Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)

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11/17/2020
The Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) has developed a Research Impact Metric (RIM) to estimate the impact COVID is having on research institutions in the U.S. Some of the recent findings based on this model indicate:

- Research output losses between 20 and 40 percent
- Financial disinvestment in the hundreds of millions of dollars at individual institutions
- Potential impact in the tens of billions of dollars across the entire U.S. research enterprise.
- Institutions are at risk of losing a whole cohort of graduate and post-doctoral students.
- A new “Pandemic Normal” for how research is conducted has emerged
- Understanding the impact is paramount to maintaining the global competitiveness, technological leadership, and the economy of the United States.
The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provided short-term relief for administrative, financial and audit requirements under the 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards including:

- Allowability of salary and other project activities
  - Ability to charge salaries and benefits to active Federal awards consistent with NYU’s policy (under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances) from all funding sources.
- Allowability to charge expenses not normally incurred on awards e.g., cancellation of conference/travel fees
- Procurement flexibilities
- Prior approval waivers and no-cost extensions
- Extension of financial, performance and other reporting
- Extension of award closeout
- Extension of submission of the Single Audit reporting package (3-month extension)

OMB noted that institutions should “exhaust other available funding sources to sustain the workforce” and that additional funding may not be available.

Flexibilities were issued on March 9, 2020. All flexibilities expired in July except for the Allowability of salary and other project activities extended to 9/30/20.
In March 2020, NYU issued the following guidance:

- Continuity of pay – allowed charging of salaries, benefits and stipends on active awards due to unexpected or extraordinary circumstances consistent with NYU and sponsor guidance.
  - https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/personnel-costs-for-sponsored-program-policies.html
- Processed No-cost extensions to extend the end dates on active awards
- Use of Virus Program code for tracking Other than Personnel Expenses (OTPS) expenses
- Purchased additional personal protective equipment for labs
- University-level approval required for certain research expenditures
- Administrative hiring pause
- Temporary suspension of non-essential on-site research
- Restrictions on domestic and foreign travel
The reasons for conducting the COVID-19 impact project:

• To ensure the programmatic and financial impact of COVID-19 has been communicated to sponsors to support compliance requirements.
• Quantify the impact of COVID-19 on the research enterprise at NYU, which will help assess the need for potential supplemental and stimulus funding.
• Allow OSP/SPA to track OMB flexibilities leveraged to ensure appropriate documentation as required by OMB and for internal control and audit purposes.

Project approach

• NYU schools / campuses were provided a listing of all awards so they could identify awards impacted by COVID and respond to questions related to financial impact, compliance and administrative activities saved in the NYU Box.
• The team met with schools over the summer to discuss responses and to clarify questions on the COVID impact to research portfolio.
• Follow-up memos were sent for additional confirmation of idle/ reduced effort and institutional funding.
• Review period: 3/16/20 to 8/31/20.
### Summary of COVID Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Projects</th>
<th>1a) Projects Impacted</th>
<th>1b) Contact with sponsor</th>
<th>2a) Salaries charged for idle/reduced effort</th>
<th>2b) Institution employees reassigned</th>
<th>2c) Contacted sponsor</th>
<th>3a) Project Extensions</th>
<th>3b) Correspondence with sponsor</th>
<th>4) Rebudgeted Funds</th>
<th>5a) Interim Progress report due</th>
<th>6a) Non-refundable travel exp</th>
<th>6b) Non-refundable conference fees</th>
<th>6c) Personnel related admin exp</th>
<th>6d) OTPS expenses</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total population</td>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of projects impacted by COVID:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OTPS expense analysis

- **Computer Hardware**: 45%
- **Travel & Living - Domestic**: 13%
- **Travel & Living - Foreign**: 13%
- **Lab Supply**: 12%
- **Computer over Cap Threshold**: 8%
- **Office Supplies**: 5%
- **Convention Reg & Membership**: 1%
- **Other**: 2%
- **Computer Software**: 1%
Principal Investigator and Departmental Administrator Feedback

• PIs/DAs felt that not many projects were significantly impacted by COVID-19.
  • Although, the data shows that 32% of the projects were impacted, many schools noted that the impact was not “significant” and research could continue at a reduced capacity.

• PIs/ DAs were not sure how to assess “impacted by COVID-19”. PIs felt that the impact will become more apparent as the projects progress towards completion.

• Funding and training Post docs and students are a big concern for PIs.

• PIs are hoping for additional funding from sponsors and concerned that they may not be able to complete their projects within performance period.

• If additional funding is not available from sponsors, can the University provide financial assistance?
Lessons Learned on Assessment Approach- Due to the tight deadline for completing the assessment, we did not have much time for planning. We have refined the process based on lessons learned throughout the assessment such as:

• Schools/PIs thought the project was helpful and necessary for documenting the flexibilities. However, the worksheet was considered cumbersome and time consuming for them to complete. We may use Qualtrics for the next round of reviews.

• There was some confusion on the worksheet. Some of the questions were answered independent of COVID-19 impact. We provided clarity on the questions after the initial worksheet was distributed.

• Initially, PIs did not know how to define “impacted” by COVID-19. We provided clarification in follow up meetings, but we should have issued a listing of definitions e.g., greater than 25% of reduced effort.

• In hindsight we should have scheduled a brief overview discussion and reviewed the worksheet with the administrators prior to distributing it.

Note: Based on our benchmarking of other universities, NYU implemented a best practice approach for assessing the COVID impact.
• **Communication/ Presentation to Research Community**
  - Leadership/ stakeholders/ participants
  - Identify presenters
  - Establish meeting dates

• **OMB/ COGR**
  - Continue to monitor communication and guidance
  - On 9/28, COGR issued a request for flexibilities to get extended to Q2 of spring 2021
  - Provide schools/ departments with updates on any communication
  - Update NYU’s website with guidance

• **Establish Timing/ Approach for next assessment**
  - Targeted for January 2021
  - Meet with schools/ campuses for follow up
  - Evaluate a potential new approach such as Qualtrics
The Project Team would like to express our gratitude to all our research administrators, Principal Investigators, OSP and SPA teams, especially Damien Grose and Sarah Lilore, who worked tirelessly on this project.

Without your efforts this would not have been possible!
The Department Administrators will share their experiences and perspectives in sustaining research activities during the onset and throughout the immediate aftermath of COVID-19. They will discuss lessons learned and best practices.

**Moderator**: Jason St. Germain, Senior Director- Office of Sponsored Programs

Please welcome our panel of administrators:

- Amala Ankolekar-Hinge, Director of Administration, CNS, FAS
- Alison Garforth, Assistant Director- IHDSC, Steinhardt
- Jackson Jones, Senior Grants Manager- Tandon
- Patty Ong, Senior Financial Analyst- Finance & Bus Ops, College of Dentistry
- Sergej Zoubok, Director of Administration- Dept of Psychology, FAS