCGA monthly training. The next subawards basics training is scheduled for June 21st. Please see the [Monthly OCGA Training Calendar](#) for sign up opportunities. We will continue to look for training opportunities.

Q10: Why does it take so long for an MCA when the information is submitted at proposal stage? The minimum time that has been communicated is 6-8 weeks?

A10: We try to operate on a first in first out basis, and at any point in time there will be between 240-300 active outgoing agreements that are being processed. Documents may also be submitted at proposal stage, but the Outgoing Subawards Team (OST) does not initiate the MCA process. We depend on the department, to let the OST know when they are ready to proceed with their MCA. This is especially important because the department, as the project managers, are the main points of contact for MCA changes -- has the budget been revised? was there a change to the scope of work? has the PI decided not to go forward with the MCA? etc. When the department is ready to proceed with its MCA request, an OCGA MCA Checklist, which can be found at [Required Forms for Outgoing Subawards](#) web page, is required to be submitted to the OST's central e-mail box outgoingMCA@research.ucla.edu. If the documentation listed as 'required' on the OCGA MCA Checklist was already submitted at proposal stage, you can let the OST know on page 2 of the Checklist (checkbox available at the bottom of section VII Required Documents).

Q11: Is there any way we could submit subaward renewals on multi-year NIH grants before we receive the new funds from NIH, so that the renewal is ready to go when the new budget year starts?

A11: UC rules prohibit us from issuing subawards when we do not have the prime award funding in hand. Obligating subawardee funding when UCLA does not have the prime award funding in hand would put UCLA at financial risk.

Q12: We submit subaward packets during the proposal phase, is there no way for the subaward team to be looped in at that time? Or start the risk assessment at that time? If it's a sub we've used before, does the subaward team need to do risk assessment again?

A12: We do not do an institutional risk assessment if we have a current assessment done within the last 12 months. The OST does have a system in place to reduce that duplication of effort. Less than 30% of proposals are funded. Having the Subawards team start to do the risk assessment at proposal time would significantly increase workload and significantly limit the time available to work on drafting and negotiating subawards.

Q13: In the Ascend environment, will there be a database that will store all incoming and outgoing MCA and subaward documents? Currently, it's strings of emails between departments, OCGA, Purchasing for agreement and amendments, which is difficult to track with staff turnovers.

A13: OCGA understands that the MCA process is being reviewed as part of the Ascend and Jaggaer redesigns, however this will not involve the storage of subaward/MCA documents. The OCGA Outgoing Subawards Team is also going through some system updates that may make it possible in the future to offer a database to departments as a resource. This is however something that will of course take time for planning and development. In the interim, we recommend that departments setup shared storage areas for the upload and archiving of subaward/MCA agreements and

amendments and communications. Having departmental shared storage space for upload would help to mitigate issues that come up due to staff turnover.

Note: This question is also answered in Q&A #6 in the Extramural Fund Management section above.

Q14: Why are employees who no longer work in OCGA still listed as a point of contact?

A14: As noted in the presentation the contacts list has been updated.

Q15: I submitted a subaward closeout on March 17 that still has not been processed.

A15: The Outgoing Subawards Team records the final closeout certification in OCGA's records—adding the certification form to our files. Please note that Purchasing is also involved in the close out process—they use the final closeout certification to close the related PO. See [Frequently Asked Questions](#) #3.35 “How is a subaward closed out?”

Q16: According to the EPASS, subrecipient proposals are supposed to be included with the proposal package. Is there a way to begin processing at that time.

A16: The subrecipient proposal is different than the sub agreement that has to be issued. UCLA's prime funding needs to be in place before the OST is able to proceed with a subaward. Proceeding without that prime funding in place would pose a financial risk to the university. UCLA also needs to know the terms of award in order to communicate those to our subrecipients—our subrecipients need to know the rules/requirements for the award funding. To go forward without those terms would prove to be a compliance risk. If the subaward request package (the OCGA Subaward Checklist and any other required documentation that has not already been submitted to OCGA) is sent to us as soon as the main award has been issued, we can generally issue a subaward agreement within 6-8 weeks.

Q17: If we are submitting multiple proposals for the same opportunity, is there any way we could be assigned to the same Proposal analyst? Last time we submitted 4 proposals and got 4 different analysts. It seemed like a lot of work for each analyst to reinvent the wheel.

A17: We do try to do this in the background if we are able to. It depends on other sponsor deadlines, staffing and overall volume, but if it's a non-fed sponsor we try.

Q18: Of course we always want a 5 day review, but worst case scenario, what's better – A full package with a 3 day review, or an incomplete package at 5 days with more info trickling in?

A18: Definitely a full proposal including the science, will provide a better review within 3 days. We will almost always be able to do a better review in those circumstances.