
Administrative Review of the Joint Institute for the Study of the
Atmosphere and Oceans (JISAO)

at the

University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

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August 15, 2005

**Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean (JISAO)
University of Washington
4909 – 25th Avenue, 1st floor
Seattle, WA 98195
Thursday, April 21, 2005
8:30 – 11:30 am**

On April 21, 2005, a panel of NOAA employees reviewed the administrative policies and procedures related to the administration of NOAA award number NA17RJ1232 at the University of Washington (UW)/JISAO. The reviewers all had experience in grants management and program administration.

The review panel spoke with the following individuals from the University of Washington and NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (PMEL):

JISAO - Mike Wallace, Director, Mary Smith, Administrator, Fred Averick, Budget Analyst, Betsy Blinks, Office Assistant, Meena Chopra, Budget Analyst, Adrienne Karpov, CIG Program Manager, Cara MariAnna, Payroll Coordinator, and Marjorie Reeves, Administrative Specialist

UW -

Administration: Helen MacQueen, Special Assistant to the Vice Provost for Research

Human Resources: Andrea McAuliff, Employment Specialist and Erin Rice, Senior HR Consultant

Office of Sponsored Programs: Wendy Robertson, Grant and Contract Administrator

PMEL: Cynthia Loitsch, Administrative Officer, Gayle Elkins, Management Analyst

The JISAO provided responses to the questions requested by the NOAA CI Program Office, prior to the review. During the review, the NOAA panel spoke with the individuals listed above to obtain more details about the responses. In this report, the JISAO response is written in bold and NOAA's findings and recommendations are written in italics.

Based on this review, the NOAA panel finds that the policies and procedures that are currently in place at UW and JISAO are sufficient to ensure that NOAA's funds are being used appropriately for their intended purpose. Moreover, the panel finds that the UW/JISAO has complied with the terms and conditions of NOAA award NA17RJ1232.

Overall, the panel found that the JISAO staff is well trained with very good experience. The JISAO staff displayed excellent communication skills and the ability to function as an efficient team, with a clear differentiation of roles and responsibilities. The JISAO staff demonstrated good knowledge of UW policies and procedures and federal policies.

The staff created imaginative solutions to administrative and financial requirements for project reporting and tracking, providing improved support for the scientific research.

The JISAO administrator, Ms. Mary Smith, displayed outstanding leadership qualities, including an extensive knowledge of UW and federal policies and procedures, awareness and dedication to the JISAO mission, instilling a strong teamwork ethic, and recognition of staff contributions. Her presence clearly benefits JISAO and the UW.

UW grants staff is very knowledgeable and supportive of the JISAO activities, despite the complexities of the JISAO cooperative agreement compared to the other grant programs at the UW.

The well-functioning JISAO administrative team is a result of the valuable leadership of the JISAO director, Dr. Mike Wallace. Through his commitment to the success of JISAO's research and scientific endeavors, he has created a CI team that clearly manages the financial and administrative activities associated with the CI in an excellent manner. To help sustain the quality of the award management activities, the review panel has provided some recommendations that they believe will help JISAO make continuous improvements.

1. Proposal procedures: How does the Institute select proposals to request funding from NOAA? What procedures are in place to request proposals by theme or task?

During the preparation of each Cooperative Agreement, the JISAO administration solicits interest from a broad range of established and potential Principal Investigators on the UW campus, as well as at PMEL, whose research falls within the four JISAO themes of: Climate, Marine Ecosystems, Environmental Chemistry and Coastal Oceanography. The response to this effort constitutes the initial basis for the five-year proposal that usually includes many long-term, ongoing projects, as well as new ideas. There are also provisions to include new projects that may be proposed after the initial award has been made, over the course of the 5-year period. The JISAO staff provides information on the preparation and submission of grants through a variety of resources. A UW Researcher's Guide is available on the web at <http://www.washington.edu/research/guide/>. It has all the information a PI needs to create, process and submit a grant. Also, regular, updated information on current research opportunities is available to all Institute employees, as well as to the public, in the administrative section of the JISAO administrative website at <http://www.jisao.washington.edu>. This information includes other funding opportunities through NOAA, and also through NSF and other agencies. Potential PIs are periodically reminded of the information on this website via meetings held by JISAO's administrative staff at PMEL and UW departments and through email communications.

Findings:

JISAO has demonstrated that an extensive review process exists for administrative requirements for submission of proposals to NOAA for funding. A corollary process for the technical/scientific has not been documented.

