

Guidelines for Determining Faculty Effort on Externally Funded Projects
School of Health and Human Sciences
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Faculty research is highly regarded in the School of Health and Human Sciences. Faculty engaged in creative activities, entrepreneurial endeavors, scholarship with graduate and undergraduate students and externally funded research enhance the teaching environment and benefit all members of the university community. Dean Hooper has recognized the importance of research by establishing and funding the Office of Research. The staff in this office support faculty and students in their research endeavors.

One role of the Office of Research is to assist faculty with development of research proposals. Faculty and Department Chairs have requested guidance regarding how to determine faculty effort on externally-funded research. Provost Perrin and Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, Terri Shelton, formed a Workload Task Force to examine questions related to externally funded faculty workload in the context of existing policies and procedures and current and future needs. The task force reported back to Provost Perrin and Vice Chancellor Shelton in May of 2013. No formal policy and guidelines have resulted from this report. However, many of the recommendations of this task force are included in these guidelines for HHS.

There are many policies and procedures to consider when determining faculty effort on externally funded projects. There are procedures at the local (UNCG), state (UNC General Administration), and federal (e.g., NIH, OMB, PHS) levels, as well as the private level (e.g., foundations, hospitals, community organizations) that address faculty effort, cost-sharing (whether voluntary or required), and percent effort certification and reporting. Given the complexity of this issue, guidelines must be **flexible**. The UNCG task force recommended policies and procedure guidelines that:

- 1) Incentivize excellence in research
- 2) Enhance transparency
- 3) Foster productive and collaborative interactions between investigators and administrators
- 4) Clarify roles and responsibilities of stake holders (e.g., the Principal Investigator is the expert in the substantive and methodological elements of the research process; Contracts and Grants is responsible for overseeing compliance with funding agency requirements related to change in faculty effort),
- 5) Clarify expectations about the interactions among stakeholders (e.g., PIs and department chairs should engage in active discussions about work load and effort before proposal preparation and often thereafter).

The following guidelines and procedures are recommended in light of the above considerations. These guidelines have been written with consultation from the HHS Research Advisory Committee faculty members, other research active faculty members in HHS, the department chairs, the Dean, the HHS Office of Research Staff, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, and the Director of Contracts and Grants. They will be evaluated by faculty, chairs, and the Dean's Office periodically.

1) The overall framework for faculty workloads are determined by the Board of Governors and UNCG policy that is consistent with those UNC policies. Department policies guide the specifics but the department policies must be in line with the overarching policies. (See “UNCG Faculty Workload guidelines, January 5, 2016 at <http://provost.uncg.edu/publications/personnel/workloads.asp>). Teaching, research and service efforts vary among units and departments, depending on the program needs. Given this reality, the faculty effort on externally funded projects must be discussed between the faculty member and the department chair.

The **primary** factor determining effort should be based on the scope of work required to complete the project. Most projects will require faculty effort during the academic year and during the summer months. Faculty effort on external funding results in salary support paid for by the external agency. This is referred to as “**salary savings**” during the academic year. The grant funds are used to pay the percent of salary paid with state funds, hence the term “salary savings”. These “salary savings” funds are used by the Dean’s office to support the research effort of HHS. The two main expenditures of salary savings are 1) salary paid to lecturers to cover courses normally taught by the investigator), and 2) graduate student stipends. If there are remaining salary savings during the year, they may be used to support internally-funded research projects, external review and editing of grant proposals, statistical support, travel to research conferences and other needs as requested.

Faculty effort during the summer months is not considered in salary savings for faculty with nine or ten-month appointments. Salary from grant funds during this period is referred to as “add-pay” and is paid to the faculty member for the amount of time working on the research project. UNCG policy states, *“For a nine-month appointee, total compensation earned from all forms of work done during the summer (such as continuing education activities, teaching Summer School, and research and curriculum development activities) cannot exceed one-third of the current nine-month salary. The level of compensation awarded for participation in sponsored program activity during the summer months will be determined for each employee at a rate not in excess of the base salary divided by the period to which the base salary relates and will be limited to charges made in accordance with the other parts of this section. The base salary period used in computing charges for work performed during the summer months will be the number of months covered by the faculty member’s official academic year appointment.”*

The percent effort of faculty time on grants is tracked by the HHS Office of Research staff as this is considered when planning for lecturers to teach courses in future semesters and for graduate student stipends.

2) Determinations regarding faculty effort on externally funded projects should be consistent with the project scope of work and the related expertise and time needed to complete the activities which are approved by the funding agency. When submitting a grant/contract proposal, the budget will include salary funding commensurate with the efforts and scope of work for all personnel.

3) Faculty and department chairs must be reasonable and **flexible** when determining externally funded effort. Not all funding mechanisms provide large enough budgets to charge

significant portions of salary against the funded grant. In addition, some agencies restrict the level of salary support.

4) The faculty member and department chair may consider using salary savings from the percent effort for paying for a lecturer to teach a course normally taught by the faculty member. This is referred to as “course buyout” in the RAMSES program. Since salary savings are managed by the Dean’s office, the HHS Office of Research staff notes those grants requesting “course buyout” in RAMSES. These requests are tracked by the HHS Office of Research staff as they are considered when planning for lecturers to teach courses in future semesters and for graduate student stipends.

5) Although decisions about effort are made on a “grant proposal by grant proposal basis”, it is acknowledged that any individual faculty member's portfolio of funded research is a “moving target over time”. That is, it is impossible to predict in advance which proposals will be funded, the exact start and end dates of grants, and how many overlapping grant funded projects will exist at any particular time. Thus, faculty may need to request from their department chairs additional course buyouts or other workload reductions and/or request that the timing of these buyouts/workload reductions be altered (e.g., a course buy out planned for fall may need to shift to spring because of project related needs).

6) In situations where a faculty member provides specific design knowledge or skill expertise for minimal percent effort on multiple funded projects, the sum of percent effort on all projects should be used to determine the necessity for course buyout. Salary savings to cover course buyout should be negotiated by the department chair with the HHS Dean to reflect the total effort of the faculty member on several research projects.

7) Faculty and department chairs may agree to workload reductions beyond course buyouts. For example, a faculty member and chair may agree to reduce the load of undergraduate advising, committee work, or other administrative duties. Or faculty members and chairs may agree to assignment of a graduate assistant to help with teaching a course. There are many ways to support time for research and we need to be **flexible** in providing an environment conducive to our academic and scholarly needs.

8) When funding is awarded, faculty will meet with the post-award administrator in the HHS Office of Research and staff from Contracts and Grants to establish their grant accounts. At this time any revisions to the budget (e.g., award is lower than requested in the proposal) will be discussed. Any changes in faculty effort should be within the guidelines of the granting agency (e.g., NIH must approve a 25% or more decrease in faculty effort) and agreed upon by the department chair and faculty member. Again, faculty effort should reflect the scope of the project and the overall research effort of the faculty member. Revision in faculty effort may result in changes in the originally agreed upon “course buyout”. It is essential that changes in faculty effort are approved by the department chair and the HHS Dean since salary savings are used in planning for graduate students’ stipends and hiring of lecturers.

- 9) Determination of faculty effort varies from department to department and from unit to unit. These differences should not become barriers to multidisciplinary research. Conflicts arising from policy and procedure guidelines differences between departments should be reviewed by the HHS Dean and differences between units should be reviewed by the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development in consultation with the appropriate Deans.

- 10) Faculty members and department chairs will be offered workshops by the HHS Office of Research to discuss the faculty effort guidelines; agency and Federal guidelines, requirements, and certifications concerning percent efforts; and various scenarios concerning salary savings.