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**UCAR Management Committee (UMC)  
Working Group #4 - Administrative Efficiency & Agility**

**PROPOSAL PROCESS**

Some of these issues and recommended solutions were coordinated with the PACUR Subcommittee

Item	Staff Raised Issues/Concerns <sup>1</sup>	Staff Identified Impact(s)	Staff Proposed Solution(s) <sup>2</sup>	WG#4 Recommendations, Comments, and/or Actions Based on SME Discussion	NCAR Directorate and/or President's Council Response	Status
1	<p>The proposal preparation process is cumbersome and time consuming. It holds up the proposal submission process and uses large amounts of staff time to try to determine exactly what is needed for the PACUR form. There is too much back and forth between PIs, Admin, and NCAR B&amp;P when completing a PACUR form.</p> <p>PACUR has no authority over UCP, so why do UCP proposals need to go through PACUR?</p>	<p>Increased administrative burden to programs and institutional level staff due to changes in PACUR rules on proposals.</p> <p>Excessive time spent on proposal processing instead of the scientific content. Frustration by all parties involved in process.</p>	<p>a) The new PandA system must be designed to streamline the proposal preparation process by allowing users to select pre-generated responses to specific questions.</p> <p>b) Allow standard responses to mission appropriate, fair use, and co-sponsorship questions.</p> <p>c) Remove UCP proposals from the PACUR proposal review process.</p>	<p><b>a) Recommendation: The related recommendations and actions of the PACUR Subcommittee on UCAR Non-Core Proposal Review Process (from fall 2012) should be adopted.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> The PACUR Subcommittee approved all recommendations. Rena Brasher-Alleva and Valerie Koch met with Steve Nelson at NSF to discuss the recommendations and obtain NSF's approval. Steve has requested additional information, including statistical information. Steve indicated that he will be discussing the proposed recommendations with Sarah Ruth, Bernard Grant, Kristin Spencer, and may also address with Michael Morgan. Any change would be effective with the renewal of the NSF/NCAR cooperative agreement.</p> <p><b>b) Recommendation: The recommendations and actions of the PACUR Subcommittee on UCAR Non-Core Proposal Review Process related to PandA and its ability to allow standard (pull-down) responses should be adopted. (e.g., R1, R3, R5)</b></p> <p>Lab/Program Subject Matter Expert's agreed that, if approved, pull down options would address some of their frustrations.</p> <p><u>Response:</u> A survey was sent to the PACUR Subcommittee and they approved all recommendations except R8 "UCP Proposals should no longer be subject to PACUR Review", which was excluded from the survey.</p>		

<sup>1</sup> This column list the issues and concerns raised by staff that was collected during the feedback solicitation process and clarified during the subject matter expert (SME) meeting(s).

<sup>2</sup> This column lists proposed solutions from the staff feedback process and, where applicable, refined during the SME meeting(s).

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				<p><b>c) Recommendation: Remove UCP proposals from the PACUR proposal review process because the PACUR does not have any direct authority over UCP. This also supports PACUR Subcommittee recommendation R8.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> The PACUR Subcommittee has not yet approved Recommendation c). The Subcommittee agreed that further information is required in order to make an informed decision regarding UCP participation in the retrospective compliance review. UCP will make a presentation to the PACUR committee in June 2013, providing an overview of the UCP programs and relaying how their activities support the broader educational community. Although PACUR does not have any direct authority over UCP, the President's Council agreed with the recommendation that UCP be removed from the review process but determined that the PACUR committee would make the final decision regarding this issue.</p>		
2	Too many proposals are subject to PACUR review.	Workload for PIs, administrators, and NCAR B&P.	The proposal dollar amount subject to the PACUR review should be adjusted for inflation (each 5 years?). It should be raised to \$200K or higher starting in FY13.	<p><b>Recommendation: The proposal dollar amount subject to the PACUR review should be raised to account for cost of business inflation. The Working Group supports NCAR's proposal to raise the threshold to \$250K.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> The PACUR subcommittee approved the recommendation to increase the dollar threshold for PACUR review from \$100K to \$150K.</p> <p>Since the \$100K dollar threshold is a requirement of the NSF Cooperative Agreement, Rena Brasher-Alleva and Valerie Koch met with Steve Nelson at NSF to discuss the recommendation and obtain NSF's approval. Steve, Rena and Valerie discussed NCAR's recommended level of \$250K. NCAR B&amp;P is hoping that Steve will override PACUR's decision and raise the threshold to a higher level.</p> <p>UCP: The number of UCP proposals qualifying for PACUR review and valued between \$100K and \$150K is under 20%. However, 50-60% of UCP proposals qualifying for PACUR review are valued at over \$200K. UCP would see greater efficiencies with a higher threshold.</p> <p>Steve Nelson requested statistical information. Valerie</p>		

