Election Results Are In!

John Case Elected NCURA Vice President/President-elect

Joyce Freedman and Peggy Lowry Elected to the NCURA Board of Directors

F. John Case of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill is the incoming NCURA Vice President/President-elect. John will begin his term on January 1, 2000.

When asked what he sees in NCURA’s future over the next two years of his term, Case responded,

“The organization will continue to be the leader in research administration professional development, and it has a great base to build upon. Combining that with a strong willingness to serve its membership to the greatest extent possible, NCURA’s leadership role in research administration will be strengthened.”

When asked what he would most like to accomplish during the next two years,

“Over the next two years I would like to work with the Board to review our current programs and where appropriate adjust them if necessary. We will work to communicate effectively with all the membership and make sure our organization provides the professional development opportunities they need in an effective and enjoyable way.”

Joining John on the 2000 Board of Directors are Joyce Freedman of the University of California Berkeley and Peggy Lowry of Oregon State University both serving as Board Members At-large.

FRA II: Not a “Mickey Mouse” Conference...

but FRA II will be held near the Disney World home of Mickey Mouse in Orlando, Florida. Mark your calendars for February 25-27, 2001 at the Royal Plaza Hotel in Orlando.

The inaugural Financial Research Administration (FRA) conference, held in Nashville this past May, was a resounding success and many of the 400 attendees indicated that NCURA should offer another FRA conference. Acting on this overwhelming response, incoming President Regina White appointed Patrick Fitzgerald from MIT to be Conference Chair for FRA II.

The program for FRA II will build on the positive elements of FRA with a greater focus on practical advice, interaction and case studies. The goal of FRA II will be to provide financial and non-financial administrators with timely and useful information which will enhance their understanding of the financial aspects of research administration and enable them to better do their jobs. An excellent program committee has been formed and the planning process is underway (the list of committee members follows this article).

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As in any large and complex organization, the changes will take some time to be completely implemented and effective, but there is enthusiasm and participation throughout NCURA as we move forward with the restructured governance and attention to the work of the Council. That work is defined by our strategic plan which calls upon NCURA to be its members’ primary resource for professional education, and a leading source of information on the profession of research administration. The new Board of Directors has a responsibility to “steer” - to oversee the pursuit of the goals articulated in the strategic plan by directing Committees, subcommittees and task forces to undertake projects and initiatives that will move the Council toward meeting those goals. These groups are “rowing” - they are actually moving NCURA forward by the projects and initiatives undertaken.

So how do the recent “fixes” actually help?

The Board of Directors: NCURA has, through the restructured governance, become a far more democratic organization. With the exception of up to three Presidential nominations, the entire Board is now elected either in a national ballot or through regional elections. Even the Presidential nominees must be approved by the elected Board. Furthermore, the Board is gaining a deeper recognition of its responsibility to the entire organization. From its attention to the strategic plan; its serious commitment to the approval of task forces, committee membership, and Board appointments; its thoughtful deliberations around leadership development and diversity, the Board’s commitment is to the excellence of NCURA’s programs, now and into the future.

Volunteers vs. Appointments: Rather than Committees appointed by the President, the groups working toward NCURA’s goals are largely comprised of volunteers - any member of NCURA can volunteer to join a committee or task force which is working on a project of specific interest to them. The old system, which was seen by some as exclusionary and the “in-crowd”, has been replaced by a system which encourages people to participate through broad-based calls for volunteers.

Leadership Development: A critical need that NCURA has acknowledged is one of recruiting and developing its future leadership. The old nominating committee has been transformed into Nominating and Leadership Development, recognizing that outreach, early orientation, mentoring, and a vision for the future will ensure NCURA’s success and stability well into this new millennium. Watch for exciting initiatives from this Committee! For example, the NLDC has taken responsibility for one track at the Annual Meeting, in which several concurrent sessions will be offered, focussing on developing the future leadership of NCURA, encouraging volunteer participation and enhancing diversity within Council activities.

