Frequently Asked Questions on Effort Reporting

1) **Question:** I generally work 50 to 60 hours per week. Is my effort computed as a fraction of the ‘standard’ 40 hour work week?

**Answer:** No. If you are exempt, your effort should be computed as a fraction of the total hours you spend in your Vanderbilt professional capacity, not as a fraction of a 40 hour week. If you are non-exempt, you should adjust your effort on your timesheet.

2) **Question:** Is the budget a reasonable method for allocating payroll distribution charges and certifying effort on restricted centers?

**Answer:** No. An individual’s effort should be charged and certified on the cost center(s) where the actual work was performed.

3) **Question:** I am fairly new to the research community, and I am not sure I completely understand the nuances of effort reporting and certification policies and procedures. What should I do?

**Answer:** It is vital that each staff member with federal effort report that effort correctly. Contact your PI and/or department administrator. S/he can help you understand how effort reporting and certification impacts you and how to reflect your effort in ePAC. Click [here](#) to find courses available for effort reporting and other grant related topics.

All faculty and staff with federally supported effort are required to take online effort reporting training.

4) **Question:** Can my effort be reallocated simply to use up unspent funds or to clear a deficit on a federal project?

**Answer:** Generally, no. A person’s effort must be charged to the cost centers where the actual work was performed. However, it should be noted that any “unfunded” effort which was committed on the project should be allocated to the cost sharing job code and charged to a non-federal source of funding. By so doing, the effort is appropriately associated with the sponsored project while, at the same time, the cost is charged elsewhere.

5) **Question:** Does cost shared effort on a federal award have to be certified?

**Answer:** Yes.

6) **Question:** Can anyone sign the effort certification?

**Answer:** With ePAC, an individual can only access his or her own effort certifications. Also, the University’s policy regarding certification requires that the individual who performed work on a federally funded project or the project’s Principal Investigator can certify the effort, unless in their absence this task is delegated to a designee who must have suitable means of verification of the work performed by the individual. For the Principal Investigator or designee to certify on behalf of an individual, the Office of Contract and Grant Accounting (University) or Department of Finance, Academic & Research Enterprise (Vanderbilt University Medical Center) must be contacted to reassign the certification in ePAC to the PI or designee.
7) **Question:** How is my effort preparing my next new or competing grant proposal reported and funded?

**Answer:** Time spent in preparing a non-competing renewal / progress report, a new proposal and a competing renewal are viewed and charged differently. Time spent preparing a non-competing renewal / progress report on a project is viewed as chargeable to the sponsored project. Similarly, time spent preparing competing renewals and proposals that are a logical extension of currently funded research are also viewed as chargeable to sponsored projects. However, time spent preparing a competing renewal related to new proposed work for the future or a new proposal is not allowable and should be funded from unrestricted or other discretionary funds.

Salary support for time spent on a new proposal that is not a logical extension of currently funded research must come from unrestricted or other discretionary funds. Availability of such funds is determined by the division chief and/or Department Chair and should be discussed before effort is committed or expended.

8) **Question:** Is effort related to service on review panels or other advisory activities for federal or non-federal sponsors included in total effort?

**Answer:** No. Effort related to review panels or other advisory activities for federal or non-federal sponsors that may or may not include an honorarium, per diem, and/or travel reimbursement is excluded from total Vanderbilt effort. Activities excluded from effort reporting are activities such as consulting, volunteer / community / public service that are conducted outside the terms of Vanderbilt employment because whether they are done or not, they do not affect Vanderbilt compensation.

9) **Question:** What about mentoring of students that directly relates to my sponsored research?

**Answer:** This may be included in the effort you report as part of your sponsored research. OMB Circular A-21 states that charges to sponsored agreements may include reasonable amounts of time for activities contributing and immediately related to work under the agreements, such as delivering special lectures about aspects of the ongoing activity, writing reports and articles, participating in appropriate seminars, consulting with colleagues and students, attending meetings and conferences.

10) **Question:** How do I classify effort related to thesis committees, search committees, admission committees, and similar activities?

**Answer:** Generally these types of activities are considered to be administrative or instructional.

11) **Question:** My administrator handles my PAC (personnel action change). How is s/he supposed to know how I spend my time?

**Answer:** Your administrator's ability to handle your PAC effectively depends on your communication with him/her. As your effort on sponsored projects changes, let your administrator know so that appropriate changes to your PAC can be made.
12) **Question:** How is effort reported when I am sick or on vacation?

**Answer:** Vanderbilt pays vacation and sick leave by distributing this time to all current fund sources, so this should be reported as if you were at work. Extended leaves of absence warrant further review and discussion with your PI or department administrator.

13) **Question:** My effort distribution indicates that I am spending 90% of my time on sponsored projects, but I am actually spending 20% of my time performing other activities. What should I do?

**Answer:** Your effort distribution must be adjusted. Work with your PI and/or administrator so that s/he can make the appropriate changes to reflect your actual effort. A retroactive adjustment may be necessary to correct your effort for past months.

14) **Question:** My timesheet does not show the actual projects I worked on during the last two weeks. What should I do?

**Answer:** The timesheet must be adjusted. Work with your PI and/or administrator so that s/he can make the appropriate changes to reflect your actual effort.

15) **Question:** I've just learned that one of the individuals working on a grant has misrepresented their effort. What should I do?

**Answer:** Work with your PI and/or department administrator to resolve the issue.

If you have questions that were not adequately addressed, please contact Craig Carmichel, Steve Todd, Paula Yarbrough at (615)322-3293 for additional assistance.

You may also contact Internal Audit or the Compliance Hotline at (615)343-0135. Calls to all of the above will be completely confidential if that is your wish.