

## MEMORANDUM

To: All Northwestern University PIs

From: Frank J. DiSanto, Associate Vice President for Research Operations

Subject: Grants.gov requires earlier proposal submission to OSR

Date: January 4, 2007

This is an important announcement relating to the upcoming mandatory submission date of most NIH proposals using the Grants.gov website. It is also a follow up to the memo I sent dated April 13, 2006 outlining NIH's plans to transition to Grants.gov. Please see the following link: [http://www.research.northwestern.edu/research/osr/docs/DiSanto\\_memo\\_NIH\\_Electron\\_Submission\\_41306.pdf](http://www.research.northwestern.edu/research/osr/docs/DiSanto_memo_NIH_Electron_Submission_41306.pdf). You will see below that internal deadlines have been established for the review and submission of proposals.

Effective January 1, 2007, the Office for Research will require that a copy of the administrative shell be submitted to OSR at least five full working days in advance of the sponsor's deadline, and the completed proposal, including the research plan and associated sections, submitted at least two working days in advance of the deadline. This requirement applies both to proposals that will be submitted electronically as well as those being submitted on paper. The five-day lead time does not include the time required by your local department/school for their review. Please note, a complete proposal includes the final scope of work and administrative components including all required documentation from proposed subrecipients.

### **The Federal Government's Transition to Grants.gov for the Submission of Proposals**

Over the past few years, the federal government has been in the process of implementing its new electronic proposal submission system, Grants.gov. For the upcoming NIH February 5 deadline, all R01 proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov, as will all other NIH and other PHS agency mechanisms that have previously transitioned. Northwestern has also submitted applications to the DOD, DOE, ED, NSF, and several other agencies via Grants.gov. Soon, all 26 federal funding agencies will require the use of Grants.gov as their submission portal. In addition, many private funding agencies have moved toward electronic submissions and will continue to do so.

### **Experience to Date with the Review and Submission of Grants.gov Proposals**

OSR's experience to date with these submissions is that the technical and administrative requirements of reviewing and submitting applications have become a far more complicated process than before. In addition, Grants.gov transmissions increase the potential that a submission will not be received by a sponsor prior to the 5 p.m. deadline, due to Grants.gov system limitations such as bandwidth and other data communication inconsistencies (NIH estimates 20,000 R01 proposals will be sent through Grants.gov for the February 5, 2007 deadline). Further, the identification of NIH business rule errors will require that a corrected

proposal be resubmitted with corrections prior to the actual deadline. OSR has experienced some difficulty with these electronic research administration systems, resulting in the rejection of several electronic proposals for missing the sponsor deadline and several near misses resulting from incorrectly prepared proposals reaching OSR within hours of the sponsor deadline. Unless we make changes to our current practices, the frequency of these difficulties is expected to increase as more and more agencies migrate to electronic proposal submission.

Based on our experience, and the experience of other major research universities, we'd like to provide you with some clarification and guidance for dealing with these new electronic submissions. Your department/school staff as well as your OSR Grant and Contract Officer need adequate time to review, approve, and submit proposals. This is particularly critical in the case of electronic submissions, where a variety of technical difficulties arise in addition to normal review issues.

### **OSR Deadline Requirements for the Review and Submission of Proposals**

The OSR staff will make a good-faith effort to process and submit proposals received after the internal OSR deadlines. Priority will be assigned to the original electronic submission of proposals over proposals that must be resubmitted due to correction of NIH validation errors in the original proposal. While priority will be given to those applications already in the queue, OSR will review late submissions as time allows. Faculty who submit Grants.gov proposals or other electronic proposals to OSR after the internal deadlines acknowledge and accept responsibility for the risks that their proposals will not be fully reviewed by OSR, that they may fail to pass the sponsor validations prior to the sponsor deadline, or that there may be insufficient time to electronically submit them on time. In those cases where OSR cannot guarantee submission prior to the deadline, we will encourage PIs to contact the sponsor to request approval for a late submission.

We recognize that this represents a major shift from current practice, and are writing to request your assistance in informing investigators and staff, as well as adjusting your own business practices, to accommodate this change.

cc     Provost Dumas  
       Vice President Moore  
       Deans, Chairs, Center Directors  
       Bruce Elliott  
       Susan Ross  
       Holly Falk-Krzesinski