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				noted that ~30% of all NCAR funded proposals are under \$100K and are not eligible for a PACUR review. About 45% of NCAR proposals are less than \$250K.		
3	Excessive explanations are often required to justify university collaborations for 3a and 3b (collaborative with funding) proposals.	Workload and frustration by PIs and collaborators	Remove requirement for <u>detailed</u> explanation of university(s) roles in abstract for 3a and 3b proposals.	<p><b>Recommendation: Reduce the amount of information required to justify 3a and 3b proposals. This supports PACUR Subcommittee recommendation R1; however, the new 20% (of total proposal value) university funding threshold recommended by the PACUR subcommittee will likely cause an additional burden on NCAR B&amp;P and PIs (e.g., resources to calculate and interpret the percentages on proposals of varying complexity) and therefore is not in principle supported by the Working Group.</b></p> <p>Note from NCAR B&amp;P: Additional feedback is required to understand how the budget offices will address the PACUR Subcommittee recommendation related to the 20% funding threshold for university collaborators.</p>		
4	Maintain the 3c status for proposals that will be part of teams formed by sponsors that will include universities and don't require excessive explanations.	Workload and frustration by PIs and collaborators.	Develop a formal way of reporting that the sponsor's solicitation is creating a team with university participation. Possibly use a pull down explanation or similar in PandA for 3c selection.	<p><b>Recommendation: Prepare standard responses for science team proposals that include university collaborations funded directly by the sponsor. This also supports PACUR Subcommittee recommendation R5.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> This is already available. See PACUR review committees review.</p> <p>The budget office's agreed that the recommendation can be added to the new PandA system.</p>		
5	University collaborators spend excessive time trying to craft collaboration letters. NCAR's requirements are often unclear. Need to reduce burden of collaboration letters for 3c proposals.	Workload and frustration by PIs and collaborators.	Develop example letter with information requirements that can be used by all PIs seeking university collaboration letters.	<p><b>Recommendation: NCAR B&amp;P should more broadly disseminate guidance for university collaborator letters. Perhaps the guidance could be made available through PandA when available.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> PACUR does not want to see form letter(s). The advance notice form provides guidance/key points that should be addressed in collaboration letters. Responses to 3C can fill in the gaps where the collaborator does not fully address the collaboration criteria in their letters. It was suggested that the guidance provided should be more broadly disseminated.</p>		
6	Joint appointments (NCAR + University) should be included as collaborative	Workload and frustration by PIs and collaborators.	Joint appointments (UCAR/NCAR/ university) should be treated as a	<p><b>Recommendation: Create a joint appointment selection in PandA that treats joint appointments as funded university collaborations.</b></p>		

