TO: USC Faculty
FROM: Robert Johnson, Associate Senior Vice President, Financial and Business Services
       Jeri Muniz, Executive Director, Department of Contracts and Grants
DATE: December 20, 2011
RE: Research Administration Survey

Thank you for your participation in the 2011 Research Administration Survey. We strive to improve our service level on a continuous basis and are therefore always interested in getting your feedback.

We are pleased to report an improvement in overall satisfaction with services provided by the Department of Contracts and Grants. This year, the satisfaction ratings were:

- Meeting proposal review and submission deadlines: 95% satisfaction
- Knowledge of sponsor and university requirements: 93% satisfaction
- Negotiation of agreement terms: 87% satisfaction
- Communication on the status of negotiations: 84% satisfaction
- Speed at which accounts are established: 80% satisfaction
- Staff courtesy and helpfulness: 97% satisfaction
- Overall, satisfaction with the Department of Contracts & Grants: 92%

Over the next year, we will continue to improve in all areas, but will focus on the communication and timeliness of negotiations, as well as the speed at which accounts are established.

DCG has implemented biweekly updates to faculty on the status of their negotiations. Timely communication, as well as developing a partnership with the Principal Investigator during negotiations, facilitates the execution of agreements and DCG is working to improve in both these areas.

To further expedite negotiations, DCG and USC Stevens are updating the University’s intellectual property position and terms, as well as identifying options for licensing. The updated terms will streamline and facilitate the negotiation of intellectual property terms in industry agreements.

DCG has streamlined account processing within the department, as well as implemented an electronic system to track the status of pending accounts. The current processing time averages 1.25 days upon receipt of a fully executed award and updated budget from the department. Accurate budgets are a key component to expediting award processing. We are working with the Research Administration Task Force to identify tools for department research administrators to ensure budgets are complete and accurate. The development and implementation of the University’s new research administration system, Kuali Coeus (KC), will improve both the transparency and processing of accounts; however, in the meantime, ensuring budgets are accurate and funds are available when establishing satellites, will improve current processing time.
To further facilitate research administration, DCG has partnered with both Sponsored Projects Accounting and Purchasing Services to review and improve processes that cross units. The goal of this partnership is to improve the services provided to faculty and campus research administrators. The Roles and Responsibilities Matrix (http://research.usc.edu/policies/responsibilities/) has clarified the roles of each of the respective units. The primary responsibilities of each unit are:

- **Department of Contracts and Grants:** proposal submission, award negotiation, sub-awards, account set-up and close-out, and ensuring that our grants and contracts are consistent with university standards for academic freedom, research ethics and fiscal responsibility.

- **Sponsored Projects Accounting:** preparation and submission of financial reports, including ARRA reports, invoicing and the collection of payments.

- **Department of Purchasing Services:** acquisition of goods and services, including competitive source selection and price negotiation; issuing independent contractor agreements and purchasing orders for subcontracts; Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) compliance.

- **Department of Accounts Payable & Disbursement Control:** processing and distribution of payments to suppliers and subcontractors; reimbursements to faculty and staff.

We are now focusing our attention on improving communication and collaboration between the units.

DCG and SPA are working to improve coordination of account activities. SPA has eliminated sending closeout notices for continuing awards; and DCG has streamlined its closeout process, focusing on ensuring non-financial documents have been submitted to the sponsor. Kuali Coeus will improve both the financial and non-financial management of sponsored accounts, including close-out, and the communication between DCG, SPA and department research administrators.

DCG and Purchasing Services are working together on streamlining subcontracting. The process improvements are being integrated into the new Procurement system, for example the University is installing the SciQuest an eprocurement system that will significantly improve the efficiency of online shopping, payments and workflow routing of approvals and documents once fully integrated with Kuali Financial System (KFS), as well as Kuali Coeus. These systems will improve the initiation and processing of subcontracts, as well as the approval and payment of invoices.

As part of KFS we are also installing the Capital Asset Management System (CAMS) to fully integrate the buying, paying and tracking of all capital equipment, those items of $5,000 and more. CAMS, as well as the Sciquest implementation will be rolled out next summer (2012) and is another functional improvement we believe will help in the financial management of all research activity.

In addition, a key part of our enterprise system upgrade is the installation of business intelligence software, the COGNOS product. COGNOS will allow users to create ad-hoc reports for their own purposes that will include modern features and functions as drop down boxes and drill down capabilities once all of our related systems are fully implemented and integrated. The system will allow importing features from other administrative systems so that you can extract data for your own needs.

As respondents to the Research Administration Survey, you have provided us with valuable feedback, but you are always welcome to send us suggestions and comments. Please contact Rob, rjohnson@usc.edu, with feedback regarding SPA or Purchasing and Jeri, jeri.muniz@usc.edu, for DCG.