

April 26, 2012

To: Heller Institute and Center Directors
CC: Lisa Lynch, Ron Etlinger, Elaine Kennen
From: Walter Leutz and Connie Horgan
Re: Coverage policy and procedures

The purpose of this memo is to briefly summarize our discussions of how the School and its research centers and institutes can best support research staff and research faculty in the context of the uncertainties of a largely soft-money environment. We started the discussion in the fall semester with comments from RSC members and Lisa on a draft policy, but we decided that focusing on procedures would be preferable. After a couple of brief RSC discussions, we decided that a memo summarizing the issues and recommended procedures would be the best approach.

Issues

The Heller research enterprise is most successful when research staff and faculty collaborate with colleagues to develop ideas and proposals, conduct research, and disseminate findings. Due to the competitiveness and uncertainty of outside research support, success in maintaining our research teams is based in part on managing work and funding to cover the salaries of valued members of teams. This includes considering colleagues with coverage shortfalls and relevant skills for inclusion on proposals and to fill openings in ongoing work.

Soft-money researchers, including both scientists and faculty members, understand the possibility that their coverage from grants and contracts might be reduced or even run out. Looking ahead to identify coverage shortfalls, having open and honest discussions about shortfalls, and making plans to address them can help maintain teams, morale, and job security. It can also help reduce the anxiety and uncertainty that can result when a soft-money researcher has to take a cut in coverage or even leave the School. This is all consistent with Heller's goal to be a caring community.

Recommended Procedures

We have discussed procedures that can help to keep our valued research team members at Heller, and also to keep team members informed of their prospects when coverage runs low. The procedures start at the center/institute level, and they also go across centers.

Center/institute-based: Here are some suggested center/institute-based practices.

- Researchers/faculty who manage their own coverage sheets should understand how coverage is presented and be able to identify coverage problems. If help is needed understanding coverage sheets, Elaine Kennen can help.
- Supervisors and center/institute directors should track coverage of their staff and discuss situations and options with staff when coverage shortfalls begin to appear. Options to be discussed may include seeking work on other projects, cutting back on coverage, or possible need to leave the School.

Across centers/institutes: Here are some suggested practices.

- Center/institute directors may develop a list of their research staff with brief summaries of their experience and expertise. The lists can then be shared with other directors.
- When there are projects or proposals that require skills that a center does not have, the director or designated staff members can consult the staff skills lists and can also should share needs for expertise with other centers/institutes through the RSC mailing list. This could be done through a short memo describing a project and the substantive and methods expertise needed.
- When a center/institute has a staff member who has available time due to coverage shortfalls, the center/institute director should share their expertise with other institutes/centers through the RSC. This could be done by sending out a brief memo with a vita attached.

Monitoring: Please cc Walter and Connie on memos and communications across centers so we can track how this works.