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	whether or not funding is sent to the university or is provided through NCAR since it benefits the university researcher.		funded collaboration.	<p>NCAR/University Joint Appointments: The budget offices currently search university websites to determine if the joint appointee has an affiliation with the university. The NCAR B&amp;P office agreed that they will look at joint appointments between NCAR and a University on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>NCAR/National Labs-University Appointments - As long as the joint appointee is not a visitor, adjunct, or affiliate then PACUR, and subsequently the budget offices, would consider them a university collaborator.\</p>		
7	There is concern that NCAR will expand the proposal review process by adding criteria related to private sector competition per some of the comments from the NSF management review.	Added workload on top of PACUR process. Constraints on NCAR's ability to seek funds from non-NSF funding sources.	Do not add additional burdens on NCAR's ability to seek non-NSF research funding.	<p><b>Recommendation: Do not consider adding burdens on NCAR's (or UCP's) ability to seek non-NSF research funding by adding criteria related to perceived issues of private sector competition.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> NCAR B&amp;P was not aware of any current discussions taking place related to this issue.</p>		
8	Having to submit proposals to NCAR B&P and UCAR F&A two weeks before the submission deadline often makes it difficult or even prohibits scientists from joining university collaborations as our university partner and associates do not have this limitation.	Frustration by PIs and collaborators and loss of time to prepare quality proposal material.	<p>Find ways to minimize the extra preparation time. Provide better guidance to PI's on the true deadlines for certain types of proposals.</p> <p>Provide timeline guidelines in the PandA system for easy reference.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation: Review the current timelines for proposal review and approval process and streamline if possible. Clarify the timeline requirements as there seems to be come confusion amongst PIs. Perhaps the PandA system could link to a document that provides guidance to PIs on this issue.</b></p> <p><u>Budget Office Response:</u> Sufficient lead time for proposal review is needed to allow the budget offices to adequately perform all of the following while managing a high volume of proposals: review the solicitation/announcement/RFP; confirm eligibility; interpret specific solicitation/RFP requirements review the budget; fully review the PACUR criteria and confirm any and all university collaborations; coordinate electronic submissions and to complete required internal processes such as cost share, sole source and, firm fixed price approvals, as well as fee waiver requests and export analysis; all while accommodating lead institution deadlines in addition to sponsor deadlines. In addition, the NCAR budget office requires adequate time to diligently comply with specific NCAR/NSF proposal guidance.</p> <p>NCAR clarified that the <u>two week</u> deadline pertains to the advance notice. NCAR requests only <u>three days</u> to review</p>		

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				<p>the final proposal package. The NCAR B&amp;P Office The UCP budget office requests a one week timeline for processing proposals.</p> <p><u>Contracts Response:</u> Under the current guidance, Contracts' opportunity to thoroughly review proposals is limited. It is becoming more common place for Contracts to receive proposals within an hour or two of the submission deadline. When multiple proposals are due in a single day, even less time can be devoted to the review. Contracts cannot perform its due diligence on behalf of the corporation unless sufficient time is given to review RFP's and final proposal packages. RFP review often includes meeting with PI's to understand the scope of the project. Conversations often center around the technology being utilized, the anticipated use of any deliverables, and determining what, if any, licensing may be required. If UCAR does not respond to objectionable terms and conditions contained in an RFP, UCAR is agreeing to accept all of the terms in the RFP. Should UCAR go back later and object to the terms, the sponsor can reject our request or worse case cancel the award.</p>		
9	<p>It's too hard to gather proposal related metrics for PIs. When data are needed to respond to requests throughout the organization. For example, in the post-ARG review, it can be difficult to pull the historical (past 5 years) proposal and award information together in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Too much time wasted by administrator's extracting information from databases.</p>	<p>Open up or mirror the Advance Notice database for use in Crystal Reports and other reporting software.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation: Provide a tool to extract data from the Advance Notice system.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> The budget offices will provide information required by Labs for the ARG and other committees such as the number of proposals and awards per Principal Investigator (PI), if requested. As part of PandA there will be reports available.</p>		
10	<p>Multiple Financial Interest Disclosure (FID) forms are required of each PI over the year, both at time of proposal and annually by Contracts.</p>	<p>Time wasted filling out and gathering paperwork.</p>	<p>Have the PI sign the FID in PandA (like a click license) for each proposal.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation: Establish an electronic form in PandA that can be accessed easily by PIs.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> An agreement has been reached that PI Disclosure forms will only be required for NSF and NIH proposals at point of proposal. This change will be implemented with the roll out of PandA. If a non-NSF/NIH proposal is funded and the funds originate with a federal sponsor, the PI and any named CoPIs will be requested to provide the required disclosure form <u>at point of award</u>. Because the PI and Co-PI Disclosure Forms are</p>		

