PURPOSE

The purpose of this operating procedure is to clarify and define the roles of the Principal Investigator (PI), Department Administrator (DA), and the Research Administrator (RA), with regard to use of the Research Dashboard (both PI and RA Dashboards).

VCU School of Medicine expenses on sponsored projects must comply with federal regulations, which are codified in a single guidance document known as the “Uniform Guidance” or 2 CFR 200 that must be used by all federal agencies. The Uniform Guidance (UG) provides standards to determine whether costs can be charged to federal grants and how those costs should be distributed between direct costs and facilities and administration (F&A) costs. These principles are rigorously applied to all federal grants and generally adhered to in administering non-federal awards. Each federal agency has or will issue more detailed guidelines as to how UG applies to its grants and cooperative agreements.

The standards established in the UG require that all sponsored project expenses must be (1) reasonable, (2) allocable to the project, (3) given consistent treatment, and (4) conform to any limitations or exclusions set forth in the UG or the award requirements.

INTRODUCTION

Grants and contracts for sponsored projects represent a contractual obligation between the grantor and the University for the performance of a specific activity through which the grantor, or sponsor, is entitled to receive some consideration or benefit. The contractual obligation is normally documented by a proposal and award combination, contract, or a written memorandum of agreement. The University assumes full legal responsibility for complying with all requirements imposed by the grantor or sponsor upon acceptance of grants and contracts for sponsored projects, including a requirement for a report of expenditures or a provision for an audit (refer to VCU’s policy Sponsored Programs Award Review, Negotiation, Acceptance and Notification). In turn, the School of Medicine must ensure its investigators and personnel are in compliance with all VCU and sponsor requirements for the administration of these sponsored programs.

The Research Dashboard is a web based financial reporting tool for sponsored projects at VCU. The PI Dashboard provides Principal Investigators and Research Administrators with “live” budget, expense, and commitment activity for active sponsored projects. The RA Dashboard provides similar information at the school, department and division levels. All data displaying in the Research Dashboard are either direct feed from Banner, direct feed from RAMS-SPOT, or a calculation performed by the Research Dashboard using Banner and RAMS-SPOT data to give as accurate a picture of current sponsored project financials as possible. The Research Dashboard calls PI and RA attention to specific areas that require administrative attention via alerts and notifications. It also houses the mechanism for PI review and certification of Monthly Expense Reports.

PROCEDURE

Access to the PI Dashboard

PIs with active grant indexes should already have access to the Dashboard. Research Administrators with Banner Finance access will already have Dashboard access.
Other access to the Research Dashboard is given on an as-needed basis. Requests for other access should be submitted to the University Controller’s Office through a Landesk support ticket. Any potential Dashboard user who does not already have Banner Finance access will be required to take and pass the online Blackboard course “PAA001: Banner Basic Navigation & System/Data Security.”

Department chairs and other senior-level Department administrators can request access to all PIs and projects in their department. Contact SOMRESADMIN@vcuhealth.org for more guidance.

Each PI with active sponsored projects (whether they are the primary PI on a project or a co-investigator with an internal subaccount) should have their own PI Dashboard. RAs will be able to view the Dashboards for all Principal Investigators in their department as well as the RA (Research Administrator) Dashboard. The RA Dashboard aggregates PI and grant information at the unit level according to Banner Finance org.

PIs and RAs can access the Research Dashboard through the VCU SAS Reporting Center or by following the “Research Dashboard” link on the MyVCU Medicine portal page.

PIs should navigate to the PI Dashboard tab along the top of the screen once logged in to the VCU Reporting Center. RAs and DAs can use the Research Admin tab to view a particular PI Dashboard or navigate directly to the RA Dashboard using the tabs at the top of the screen.

If trying to log in to the Research Dashboard from off-campus you must use the VCU VPN secure login.

**Maintenance of Data Displaying in the Dashboard**

Source data for the Research Dashboard are held in the University’s Banner Finance, Banner HR, and RAMS-SPOT systems.