Financial Management Committee: Under the old structure, the regional treasurers made up the Finance and Budget Committee. While they were diligent, conscientious and expert in research administration, sometimes these individuals had limited financial expertise and were not experienced in dealing with substantive financial issues such as managing investments or setting long-term financial strategies. Furthermore, requiring regional treasurers to deal with issues at the national level in addition to serving the needs of their respective regions involved a substantial commitment of time and detracted from their ability to focus their attention on local goals and objectives. NCURA’s new governance structure has created more opportunities for involvement in the

(Continued on back cover)

NCURA Staff Observations

Newsletter: Both of you have been with NCURA for quite some time. You have lived the old and the new NCURA. How do you feel about the changes in governance and structure?

Larmett: NCURA has always been a strong organization and, with the recent and ongoing changes, it now has many more tools to work with and that, in turn, will bring benefit to our members.

N: Was it apparent to you that NCURA needed to make some changes?

L: When I became executive director, the first thing I did was stand back and look at NCURA as someone new walking through the door would do. I saw a vital organization but, one that was slowing down a bit at a time when the rest of the world was speeding up. I’m not sure if it was because we were almost forty and needed to do some shaping up but, the time came and we did it.

N: What did you see when you looked?

L: I saw that we had the best of intentions and wanted to bring more service to our members but, we were spending way too much time going around barriers so that by the time we reached our objectives it was often too late. Today, windows of need/opportunity are no longer than 90 days and yet, NCURA’s operating method often had projects left in committee for a year and longer.

N: And then what?

L: I began looking outside of this association to see what some of the other 135,000 associations in this country were doing. I wanted to know which organizations were the most successful and then, of course, I wanted a list of their best practices. In January of 1998, I invited president, Mary Husemoller, to attend a one-day symposium for chief executive and chief elected officers. The program, “Leading Together”, was beneficial in content and gave us the opportunity to see and hear from forty other associations during the course of the day. It was most reassuring to see how many others were experiencing some of the same “sluggishness” we were. Hearing a different organization talk about their challenges was like looking in a mirror. Within the first two hours, it became apparent to both of us that NCURA needed refurbishing (inside and out) if we wanted to successfully serve our members in the next century.

We made contact with the symposium’s leader and after asking a number of questions, agreed to continue the conversation when we all returned home. From there Mary and I agreed to move forward on a “knowledge based association” plan and scheduled NCURA’s first Board Training Workshop for what was then known as the Executive Committee.

N: Tara, you were at that first Board workshop. What was it like?

Bishop: The first workshop took the then Executive Committee dramatically out of the committee and programming details of NCURA. It took a leap of faith to step all the way back to the core of NCURA and question who we are, who do we serve, and what do we do and how.

This group of people were committed to the process yet never lost site of the uniqueness of NCURA. The mission statement and strategic plan emerged from a meeting 5 months later in Philadelphia. It’s a journey they took on behalf of the 3,500 people who call NCURA their professional home.

(Continued on back cover)
DHHS Conference on Human Subjects Protection and Financial Conflict of Interest

The issue of financial conflicts of interest in research is one of the five main issues identified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services in her May 23, 2000, announcement of steps being taken to strengthen human subject protection during clinical trials. In that announcement, the Secretary stated that HHS would hold public discussions to find new ways to manage conflicts of interest so that research subjects are appropriately informed, and to further ensure that research results are analyzed and presented objectively.

A conference was held August 15-16, 2000 at the National Institutes for Health in Bethesda, Maryland in order to begin this public discussion.

Dr. Ruth Kirschstein, Principal Deputy Director at NIH, opened the conference by reminding everyone that while we are talking about conflict of interest, the NIH policy and regulation is entitled “Objectivity in Research”. She said as financial interests have become more commonplace for biomedical researchers in recent years, our responsibility is to identify the financial interests that may compromise a scientist’s objectivity.

In other segments of the meeting, institutional representatives described the detailed procedures they use for the disclosure and management of conflicts. Susan Kornetsky, Director of Clinical Research Compliance at Children's Hospital in Boston, noted that her institution follows the rather stringent Harvard University guidelines. Financial disclosures are largely reviewed and maintained by department chairs, and this information is passed onto Institutional Review Boards (IRB) when germane to a protocol under review. The IRB role is limited to determining if, when, and how to tell subjects of such interests.

