Top Management Practices for Strong Internal Controls

1. Set a strong example for the expectation of ethical behavior, compliance with laws/policies, and communicate your expectations routinely to your unit’s personnel.

2. Be familiar with University policies and procedures. Ensure University assets are used for University business. Be willing to call and ask questions.

3. Develop measurable annual department goals based on your department’s mission and strategic goals. Create an action plan to achieve goals and communicate to all employees. Pay attention to what your employees are doing.

4. Develop written procedures for critical operations. These serve as a resource for current employees and a good training tool for new employees.

5. Don’t be satisfied with “The way we’ve always done things.” Review your processes on a continuous basis for inefficiency and duplication of effort.

6. Consider unique risks your unit may have (i.e. lab safety, cash collections, contracts and grants, etc.) and ensure additional oversight is provided.

7. Limit signature authority and don’t let anyone sign your name (an employee should sign their own name). Never use a signature stamp for any contracting or fiscal transactions.

8. Read all requests to spend college money before you sign them (check requests, travel expense vouchers, payroll time sheets, etc.). Never sign a document unless you have reviewed the information on that document. Satisfy yourself that it is a wise use of taxpayer funds. If something doesn’t make sense ask questions about it until you do.

9. Make sure each transaction has 2 people involved; one initiator and one approver. Separate these two duties to reduce the possibility of errors.

10. Ensure accounts are reconciled monthly and review this reconciliation for any unusual transactions. Maintain good supporting documentation for all purchases. Ask yourself “what would an auditor want to see?”

11. Make sure time sheets are reviewed and signed off by a supervisor or someone who is familiar with the employee’s work hours.

12. Keep offices and labs locked to protect property, data, and other resources. (Remember to shred paper documents with identifying information.)