Have you ever wondered what to do when a researcher walks into your office with a $400,000 grant denominated in Euros or Japanese yen? Or perhaps you have signed off on a subagreement allocating a portion of an NIH grant to an institution in another country — does the subrecipient institution understand how to document effort properly, and will the investigators understand how to abide by the financial conflict of interest rules that they have signed off on?

It is a situation like these that persuaded NCURA member Leslie Schmidt from Montana State University to apply for an NCURA Global Fellowship in 2011. Accepting an almost $400,000+ grant from the University of Copenhagen and dealing with European Commission research grant rules for the first time seemed like good reasons to visit the origins of the funds as well as to understand the collaborating institution’s systems and mindset. The president of her university, like many other U.S. institutions, was on the lookout for “non-traditional” sources of research funds, especially as U.S. federal research funding has remained flat at best, and many state budgets have slashed support for higher education and research. In addition, the European Commission has allocated more than $100 billion for research funding through Horizon 2020, and U.S. institutions have been particularly singled out as a potential growth target for collaborating with European institutions. If your university has not already received a grant or otherwise participated in a European Commission-funded project, chances are that that will change in the near future.

At the same time, researchers in the U.S. have increasingly found that world-class research partners may very well be in different countries, and collaboration often requires sub-granting U.S. federal funds to institutions that may not have much experience with U.S. federal grant regulations. Of course, it is the prime recipient institution that is in the end ultimately responsible for the outcome of the project and for documenting the proper usage of grant funds, including any and all sub-recipients. How, then, can a U.S. research administrator gain greater understanding of how partner institutions are interpreting and implementing the grant requirements and ensuring compliance with applicable regulations? One way to do this would be to use the NCURA Global Fellowship as a “site visit” to an institution and/or a country that your institution currently works or will work with in the near future.

For Linda Mason from Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Oklahoma researchers and the state university system were interested in greater collaboration with researchers in the UK, and her fellowship to Brunel University in Uxbridge, UK (near Heathrow Airport), was useful for her to foster connections between Oklahoma researchers and Brunel University researchers. Her two-week visit included a presentation by her to Brunel University administration and researchers, involving both Vice Presidents for Research of Oklahoma University and Oklahoma State University, and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. It also gave her a chance to meet with representatives of UK research boards and directors of research centers. These and other meetings resulted in establishing direct alerts from Linda to Brunel University whenever appropriate international collaboration opportunities come up. At least one collaborative team between Dr. John Jiang of The University of Oklahoma and Dr. Garreth Taylor of Brunel University, both professors of electrical engineering, have pursued and received funding for research on small electricity grids.

Then again, sometimes it takes going to another country and situation in order to see with fresh eyes how issues might be addressed at your own institution. That was part of Jeremy Miner’s experience when he traveled from the University of Wis-
Jeremy Miner and the NCURA Region IV Cow Mascot at Robben Island Museum during Fellowship at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (South Africa), March 2014.

Leslie Schmidt at the University of Copenhagen in May 2012.

The application process for the NCURA Global Fellowship is a simple and effective process that ensures a potential Fellow has the requisite experience and institutional support to make the most use of the Fellowship experience. The requirements are:

✔ Minimum 5 years of experience in research administration.

✔ Minimum 5 years of active membership in NCURA. This can be waived if the applicant’s own institution agrees to serve as a Host Institution for a future NCURA Global Fellow.

✔ Institutional support as demonstrated by a Letter of Commitment from the applicant’s institutional leadership.

✔ Credentials and the ability to travel outside the applicant’s own country.

Potential applicants can find out more and download the application form from NCURA’s website: http://www.ncura.edu/MembershipVolunteering/Programs/NCURAInternationalFellowship.aspx

In the young history of the NCURA Global Fellowship program there have been a total of 15 fellows from among a wide range of institutions, including research-intensive universities, PUIs, and mid-sized research universities. What is common about these universities and the Global Fellows is their recognition that the research enterprise is no longer a “domestic affair”. In fact, it never was, but the increasingly global reach of scientific research, the coordinated research programs negotiated between funding agencies in different countries, and large-scale research framework programs that actively encourage and require research consortia to cross national boundaries have made this increasingly apparent. NCURA Fellows have had host institutions in Austria, Israel, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, and the UK. NCURA currently has two active Global Fellowship programs with two sister research organizations: (1) EARMA (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators) and (2) SARIMA (Southern African Research & Innovation Management Association). New Fellowship programs are in the works, and with the advent of NCURA’s Region 8 (International Region), it is fully possible that NCURA Global Fellows may undertake their fellowship while being hosted by a fellow NCURA member in a different country.

Just talk to any of the 15 NCURA Global Fellows — the fellowship is a life-changing, eye-opening, and career-enhancing opportunity. While researchers often travel internationally to conferences and workshops for professional development, this program is one of the few that is exclusively for research administrators to strengthen their professional expertise.

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