

Faculty Overview of the September 10-11, 2007 FDP meeting

Overall, the September 9-10 2007 FDP meeting was a very forward-looking meeting, which included many discussions of the plans for Phase V of the FDP. The framework developing for Phase V of the FDP presents continued opportunities for increasing faculty participation in FDP activities and priorities. The draft administrative policies for Phase V state that “The FDP’s Purpose is to promote increased research productivity in the conduct of federally supported research and education, provide for enhanced stewardship under federally supported programs, and achieve reductions in administrative burdens and costs associated with sponsored research and education.” During Phase IV, the findings from of the Faculty Burden Survey have shown the negative impact on productivity resulting from the increased the administrative burdens on the faculty. In addition, the activities of the faculty representatives have become more focused and more closely interwoven into the overall fabric of the FDP. There seems to be a general expectation that the voice and viewpoints of the faculty members will be critical in planning and carrying out the activities of the FDP during the remainder of Phase IV and during the implementation and execution of Phase V.

The Sessions began with **Welcoming Remarks** from the FDP Chair, Nancy Wray and from the Vice Chair of the FDP and Chair of the Faculty Committee, Sara Rockwell. Nancy Wray welcomed the participants to the FDP meeting. She then reminded the participants that this was the last year of Phase IV of the FDP and mentioned that Phase V would bring some changes in the structure of the FDP (e.g. new members) and would lead to considerations of new areas (e.g. problems in oversight of international research projects). Sara Rockwell then welcomed the participants and reminded the faculty that the faculty voice was very important to the FDP and was one of the unique features of the FDP. There are many forums in which university administrators meet with one another and with representatives of federal agencies, but few of these venues include significant numbers of faculty members. A unique feature of the FDP is therefore that faculty members are present and engaged in the discussions and in the development of the projects and demonstrations of the organization. Dr Rockwell then reminded faculty of the two faculty sessions, pointed out some other sessions of special interest to faculty members, and stressed the importance of broad faculty participation in all sessions of the meeting.

Dick Seligman and Joanna Rom then discussed the **Phase V Transition**. Phase V will last 5 years, and the FDP will be open to new members as the phase begins. There will be some changes in the administration of the FDP at the beginning of Phase V. These include the possible formation of an “oversight board” including senior federal officials to help guide and review the activities of the FDP. Elections of the next chair and vice chair will be timed so that they begin their service with the initiation of Phase V, in September 2008. The incoming chair and vice chair will serve 3 year terms.

The Federal Updates Session was disappointing from a faculty perspective, as several federal agencies did not present, even though some had representatives present in the audience.

Joe Ellis presented an update from NIH which began with a reminder that NIH would be on continuing resolution until November or December, and that this would impact both competitive and continuing awards. He also noted that award notifications are now 90% electronic and that this would soon reach 100%, underscoring the importance of to investigators of using the NIH commons. He also noted that although the NIH 398 was to expire at the end of September, it was still active and that NIH would continue to use it. As of October 1, he reported, NIH would no longer accept hard copies of financial reports. Finally, he reported on the NIH RFI for comments

and suggestions concerning peer review, and noted that NIH had received >1000 comments over the web or by e-mail, plus additional comments in the Regional Meetings.

Jean Feldman presented an update from the **NSF**, which is well captured in the PowerPoint mounted on the FDP website, describing some important changes and potential changes in NSF programs, review procedures, cost sharing policies and grant applications, as well as some new web resources for faculty.

Frank O'Day reported briefly for **ONR** on the PKI requirement and on some internal infrastructure restructuring, which should not affect faculty.

Merrilea Mayo reported for **GUIRR** on a workshop considering the special problems of faculty submitting applications through Emerging Research Institutions, which result from the lack of time and lack of administrative infrastructure at their institutions, and presented some potential approaches to mitigating these problems. Her report is well captured by the PowerPoint on the FDP website.