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				<p>confidential, at this time, they will not be housed in the PandA system.</p> <p><b>Recommendation: SME's asked if UCAR could review our current process and determine if a single disclosure per year is adequate to meet the requirements of the regulations.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> UCAR is required per government regulations to obtain PI disclosure forms annually on all awards sponsored with federal funding. If a PI or Co-PI are named on multiple awards, a list of their active awards accompanies the annual renewal request. When certifying, the PI and named CoPIs are certifying for all active awards.</p>		
11	Current and Pending support documents are not available in a common form or at a common access point.	Time wasted filling out and gathering data each time it's required. This also slows down the proposal preparation process.	Ensure that the new PandA tool will address this issue.	<p><b>Recommendation: Develop a single source to collect, store, and print current and pending information required for submission at point of proposal.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> This is a planned feature of the PandA system. However, the feature will not be available during the initial release of the system. It is anticipated that a Current and Pending report will be configured for a future release once the Award system is also available. Prior to Award, reports of all pending proposals can be generated to help facilitate the completion of the Current and Pending, but this would not capture Award information.</p>		
12	NCAR B&P requires proposal information (e.g., cost share details, collaborations, etc.) during the Letter of Intent (LOI) phase of the process even when the sponsor does not require it (i.e. it's a non-binding type of LOI).	Frustration by PIs and collaborators responding to requests for data before its required straining relationships with potential collaborators &/or cost sharing partners.	Acknowledgement from B&P that internal cost sharing requirement/approval is only needed at the stage that it is required by sponsor and/or becomes a binding agreement.	<p><b>Recommendation: Establish more specific guidelines for determining when cost share documentation is required during the proposal review process, particularly when it's only at the stage of submitting a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI).</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> Per UCAR's Cost Share Guidelines "No proposal or pre-proposal will be presented to a funding agency without the process described in this guideline being followed. Cost share commitments presented in a pre-proposal are binding and must be approved through the proper channels. Failure to do this may result in the proposal being withdrawn." The budget offices require an approved cost share request at time of pre-proposal if the sponsor requires information about the proposed budget amount and/or cost share commitment.</p> <p>The budget offices may require information about the</p>		

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				collaboration at time of pre-proposal if the sponsor does not allow team members to change between pre-proposal and proposal. This is to ensure at time of pre-proposal that the project will adhere to the PACUR criteria.		
13	Inconsistent reviews of ANs – request for additional, non-pertinent information that does not address the question (& guidance provided for answering the AN questions), but instead requests additional info that the PACUR “may” want to know.	Workload issues and frustration by PIs and collaborators.	Clarify the proposal information requirements of the PACUR and only seek additional information later if a proposal is selected for review by the PACUR.	<p><b>Recommendation: Clarify the proposal information requirements of the PACUR and only seek additional information later if a proposal is selected for review by the PACUR.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> All NCAR proposals are reviewed by the Budget Analyst the proposal is assigned to, then reviewed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> Budget Analyst, and then reviewed by the Proposal Manager before a response is sent to the administrator requesting additional information about the proposal and responses to the PACUR criteria. The UCP Budget Office also employs a 2-3 step review process. This helps to maintain consistency in the review process. However, each review can be different depending upon the information at hand at the time the Advance Notice, budget, etc. are reviewed. The “Advance Notice Tips” document posted on the NCAR Budget and Planning webpage details the key items that each Advance Notice abstract and PACUR criteria responses should include. This document will be updated once PACUR recommendations have been reviewed by NSF and are implemented. UCP has a similar document posted on their site called “Guidelines for Completing the Advance Notice Form”.</p> <p>It is anticipated that these concerns will also be lessened when UCAR receives NSF approval for implementing the PACUR approved Recommendation R3. Standard drop-down responses will be available for Criteria 1, 2 and 4.</p>		
14	Multiple reviews are done by NCAR B&P of electronic proposal packages, with more granular level of detail in each review, requiring multiple changes & re-uploading of proposal documents into the electronic submission system multiple times.	Time-consuming, inefficient approach to making corrections in electronic proposal packages.	Where applicable, NCAR B&P should do a thorough, initial review & note all changes that should be made to initial proposal package with a thorough, final review once final proposal package is ready for submission.	<p><b>Recommendation: Streamline the proposal review process, thereby reducing the number of proposal package iterations that are required prior to final review submission and approval.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> NCAR B&amp;P will work to improve their review process to minimize the number of iterations and ultimately reduce the number of uploads into the sponsor’s electronic system. Completion of the final proposal <u>three days</u> prior to the sponsor due date would be very helpful in streamlining the process.</p>		

