I’m Morris Foster, Vice President for Research at Old Dominion University. I want to give you an introduction to research here at ODU so that you will know what services we offer and who to call if you have questions.

Here’s how you can reach me, should you need me.

The two offices you are most likely to encounter are the Office of Research and the Research Foundation. Briefly, the Office of Research disseminates funding opportunities, offers faculty intramural funding, provides proposal development assistance, houses the patents and licensing team, and takes care of human and animal research protocols.

There are also three research enterprise centers under the Office of Research umbrella, which I will discuss later. The ODU Research Foundation is a separate, non-profit entity that handles proposal budgets, proposal submission, post-award grants management, purchasing, and grant reporting. It is also the conduit through which post-docs and research assistants are hired. There should be a brochure in your faculty welcome packet titled “Guide to Research Support at ODU” that explains all of this in greater detail and provides a list of the relevant contacts in each office.

Specifically, the Office of Research has four functions, which include strategic planning and research policy, research development, research compliance, and licensing and technology.

Strategic Planning involves working with faculty and colleges to set ODU’s strategic research goals and directions, identifying future directions for research funding that faculty might pursue, and investing in the infrastructure needed by faculty to pursue those goals and directions. The Office of Research also establishes and maintains policies that are relevant to research, such as policies about intellectual property disclosures, patenting, licensing, and conflict of interest.
The Office of Research currently has intramural funding programs, which are managed by the research development team. These opportunities are announced in early Fall and can include support for course release, interdisciplinary seed grants, and summer fellowships.

The research development team also offers funding searches and biweekly listservs of funding opportunities. We can help build teams, analyze requirements of solicitations, develop writing outlines, coordinate large research proposals, and edit proposals.

If your research involves animal or human subjects, biosafety concerns, export control, or conflict-of-interest issues, you will work with the research compliance team.

They work closely with ODU’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) and receive research submissions for these committees.

If your research yields marketable products or involves intellectual property, then you will interact with the licensing and technology team. They will evaluate your innovations and, if they have commercial potential, they will protect them and help to market them. Their goal is to negotiate mutually beneficial agreements between faculty and industry.

Now that you have a better understanding of the services in the Office of Research, I want to say a few words about the ODU Research Foundation to make you aware that the two offices are separate entities. The Office of Research is an administrative department of the university, while the Research Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit, tax-exempt 501C(3) organization. The Research Foundation serves as the university’s fiscal and administrative agent for sponsored program activities. Almost all grant submissions are made through the Research Foundation, so if you are research-active, you will work with at least the pre-award team of the Research Foundation. Pre-award helps formulate your proposal budgets,
reviews the sponsor’s legal terms, and serves as the authorized official for submissions, among other duties. When you receive a grant award, the post-award Grant and Contract Administrators (GCAs) help to administer your grant. The Foundation also has an accounting team that works with the post-award GCAs on grant administration, as well as a human resources team that assists with recruitment and hiring for grants and for post-doc positions.

The two offices do interact and work together, however. The intramural programs that I mentioned earlier are administered by the Research Foundation on behalf of the Office of Research. The Foundation and Licensing and Technology also work together, since the Foundation holds ownership of the University’s intellectual property and must sign for any licensing of this property and on any confidentiality agreements.

Now I want to say a few words about how external funding fits into a faculty member’s career. In many disciplines, external grant funding is necessary for tenure, but perhaps most important is that it provides funding for you to pursue your research interests and ultimately enhances your reputation in your field. It will help you generate and collect data and will provide access to equipment and facilities, either on our campus or on a collaborator’s campus. Many funding opportunities stress collaboration with those in other disciplines, so it increases your opportunity to work with others that you wouldn’t normally interact with. Your grant funding also provides opportunities for our undergraduate and graduate students to participate in research, so you’re training the next generation of researchers.

If you practice in a discipline that hasn’t traditionally had a lot of external funding, then our office can provide some direction. First, there are the intramural funding programs that I mentioned at the beginning of the presentation. These are a good way to get pilot data or to spend part of the summer conducting research for a book or working on an artistic project. If you want to look for funding but need help, either the Grant Development Specialist in your college or the Research Development and Outreach Coordinator will meet with you so that they understand your research, and will then conduct a funding search. We also subscribe to Pivot, a very comprehensive funding database, and host two workshops each semester.
for faculty to set up accounts and learn how to use it. Our office can also introduce you to other faculty members if you need a collaborator in another discipline. So, there are a few ways to get started. You can contact our office and set up a meeting as a first step.

If you’re new to the funding arena, then here are some opportunities to consider – a place to start in your search for funding. There are a few mission-driven agencies you can consider: DOD, DoE, DOE and NASA. Your research has to fit into their specific mission, however. Other possibilities are NSF, NIH, state funding, foundations, and for some, industry-sponsored research. I suggest that you attend a Pivot workshop during the semester so you learn how to use this funding database, and also that you sign up for the biweekly listservs. Again, you can also contact the Research Development staff for an individual funding search related to your area of expertise.

An important topic that I want to cover next is Facilities and Administrative Costs, known as F&A. F&A, also known as Indirect Costs, or IDC, are a percentage that gets added to the budget of most submitted proposals. Each institution negotiates a rate based on the cost of maintaining their research facilities (building, equipment, etc.) and the administration of research (compliance, accounting, reporting, etc.). The negotiated rate of recovery at ODU is currently 53%. This means that ODU’s Research Foundation can add 53% to your budget for F&A. It’s not quite this simple, though, because, as you see, the actual rate of recovery at ODU is only 24%. The difference stems from some funders capping their allowable F&A charges at a much lower rate than the 53%, and some items in the proposal budgets that cannot be included in the F&A calculation. Examples are equipment, tuition remission for grad students, and subcontracts over the first $25,000. Faculty should contact the ODU Research Foundation well in advance of their submission deadline, so that the Foundation can draft a budget and discuss IDC and allowable costs.

You’re probably wondering how these F&A costs are used at ODU. The Research Foundation gets a portion as payment for the administrative cost of grants management, and another portion helps pay for maintenance of research-related university facilities, such as the labs. F&A also helps pay
for infrastructure and operations related to research, such as hazardous waste disposal, library resources, utilities, and phones. Finally, and probably what you will be most concerned with, is that the Office of Research, the Deans, Chairs, and the PI also receive a portion of the IDC.

A final point I want to make is about the Enterprise research centers at ODU. If you hear someone mention that phrase, they’re referring to the three Enterprise centers that fall under the Office of Research’s umbrella. These multidisciplinary centers are not affiliated with one college. They are the Frank Reidy Research Center for Bioelectrics, located next door to our office on Monarch Way; the Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center (or VMASC), located in North Suffolk; and the Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium (or VCERC), headquartered here at ODU. Bioelectrics researchers look at the interaction of electromagnetic fields and ionized gases with biological systems, and are working to develop new medical diagnostics, therapies, and environmental decontamination technologies. Our researchers at VMASC work in eight core areas. They provide government and industry with modeling, simulation, and visualization expertise. VCERC is headquartered here at ODU, and consists of eight additional Virginia universities. Their initial focus is biomass for biodiesel production, and offshore wind energy.

So, that’s a snapshot of the Office of Research, as well as some basic information about the Research Foundation. Take a look in your new faculty packet at the Guide to Research Support at ODU brochure, which provides greater detail about our core functions and lists key personnel if you need to contact someone directly. If you want to stop by and introduce yourself, we’re located in Suite 203 of Innovation Research Park I, or IRP I, at the corner of Monarch Way and 43rd St.

We at the Office of Research look forward to helping you in your research endeavors here at ODU. Welcome!