Morning Breakout Sessions

The session on **Administration of Awards and Subawards Conducted in Foreign Countries**, led by Richard Ortisi of ONR and Deloris Pettis of Harvard, discussed agency expectations and institutional processes. Concerns and problems related to the oversight of complex projects in regions with limited administrative infrastructure and very limited financial resources were discussed, as were problems arising from difficulties in communication and diverse cultural expectations. PowerPoints of both presentations are on the FDP website.

The Session on the **A-133 Audit Demonstration**, led by James Becker and Lynn Johnson, described a pilot involving 9 FDP Institutions that has recently been completed. The group is soliciting interest from additional FDP Institutions to move into a full demonstration regarding audit findings on sub-recipient awards. The goal is to show OMB that there are minimal audit findings and therefore inter-organizational monitoring is an unnecessary exercise. The demonstration would be to test electronic forms to respond to A-133 audit findings broken down into three major headings, namely 1) Questioned Costs; 2) Systemic Findings; and 3) Compliance Findings. The potential impact to faculty is that if such monitoring is deemed superfluous, faculty would no longer have to review and attest to sub-recipient charges as "usual and customary." The reduction in administrative burden for faculty would probably be small relative to the reduction in institutional burden.

The session on **NSF's Grants Management Line of Business (GMLoB) consortium on Research.gov** outlined the progress and plans for this new resource. The PowerPoint from the research.gov team describing this new resource, which is scheduled for a fall 2007 release, is available on the FDP website.

The session on the **Grants Management Line of Business (GMLoB)** provided updated information on the attempt to streamline access to grant information on grant.gov and to provide services for multiple agencies. PowerPoints on the FDP website from the presenters, Tony Cavataio of the Department of Education and Michael Curtis of HHS cover these presentations nicely.

Lunch Discussion Sessions

The Lunch Sessions included the **Faculty Lunch**. A number of issues were discussed at this meeting. Norika Ruiz-Bravo, Deputy Director for Extramural Research at NIH, followed up on her plenary presentation at the May FDP meeting to discuss further the problems related to the use of animals in research. She showed draft versions of potential NIH web resources and asked for feedback from the faculty. She also described resources and communications infrastructure needed by universities and described information and assistance available to NIH-funded institutions from the NIH. Sandra Schneider announced that she is leaving NSF to return to Academia, and introduced Mark Weiss, who will take her place as the NSF representative on the Human Subjects Research Subcommittee. The faculty expressed their willingness to continue working with the HSRS on the problems of mutual interest to the two groups. Tom Weber discussed his efforts to have NSF consider revisiting their policies of requiring detailed budgets at the time of grant submission, and described the negative reaction of the associate directors at NSF to a proposed demonstration project on modular budgets. The faculty offered to write a letter in support of this concept and in support of a pilot project demonstration testing the merit/feasibility of this approach with NSF grants. Joe Konstan was assigned the task of drafting this letter.

Parallel lunch session aimed primarily at administrative representatives included a discussion session led by Debi Rafi (ONR) to follow up on the morning session on **Administration of Awards and Subawards Conducted in Foreign Countries and** a session led by John Harris (Northeastern), Deb Carmel (Harvard) and Karen Seward (ONR) discussing the possible streamlining of A-110/A-21 inventory requirements. A session devoted to the special problems at **Emerging Research Institutions** drew both faculty and administrative representatives.

Plenary Session

In the Plenary Session Gil Tran (OMB), Terry Hurst (HHS), Barbara Dorf (HUD) and Earl Warrington (GSA) discussed various aspects of the **Federal Funding and Accountability Transparency Act (FFATA)**, which mandates the development of a searchable website that allows the public to ascertain the amount of federal money awarded to specific entities and to download the results of such searches. The funding types to be posted include grants, subgrants, loans, awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of financial assistance as well as contracts, subcontracts, purchase orders, task orders, and delivery orders; they do not include individual transactions below \$25,000. The systems to be used in this reporting are still under development. The concern for faculty is how much these new reporting requirements will increase the administrative burden on faculty and laboratory staff associated with their federally sponsored research and therefore how much they will increase the administrative costs they pay from the direct dollars on their research grants. The information provided (described in the slides on the FDP website) describes the systems being developed, but did not address the concerns of the faculty.

