

UNI Forward Together Guidance on Research, Scholarship, & Sponsored Projects at UNI

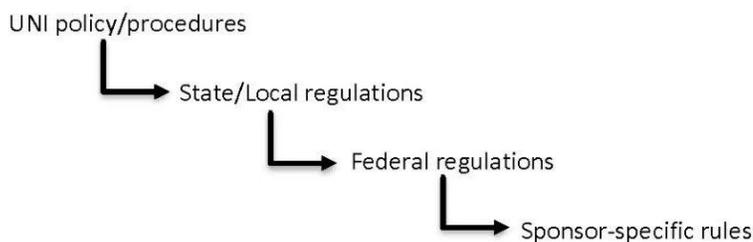
August 4, 2020

General Information

The following guidance is offered to faculty, staff, and student researchers across campus to assist in implementing sponsored and non-sponsored research and public service projects as UNI resumes on-campus operations for the fall 2020 semester.

As was the case this past spring and summer, the circumstances will continue to evolve. Please visit, and continue checking, the [UNI Forward Together](#) website, which is the University's central information hub for all faculty, staff, students and visitors regarding the resumption of on-campus operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, information regarding funding and project management for sponsored projects can be found on the [RSP Website](#). Please note that the term "research" in this memo includes all types of scholarship, creative activity and basic research.

In general, researchers are encouraged to be strategic and flexible about how they plan and conduct their research at this time. Planning for a full or partial campus shutdown in the near future should be a part of their project implementation strategy in addition to planning normal project activities and expenses. Above all, remember that all externally funded projects are awarded to the University, and as such, all project activities that take place under an externally funded project must first and foremost follow the University's rules, policies, and protocols. There are times when state, federal, or sponsor rules are more strict than the University's and in those cases the project should be managed to the most restrictive set of rules available. In order of applicability, externally funded projects should be administered by applying rules, policies and protocols in the following order:



Below are some key considerations related to administering sponsored projects at UNI beginning in August, 2020. This is a *highlights* list only. Please consult the [UNI Forward Together](#) website for additional information and contact RSP about project-specific questions.

- **Face coverings:** As of July 6, 2020, a face mask is required when working indoors and outside in situations when 6' distancing is not possible on the UNI campus. This rule applies for all UNI employees and students who are conducting university related business, which includes any activity in support of a UNI sponsored project, even when the project activity is taking place off-campus.

- **Travel:** UNI's travel policies apply to all sponsored projects regardless of what the project's original plan for travel might be. As of June 18, 2020, all university-sponsored in-state and out of state travel is permitted with proper approvals. Please note that only project-related travel expenses are allowed to post to sponsored project accounts. A sponsored project account cannot be used to support travel that is *loosely* related to the project or to support travel that the project's home department would normally support, such as conference travel, unless the conference is specifically a part of the sponsored project's scope of work and budget. Please consult the [UNI Fall 2020 Department Protocols](#) for more guidance about travel.
- **Sponsored Project Purchasing:** Sponsored project principal investigators/project directors (PI) should exercise the same careful and strategic spending practices for sponsored projects as is expected for UNI general fund expenditures. Please note that on July 13, 2020, the UNI Office of Business Operations circulated a memo requesting that all non-IT expenses of less than \$5,000 be made using a University procurement card. Please follow this request for sponsored project expenses as well. *However*, remember that purchases using a University procurement card do not require prior approval before incurring the expense. Please take extra care to ensure that sponsored project related purchases using a University procurement card are [allowable, allocable, and reasonable](#) for the sponsored project. Ultimately it is the PI's responsibility to ensure that all project expenses are allowable. If you are unsure and you are the PI, please consult RSP; if you are unsure and not the project PI consult the project PI prior to incurring any expenses.
- **Purchasing PPE and Hand Sanitizer with Sponsored Project Funding:** Sponsored project accounts may be used to purchase PPE & hand sanitizer only when the supplies are required to implement the project and when the purchase of PPE and hand sanitizer is already in the sponsor-approved budget or by approval from RSP. The University is supplying each employee with two cloth face masks and a face shield. If the project requires additional PPE to be successful (for example, if a non-University employee collaborator needs a face mask to work on the project), researchers may purchase the PPE with sponsored project funds only if the PPE is budgeted in the project. If the PPE is not in the sponsored project budget, or RSP does not approve the purchase, then a non-General Fund account, such as a PI or Departmental incentive fund account, must be used. The University does not have a centralized fund to purchase PPE or hand sanitizer to support externally sponsored projects. Contact RSP if there is a need for PPE and/or hand sanitizer but these items are not in the current budget before purchasing these items.
- **Sponsored Project Effort:** In November, 2020 RSP will be sending out the Fall Effort Certifications for certifying effort allocated to sponsored projects in the 2020 spring semester for all UNI employees and for summer 2020 effort for UNI faculty. Please review the sponsored project effort for the 2020 spring and summer periods *before* the end of September, 2020 to make sure that the PAF effort allocation matches the actual effort during this period. This is a normal best management practice for managing sponsored projects. However, because of the pandemic it is more likely that the researcher's effort may have deviated from what was originally planned for the 2020 spring and summer. Remember, effort cannot be allocated in one month and then actually performed in another. If in any given month there was allocated effort to a sponsored project, but the researcher did not actually work on the project, it is necessary to retroactively revise the PAF effort allocation *even if the work was eventually completed in a different month*. Please contact RSP's Michele Mullings-Shand with any questions about sponsored project effort at mullings@uni.edu or 319-273-6418.