Other speakers supported the idea that policies and procedures must be implemented institution-wide, and they expressed concern about overburdening IRBs with yet another compliance responsibility. Greg Koski, M.D., appointed to head the new Office of Human Research Protections, echoed worries about the intense workloads that IRBs already face.

As for promoting responsible behavior, professional societies have an important role to play, Koski added. Savio Woo, Ph.D., president of the American Society for Gene Therapy, reported that his organization has asked its members to forgo “any equity position or other financial interest” in companies sponsoring gene therapy trials.

While it seemed that through much of the day and a half meeting the focus was on how best to manage conflicts of interest and coordinate the responsibilities of conflict-of-interest committees and IRBs, the direction of the conference shifted when several members of a closing panel, including Marcia Angell, the former editor-in-chief of the New England Journal of Medicine, challenged the concept of managing conflicts. In her view, any financial interests were said to be a conflict, so new regulations were called for to prohibit such interests. Dr. Angell said the Bayh-Dole act is being “used to make as much money in as many different ways as possible”, and that “pervasive and manifold conflicts of interests now exist”. She characterized disclosure of financial interests as unfairly passing the buck to the human subjects, and recommended dealing with conflicts head on by, among other things: 1) not allowing any financial interests in a company sponsoring the research; 2) not accepting grants and contracts with “strings” attached- such as limitations on data control and publications; 3) not allowing institutions to become outposts for industry by letting them set up centers on campus with access to patients and students; 4) limiting consulting arrangements; 5) institutions foregoing investments in any health care companies; and 6) eliminating or greatly reducing the common technology transfer practice of providing a share of royalties on inventions to investigators.

In Dr. Greg Koski’s closing presentation, he said that conflicts of interest in biomedical research were so troublesome that “the system may have gotten entirely out of control” and might have to be reorganized. Dr. Koski said he would use the information from this conference to start developing a new conflict-of-interest policy by the government. He said disclosure of a scientist’s conflict, as is currently required, would no longer be enough; new restrictions may be necessary. Dr. Koski praised the policy adopted by the American Society of Gene Therapy and urged other societies to take similar action. The problems pointed out by critics of the current ethics system, he said, are “very real, very serious and a threat to our entire endeavor.” In response to the challenge from Marcia Angell, he said that researchers should not conduct studies on products of companies in which they own shares.

Two articles in the August 25, 2000 issue of SCIENCE magazine coincidentally point out the challenge in deciding how far to go in restricting university and faculty interactions with industry. The first article, in describing the August 15-16 conference, gives an amusing analogy that is worth repeating: “With concerns growing that some research universities are getting too cozy with drug companies, its perhaps fitting that the debate over reducing conflicts of interest in clinical research sounds a lot like an argument about premarital sex. While some insist that abstinence is the only solution, others believe that education is enough to keep the problem under control”. The article cites statements by several influential policymakers including Dr. Koski that favor the abstinence side, and concludes that more restrictive government regulations are likely. The second article is entitled “Does Science Drive the Productivity Train?” and while the main focus is on how to more accurately assess the impact of scientific innovations on the economy, it has become clearer to many that investments in research drive economic growth. Unsaid in the article but a necessary corollary is that scientists and their institutions have to establish relationships with industry in order transfer innovations into the marketplace. We know from past experience (pre-Bayh-Dole) that the government is not equipped for that job.

So the abstainers and the educator/managers will have a healthy debate about the best way to protect subjects in research, avoid conflicts of interest that jeopardize scientific objectivity, and maintain effective relations with industry. Not an easy task to be sure, but perhaps easier than resolving the premarital sex dispute.

Tony DeCrappeo is a Staff Associate for the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR).
The Case for Electronic Signatures

by Stephen Dowdy

In my previous article, published in the July/August issue of the NCURA Newsletter, we took a look at NSF’s move from a PIN-based authentication system to a password-based system. This strategic move paved the way for NSF to use strong authentication for electronic signatures when conducting electronic transactions with NSF. In fact, NSF is currently piloting with 19 FDP schools to eliminate the signed cover page for the investigator. Many of you experienced this with the last CAREER program from NSF. For those FDP schools participating in the pilot, signed cover pages are no longer required on full proposals (on a per proposal voluntary basis.) The PI’s strongly-authenticated electronic signature is sufficient to satisfy the business risk associated with the submission of the proposal.