Recommendation:

JISAO should consider documenting the required, deliberative process by which proposals are reviewed for their technical/scientific content prior to submission to NOAA for consideration, including appropriate theme and task. The ideas proposed by Dr. Wallace during the review regarding use of the senior fellows to evaluate proposals would be an example of how to strengthen the process.

2. How does the JI/University/Institution ensure compliance with OMB circulars, Department of Commerce regulations and NOAA grant conditions?

All JISAO grants are processed through the University of Washington's Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP), which serves as the "Control Office" and the ultimate authority for ensuring compliance. However, the responsibility for managing and ensuring compliance is shared through a structured system of checks and balances between OSP, the JISAO administration, the PMEL administration, the UW Office of the Vice Provost for Research, and the UW departmental chairs and deans within the PIs' academic units. A chart of compliance roles and responsibilities is available on a link off the OSP home page at <http://www.washington.edu/research/osp/>. All of the university's regulations regarding grants and contracts are detailed in the University Handbook and the Administrative Policy Statements, both available through the Administrative Gateway at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/>. Additional information is detailed in the UW Grants Information Memoranda (GIMs),

<http://www.washington.edu/research/osp/>. Quoting from the OSP GIM web page, "Grants Information Memoranda are statements of policy related to grant and contract issues. General University policies and procedures related to grants and contracts are outlined in the University Handbook and the Administrative Policy Statements. There are, however, some unique and more restrictive policies related to grants and contracts imposed by the funding agencies. Special statements of policy are sometimes required related to grant and contract issues. These additional requirements, instructions and explanations are embodied in a series of numbered Grants Information Memoranda that are posted at <http://www.washington.edu/research/osp/gim/>. Questions related to any of the Grants Information Memoranda or to other University Policy and Procedure documents concerning sponsored activity support may be referred to Office of Sponsored Programs at 206-543-4043."

Principal Investigators are required to attend a formal training in grants management and compliance, sponsored by OSP. After the initial in-person session, they must update their knowledge every three years via a web-based instructional system. The PIs are informed of this regulation several times per year and directed

to the Faculty Grants Management Program information at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/traindev/fgm.html>. The Institute's administrative staff are required to know and follow all OSP and funding agency procedures, as well as all of the university's regulations regarding not only grants administration, but all regulations that govern the operations and business side of JISAO, as outlined in the above documents. The staff works closely with both the UW and PMEL administration on ensuring compliance with all agency regulations. The JISAO Operations Manual, updated annually and located in the administrative section of the JISAO home page, and appended to this document, is an additional reference for staff that outlines the infrastructure and procedures of JISAO administrative operations and also serves as a reference for auditors and others who require this level of detail.

Findings:

JISAO and University staff demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of federal requirements. We appreciate their sharing of dealing with other funding agencies and find that their internal UW website and collaboration between departments is outstanding. The 2004-2005 JISAO operations manual is an excellent resource document.

Recommendations: None.

3. How does the JI/University/Institution ensure compliance with internal grant policies?

JISAO's infrastructure is a system of checks and balances that is designed to ensure compliance in all areas of financial and operations management, fitting into the larger systems of checks and balances within the UW and PMEL. It was designed to meet auditing standards and best practices, as well as the requirements of all of its partner agencies. This system includes: grants and contracts, ICR and state budgets, human resources management, facilities, equipment inventory, and any other areas that relate to the business of supporting the Institute's research activities. These procedures are detailed in the JISAO Operations Manual appended to this document and located on the web at

http://www.jisao.washington.edu/JISAO_admin/JISAO_DOCS/Document_Index.htm.

Findings:

JISAO staff is educated and knowledgeable about the comprehensive UW website concerning UW internal grant policies. Discussions with the staff demonstrated their familiarity with the university's policies regarding grant administration. The reviewers were informed that JISAO had been audited by Washington state audit staff, who had virtually no findings.

Recommendations: None.

4. What are your formal and informal mechanisms for communications between JI and University/Institutions administrative/finance offices? Who are the NOAA contacts (admin & technical)?

JISAO's philosophy on administration is that it should serve to facilitate the research activities and mission of the institute. This requires staff to always strive to provide the best support possible, while also ensuring compliance with all the regulations of the collaborating agencies. Communication plays a key role in these services and is a particular challenge because JISAO's partners are scattered throughout campus, at the PMEL host lab, about 3 miles away, and at NOAA headquarters, NSF and other agencies. The JISAO administration has been working to develop and maintain collaborative working relationships with all partners. To accomplish this, JISAO staff communicates regularly via email and phone, but also initiate regular, formal meetings as needed with PMEL and UW departmental staff to discuss any changes or updated information regarding policies and procedures related to all administrative operations (i.e., financial, grants and contracts, HR and general issues).