Early Afternoon Breakout Sessions

The four early afternoon breakout sessions included a session led by Jean Feldman (NSF) continuing the discussion of the implementation of the **FFATA**, and describing the new SF424 forms/procedures being developed to meet the requirements of this legislation. The slides for this presentation are on the website.

In a simultaneous session entitled **Best Practices Agency Matrix** Steve Dowdy (MIT), Tammy

Custer (Cornell), Michelle Powell (Georgia Tech) and Ron Splittgerber (Colorado State) described their progress in establishing a template that summarized each Federal Agency's position on grants.gov issues. The slides (posted on the website) emphasize that very significant differences will still exist in agency requirements and practices despite the harmonization of forms and practices envisioned for the overarching grants.gov system.

The **Contracts Task Force** session, co-chaired by Alexandra McKeown (Johns Hopkins) and Carol Zuiches (University of Washington) and Rosemary Hamill (NIH) considered current federal contracting issues, provided updates, and discussed the troublesome clauses demonstration. Unfortunately, no presentation or report from this session is yet available on the website.

The session on **Streamlining at NSF and NIH**, led by Tom Weber (NSF) and Anne McNicol (NIH), discussed a proposed budget streamlining project at NSF that would allow "just in time" submission of detailed budgets and also discussed continued NIH streamlining efforts and activities. The faculty at the session expressed their continued support for streamlining efforts in all areas and their continued willingness to participate in information gathering, pilot projects and demonstrations that would facilitate streamlining and harmonization of processes at the funding agencies, citing the negative impact of unnecessary faculty administrative burdens and the value of reducing those burdens by streamlining and standardizing forms and procedures.

Late Afternoon Breakout Sessions

The Late Afternoon Breakout Sessions included a meeting on **Project Certification** led by Joe Ellis (NIH) and Andy Rudczynski (Yale). Discussions focused largely on the aspects of current standards, policies, and practices that the session participants felt could be improved by clarifications, streamlining, and refining. The Faculty Burden Survey was cited as showing the negative effects on productivity of the current level of regulatory burden. Problems associated with effort reporting were discussed, as was the need to clarify and streamline aspects of A21 and the principles behind costing, and the need for clarification on voluntary uncommitted cost sharing. The possibility of a faculty survey on time and effort reporting was discussed. Elements might include: is accountability currently in place; do the expectations reflect how science is optimally and actually done; is the process working. This was envisioned as raising the question of whether there was an unnecessarily large burden associated with current processes and whether there was a need for change. This discussion will be continued by session participants and agency representatives over the fall and a plan for proceeding will be brought to the January meeting if appropriate. Participation of faculty representatives in these discussions was encouraged.

The session on the **NSF Merit Review and Award Mechanism** provided a report by Joanne Tornow (NSF) on trends in NSF funding, including a breakdown of the relative impact of those trends on different types of applications and investigators. The report, available on the website, shows that the success rate of NSF applications has fallen from 30% to 21% over the last decade. The decrease in the success rate was similar across the metrics presented (new and established investigators, solicited and unsolicited proposals, type of institution, etc). Applications increased by 50% over this period, reflecting both an increase in the number of applicants and an increase in the number of proposals submitted per applicant. Importantly, the proportion of highly rated proposals did not decline as a result of this increase in submissions, but the funding rate for the highly rated proposals decreased. The report also discussed the stress on the NSF peer review system as a result of these changes, the perception of the review and funding situation by the research community, and the increased use of submission

limitations (by PI and by institution) to manage the number of submissions received by the agency.

The session on **Terms and Conditions**, led by Mike Ludwig (Purdue) and Jean Feldman (NSF) continued the ongoing discussions of problems in this area.

Tuesday September 11, 2007

Tuesday Morning began with an early meeting of the **Membership Standing Committee**, led by Joanna Rom (NSF) and Susan Sedwick (University of Texas) to discuss current membership issues (e.g. requests for memberships; members that have not yet paid their dues) and to discuss membership issues related to Phase V (e.g. solicitation of members; requirements for membership).

