Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Effort Reporting

1. Why must I certify effort?

UIC receives funding from the federal government in support of sponsored research. Therefore, we must comply with the effort reporting regulations as they are defined in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) 2 CFR Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards ("Uniform Guidance") and OMB Circular A-21.

2. If I work on a sponsored project but I am not the Principal Investigator, will I need to certify?

Principal Investigators (PIs) must certify effort for themselves and for their direct report staff. This is because PIs have the best knowledge of their own effort and the effort of the staff who report solely and directly to them. Some grants have multiple PIs who each manage one or more funds set up under the parent grant (e.g. multiple funds set up for Program Project grants or a separate fund set up for internal allocation of funding to a Co-Investigator's department). In these cases, the "fund" PI will certify effort for themselves and for the staff paid from their fund(s). Co-Investigators, individuals who report to more than one PI, and individuals who are paid from both sponsored and non-sponsored funds will need to certify their own effort.

3. If I work for more than one Principal Investigator on more than one grant, who will certify for me?

In this situation, you would self-certify because you are the individual most knowledgeable about how your time and effort were spent during the certification period.

4. If a Certifier (faculty or self-certifier) does not respond or certify their effort report, can I make myself the Certifier?

No. If a Certifier is non-responsive, this should be brought to the attention of the Certifier's supervisor.

5. Both the Principal Investigator and the Certifier for this project have left the university. Who should certify the effort for this project?

Effort reports should be certified by the person having direct knowledge of the work performed, confirming that the record of activities charged to each sponsored agreement is appropriate and is consistent with the overall distribution of the employee's compensated activities. If the Principal Investigator and/or assigned Certifier has left the university, the Certifier who best meets these qualifications will need to be identified on a case-by-case basis.

6. The Principal Investigator and the Certifier for this project are on sabbatical or extended leave from the university. Who should certify the effort for this project?

Effort reports should be certified by the person having direct knowledge of the work performed, confirming that the record of activities charged to each sponsored agreement is appropriate and is consistent with the overall distribution of the employee's compensated activities. If the return to work date is after the close of the Effort Reporting period, contact the Effort Reporting Help Desk (gcoeffort@uillinois.edu) to determine how to proceed.

7. Do I need to certify?

Certification is required for anyone working on a sponsored project, regardless of the source of funding. The certification will either be completed by you or the Principal Investigator of the project, in accordance

with campus policy.

8. Is effort for service on review panels or other advisory activities for federal sponsors included within my total university effort?

No. Only compensated effort, paid through the university's payroll system for your university activities as a UIC employee (e.g. instruction, organized and departmental research, public service, administration, and other institutional activities), is included on your effort report. Effort related to review panels or other advisory activities for federal sponsors, whether you are reimbursed or not by the federal agency, is not included in your total effort for effort reporting purposes. Effort reporting only accounts for activities that are considered to be part of the individual's total professional effort at UIC. Therefore, uncompensated or externally compensated activities performed for federal sponsors are excluded.

9. Can a person whose salary is 100% funded by research be involved in any other scholarly activities (e.g., teaching, mentoring graduate students, proposal writing, etc.)?

No.

10. Is it sufficient for a faculty member to simply tell his/her Program Officer about a change of effort greater than 25% of current effort?

No. Many sponsors have a notification threshold for changes in effort commitments or absences from the project. For example, in most cases, NIH and NSF require written notification of changes to effort commitments of 25% or more prior to the actual reduction in effort for Key Personnel. Departments must manage all changes to original effort commitments based on the regulations of the OMB Uniform Guidance Section 200.430, awarding agency, requirements listed on the Notice of Grant Award and other applicable policy. If there is a change in effort, the overall project must be re-evaluated, including scope of work, other effort commitments, budget allocations, and potential increases or decreases in cost sharing commitments.

11. Do I need to report effort during a No-Cost Extension (NCE) period?

The effort commitment percentage during a no-cost extension period is generally assumed to be consistent with the commitment for the immediately preceding budget period. If faculty expect effort to be reduced beyond the sponsor's notification threshold during the no-cost extension period, consult the sponsor guidelines to determine if notification is required. If the effort will not be charged to the award, the effort should be reported in the ERS as cost sharing.