Primary responsibility for maintaining the data displayed in the Research Dashboard lies with the RA and DA in the Department. Incorrect data in the Dashboard is a result of incorrect data in one of the University’s source systems (Banner, RAMS-SPOT). RAs are expected to perform data verification in the PI and RA Dashboards on a regular basis, particularly at award set-up and award continuation. Once verification has occurred, the RA will work with various groups to correct any inaccurate data.

Requests to update source data in Banner and RAMS-SPOT systems should be directed to Grants & Contracts Accounting and Office of Sponsored Programs as applicable.

See the SOM Office of Research Administration website for tools to help maintain data displaying in the Dashboard.

**Monthly Expense Report Review and Certification**

PIs with active grants or internal subaccounts are required to log in to the PI Dashboard on a monthly basis to review and certify Monthly Expense Reports (MERs).

The review of MERs must be certified within 30 days of the report’s release. **IMPORTANT NOTE: Principal Investigators are certifying that they have reviewed their MERs, and notified their DA and RA if issues are found, not that the MER itself is correct.** The PI should work with the DA and RA on any issues identified while reviewing their MERs but should still certify that they have reviewed the report for that month.

Department Chairs are notified via automatic email notification of all investigators in their Department with MERs between 30 and 60 days past due. PIs with any monthly expense report certifications greater than 60
days past due run the risk of their new incoming awards not being processed until the review of all outstanding MERs has been certified in the PI Dashboard. The SOM Dean’s Office semi-annually issues a memo to both Department Chairs and the Dean notifying them of all investigators with MERs more than 60 days past due.

Primary responsibility for assisting PIs with the review and certification of their MERs lies with the DA and the RA and should be an integral part of the required monthly reconciliation process.

**Day-to-Day Grants Management with the RA Dashboard**

Monitoring accounts – the Active Index Status portlet provides a way to quickly review the financial status of the active indexes within the department/division and helps spot possible trouble areas, such as, actual and projected deficits, indexes with no budget loaded, or potential large remaining balances.

Getting an overall picture of awards in your department – DAs and RAs can use the “View Award Details” link at the bottom of the My Researchers portlet in the RA Dashboard to pull up a comprehensive list of all sponsored accounts housed financially within the department. The list breaks out those awards originating in the department, as well as awards originating outside of the department or School of Medicine (internal subaccounts). The “View Award Details” report in the “My Researchers” portlet of the RA Dashboard can also be used for a comprehensive list of active awards displaying in the Dashboard.

Stay on top of awards that have ending budget periods – The transition from one budget period into the next is a critical administrative time in grants management. The “Budget Period Ending” portlet in the RA Dashboard allows the DA and RA to look ahead and see which awards are nearing the end of their budget periods and view important related information (personnel currently being charged, whether or not a new index is needed, etc.)

NIH over-the-cap salary requirements – VCU is required to cost share the amount of an investigator’s salary over the current NIH cap for all personnel on DHHS-funded awards. The “Over-the-Cap Salary” portlet in the RA Dashboard captures those awards that have this cost sharing requirement and provides a calculation to aid in ensuring the correct amount of salary is being charged to the grant funds and any associated cost share accounts.

**RESPONSIBILITY**

**Principal Investigator (PI)** The PI is primarily responsible for:

- Reviewing and certifying their review of Monthly Expense Reports for all active sponsored accounts.

**Research Administrator (RA)** The RA is primarily responsible for:

- Working with Grants & Contracts Accounting and Office of Sponsored Programs to maintain the data displaying the Dashboard.
- Assisting Principal Investigators with reviewing and certifying their Monthly Expense Reports within the required 30 day review period.

**Department Administrator (DA)** The DA is primarily responsible for:

- Assisting PIs with review and certification of Monthly Expense Reports in the PI Dashboard as needed
- Ensuring data in the PI and RA Dashboards is maintained