So how did NSF convince their auditors and IG’s office to move forward with this pilot? The answer is found in the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) guidance to the agencies to implement the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA). In my previous article, published in the July/August issue of the NCURA Newsletter, we took a look at NSF’s move from a PIN-based authentication system to a password-based system. This strategic move paved the way for NSF to use strong authentication for electronic signatures when conducting electronic transactions with NSF. In fact, NSF is currently piloting with 19 FDP schools to eliminate the signed cover page for the investigator. Many of you experienced this with the last CAREER program from NSF. For those FDP schools participating in the pilot, signed cover pages are no longer required on full proposals (on a per proposal voluntary basis.) The PI’s strongly-authenticated electronic signature is sufficient to satisfy the business risk associated with the submission of the proposal.

So how did NSF convince their auditors and IG’s office to move forward with this pilot? The answer is found in the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) guidance to the agencies to implement the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA). OMB asserts that in enacting GPEA, Congress addressed the legal effect and validity of electronic signatures or other electronic authentication:

“Electronic records submitted or maintained in accordance with procedures developed under this title, or electronic signatures or other forms of electronic authentication used in accordance with such procedures, must not be denied legal effect, validity, or enforceability because such records are in electronic form” (GPEA, section 1707).

For the purpose of this article and to validate NSF’s decision to use electronic signatures to conduct official business, the phrase “or other forms of electronic authentication” is probably the most significant. The GPEA actually recognizes the use of electronic authentication to conduct official business. This is great news for the agencies and for the university community since this helps pave the way for the university community to use strong authentication for electronic signatures in lieu of a true digital signature.

So, what constitutes strong authentication? One of the most important rules is this: A user’s password must never travel across an open network as clear text. Clear text means that the data is not encrypted. The Internet is an open network. More than likely, your campus network is open. Now, here is the scary part. Many application programs that you use in your day-to-day activities do not encrypt your password as it travels across your open network. Chances are you have read your e-mail today. Chances are that your password to access your e-mail traveled across your campus network as clear text (unencrypted). And, for many college campuses, that packet of “password” data that traveled from your workstation to your e-mail server easily could have been intercepted by other individuals.

Software programs are readily available to grab pieces of information off of the network. This is known as packet sniffing. Many companies (and some universities) deploy firewalls to help prevent these types of attacks. The problem with a firewall is that it assumes the “bad guy” is on the outside. Most of the really damaging incidents of computer crime are carried out by insiders. Firewalls also have a significant disadvantage in that they restrict how your users can use the Internet. For the university environment, this is often unacceptable.

So, when you establish a connection between your workstation and a server (like your e-mail server), these packet sniffing programs will look for the first few characters of a connection. Why are they interested in the first few characters? Think about your connection to your e-mail server. What is the first piece of information that travels across the network? BINGO!! Your user name and password. So, these programs look for the first few characters in an attempt to steal your username/password combination.

Now, back to strong authentication. GPEA helps give us some guidance on what may constitute strong authentication. While addressing non-cryptographic methods of authenticating the identity of an individual, GPEA goes on to state:

A user accessing an agency’s electronic application is requested to enter a “shared secret” (called “shared” because it is known both to the user and to the system), such as a password or PIN. When the user of a system enters her name, she also enters a password or PIN. The system checks that password or PIN against data in a database to ensure its correctness and thereby “authenticates” the user. If the authentication process is performed over an open network such as the Internet, it is usually essential that at least the shared secret be encrypted.

Clearly, OMB suggests that the user’s password be encrypted during the authentication process. So how do we encrypt the password to prevent its misuse by individuals on the open Internet that may intercept our username and password combination with packet sniffing programs? Tune in next time when we will continue to explore OMB’s implementation of GPEA, the Secure Socket Layer (SSL) and Kerberos.

