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Electronic Research and Administration (eRA) system upgrade keeps grants coming to CU [1]

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The Electronic Research and Administration (eRA) system, which automates the University of Colorado's processes to apply for research grants and other funding, recently upgraded to a new version.

Grants are critical to CU, and grants are hinged on this tool being successful. In fiscal year 2016-17, CU garnered $1.034 billion in sponsored research awards to conduct research in economic sectors critical to the state and nation, including health care, energy, bioscience, and aerospace.

When the upgrade was announced, eRA implemented new features with no disruption in the grant application process that funds this crucial research at the campus level.

Why upgrade now?

The U.S. government moved to new forms for submitting grants, so many organizations and universities, including CU, had to upgrade by Jan. 25, 2018. CU campuses started using the new application on Dec. 4, 2017. Simply: If UIS hadn't done this upgrade, campus users wouldn't have been able to do electronic grants submissions.

What changed?

From a technical perspective, the system received fixes and application enhancements that allowed for a more modern codebase resulting in a lower support burden. Changes to the eRA proposal tracking budget's database, overall structure and usability means users will find it easier to work with as they get comfortable with the application.

The latest version added many enhancements, including updated budget, enhanced personnel, fringe benefit and Facilities and Administration (F&A) costs functionality in the Proposal Tracking and Proposal Development modules designed to help streamline business processes. Enhancements also affected eForm options adding functionality to all modules, including Human Subjects and Conflict of Interest.

Campus users were provided training prior to the switch.

What work went into the upgrade?

The project began in June 2016 and concluded in January 2018 and totaled more than 5,600 hours of work.

The project was led by the UIS eRA team and was successful thanks to a strong partnership

from the module administration teams on each campus. About 30-40 individuals worked on this upgrade, from planning to execution. This includes campuses, vendors, testers, report writers, application server administrators, database administrators and others.

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