- **Reductions of Indirect Cost (F&A) Recovery:** It is vital to recover indirect costs associated with sponsored projects. Please refer to the [RSP website](#) for information and guidance related to indirect cost recovery at UNI. Effective on July 1, 2020, voluntary reductions of the UNI indirect cost recovery rate will not be allowed. All project proposals must include the University's full federally negotiated indirect cost rate (35.1%). If a project proposal includes a lower indirect cost rate the lower rate must be a Sponsor-imposed rate reduction and supported by documentation from the Sponsor. Remember that any time an indirect cost rate lower than 35.1% is used the difference between the lower rate and 35.1% is covered by the UNI general fund and student tuition fees. The University's general funds and student tuition income will not be used to voluntarily subsidize sponsored projects.

- **Cost Share:** Cost share is a normal component of many sponsored projects. Due to current challenges please be sure to seek, and receive, prior approval from all necessary parties *before* committing the University's funds for cost share. The RSP preaward team (Maggie Heretakis, Maggie.heretakis@uni.edu or by phone 319-273-3961; Rebecca Rinehart, Rebecca.rinehart@uni.edu, or by phone 319-273-6482) are available to help navigate the necessary approval process for any projects requiring cost share. Never offer voluntary cost share. Finally, if researchers are administering a current project that includes cost share, take the time now to review the cost share obligations. It is important to make sure to keep up with the cost share requirements and that the planned cost share reported to the sponsor is allowable cost share for the project.

- **UNI-issued Subawards & Vendor Agreements:** If the sponsored project has a subaward or vendor agreement with a non-UNI entity be sure to check in on their status and ability to continue to support the project as we enter the fall 2020 semester. Across the country each state is taking its own approach to manage the impacts of COVID-19. It is very possible that collaborators in other states may have to adhere to different rules, guidelines and protocols than at UNI. Their protocols may very well restrict their ability to work on the project. If there is an issue with a paid collaborator or service provider contact Britta Sandberg in the RSP office at britta.sandberg@uni.edu or by phone at 319-273-4321.

- **Families First Coronavirus Response Act Sick Leave:** In the event the project PI or anyone who normally works on the sponsored project is eligible for and in need of COVID-19 sick leave/family care leave, allocating some (or all, depending on the situation) of the leave to a sponsored project is permissible. Please see the [UNI Human Resource Services](#) webpage for UNI employees and the [UNI Career Services](#) website for UNI student employees for COVID-19 related leave rules and requirements.

- **Proposal Submission and PRAF Completion:** Although it is never a good idea to wait until the last minute to submit a project proposal and PRAF, it is particularly important to plan a project proposal and PRAF submission at least a week in advance of the actual deadline due to the possibility of COVID-19 related delays. Many processes may take additional time, especially when working with an off-campus collaborator, as UNI, our project partners and sponsors contend with COVID-19 related staff shortages, delays caused by remote working, and the simple necessity for most institutions to re-tool their mode of operation as the fall 2020 semester approaches. Please work with the RSP preaward team to set, and achieve, advance submission deadlines to ensure that the hard work of compiling a project proposal does not end in a deadline-related submission failure due to a COVID-19 related delay.

If you have any questions please contact the RSP office at 319-273-3217 or email rsp@uni.edu, or contact Tolif Hunt, Director Research & Sponsored Programs at 319-273-3025 or tolif.hunt@uni.edu.