Over the past year, the JISAO staff has met with PMEL staff about once per quarter to discuss all aspects of administration – from changes in the HR policies (performance reviews, hiring procedures, etc.) to new grant and contract information (new UW electronic system and grants.gov, etc.), to ensuring that everyone is aware of the JISAO administrative website that is meant to be the main point of contact for information and to initiate many of our procedures. In addition, JISAO staff met twice over the past year with UW departmental administrators on such topics as improving communication, grant procedures, equipment inventory coordination, etc. A copy of the minutes from a meeting held on November 18, 2004, is shown at the end of the *Operations Manual*.

The NOAA contacts for JISAO are Dennis Moore, Leader, Ocean Climate Research Division, Cynthia Loitsch and Gayle Elkins, Administrators. There is constant communication via phone and email between the two administrations, and the NOAA personnel always attend the quarterly meetings of the JISAO-UW staff at PMEL. There are formal mechanisms in place to request amendments to the Cooperative Agreement through funding letters, and this procedure is completed by the JISAO grants specialists and the PMEL administrator. The funding letter package must first go through UW channels with approvals and signatures from the JISAO administration, the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and any related UW departments involved. OSP is the final stop in the process and it must review and give approval before the packet is sent to PMEL. JISAO staff collaborates with PMEL and UW staff on all aspects of administering the Cooperative Agreement and other grants awarded to the institute.

Findings:

There is a strong interconnectivity between JISAO staff and servicing UW personnel for the various areas of concern, such as HR, inventory control, budget and finance, and grants and contracts. JISAO staff demonstrated an effective working relationship between them and their UW subject area counterparts. JISAO administrative staff has continuous and helpful contacts with Cindy Loitch and Gayle Elkins at PMEL when dealing with CI issues.

Recommendations:

Quarterly meetings with JISAO and NOAA administrative staff at PMEL have been very useful and should continue.

JISAO should receive adequate information from the other academic departments in which JISAO PIs reside in order to better monitor and track the activities and expenditures of those projects.

5. How do you ensure compliance with university/institution human resources policies in such matters as: hiring, resignations, promotions, salary scales, disciplinary actions, etc.?

The framework for compliance with university, state and federal human resources policies is similar to that for grants and contracts and all other administrative functions at UW. There is a complex system of checks and balances that ensures compliance in all areas of human resources that is a collaborative effort between JISAO's administration, the UW's Human Resources Operations and Compensation Offices, the PMEL administration and the Office of the Vice Provost for Research, as well as any other involved UW departments. The JISAO employees who serve as supervisors are updated regularly on new information regarding hiring, resignations, performance reviews, promotions, salary increases, disciplinary actions, etc. The meetings that the JISAO staff hold at PMEL and in UW departments cover this information, and it is also posted on the administrative section of the JISAO website at <http://jisao.washington.edu/> and in the *JISAO Operations Manual*. Complete University of Washington HR information is located at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/>. An excerpt from the *JISAO Operations Manual* describes the current system in place to ensure compliance: JISAO Human Resources Management and Supervision JISAO follows all UW, state and federal regulations regarding human resources management. Information on UW Human Resources is found at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/>. The administrator serves as the JISAO human resources manager, in collaboration with the UW and PMEL administrations. Responsibilities include: managing the hiring process; overseeing the performance review process; providing counsel and information to supervisors and employees on federal, state and university human resources regulations and policies; initiating personnel actions, such as merit reviews, promotions, in-grade salary increases; and handling disciplinary processes as necessary. The administrator directly supervises the JISAO administrative staff. Extensive experience and training in human resources management and in effective

supervisory skills are required.

