

Statement on Congressional Research Funding Requests The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Each year the U.S. Congress attaches funding for specific projects to various appropriations bills. These targeted funding priorities — sometimes referred to as “Congressional earmarks” — include funding to support specific research and academic activities at universities. Congressionally directed projects do not undergo the peer-review or other merit-based competition often used to distribute government funds for research, yet they reflect each Congressional member’s assessment of his or her constituents’ needs and of the value of the effort to the community, state, or nation.

The policy of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is to seek targeted Congressional funding only when no other competitive source of federal support is available for the work proposed. There are projects that often cannot be funded through traditional, peer-reviewed programs, such as construction and renovation of laboratories or office space or acquisition of expensive instrumentation. In such instances, targeted support is necessary to enable investigators to compete for other grants and awards from federal and other research sponsors.

It is fundamental that any request for Congressional support submitted by Carolina be considered to be of the highest quality. Accordingly, all faculty-initiated submissions will be evaluated by the School/College Dean's Office; by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development; by the Office of the Provost; and by the Office of the Chancellor. Additionally, each submission will be considered in the context of the missions and priorities of the federal government.

The process for seeking Congressional support through the University’s annual “Federal Initiatives” undertaking includes the following steps and evaluations:

1. A letter of invitation for submissions is sent from the Provost to Deans, Directors, and Department Heads, in September outlining guidelines for the format of proposals;
2. Deans solicit proposals from faculty directly thereafter;
3. Proposals from faculty are submitted to their chief administrator’s office by late October;
4. Deans’ offices complete and submit a short list (no more than three) of proposals to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development by mid-November;
5. Proposals are evaluated by Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of the Chancellor, and a short list of three to five selected initiatives is announced in December;
6. Selected proposals are revised by faculty, in consultation with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Federal Affairs;
7. Final versions of Carolina’s Congressional requests are completed in January;
8. A briefing book of final requests is presented to the North Carolina Congressional delegation in February;
9. Visits to the Congressional Delegation by the Chancellor, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, and possibly by faculty are organized by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Federal Affairs throughout winter and spring.