Stephen Dowdy is the Manager, Network and Information Services, Office of Sponsored Programs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
SYNOPSIS of the OSTP and RAND REPORTS: Two Important Reports on F&A Costs at Universities

by Jack Beaudoin, Carol Berdar and Bob Stevens

Two important reports on facilities and administrative (F&A) rates at universities have recently been issued. These are the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) report, “Analysis of Facilities and Administrative Costs at Universities”, and the RAND report, “Paying for University Research Facilities and Administration.”

A respected sage in the cost accounting arena describes the reports as “the best and most accurate presentation of the issues I’ve ever seen.” The goal was to present accurate reports of F&A recovery issues, and identify the ramifications that related policy decisions would have on the federal government and universities. “The reports are fair, and a seemingly unbiased presentation of the facts without distortion.” There will probably be some critics of the reports, as there always are, but overall the facts of “what’s happening” related to F&A costs at universities are identified very well.

This article provides a synopsis of the OSTP and RAND reports. It provides a summary of the OSTP report, describes the background of the RAND report, identifies and briefly describes the six F&A issues, and highlights some valuable resources included in the appendices of the reports. We encourage our colleagues to review these insightful reports.

OSTP REPORT – IMPORTANT POLICY STATEMENT

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Authorization Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-207) requested the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to address six issues related to F&A costs. The OSTP report, “Analysis of Facilities and Administrative Costs at Universities”, is an important policy statement from a high-level office in the Executive Office of the President.

In its response to Congress, the OSTP was required to analyze options for reducing or controlling F&A costs, and determine the impact it would have on federally funded research at universities. The report makes policy recommendations for the future and is significant considering the 2000 Presidential election will bring about a change in administration in a few months. Emphasis is made on the some of the report’s statements:

“…we believe that increased pressure on universities to provide additional cost sharing is detrimental…”

“…universities are contributing in a significant way… we caution against imposing additional costs…”

“…pressure to increase cost sharing through decreases in F&A recovery…could result in reduced investments…thus jeopardizing future research capabilities…”

Appendix B of the OSTP Report presents some potential options that might reduce F&A reimbursement - including eliminating/limiting payments for specific F&A costs, establishing caps/flat rates for specific costs, eliminating/restricting special studies, and promoting efficiency by simplifying the process and creating incentives.

The options are considered “not appropriate” at this time, and the overall conclusion is best summarized by Neal Lane, Director, OSTP, in his letter covering the report: “We believe that enactment of any of the mechanisms for decreasing F&A cost recovery that are discussed in this report could result in reduced investments in building and renovating needed scientific facilities, thus jeopardizing future research capability and the scientific/technological workforce.”

RAND REPORT – INFORMATIVE ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

In 1998 Congress directed the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy (OSTP) to conduct an analysis of issues related to the ways universities recover the F&A costs they incur when performing research under federal grants and contracts. At OSTP’s request, the RAND Science and Technology Policy Institute prepared a report, “Paying for University Research Facilities and Administration”, to present objective information on F&A costs in U.S. higher education.

The RAND report addresses six issues raised by Congress, limits its scope to presenting balanced factual information, identifies the calculation of costs related to the support of research, presents an analysis of alternatives, and does not take a position on policy options. The report is an important study because university F&A costs are often misunderstood and can be contentious. The RAND confirms that universities contribute significant direct and indirect resources to support and produce the very best research. Highlights of the findings in the RAND report include:

• F&A costs have not increased, but have remained constant for over a decade.
• The federal government pays 70% - 90% of the total negotiated amount for F&A costs.
• After the federal government, the largest supporter of university research is universities themselves.
• Typically 75% of a grant award is for direct expenditures, and 25% is for the supporting F&A.
• The actual amount of awarded F&A is lower than cost structure comparisons indicate – because of the specific limitations (e.g., 26% administrative cap) on university F&A reimbursement.

