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**Give us a brief overview of your professional career and how you ended up at Harvard University in your current position.**

I had my first 'taste' of research administration back in 1996 as an Assistant Fiscal Officer in a center at MIT, and then transitioned into full-fledged research administration in 2002 as the Assistant Director for a large NSF-funded research center, also at MIT. The center was multi-disciplinary and involved faculty from 3 different schools and 8 different academic departments. I left MIT in the fall of 2005, and after a few position changes, ended up working for a small, private research and management consulting company in Boston. This was quite a transition after spending over 15 years in higher education. The company's work was primarily in the international field through various funding sources (both US and international) and one large DoD project based in the US. Although this position was US-based, it did give me a lot of exposure to the fascinating world of international research and led me to explore my current position at Harvard University's School of Public Health.

**What are your current responsibilities and what are the most rewarding aspect(s) of your current position?**

I am currently the administrator for an international research group within an academic department – which means that I provide comprehensive leadership to the groups based both in Tanzania and Boston, including overseeing all the financial, human resources, facilities, and IT as well as assuming responsibility for overall administrative management and day-to-day operations in Boston for this group. This support is primarily for one PI who has an array of federal and foundation funding. The major change in this position from previous positions is the regular interaction with people at the University in Dar es Salaam as well as the travel to Tanzania, which has been three times in the last six months and will continue to be 3-4 times per year. A few of the more rewarding aspects are being involved in capacity building in Tanzania, being able to witness firsthand the benefits to the people in Tanzania of the ongoing research, and to see how things have improved over the last 10 years.

**What are the key qualities required in your position?**

Some key qualities are optimal organization, flexibility, awareness and understanding of cultural aspects in other countries and regions, ability to operate in a fluid environment, and knowing where the nearest coffee place is! The person in this position has to be able to look

at the details and understand how they fit into the bigger picture, as well as being able to look at the big picture and work out the details to support it. There is also a lot of organizational development happening in relation to building sustainable capacity in Tanzania, so being able to envision future business plans and work to develop the training for those plans are extremely helpful as well. This position deals with funding from various sources including federal and foundation, and we are consistently applying for new funding as RFA's are publicized or new projects are conceived. Other key qualities include having a good strong financial background, an ability to learn new systems quickly, flexibility with your schedule, understanding the benefits of good customer service, and keeping an open mind. You are dealing with people from many different countries at many different levels, but the bottom line is that we are all here to make sure the research continues.

### **You recently traveled to Tanzania. What was that experience like?**

I started my new job at Harvard in early January 2008 and two weeks later it was suggested that I join the group that was heading to Tanzania that weekend. This was my first international business trip and my first time to Africa. I arrived in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania at midnight after flying for over eighteen hours, excited, wide eyed and full of wonder. I spent seven days in Tanzania meeting people and getting to know the 'lay of the land'. I was able to meet the key administrative contacts at the University and City Council that I would be working with, as well as the country PIs and other staff. My primary PI has over ten projects in Tanzania and I was a bit confused about who was working on which one and how the projects were related, but by the end of my first trip things were beginning to come together.

Until you travel somewhere, you cannot truly appreciate the day-to-day things that we tend to take for granted in the US such as the regular flow of electricity and water. Also, when I arrived in late January, it was the end of their summer and temperatures reached 98! I had been concentrating on bringing appropriate business attire and forgot to check average temps for that time of year. Needless to say, I was much better prepared for my second trip. Overall, it was a very interesting and enlightening experience and I now have strong relationships with the people I interact with regularly in Tanzania.

### **What do you see are the key challenges in administering international programs?**

I believe that a key challenge to administering international programs is in learning about the cultural differences. While we in the US may greet someone by hugging them, in other countries this is insulting and even prohibited. You have to learn to ask specific questions that don't have a yes or no answer since the people in the other country may answer yes because they are being polite.

Another key challenge is the time difference between your home base and where the research is taking place. Generally the time difference for Tanzania is 7-8 hours ahead of EST depending on where the US is with daylight savings. I learned early on to adjust my schedule to come in early and catch key people in Tanzania before they left the office for the day. I also try to end my day by getting out email that will be read the next day in Tanzania.

Another key challenge is explaining the US regulations to foreign entities and trying to ensure compliance that is applicable to them because they are a subcontract entity of US Government funding, and doing this while you are on another continent.

### **What are the similarities and dissimilarities of administering domestic and international programs?**

There are many similarities in administering domestic and international programs. You still have the same general guidelines that have to be adhered to, regular reporting, effort certifications, budgeting, allowables/unallowables, etc. The differences are in working directly with entities in countries that don't necessarily have an equivalent infrastructure to

support them - there are often slight language barriers, time zone differences, cultural differences including specific dress codes and customs, and not as much access to training related to sponsored research.

**Are there any aspects of your international experience that your colleagues in NCURA could learn from?**

I would suggest that those who are considering an international experience do as much research on the country as possible prior to their trip, always be aware of your surroundings, and be open to exciting new worlds!

**What do you see are the upcoming challenges in international research administration over the next 5-10 years?**

Compliance is going to be the key challenge when working with international organizations that already have their own policies, procedures, government rules and regulations and don't feel the US Government rules and regulations apply to their institutions, government, and companies.

**What have been your greatest successes and challenges while working with international programs?**

My greatest success has been in establishing good working relationships with my colleagues in Tanzania. I approached each of them with a desire to understand their roles, business and processes, to help them to understand how business is handled in Boston (and why), and to assist them with whatever I could from Boston. Good communication is an asset that we all have to continuously work to improve. My greatest challenge is being aware of how my slightest actions may impact others given the cultural differences. I have become a bit cautious and observant so as not to inadvertently offend anyone. Another challenge is in learning a new language and making sure I don't pronounce any word wrong – you don't want to think you're complimenting someone and find out later that you've actually insulted them!

**Any final words of wisdom you want to share with your colleagues?**

My final words of wisdom - never be afraid to take on new challenges – the results could be very exciting!