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15	<p>Inconsistent requests for “proof” (copies of email messages, etc.) that we’ve been asked to submit a proposal.</p>	<p>Workload issues and frustration of PIs and administrators due to the perception of a lack of trust.</p>	<p>Allow PIs to write or select “verbal conversation or meetings” in the solicitation section (or pull down menu in PandA). Trust that PIs are giving NCAR B&amp;P the correct information without having to provide additional documentation proof.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation: Accept different forms of “proof” from PI’s that a potential sponsor is requesting a proposal from UCAR.</b></p> <p>Stating that the proposal is being submitted as a result of a verbal conversation or meeting with the sponsor is acceptable as long as the proposal is ultimately not being submitted in response to an official solicitation, RFP, BAA, etc. by the lead institution.</p>		
16	<p>Sometimes NCAR B&amp;P and/or UCAR F&amp;A ask for copies of full and final submitted proposal packages from the prime contractor when UCAR is only the subcontractor.</p> <p>Often the financial information in these final submitted proposals is considered proprietary by the prime.</p>	<p>Workload issues and frustration of PI’s and prime contractors. It’s embarrassing to have to go to the prime and ask for this proprietary information and they often complain that UCAR/NCAR asks for it since it contains sensitive financial information.</p>	<p>Just don’t ask for this sensitive financial information from the primes.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation: Given that many prime contractors include company sensitive financial information in their final (and submitted) proposals, UCAR/NCAR should not request copies of the final full proposal packages from the primes (or at least not the proprietary portions) when UCAR is only a subcontractor on that proposal.</b></p> <p><u>Responses:</u></p> <p><u>Budget Offices:</u> For proposals that are either (3a) Joint with the university or (3b) Collaborative with funding to/from the university, documentation is needed to confirm that the university partner will receive funding if the proposal is awarded. The budget offices can accept an email from the lead institution (if non university) stating that the university partner will receive funding.</p> <p><u>Contracts:</u> Contracts requires a copy of the full proposal, if the primary sponsor incorporates the full proposal into a subsequent agreement. If the prime will not provide upon request, then Contracts’ requests all references to the proposal be removed, if UCAR would otherwise be bound to the terms of the proposal.</p>		
17	<p>Too many activities must go through the proposal process and/or system.</p> <p>Reduce burden by removing MOUs, LOIs, letters of support, and similar non-official proposal items from the proposal system.</p>	<p>Workload by all contributing staff.</p>	<p>Identify another mechanism to record these activities outside of the proposal system.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation: Reduce the administrative burden of recording and tracking unfunded collaborations and MOUs by eliminating the need to respond to the four PACUR criteria.</b></p> <p><u>Response:</u> Per the NSF Cooperative Agreement, activities involving the use of NCAR personnel, resources or facilities must be accessible to the NSF Program Office and Contracting Officer in an internet database. This includes unfunded collaborations and MOUs. NCAR B&amp;P does not require an Advance Notice for letters of support where NCAR personnel are only “endorsing” a proposal.</p>		



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				As part of the PandA System, required information and approvals will be different for unfunded collaborations, MOUs or MOAs and anticipated umbrella agreements. For NCAR, responses to the PACUR criteria will no longer be required for unfunded collaborations, MOUs, and umbrella agreements.		
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