The administrator provides consultation on information regarding communication, conflict resolution, proactive problem solving and team building, facilitates staff training and disseminates information as needed. The administrator promotes good working relationships and open communication with all staff, faculty and students, and all other personnel and agencies dealing with JISAO. All personnel appointments are coordinated through the administrator's office, in collaboration with PMEL and the UW HR Operations and Compensation Offices, including new hires, promotion paperwork, visa requests, etc., ensuring correct procedures are followed and documents are complete for submission to the appropriate offices for processing. The administrative specialist works with the administrator on these actions. To ensure compliance with University and federal regulations, the administrator and administrative specialist initiate, manage and track the hiring process, including new position advertisements, maintaining appropriate contact with applicants and keeping accurate records of applications. For employees who handle hiring of personnel, the administrator will provide access to training on the new UW online hiring system, which is found at:

<http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/>. Additionally, the administrator provides consultation to staff members on the process of writing position upgrades and job descriptions, procedure interpretation, etc. The administrator maintains human resources files for faculty and staff, including CVs, job descriptions, promotion documents, performance evaluations, and training records and sends appropriate documents to the UW HR Department for filing in official personnel records. The administrator identifies and participates in HR training courses to add to job skills, as desired/required since the position is dynamic and evolving as JISAO changes. Training courses are also available to all JISAO administrative and scientific staff.

Findings:

There is an excellent working relationship between JISAO and the HR staff. This relationship is complemented by robust software systems in place that are used to effectively manage HR issues. The UW and JISAO HR staff demonstrated a comprehensive command of UW policies and their usefulness to JISAO personnel.

The ability to work with UW's senior HR consultant provides a valuable asset to the program.

The training workshops available to UW employees appear to be effective tools to ensure compliance with UW, State, and federal requirements and policies.

There exists an impressive array of professional development workshops and courses available to all UW staff.

Recommendations: None

6. Who supervises JI employees working in NOAA facilities? How is this implemented on site and reported (e.g., leave and performance evaluations)?

A formal structure of JISAO/UW supervisors responsible for JISAO/UW employees at PMEL was developed a couple of years ago. Many in this group have been trained through the UW's Strategic Leadership Program and, informally, by the JISAO administration and UW HR representatives. These trainings include hiring and promotion procedures, how to conduct performance reviews and disciplinary actions and how to assist employees in the area of professional development. It is JISAO's policy that all human resources actions are approved and initiated by the JISAO/UW supervisor. The PMEL administrator and the PMEL advisors participate in a collaborative process with the UW supervisor to give input and to ensure that finances are available for personnel changes and that equity issues are checked. All JISAO employee timesheets and leave records are approved and signed monthly by the JISAO/UW supervisors.

Findings:

JISAO has recently instituted a policy that clearly delineates the lines of authority solely between UW staff regarding all personnel matters. Currently there appear to be no problems regarding NOAA personnel directly supervising JISAO staff.

Recommendations:

NOAA should explore providing JISAO staff not housed at PMEL with NOAA badges to allow them to access PMEL facilities without the need to sign in at the front desk.

7. Reports and requests to NOAA -- how is the JI informed when the University/Institution formally sends in the financial reports and annual technical reports?

The UW Grant and Contract Accounting office (GCA) is responsible for completing all formal financial reports on UW grants and contracts, and information on their procedures is at <http://www.washington.edu/research/gca/office/>. The JISAO administration works with this office on a continual basis in the ongoing accounting work of managing grants and also on closing out budgets and providing necessary financial information for final financial reports. GCA sends the final copy of the financial report to NOAA, with copies to the PI and the JISAO grants office. Funding requests are sent to the PMEL administrator after they have been approved by the JISAO director/administrator, any involved UW departments, Office of the Vice Provost for Research, and OSP. Other reports and requests for information are usually handled between the JISAO director/administrator and the OAR/JI program officer.

Two types of monthly financial reports are prepared by the JISAO grants staff: 1) updates for the use of PIs in planning and projecting their grants; 2) expenditure reports for the PMEL administration on the Task II budget for salaries,

services/supplies and travel. The JISAO director and administrator prepare annual technical reports with input from all JISAO researchers. These reports are submitted to NOAA/OAR each fall.

Findings:

Financial reports prepared by JISAO grants staff of activities under Task III are detailed, comprehensive and useful. Based on these reports, JISAO has developed an expeditious communication process between PIs and JISAO administrative staff and/or PMEL if funding patterns are not as projected and adjustments need to be made.

There is direct communication between JISAO administrative staff and UW contract and grants staff regarding submitting of financial reports. JISAO submits annual technical reports directly to NOAA.

Additional Information Request:

The UW grants and contract accounting officer should supply the review team with the following information:

- 1) basis and frequency of automated standard application for payments (ASAP) drawdowns;*
- 2) description of the process utilized for preparing required federal financial reports using UW financial data;*

(7/28/05: UW submitted the requested information to the review panel.)

