Procedures and Criteria for UCAR Non-Core Funded Activities

When NCAR was created in 1960, one of the key purposes was to help the universities “mount an attack” on fundamental atmospheric science problems that were beyond the scale of an individual university department. The 17 February 1959 University Committee on Atmospheric Research report, *Preliminary Plans for a National Institute for Atmospheric Research* (the “Blue Book”) that established NCAR also said that this could be done in a way that “preserved the natural alliance of research and education without unbalancing the university programs.” Over time this partnership has been very effective and has propelled atmospheric sciences well beyond what could have been accomplished by NCAR or the university community acting alone. To ensure that NCAR maintained this natural alliance with the community when proposing for funding over and beyond its NSF core support for laboratory operations, a process was established to review how non-core proposals were handled within NCAR and UCAR. This review is currently administered by a subcommittee of the President’s Advisory Committee on University Relations (PACUR). In April 1993, the PACUR began reviewing NCAR’s non-core proposals. UCAR Community Programs (UCP) non-core proposals were added in 1995 and UCAR Education and Outreach Office (E&O) proposals in 2001.

The review by PACUR is not focused on critiquing or approving the proposal’s science; in fact, PACUR does not receive the full proposal itself, but rather a subset of the proposal content necessary to satisfy the review criteria. Thus, the PACUR examines whether the UCAR and NCAR senior staff followed the PACUR non-core proposal criteria in approving the submittal of proposals. Having the PACUR regularly examine the proposal review process within UCAR is important for two reasons: it is an assurance to the universities that there is no unfair competition and it serves as a mechanism to encourage collaboration between NCAR and UCAR programs and the university community. The PACUR reviewers must apply the currently approved criteria and procedures to this retrospective review. Any suggestions or recommendations on changes to the criteria and procedures should be made to the PACUR committee for approval by NSF, UCAR Management and PACUR. Continual revisions to the criteria can be burdensome on both UCAR and the PACUR. Thus, suggested changes should be collected and a formal assessment done every 3-5 years on criteria or process updates. Once the revised criteria have been approved they will be applied to future review cycles. (*NOTE: we will try to provide some history on revisions so new members can learn about changes and avoid repeating past issues.*)

**Review Criteria.** UCAR proposals for non-core funding must: (1) be mission appropriate, (2) use UCAR facilities fairly, (3) be collaborative or community service oriented, and (4) identify co-sponsorship levels. To determine whether proposals meet these criteria, UCAR staff must provide the following information:

1. **Mission Appropriate.** Explain how the proposal supports the research, facilities, education and/or leadership objectives and strategic plans of the appropriate entity within UCAR (e.g., UCAR, NCAR, UCP, or E&O).
2. **Fair Facility Use.** Identify which UCAR facilities will be used for the proposed activity: (check all that apply)
   a. High-Performance Computing,
   b. Observational,
   c. Research Data,
   d. Community Models,
   e. None
   f. Explain how the proposed activity does not utilize these facilities in a way that is not available to the typical university investigator.

3. **Collaboration Level.** Identify the collaboration type (pick a, b, c, or d) and provide the requested explanation:
   a. **Joint** (e.g., separate proposal from UCAR and each university institution). No further explanation needed provided the proposal is clear as to how it supports and complements the community.
   b. **Collaborative with funding to or from university partner.** No further explanation needed provided the proposal is clear as to how it supports and complements the community.
   c. **Collaborative with no funding to or from university partner.** Describe in detail the nature of the collaboration including letters of collaboration. The collaboration should be significant and meaningful. The level and scope of the collaboration must be clearly stated (including graduate student participation if applicable) in both the Advance Notice Forms and in the letters of collaboration. In addition, it must be clearly stated how this collaboration is supportive of and complementary to the university PI.
   d. **No University Collaboration.** Explain how the proposed activity supports and complements the university community through: 1) contribution to the development or support of community facilities, community models, community data sets, or other community projects such as field programs, workshops, visitor programs, or community meetings, or 2) development or transfer of UCAR-developed technology or expertise to the scientific community or to society at large with demonstrable benefit to the community and to society.

4. **Co-sponsorship Level. (NCAR Proposals Only)** Describe and justify any activities that are co-sponsored by NSF Base Funds (i.e., NCAR funds from NSF that contribute to research sponsored by other organizations -- NOAA, NASA, etc)
Procedures for PACUR Subcommittee Review of Non-Core Proposal Process

The following procedures are designed to support the PACUR review process:

1. Prior to proposal selection, UCAR provides all Subcommittee members an orientation on the non-core proposal process, past issues and how they were resolved, and a clear understanding that the Subcommittee should examine the proposal process relative to currently approved criteria. Any suggestions or recommendations on refining the criteria and procedures should be made to the PACUR committee for approval and future consideration.

2. UCAR provides the PACUR non-core proposal Subcommittee chair with a list of UCAR non-core proposals over $100K that were submitted since the last cycle. This list should include the proposal number, name of the laboratory or program, title, date submitted, sponsor, requested amount, co-sponsorship amount and leveraging ratio (where there is NSF base-funding), and collaboration category (3a,b,c, or d).

3. The Subcommittee chair has the discretion of selecting all proposals or may select a representative sample of proposals from the various UCAR and NCAR labs/programs and collaboration categories.

4. The Subcommittee chair notifies UCAR of the selected proposal numbers. The Advance Notice forms, cover pages, letters of collaboration, confirmation of university affiliation, and budgets for each of the selected proposals are sent to the Subcommittee members. A copy of the PACUR review criteria is also sent to the Subcommittee members. (NOTE: letters of collaboration will be discussed at the April 2011 PACUR meeting.)

5. The Subcommittee reviews the material listed above with regard to the criteria and discusses their reviews via a conference call or e-mail. At this time, if more information is required on a specific proposal, the Subcommittee may request that the complete proposal be provided to them. The Subcommittee should contact the relevant UCAR entity representative (NCAR, UCP, E&O, etc) to address specific questions or general concerns that arise during their review.

6. Based on the Subcommittee members input, the Subcommittee chair develops a report that includes a summary of:
   a. the compliance of the proposals with PACUR criteria and any relevant conversations with UCAR management.
   b. the representativeness of the sample proposals selected vs. the total number of proposals in each UCAR entity and in terms of the dollar value of the proposals.
   c. any Subcommittee conclusions or recommendations.

7. Four weeks prior to the PACUR meeting, the report is submitted by the Subcommittee chair to UCAR Governance office for distribution to UCAR entities for their review and any final
response to questions that the Subcommittee may have had on the proposals. It is expected that any issues will have been addressed by interactions mentioned in step four and five.

8. UCAR’s response is sent to the subcommittee chair no later than two weeks before the PACUR meeting, and then is distributed by the chair to the subcommittee members. The subcommittee reviews these comments and engages UCAR as needed. A goal is to resolve any issues prior to the subsequent PACUR meeting.

9. After all issues are resolved, UCAR and the Subcommittee chair develop a joint report that summarizes the Subcommittee’s analysis, UCAR responses, and any further UCAR or subcommittee comments or recommended actions. That report is submitted to the PACUR Chair and Committee members no later than two weeks before the next PACUR meeting where the Subcommittee Chair will brief the PACUR on the joint report conclusions and recommendations. Once that report is approved, it is submitted to the UCAR President and a copy to NSF.

10. UCAR staff may update Subcommittee orientation materials based on joint report recommendations. Based on these joint reports, the PACUR Chair presents a PACUR report at the UCAR Annual Meeting that summarizes the proposal review process and outcome for the prior year and any other relevant matters.

Revised and approved by the PACUR in April 2011