The Office of Research has been monitoring communications and information regarding the federal government sequestration that took effect March 1. The major impact to the University of Washington will be to our research enterprise. Unless Congress intervenes, we are estimating that our research program will lose approximately $83 million out of $1.08 billion in federal grant and contract funding. Unfortunately, this will mean that many outstanding projects are simply not going to be funded.

Although several federal agencies have shared general information on sequestration with the grantee/university community, there are few specifics at this time.

NIH has published a notice that non-competing continuation awards are currently being funded at a level below that indicated on the most recent Notice of Award (generally up to 90% of the previously committed level). Final levels of FY 2013 funding may be reduced by sequestration. At the February meeting of the Council on Government Relations, Salley Rockey of NIH noted that while the various Institutes and Centers may implement budget cuts differently, the average reduction for each will be approximately 5.1%.


NSF published an important notice to heads of NSF awardee organizations indicating that appropriations of the NSF will be reduced by 5 percent as a result of the sequestration order. In this notice NSF cites a set of core principles that includes maintaining existing awards. However because sequestration is taking place mid federal fiscal year, the impact is expected to be greater. NSF expects the major impact to be in the reduction of new research grants and cooperative agreements, anticipating this to be reduced by approximately 1,000.


It appears that many agencies are trying to determine how to implement the mandatory budget reductions. It is likely that UW investigators will see a wide range of methods used by federal sponsors over the remainder of the federal fiscal year to implement the mandatory cuts. It is unlikely that more details will be forthcoming until the current Continuing Resolution is resolved. It is due to expire on March 27, 2013. Please remember that even without sequestration, federal awards can be altered and reduced at any time. It is important to always be cautious when anticipating future federal funding.

We anticipate that we will likely see:

- Revised awards with reductions in funding for the current award years and well as future years (except NSF, as discussed above. Other agencies may try to reduce this as well). Agencies and the divisions within the agencies will have the ability to assess the cuts as they find necessary, so we won’t necessarily see across the board cuts
- A reduction in the number of new awards being funded overall from all agencies
- Delays in funding and receipt of award notices and contracts from all agencies
- Slow-down in new funding opportunities, RFA’s and RFP’s announced from all agencies
- Possible reductions in approvals of carry-forward from one year to the next

I have been preparing for sequestration by working with the deans of our schools and colleges, research administrators and our staff, to minimize any immediate disruptions to our research programs.

We will be disseminating information as it becomes available. The Office of Planning and Budgeting will be providing informational briefs to keep our community apprized.

Mary Lidstrom, Vice Provost for Research