Recommendations: None

8. How are other formal requests to NOAA communicated between the JI, University/Institution (e.g. large equipment purchases, sub-grants)?

a. Equipment: Equipment is strictly controlled by both the UW Purchasing Department and the Equipment Inventory office. The definition of what is considered to be equipment and related information is at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/APS/61.02.html>. JISAO has a purchasing procedure that is described on the administrative website at http://www.jisao.washington.edu/JISAO_admin/PURCHASING/PURCHASING.htm. All equipment purchases must be initiated on a JISAO purchasing request form and approved by the PI of the budget on which it is being purchased. Once the purchase is made, JISAO has a procedure for tracking the item that follows the UW and federal regulations on keeping an inventory of these items. Once an item is no longer needed, there is a controlled surplus property system and any items originally purchased with federal funds must go through a special process of review and approval before they can be surplus.

b. Subcontracts: Subcontracts, whether they are being granted to other institutions by UW or granted to a UW PI through another institution, must follow the same procedures as any other grant application. Any required funding agency forms must be completed, along with the necessary UW forms and a letter of intent from the PI must be submitted through the UW approval process (JISAO administration, other UW departments, Office of Vice Provost for Research, OSP, etc.) before a subcontract can be established.

Findings:

The written policies and procedures regarding purchasing and contracts at the UW and JISAO websites are comprehensive, easily accessible, and very useful for JISAO personnel. JISAO staff responsible for these administrative areas demonstrated a breadth of knowledge and expertise that appeared to be extremely helpful to JISAO PIs.

Recommendations: None

9. Demo of electronic communications (e.g., preparation of required financial reports from univ/Inst. fiscal data).

The UW Office of Grant and Contract Accounting, in collaboration with the JISAO administration, completes the official, final financial report for all grants awarded. Other financial reports are prepared by the JISAO grants staff, who provide regular, monthly updates for the PI on all budgets and also submit monthly reports to the PMEL administrator with detailed expenditure spreadsheets on Task II salaries, services/supplies and travel. The data comes from the UW BAR/BSR financial system and from information that the staff maintains that has not yet reached the BAR system. A demonstration of this process can be done for the Review Team. A detailed description of the procedures followed by the grants staff in this area is found in the JISAO Operations Manual.

Findings: Same as #7.

Recommendations: None.

10. Publications, property and intellectual property records (demo view of these).

a. JISAO Publications: There is a system established that requires the lead author of any new JISAO publication to contact JISAO staff to obtain a “contribution number.” When all of the publication information is available, the author(s) submit it to the JISAO publication coordinator who enters it into a publications database. The JISAO Publications policy is posted at:

http://www.jisao.washington.edu//JISAO_admin/PUB_CONTRIBUTIONS/publication_policy.htm

b. UW Property – Equipment Inventory System:

As with all other administrative procedures at UW, the equipment purchase and tracking system is multi-layered to ensure compliance with UW and funding agency regulations. The office responsible for administering this system is the UW Equipment Inventory Office, <http://www.washington.edu/admin/finacct/eio/office/> UW's Equipment Accountability Policies are located at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/eio/fedreports/fedaud.html>. JISAO's administrative specialist keeps a detailed tracking system of all JISAO equipment that has been purchased, in collaboration with the equipment inventory system of the UW.

c. Intellectual Property. There is an intricate support system for intellectual property protection and control through the UW TechTransfer office. The JISAO director and administrator are responsible for managing this process, in collaboration with the UW TechTransfer office. Following is an excerpt from the *JISAO Operations Manual*: "Should there be a need, the administrator is responsible for creating a plan to ensure protection of JISAO's intellectual property and any products developed, in compliance with UW procedures for copyrighted and intellectual materials. This plan should be developed in collaboration with the UW's Tech Transfer Office. Information on this office is at: <http://depts.washington.edu/techtran/>. The administrator would facilitate the process by directing the development and implementation of technology transfer documents, including participation, licensing and royalty agreements." Additional information for PIs on managing their intellectual property is available at <http://www.washington.edu/research/guide/intellectual.html>.

(NOTE: See appendices for the JISAO Operations Manual and an example of minutes from a collaboration meeting between JISAO staff and other UW administrators.)

Findings:

The UW website reflects the information provided in the review.

Recommendations:

JISAO should improve the JISAO Operation Manual by strengthening the section on intellectual property and including a section describing the JISAO publication policy.