

New Initiatives Support Faculty Researchers

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Faculty researchers are receiving a boost from two new initiatives by the Office of Research to advance Notre Dame's progress into the ranks of America's leading research universities. These initiatives include improved services to faculty and a web-based software suite as an additional tool to assist them with proposal preparation and award management.

"This project is a key part of the foundation required to make Notre Dame an outstanding research university," commented Ed Maginn, a professor in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. "These additional services are a major step in the right direction toward helping Notre Dame increase its research profile."

Dr. Donald Pope-Davis, dean of the Graduate School, is pleased by the continuing focus on service to faculty provided by the Office of Research. "We feel a responsibility to provide the support and tools our faculty need to take Notre Dame to the next level in becoming a leading Catholic, research institution. We're doing all we can to help our researchers achieve that goal."

The mission of the Office of Research is to assist faculty members in obtaining and managing funds to support their research and scholarly activities. The additional services offered by the Office of Research and the decision leading to the acquisition of the InfoEd software suite were made with participation from the faculty.

University leadership is committed to growing sponsored research. Michael Edwards, assistant vice-president and director of the Office of Research says, "Due to more stringent and complex compliance regulations, new proposal submission systems, and an increase in the administrative burden to submit proposals and manage awards, we've made significant changes in how we serve our researchers. "

Since December, all university researchers have been assigned a team to support their proposal work and award management. The team consists of a pre-award research administrator, a post-award administrator, and a research accountant. "This allows us to develop a partnership to understand the unique needs of the faculty with whom we work," says Terri Hall, associate director of pre-award. "The response to the new services has been encouraging, and we believe the transition from paper to online business procedures is the next step toward reaching the goals before us."

Additionally, the new system addresses a long-standing problem with the federal Grants.gov system which researchers must now use to apply for grants. Grants.gov is not a web-

based system and was created with only PC-users in mind. InfoEd is a web-based system that works with Grants.gov and can be used by both PC and MAC users wherever internet access is available. "Whether faculty are in their office, the lab, at home, or at a conference, they'll be able to access it," says Erin Ytterberg, assistant director of pre-award. "We expect it will reduce the time faculty spend on paperwork, and allow them to focus more on research and scholarly activities."

Other features of the system include electronic routing for approvals and reporting capabilities which will further ease the administrative burden on researchers and staff.

Maginn agrees. "The new services are a *major* improvement over the old process," he says. "I am much more productive now as a result of this change, and have been able to submit and win more proposals as a result." He adds, "I am pleased that the university has begun implementation of a new set of electronic tools from InfoEd. It should significantly reduce the amount of paperwork required of faculty and at the same time bring the university into a better position to be in compliance with research guidelines."

"The new services being developed for faculty will allow them to build upon our strategic plan to build pre-eminent research programs," says Dr. Christine Maziar, associate provost, "and provide the kind of administrative support necessary to enable the creativity and efforts of the faculty to be used to their full potential. One of the biggest issues at the forefront of university research administration," adds Maziar, "is compliance with federal regulations. The new software system will enable expanded oversight and tracking of conflicts of interest and improved time and effort reporting -- two key areas of compliance concern for university research in addition to the use of animal and human subjects in research. "

InfoEd is the leading provider of software solutions for university research administration and is used by leading research universities such as Columbia, Northwestern, Duke, and UCLA.

"We appreciate the high level of commitment and support this project has received from the administration, campus offices, faculty and staff encompassing Notre Dame's research community," says Edwards. "It has certainly been a collaborative effort and we will continue to need assistance as we proceed. After all, we're working toward the same goal -- to see Notre Dame progress as the pre-eminent Catholic research university we all believe it can be."