

Effort on Sponsored Projects: Summer and Academic Distribution

Faculty must certify that the way they expended their effort is consistent with the way they were paid during a certifying period (fall, spring, summer). Issues may arise because faculty and chairs may think of effort in terms of the budget year rather than the certifying period and may have institutional/college/department conventions that lead to faculty member's being paid in a way that is not consistent with their effort during a particular period. We propose that colleges consider changing those conventions. This would require advanced planning between PI and chairs but would result in better relations between commitment, pay, and actual effort.

The following are two common problems with proposed solutions:

Summer pay

Common scenario now: A faculty member charges 100% of their salary to a sponsored project during the summer (equivalent to 33.33% of Academic Year (AY) salary) and charges the sponsored project 0% (or some amount that is less than their actual effort) during the academic year.

This is a problem if the faculty member is doing non-project related activities during the summer (e.g., working with students on unrelated activities, writing a new grant, other service activities) even if their effort averages to the correct amount over the whole year.

Proposed change: Faculty member divides salary between sponsored project and department for both summer and academic year. For example, summer salary could be distributed 23.3% AY to sponsored project and 10% of AY to department (that would be equivalent to 100% of summer salary). Then during the AY, their salary would be distributed 10% of the AY to the sponsored project and 90% of AY to the department.

Both scenarios would "cost" the department and the sponsored project the same; however, the proposed change would be more in line with actual effort on the sponsored project and thus not cause problems with certification. Such a solution would require planning at the beginning of the fiscal year (i.e., summer).

Academic year "buy-out" of courses

A common convention is to charge a sponsored project only during the semester an individual is not teaching a course. However, this should only be the case if the effort on the project is primarily going to be during that semester. Faculty who are expecting to maintain a consistent level of effort on a sponsored project across the academic year should allocate the same percentage of salary to that sponsored project for fall and spring semesters.

For example, Dr. Brown has committed 12.5% of his time for the academic year to a sponsored project and his department chair has excused him from teaching a course in the fall. If he is spending the 12.5% effort equally across the semesters, he should charge the sponsored project 12.5% for both fall and spring semesters. If he is only expending effort in the fall, he would charge the sponsored project 25% of his salary fall term