Institutional Base Salary

1. What is Institutional Base Salary ("IBS")?

IBS is the annual compensation paid by the university for an employee's appointment, whether that individual's time is spent on research, teaching, patient care or other activities. The IBS does not include bonuses, one-time payments or incentive pay. Also excluded from IBS is salary paid directly by another organization, including, but not limited to, the Veterans Administration Hospital and income that an individual is permitted to earn outside of their university responsibilities (such as consulting).

2. I receive pay for a Directorship (0% FTE). Should this pay be included in my IBS?

Yes.

3. My IBS is above the NIH cap. Consequently, only 20% of my salary can be directly charged to the grant even though I am working 25% of my time on this project. Do I report my effort as 20% or 25%?

If you are working 25% of your time on a project, then 25% effort must be reported. This is accomplished by certifying the 20% salary charged directly to the grant and listing 5% effort as cost shared/salary cap.

4. I receive pay from both UIC and the VA. My pay at UIC is $40,000 and my VA pay is $80,000. What IBS do I list on a budget form? If I am requesting $20,000 of my UIC salary, what is the effort percentage (or calendar months) for this amount of salary?

The IBS listed on the grant budget would be $40,000, which is your UIC salary. If you were requesting $20,000 for salary support, this would be listed as 50% effort (or 6 calendar months, assuming a full-time appointment).

Cost Sharing

1. A faculty member in our department performed more than what was proposed in one of their grant applications. Do they need to declare this as cost sharing?

No. The additional time is considered voluntary, uncommitted cost sharing and is not required to be tracked or reported in the Effort Reporting System.

2. Can one sponsored award be used to satisfy the cost sharing commitments of another sponsored award?

Generally speaking, **no**, unless it is specifically approved by the agency in writing.

ERS

1. Do I need to click the "Save" button after I enter the data for every fund?

Yes. After making any change to the fund, including entering a cost sharing value or choosing a comment from the comment drop down menu, you must click the "**Save**" button, before moving on to another fund. After saving, the page will reload and the fund you were working on will be positioned at the top of the screen. You also need to click "**Save & Check for Errors**" after entering a comment in the box at the end of the form before moving on to another fund.

2. Will error checking be performed automatically after saving?

The ERS will check for errors after you click "**Save & Check for Errors**" and "**Submit for Certification**". It does not check for errors after you click the small "**Save**" button under each fund.

3. I am a Certifier and have logged into ERS, but nothing is available for me to certify. Do I still need to continue the certification process?

Yes. Ensure that you are logged in to the Certifer Effort Form Management and that your Business Manager has submitted a report for you to certify. If the system does not allow you to certify, then please contact the Effort Reporting Help Desk (gcoeffort@uillinois.edu) for assistance.

4. I am a Business Manager and receiving a notification that my effort reports are Overdue. Why is this happening?

Review your list of reports to confirm that everyone has a Certification Status listed as "Certified". Additional reports may have been assigned to you during the reporting period. If the table indicates that all

individuals have completed their certifications, then please contact Effort Reporting Help Desk (gcoeffort@uillinois.edu) for assistance.

5. Can I revise an effort report that has already been certified?

Yes. Contact the Effort Reporting Help Desk (gcoeffort@uillinois.edu) to request that the report be returned to either the Certifier or the Business Manager as needed.

6. Can a Business Manager revise an effort report that has been submitted to the Certifier but not yet certified?

Yes. In their list of effort reports, the Business Manager should click the "**Change**" button next to the report to be revised. On the list of effort reports, click the "Change" button next to the report you want to revise. The first option listed is to Unsubmit Worksheet. Provide a justification and click the "Unsubmit Worksheet" button. The effort report is immediately available to the Business Manager for revisions.

Training

1. Will training be available for Principal Investigators?

Yes. Faculty online training is on the OBFS website at the following link:
http://www.obfs.uillinois.edu/grants/effort_reporting_uic/