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Requirements of funding agencies drive UT internal competitions

In recent years, the National Science Foundation began limiting the number of proposals that a given educational institution can submit in response to a specific solicitation. The NSF practice spread rapidly to other federal agencies and nonfederal funders, as program administrators saw the possibility of reducing the workload of their reviewers and staff.

In response, UT has been obligated to develop a process to select which proposers will be allowed to submit to solicitations with institutional limits. It is important that faculty understand that process in order to make the best use of their resources and time when preparing to submit to a limited program.

When faced with a limited-submission solicitation, the UT Office of Research will generally announce an internal competition that will specify the number of permissible proposals, set an internal deadline, and describe the information needed in the preproposal. The office selects reviewers and tabulates their responses. The reviewers' recommendations are then typically evaluated by the appropriate research administrator for the campus or institute to confirm the final decision.

The review process is based on these principles: (1) The competition seeks to advance those proposals most likely to receive awards from funding agencies. (2) The competition will be conducted so that each preproposal gets a fair evaluation on its merits. (3) Each proposer, whether selected or not, will receive feedback from reviewers to help improve current and future proposals.

UT research administrators may at times evaluate the proposals in terms of specific institutional research priorities.

Because many competitions have a broad scope, it will not typically be possible to use reviewers with scientific and technical knowledge specific to a given subdiscipline. Reviewers will be selected from among faculty and administrators who have a breadth of experience with proposals, research projects, and funding agencies.

Tips for preparing for internal competitions

Read the UT announcement carefully. No matter what the funding agency, the preproposal for UT's internal review will typically be no more than (1) a two-page summary including the participant list, the project goals, and methods, (2) a one-page agency cover sheet, and (3) a one-page budget summary. Support letters are never needed in a UT preproposal, even when the funding agency allows them.

Read the agency solicitation carefully. UT internal reviewers will evaluate preproposals based on how well they meet the requirements of the agency RFP. If your project summary doesn't follow agency guidelines, it will be downrated or disallowed.

Submit your preproposal to the internal competition electronically and in one PDF file. Faculty and administrators who review preproposals typically do so in addition to their assigned responsibilities. Your proposal documents should be readily accessible to them.

Inform the UT Office of Research and your college or entity's research administrator if you intend to propose to a limited-submission opportunity. Do so as soon as you decide to propose. If you find an RFP that limits institutional submission, contact the Office of Research to see if a competition is under way.

Know the deadlines for the internal competition. Preproposals are always due electronically to the Office of Research at noon on the specified date. Late proposals are not considered.

Monitor both campus and agency media for announcements of RFPs that limit submissions. The Office of Research uses "Tennessee Today," the UT Research Log, the DDDH listserv, this newsletter, and other lists to announce internal competitions. The associate dean for research in your college or your unit's research administrator is also a resource.

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State again qualifies for EPSCoR assist

Nano, neutron proposals in preparation

Colleges and universities in the state of Tennessee are again eligible for funding under EPSCoR, the National Science Foundation program that provides extra research funds for states that fall below a certain percentage of average NSF funding.

EPSCoR is the NSF's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, and states and other jurisdictions which receive less than 0.75 percent of NSF research funding nationwide qualify for the program. Tennessee became eligible for the program in 2002. When NSF research awards rose in 2005, Tennessee became the first state ever to "graduate" from the program; but NSF award totals in 2006 showed that the state had again fallen below the 0.75 threshold.

Eligibility for EPSCoR allows the state committee to apply for funds for research infrastructure improvements that will make Tennessee universities and colleges more competitive for major NSF research initiatives. The Tennessee committee is currently preparing a Research Infrastructure Improvement proposal that seeks \$15 million in support for (1) nanomaterials for energy conversion, (2) nano-based sensors, and (3) novel nanomaterials. The proposal will be submitted on 4 January 2008.

Additionally, EPSCoR automatically qualifies Tennessee researchers for additional monies that fund qualified projects that would not normally be supported. Since the state first qualified for EPSCoR in 2002, state institutions of higher learning were awarded some \$27 million in research funds that would have gone elsewhere.

Consideration for this extra funding is automatic and requires no special effort from individual proposers.