RAND ADDRESSES SIX ISSUES

The RAND addressed six issues in their report – the comparison of F&A rates across sectors, distribution of F&A rates by spending category, impact of changes in OMB Circular A-21, impact of federal and state law on F&A rates, options to reduce or control the rate of growth of federal F&A reimbursement rates, and options for creating an F&A database. The six issues are described and briefly summarized as follows:

(Continued on Page 15)
Greetings from a chilly New England today. Vacations are over and Labor Day has past and for most of us it’s back to reality. It seems only yesterday we were organizing our Spring meeting in Hyannis and now we’re already planning for next year. The meeting in Hyannis was a huge success with registration exceeding 180 attendees. Kudos to the program committee and its co-chairs, Tom Richardson and Kevin Brodrick for a great meeting. As indicated work is already under way for our 2001 Spring meeting in Burlington, Vermont. The dates have been set – mark May 16 – 18, 2001 on your calendar. In addition, NSF will be following our Region I Spring meeting with its Regional Grants Conference which will be held May 16 – 18, 2001. Vivian Holmes and Louise Griffin have volunteered to be co-chairs of the meeting and have already begun making plans. Watch for upcoming announcements.

Our 2000-2001 RADG season will begin on October 18, 2000 at the John Hancock Conference Center. Our speaker for our first session will be Joe Kull from OMB. Future RADG dates are December 13, 2000; January 17, 2001; March 14, 2001; and May 9, 2001.

As this goes to print most of us are preparing for the upcoming NCURA Annual meeting in Washington, D.C. There are panels to be put together, regional activities to be arranged, receptions to be organized, and a regional business meeting requiring preparations. The Annual meeting hospitality committee has put out a call for volunteers to help at the meeting. This is a great opportunity to get more involved in NCURA activities in a group atmosphere. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Sally Tremaine at (203) 432-2460 or by email at sally.tremaine@yale.edu

Finally, Region I has an opening for a Secretary. Elayn Byron’s term as Secretary will come to an end on December 31, 2000 and we need to find a replacement. Shortly a call for nominations for Secretary will go out electronically from Steve Bernstein, Chair of the Region I Nominating Committee. We plan to have our slate of candidates ready by the end of September and will send out an announcement calling for electronic balloting during the first two weeks of October. The winning candidate will be announced at the Region I Business meeting at the Annual meeting and will assume office on January 1, 2001. If you would like to hear more about the position of know of someone you feel would make a great Secretary, please contact Steve Bernstein at (603) 862-2420 or by email at steven.bernstein@unh.edu.

Bill Corbett is Chair of Region I and is the Director of Research Administration, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

The fall season is upon us. A number of exciting developments are underway in the Region.

At the conclusion of our spring meeting in Alexandria, the Region II Steering Committee engaged in some thoughtful reassessment of participation levels in regional leadership. Challenges include the need for outreach to a large and diverse regional membership. This fact is contrasted by a recent history of “reluctant volunteerism” that needs to be reinvigorated.

Based on these perspectives, a “Regional Revitalization Retreat” was called at the new Pittsburgh Hyatt Airport Hotel for Saturday, July 29. Participants were solicited from a list of individuals who had had any designated role in regional affairs over the last several years. Six hardy volunteers from throughout the region bravely weathered thunderstorms and travel disruptions to join the current Chairman in a concentrated planning session. Participants reviewed membership issues with respect to overall core purposes of the region and organizational opportunities for the membership. “Brainstorming” exercises arrayed a wide variety of ideas against the specific themes of Education & Educational Resources, Membership, and Professional Development. A summary of these topical analyses will be presented to the overall membership for further deliberation at the Regional business meeting in November.

Elsewhere in regional activities, a site selection/planning committee headed by Betty Farbman has been hard at work. A hotel contract with the Hershey Lodge in Hershey, Pennsylvania has been executed for the next annual meeting, slated for April 29-May 1, 2001. Denise Clark and colleagues are developing preliminary program details. Look for details as they develop at the 2001 website, available at http://www.osp.cornell.edu/RegionII2001/ Additionally, the committee is working on the 2002 site, tentatively slated to be held in Ithaca, New York.

Other developments of note include recent regional appointees to several national task forces. These include the National Annual Meeting Committee and ERA V. Bonnie Seward headed up the inaugural Financial Research Administration forum. Other task groups with regional representation include the Private Organizations Commission, Financial Management Committee, President’s Commission on Technology, Nomination and Leadership Development Committee, Professional Development Committee, and the Committee on Communication and Member Services.

