

Coordinating Internal Competitions (Case Studies)

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NCURA Region IV Annual Meeting
April 18, 2011



Internals at SIUE

- Internal Grant Competitions
 - S.T.E.P.
 - Hoppe Research Professor and Vaughnie Lindsay New Investigator
- Limited Submission Competitions to External Agencies
 - NSF MRI, Dreyfus Foundation, etc.
- Differences in ORP's role in these two types?

Case #1: Who's competition is this anyway?

- You are a new R.A. and have been tasked with scouting and advertising limited submission competitions. You notice that the upcoming Camille Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar Program at the Dreyfus Foundation allows only one nomination per institution, and you know a few young faculty members who should apply. You make a broad announcement about the opportunity stating that the SRO needs to conduct an internal competition to determine who receives the nomination.
- After the announcement, you receive an angry call from the University Foundation who states that this competition is normally run through the Foundation who determines the nominee and helps applicants submit their proposals.
- What went awry and how can one avoid this situation in the future?



Case #1: Who's competition is this anyway?

- Understand your own University system—determine if there are forces at play with which you are not yet familiar.
- Discuss with supervisor.
- How to determine who coordinates competitions and why should be discussed

Follow-up Question:

- How do YOU determine which competitions are to be limited submission internal competitions?
- How are they defined?
 - Agencies' definitions versus yours
 - University priorities and how they determine how these competitions are defined
- How do you find information about them?



Case Study #2:

The Ambivalent Applicant

- You are coordinating an internal seed grant program, which is intended to support new research directions. A potential applicant comes to you for help with an application that is clearly curriculum-focused and falls outside the program eligibility guidelines. When you try to suggest that this might not be the right program for this proposal, the faculty member insists that this is the only chance for funding for an important project and that it has been funded through similar programs by the University before.
- The faculty member asks you if you think the proposal should be submitted to your program. How do you guide this person?

Case Study #2:

The Ambivalent Applicant

- Talk through eligibility
- Point out hallmarks of a competitive proposal
- Point to Guidelines and try to get the applicant to see it from the reviewers' perspective
- Ultimately, the decision isn't the R.A.'s about whether this person submits or not

Case Study#3: A Stacked Deck

- You coordinate the internal competition for a major research instrumentation program. The University has two major schools in which 4 representatives from each school sits on the University Review Committee. The representatives from one school have learned to communicate and vote as a block, while the 4 reviewers from the other school vote as individuals. Consequently, the school in which the 4 reviewers vote as a block tend to sway the Committee and most University nominations for the limited program come from that school.
- As a program coordinator you see problems with this system and view the voting pattern as a potential conflict of interest situation. What is your role as a research administrator?



Case Study#3: A Stacked Deck

- Reviewer selection and system set-up not usually in coordinator's power.
- Know the University priorities and policies on COI
- Look at things one could do in review process to mitigate conflict of interest and ensure fairness in the process

Case Study #4: Guiding the Reviewers

- In reviewing proposals for a limited submission program to the NSF, the University Review Committee is split on its top two proposals. Much of the discussion hinges on how well the two applicants fulfill the program criteria. One side of the panel views Application 1 as stronger in its intellectual merit while the other panelists see Application 2 as stronger in its broader impacts statement.
- The panelists are split down the middle and ask you for information about how the agency might rate these two proposals.
- What is your role as an administrator in this situation?



Case Study #4: Guiding the Reviewers

- Do your homework on the agency and its expectations for this program
- Also understand the University priorities for research at the institution and how the submitted proposals fit/don't fit with those strategic goals
- Have knowledge, understanding, and confidence to know when your input is needed to facilitate a decision that is best for the University

Case Study #5: Rejection Rage!

- The University Review Committee has made its selection for the limited slots in the major research instrumentation program. Not included in that list is the proposal of an applicant who had won the nomination the year before and didn't receive funding but had received reviewer feedback. This applicant calls enraged that his proposal wasn't selected, indicating that the University reviewers didn't know cutting-edge science when they saw it. Furthermore, his proposal had a high chance of getting funded since there was a top-notch collaborator and the agency reviewer feedback had been encouraging in his previous submission. Finally, he demands to know who is on the anonymous Review Committee and how they are selected.
- You review the comments from the University Review Committee, which hammer the proposal for its sloppiness and point out that the agency feedback had been only lukewarm. What can you do to help mitigate this person's anger and uphold the integrity of the committee's decision?



Case Study #5: Rejection Rage!

- Can assert how the institution takes the internal review process seriously
 - Can point to review criteria and comments about condition of proposal (Did the applicant take the internal review seriously?)
 - Can discuss standards for reviewer selection rather than reveal identities
- Consider University priorities in selection process
 - Is there priority given to resubmission?
 - Strategic research goals, etc.: bigger than the individual researchers' goals
- Can this person's project be rolled into another one to develop a strong institutional strategic application?
- Send it up the line!