

## **Council of Principal Investigators (CPI)**

### **Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, January 20, 2022, 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., Microsoft Teams

Members in attendance: Armen Akopian, Gregory Collins, Lynette Daws, Katherine Dondanville, Charles France, Bess Frost, Randolph Glickman, Asma Khan, David Libich, Daniel Lodge, Susannah Nicholson, Darpan Patel, Adam Salmon, Mark Shapiro, Susan Weintraub

Guest: Ginny Gomez-Leon (UTHSA VP and CFO)

The main topic of this meeting was to obtain information about the new process for business travel for the UTHSA. The presentation was given by Ginny Gomez-Leon. Melanie Zuniga Rapp, who was also invited to the meeting, was not able to attend. The meeting was opened by Dr. Lodge, who introduced Ms. Gomez-Leon.

#### **1. Updated Travel Process – Ginny Gomez-Leon**

- Ginny Gomez-Leon started the discussion by explaining that the intent is to use the Financial Services Center to facilitate making travel arrangements. It is anticipated that this Center will be capable of handling all business involved with travel, including approval, arrangements and reimbursements. The rest of Ms. Gomez-Leon's presentation described the process for arranging official travel including scheduling and expense reimbursement.
- Why the New Process for Official Travel?
  - ❖ The previous system was out of compliance
    - Third-party sponsored trips must be disclosed (HOP 10.1.6 and 10.1.8)
    - Registration is needed for foreign travel (HOP 15.2.1)
  - ❖ Extramural funding can be in jeopardy without full disclosure
  - ❖ Required compliance processes will be streamlined and integrated with other systems, such as:
    - TeamDynamix, PeopleSoft Expense
    - iDisclose
    - Enterprise Travel Registry
  - ❖ Travel reimbursement will be automated
    - Eliminates paper travel vouchers
  - ❖ Travel reporting mechanisms will be facilitated
    - Travel reports
    - Time Away Dashboards
- How This Impacts You – Preparation Steps:
  - ❖ Find out the name of your department's travel partner/travel arranger, who may be a/an:
    - Administrative assistant
    - Departmental administrator
    - Financial Services Center Specialist
  - ❖ Set up profiles (travel preferences)
    - Concur (e.g., airline, seating, car rental agency)
    - Enterprise Travel Registry
    - iDisclose
  - ❖ Plan Ahead
    - Disclose all third-party sponsored trips
    - All foreign travel must be approved by the International Oversight Committee (IOC) while the pandemic continues (UTS 190)

- International trips must be registered with the Office of International Services (OIS) (UTS 190)
- Ms. Gomez-Leon then provided a general overview of the travel arrangement process, along with links to additional resources related to the travel process and policy.
  - ❖ Domestic Travel – connect with Travel Arranger
    - Provide travel details and request approval
    - Submit reimbursement request
  - ❖ Foreign Travel: Connect with Travel Arranger
    - Provide travel details and approvals
    - Submit reimbursement request
    - Submit waiver to IOC
    - Register trip with OIS
  - ❖ Third-party sponsored travel; Submit financial disclosure via iDisclose
- **Discussion:**
- Dr. Lodge suggested that the travel arranger (if not a departmental staff member) have periodic meetings with their faculty to establish a personal relationship. Ginny agreed to bring this suggestion forward to the Financial Service Center.
- Ms. Gomez-Leon emphasized that the new process does not include any additional steps to arrange travel; it is only a change in assignments for making travel arrangements.
- Dr. Akopian asked about how to make arrangements for future international travel in view of present uncertainties. Ginny acknowledged these challenges and recommended travelers be clear about cancellation policies, if circumstances dictate travel changes. She also noted that the enterprise travel services, such as Concur, allow University travelers up to 24 months to use any refunded travel funds (at least during the pandemic). Dr. Akopian said he was still uncertain about how to make commitments for foreign travel. No firm answer was given, other than to suggest that he work with OSP to rebudget funds if events were cancelled. It is also necessary to submit an application for a waiver to the IOC to approve foreign travel. This would permit the traveler to register for the conference or other foreign activity.
- Dr. Dondanville asked how much lead time is required for approval of domestic travel. Ms. Gomez-Leon said to allow at least two weeks, not including departmental requirements, such as advance notice of leave/travel requests.
- Dr. Weintraub said that she made her own travel arrangements in the past and wanted to know if the same option would be available. Ms. Gomez-Leon replied that it should be possible for the traveler to make their own arrangements, once necessary approvals are obtained. Faculty are permitted to contact Concur directly to make these arrangements.
- Dr. Libich asked if flight credits can be transferred to another person. Ms. Gomez-Leon said that to her understanding, if the flight was booked through Corporate Travel, there was flexibility to transfer credits to another individual. She was not sure if there was similar flexibility for travel made outside the enterprise system but said she would get more information about the issue and follow-up with the CPI.
- In response to a question from Dr. Frost, Ms. Gomez-Leon said that none of these travel policies and procedures applied to virtual meetings.
- Dr. Shapiro asked about per diem rates and the level of detail required for receipts. Ms. Gomez-Leon replied that if the traveler submits a statement that their expenses approximated the per diem allowance, they can be reimbursed at the allowed per diem rate for domestic travel without providing receipts for each item. This does not apply to international travel where receipts will still need to be submitted.

- Dr. Weintraub asked if hotel room rate charges above the per diem allowance can be fully reimbursed. Ms. Gomez-Leon said there was some leeway for handling these expenses when staying at the host hotel for a meeting. Discretionary PID accounts are still accepted as well.

Ms. Gomez-Leon concluded by promising to send more detailed information to address the questions of the CPI members. There was no further discussion about the travel policy, and she left the meeting.

- **CPI Business**

- December minutes were approved.
- Dr. Libich brought up the topic of his frustration with EDGE, including changes in assigned personnel that leads to a general lack of continuity in the process. Dr. Lodge recommended that he reach out to Chris Green to address these issues. Dr. Dondanville suggested having a CPI meeting focused on specific pain points that the faculty are experiencing with EDGE.
- Communications update: Dr. Frost reported that she continues to send out updates and synopses of the meetings to chairs and center directors but she hasn't received any feedback except that they like the updates. No one has asked to be removed from the distribution list.
- Next meeting suggestions
  - Dr. Frost suggested consideration of what the University is doing to support career development of junior faculty members who may be struggling to start their labs during the pandemic.
  - Dr. France said that he has noticed many students are in a tailspin due to disruptions related to the pandemic. He suggested that the CPI might consider what can be done to help the students. Although it is unclear what resources might be available in the institution to handle such issues, Dr. Lodge said he would approach Dean Weiss for suggestions and invite him to the next meeting.

No new business was introduced, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.