Bob Killoren as continuing RMR editor has made further refinements in the electronic publishing frontier, with the featured posting of complete articles on the NCURA homepage. Gunta Liders as co-editor of the NCURA Newsletter is pioneering novel approaches to old and new subject matter alike. As an example, Tony Merritt has recently authored the first article of the “Senior Corner” byline, under the revamped NCURA Newsroom format. Last but certainly not least, Janet Simons is coordinating the region’s participation in another exciting series of “Newcomer” events at the upcoming national meeting.

By now you should have received a voting ballot for the Region II candidates for the upcoming two years. Please be sure and register your votes! As the old adage goes, every vote counts.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Washington, as we move forward with the advancement of regional activities.

Mike Crouch serves as Region II Chair and is the Director, Office of Research, University of Pittsburgh
**REGION IV**

*Mid-America*

Election Results
This spring, the Region IV membership elected the following people to work for us on the Executive Committee (Board of Directors after November, 2000): Chair-Elect, Jim Maus (Washington University); Secretary, Glenda Luecke (Washington University); and Members-At-Large, Susan Toler (Loyola University of Chicago) and Deborah Vetter (Wright State University). Dorothy Spurlock (Eastern Michigan University) will serve a one-year term as a Member-At-Large for her nomination to Chair-Elect. These newly elected members join current executive committee members: Chair, Kathy Taggart (Creighton University); Treasurer, Deborah Galloway (University of Cincinnati); Past-Chair, Ellen Rogers (University of Notre Dame); and Members-At-Large, Joanne Altieri (University of Kansas) and Ted Knous (University of Wisconsin-Stout).

**REGION V**

*Southwestern*

Sondra Ferstl, Vice Chair of Region V, is busy planning the Spring 2001 meeting which will be held at the Westin Hotel in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma from Sunday, April 29 through Wednesday, May 2.

Also, Region V is excited about our joint meeting in Spring 2002 with Region III. This meeting will be held at the St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio, Texas from Sunday, May 5 through Wednesday, May 8.

Region V’s Bylaws Committee has been re-constituted under the chairmanship of Jan Fox. The Bylaws are being reviewed, based on feedback that has been received by Region V members. The Bylaws Committee will present proposed changes at the Region V business meeting in Washington DC in November. Region V members will receive a draft of the proposed Bylaws before the meeting.

Region V is always looking for more volunteers to assist with regional meetings! If you are not already an active member of NCURA—this is your chance! Volunteer opportunities include: presenting or moderating a session, participating on the program committee, assisting with registration, planning meals, organizing audio visual equipment and usage, designing the program, brochure or website and audio visual equipment and usage, designing the program, brochure or website and organizing planning dinner groups and other logistics for the meeting. Please contact Sondra Ferstl or me if you would like to volunteer. We need your help!

Susan Krause, Chair, Region V, Director, Program Development, Texas Children’s Cancer Center and Hematology Service/Baylor College of Medicine

**REGION VI**

*Western*

By the time you read this hopefully you are making plans to attend the National Meeting in Washington, DC. The program committee has put together a fantastic program and from what I understand, registration #’s are ahead of last year’s at this time.

Also, you should have received, or will shortly, a ballot with a list of candidates for offices of Chair-elect, Secretary/Treasurer-Elect, Regional Advisory Committee and Regional Rep to the National Board. Please vote for the candidate of your choice. I would like to thank Georgette Sakumoto from the University of Hawaii for chairing the nominations committee.

We will have two travel award winners to the National Meeting in DC and they will be introduced at the regional business meeting. Thanks to Samantha Westcott from UCLA for chairing this committee.

We do have dates for our joint regional meeting with Region VII. The dates of the meeting will be April 16-18, 2001 at the El Dorado Hotel is Santa Fe, New Mexico. Information regarding the rates before and after the conference will be coming soon. Please mark these dates down on your calendar.

That’s it for now. I hope to see you all in Washington.

Hal Gallos is Region VI Chair and Director, Research Development, Pacific Graduate School.