Early Morning Concurrent Sessions

The **Faculty Standing Committee** meeting continued several discussions from the lunch meeting on Monday. There was continued interest in and discussion of the possibility of a session on the reasons why some institutions require detailed budgets even when agencies do not. David Robinson will continue to work on such a session for the January meeting, and (as he could not attend the September FDP meeting) ask that faculty who had ideas for the session and for possible participants contact him. He would like to have a team including a faculty member and an administrator present for each of the participating institutions. The faculty were asked to suggest other sessions for future meetings. Bill Osborne reported on the workshop on the Common Progress Reports, where he represented the FPD faculty as a speaker and member of the panel.

Marilea Mayo reported on the Emerging Research Institution lunch, which occurred in parallel with the Monday Faculty lunch. She noted that faculty at ERI report that one of their major problems is obtaining protected time for research, which reflects not only the emphasis of these institutions on teaching and the heavy teaching load of these faculty but also the lack of robust administrative and academic infrastructures to support faculty research efforts.

Joe Konstan reported on progress in the development of a proposal for a pilot project aimed at providing PIs with support for certain administrative tasks related to their research. In the Faculty Burden Survey, the faculty noted that some of the burden associated with their research could be delegated to highly trained and skilled assistants. Joe is developing a proposal to test whether allowing PIs to budget for such support (or to rebudget small amounts of salary on existing grants to this purpose) would decrease the burden on faculty, without increasing the costs of the research, and thereby increase overall productivity. A white paper describing such a proposal is being drafted, to be distributed when appropriate with copies of the Faculty Burden Survey. The white paper will also include a discussion of the need for clarification from OMB of the level of complexity needed to allow budgeting of administrative support as a direct cost under A21.

Plans for further distribution of the faculty Burden Survey were also discussed. Faculty were reminded to give Sara Rockwell, Nancy Wray or David Wright the names of organizations (e.g. federal agencies, professional societies, or scholarly publications) who should receive copies of the Faculty Burden Survey, with the name of a contact person if possible.

Joe Konstan also volunteered to write the draft of a letter to go to the NSF from the FDP describing the success of the NIH modular budget concept in reducing the administrative burden for PIs and proposing an FDP/NSF pilot project testing a similar requirement for a detailed budget only for projects likely to be funded, at the beginning of the funding negotiation process.

Two sessions ran in parallel to the faculty session. In the **Subawards** session, Susan Boone (University of Chicago) and George Gardner (NIH) continued discussions of subawards to foreign recipients and reviewed the template for these awards that had been vetted recently by NSF. In the session on **Streamlining Federal Agency Invoicing Systems**, Debi Rafi led a continuation of the discussions of this issue.

Late Morning Concurrent Sessions

The **ERA Grants.gov Update** session presented by Terry Nicolosi and the grants.gov team updated the FDP on the current status and progress with this system and provided an opportunity for discussion and questions from institutions and investigators using grants.gov.

The **FFATA pilot Discussion Session** continued discussions and planning of the pilot discussion begun in the session on Monday and described above.

The session on the **FASEB COI Toolkit**, led by Carol Liedtke and Susan Sedwick, described and discussed a valuable new toolkit for investigators, institutions, editors, professional societies, and industry to use to help in the management of conflicts of interest. The toolkit is an unusual resource, because it considers the different needs and viewpoints of the different stakeholders, recognizes both the potential benefits of interactions between academic researchers and industry and also the need to manage conflicts of interest that could arise because of these interactions, and considers the principles involved in managing potential conflicts. The PowerPoints from the session are available on the FDP website. The Toolkit is available at <http://opa.faseb.org/pages/Advocacy/coi/Toolkit.htm>

Plenary Session

At the final Plenary Session, Diane DiEuliis (OSTP) described the Research Business Models Subcommittee which reports to the NCST, a cabinet level council of advisors to the President on science and technology. She also described the priority areas of the RBM Subcommittee (facilitating collaborative multidisciplinary research, improving consistency of agency practices, and harmonizing accountability), and discussed its past results, recent progress, and developing activities in these areas. The PowerPoint of this presentation is available on the website.

Respectfully Submitted,

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