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To/Destinataire(s): Deans
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From/De la part de: Albert Caponi, Assistant Vice-Principal (Financial Services)
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c.c. Anthony C. Masi, Provost
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Subject/Object: Update on Grant Administration

In late 2010, the MAUT organized a meeting attended by approximately 65 people composed mainly of researchers from across the university. We took this opportunity to follow up on the 2008 Focus Group sessions held by Financial Services and to compare issues and to report back on some of the projects and initiatives currently underway to address issues of the past and new emerging ones. Members of Financial Services and Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) collected the information stemming from this meeting with regards to their current satisfaction level with Grant Administration.

The follow key themes, in varying degrees, were identified by the group as requiring attention:

- Communication of services and responsibilities of various central units
- Lack of local support
- Regulations - internal
- Institutional Transfers
- Fund Opening & closing Process
- Financial & Research information Systems
- Procurement: MMP / PCards and Accounts Payable – operational issues / concerns
- Human resources and Other themes

The attached contains examples from the original comments supporting the themes, along with initiatives & action plans being considered or underway.

It is important to note that several new initiatives have been undertaken in the past few years further to the first Focus Group session, including the introduction of the Financial Specialist Teams (FST) within the Faculties. This objective was to insert local talent in the units in order to directly support the researchers and allow for an aligned integration with the financial specialists in the Deans' offices and in Financial Services unit. As the majority of you know, the implementation was done on a Faculty by Faculty basis and we are integrating more responsibilities over time within the FSTs roles. The last Faculty to be implemented is the Faculty of Medicine, as the plan is to complete their Administrative Excellence project and proceed to the FST implementation. Several of the comments made in the MAUT session originated from PIs in Medicine or associated with the teaching hospitals. We continue to build on the FST model and structure, as our initial survey of researcher satisfaction meets their expectations. Subject to additional financial resources, the vision is to incorporate other specialists (i.e. pre-award, procurement, etc...) to those teams to better align services required at the local level with appropriate skill sets, all the while having an effective integration with the specialists at the institutional level.

The other major initiative currently underway is a full process review in the Vice-Principal Research and International Relations (VPRIR) portfolio. This, in conjunction with the Strategic Reframing Initiative (SRI) will also have an impact on the research landscape; more is forthcoming on this topic.

Lastly, our environment will continue to be subject to change, based on regulatory and legislative requirements. We currently await the result of our latest institutional Federal Tri-Agency monitoring site visit. Preliminary results have indicated that changes are required in our approval mechanisms and documentary processes. This will lead to other changes, some of which will directly affect the research community, however we will have to make changes in order to be in compliance with our funding agencies.

We wish to thank MAUT and all those who have participated in the sessions for the valuable input and will have more announcements for the community in the months to come.

Best regards,

Encl.