Tennessee EPSCoR is guided by a committee of educators, government officials, and representatives of private industry.

Eligibility for the NSF program also qualifies Tennessee researchers for the Department of Energy's sister program. The state committee is completing a proposal on neutron science for that program.

Tossing lab glass

The Facilities Services Department and Environmental Health and Safety reminds UT faculty and staff that all lab glass must be disposed of according to safety guidelines.

To prepare uncontaminated glass for disposal, place all glass in a trash bag. Place the trash bag in a cardboard box and seal it with tape. Write "glass for trash disposal" on the box and leave it next to a trash can inside the lab. A custodial staff member will remove the box from the lab and dispose of it in the trash dumpster.

Glassware contaminated with biohazards requires special handling. Disposal options include:

1. Chemically disinfect the glassware and treat it as regular lab glass, following the instructions above.
2. Prepare for shipping disposal in a puncture-proof biohazard container.
3. Ship via Stericycle. Only researchers are authorized to pack and handle these containers. Sharps containers are also shipped via Stericycle.

No material (glassware, paper, etc.) labeled "biohazard" should be discarded in trash receptacles.

The UT Environmental Health and Safety contact number (974-9586) is answered round the clock every day. For more information contact the EHS office or visit <http://www.pp.utk.edu/policies/glassDisposal.htm>.



When preparing a proposal for final submission, should I hold notifying the Office of Research if I am having trouble with some final detail or getting all the signatures, even if it goes beyond the internal review deadline?



No, notify us at least five business days ahead of the agency deadline schedule so we can start the communication with you to solve any problems and help your proposal be in the best possible shape to increase its chances for an award. The purpose of the advanced deadline is two fold. First, it gives us time to help you fix any problems and make sure everything the agency requires has been adequately addressed. Second, it helps us queue the proposal reviews so that every proposal gets a thorough review. This is particularly important now that we are short on staff.

CEHHS starts 3 multidisciplinary centers to improve life in state

The College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences has opened three new centers that will draw on disciplines as varied as education, exercise science, social work, nutrition, and hospitality to enhance the quality of life for citizens of Tennessee.

"We're pleased to have the opportunity to collaborate with so many other colleges and programs in these efforts," said Bob Rider, dean of the college.

The Center for Public Health

CEHHS is working with the colleges of nursing, social work, and veterinary medicine, as well as the Graduate School of Medicine, and University Extension, to create a center that will enhance research and outreach and help the university collaborate with local, regional, and state programs of public health. Paul Erwin will head CPH.

"Our purpose is to identify and integrate resources related to public health across the university," Rider said.

The Tennessee Obesity Research Center

Naima Moustaid-Moussa in nutrition and David Bassett in exercise science will lead the college's new center on obesity. The research will focus on genetic and environmental factors leading to obesity, effective interventions for long-term prevention and treatment, and development of public policies to combat obesity. Rider called the center "very comprehensive and multidisciplinary."

The UT Culinary Institute

Under the department of retail, hospitality, and tourism management, CEHHS has opened a training institute that will provide students with an intensive 10-month course in the culinary arts leading to a certificate that also includes certification in Servsafe Foodservice Sanitation. John Antun will direct the institute.

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Internal competition in works for NSF CPATH

In an effort to transform undergraduate computing education on a national scale, the National Science Foundation is soliciting proposals for its Pathways to Revitalized Undergraduate Computing Education (CPATH) program, which is supported through the NSF Computer & Information Science & Engineering directorate. The program supports three types of projects: 1. Community Building (CB) grants, 2. Conceptual Development & Planning (CDP) grants, and 3. Transformative Implementation (TI) grants. The University of Tennessee, as accredited, will be limited to participating in one submission each for CDP and TI proposals. The CB proposals have no institutional limits. The UT Office of Research will publish details of the internal competition shortly. The NSF deadline is 11 March 2008. Information on the solicitation is available at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2008/nsf08516/nsf08516.htm>

Remember Chancellor's Awards for faculty

Information about the Research and Creative Achievement Awards and the Professional Promise in Research and Creative Achievement Awards is available on the UT Office of Research website. Go to <http://www.utk.edu/research/>, choose the link for the Knoxville Office of Research, and then click on Chancellor's Award in the Quick Links box.

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