Temple University
Office of the Vice President for Research

To: All Faculty and Staff subscribed to the ERA listserv

From: Josh Gladden, PhD
Vice President for Research

Subject: Updated Guidance for 5 and 2 Day Waiver Requests

Date: November 6, 2023

Background

The final stage of the development and submission of a proposal for extramural funding requires a number of critical administrative checks before submission to the sponsor. These checks ensure that there are no errors to prevent the application from being accepted by the funding agency. Thus, every comprehensive research university sets an internal deadline some number of days before the submission due date for materials to be finalized and submitted to the central research office to allow time for the research administration staff to conduct the quality control checks and submit the proposal.

Temple has chosen a split internal deadline of **5 days for the finalized administrative portions of the proposal** (budget, budget justification, facilities, biosketches, ...) and **2 days for the proposal narrative** (sometimes called the Statement of Work (NSF) or Specific Aims and Research Strategy at NIH). These deadlines allow the staff time to check for internal errors such as incorrect formatting or missing information, current conflict of interest disclosures, current fringe and overhead rates, and reach out to the PI to correct the errors. Our faculty at Temple University have generated substantial growth in the research enterprise over the last decade as evidenced by being listed as one of the top 10 fastest growing research universities a few years ago. Research expenditures have more than doubled in the past decade ($124M to $300M). Temple submits almost 1500 proposals annually (average ~30/work week). It should be noted that the research administrative staff do not review the content of the narrative or science portion. These deadlines allow us to guarantee an on-time submission of a properly formatted proposal with a high degree of confidence it will be accepted by the agency portal.

Waivers to Internal Deadlines

Rationale and Criteria
As we all know, there are times when internal deadlines cannot be met, thus the need for a process to assess whether a waiver is warranted and have the proper approvals and communication to all stakeholders. The general criteria for a waiver request should be that the deadline cannot be met because of something *outside the control of the PI* (waiting for another institution to act, notice of opportunity on a very short lead time, unforeseen medical or family issues, …). Waiver requests should be the exception, not the rule. As these waivers put an extra burden on both local and central research administrators, these requests will be assessed by the Dean or Associate Dean for Research and the Vice President for Research. An approved waiver indicates that the local and central staff will do their best to get the proposal submitted on-time but cannot guarantee this outcome.

Updated Process
Historically, the waiver request process has been handled by email which results in a number of problems. The Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and Information Technology Services (ITS) have nearly completed work on an updated process for submitting and processing waiver requests (as well as other processes with a similar structure and flow). Within the next month, a link will be distributed to a web-based form which will initiate a sequential review and approval chain, allow for status visibility, and ensure all stakeholders are notified of an approved waiver in a timely fashion.

We are excited to launch this new system as we believe the flow for waiver requests and status updates for requested waivers will promote a streamlined process for ease of proposal submissions.