**REGION VII**

*Rocky Mountain*

Summer is over and with that the end of fire season has finally arrived. Fires raged all over Region VII this summer, including a major threat to One of UI’s research stations in the Frank Church Wilderness. Cool heads and brave souls saved most of the records, but storage methods will be examined (can you spell Records Management?). As torrid as our region has been, it isn’t as hot as the Program for the Annual Meeting. I’m sure you’ve all made your arrangements for attending, but if you haven’t there is still time!!! This is not one to miss. Joanne Moretti and Mary Husemuller have put together a GREAT program, so we hope you can all make it.
The contract is in place, and we’re excited to announce that Region VI and VII will hold the 2001 Regional Meeting in beautiful Sante Fe, New Mexico. The regional meeting will be held April 16-18, 2001 so mark those dates on your calendar. As always we encourage members from other regions to attend our meeting. I know the program will be a good one, and Sante Fe is wonderful place to spend if you have to travel on “business”.

Brian Farmer is Region VII Chair and Manager, Grants and Contracts Finance Administration, University of Idaho.

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Region III is on hiatus!
FRA II: Not a “Mickey Mouse” Conference! (Continued from the cover)

Similar to the format for FRA I, FRA II will consist of two half-day pre-conference workshops and a two-day meeting organized into three tracks. One notable change for last year’s program will be the introduction of a training track designed for departmental administrators and other non-financial administrators.

In addition, there will be a compliance track with up-to-date discussions on current topics of interest on the regulatory front. The third track will be focused on transactional issues and will include interactive sessions on specific financial topics, which will be aimed at providing attendees with “how-to” information and examples of policies and procedures at various institutions.

The program and registration information for FRA II will be posted on the NCURA website as details are finalized. If you have any suggestions regarding conference topics or speakers please email your ideas to Patrick Fitzgerald at fra@ncura.edu.

FRA II Program Committee

Patrick Fitzgerald (MIT)
Sara Bible (Stanford University)
John Case (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
Jerry Fife (Vanderbilt University)
Louis Guin (University of Southern California)
Bob Hardy (National Science Foundation)
Joellen Harper, (National Institutes of Health)
Ann Holmes (University of Maryland at College Park)
Gunta Liders (University of Rochester)
Michael McGuire, (PriceWaterhouseCoopers)
Beth Mora (Harvard University)
Julie Norris (MIT)
Bonny Seward (Research Foundation of SUNY)
Marilyn Surbey (Emory University)
Gary Talesnik (KPMG)
Laura Yaeger (Arthur Andersen)
Jane Youngers (University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio)

Workshop 2000 (Continued from the cover)

National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health On-Site Workshops are Back!

Don’t miss this opportunity to go meet with key players at the National Science Foundation or the National Institutes of Health. In addition to the unique opportunity to spend a day with these individuals, you will also have the added bonus of actually going on-site to the agencies. We are so pleased to be able to offer these site visits this year and encourage you to take advantage of this interactive and informative day.

New and Reprised Offerings

We have a host of new offerings in response to your past evaluations to compliment the Workshop 2000 slate. In 2000, Indirect Costs for the Lay Audience came to you as a Video Conference, and The Other Side of the House: Understanding What the Pre-Award Folks Do came to you as a workshop during the inaugural Financial Research Administrators Conference. The positive feedback was so overwhelming that we wanted to bring them to Washington in November for those that were not with us for those two events.

If you are facing challenges with International Students and the INS this workshop is a must! We are pleased to bring this new offering to you. Also, the “How to Set up a Fully Comprehensive Small Sponsored Research Office” comes to you in response from those attending the NCURA/UNCF offerings this year as a needed component of NCURA’s suite of professional development programs.

Personal/Professional Development

You will bring home a tremendous amount of information from the 42nd Annual Meeting and Workshop 2000. Now learn how to effectively manage and communicate that information. We have a number of essential offerings in Strengthening Managerial Writings, The Effective Presentation, Performance Management Through 5 Key Conversations and Enhancing Customer Service and Job Performance.

Roll up Your Sleeves

These reprised workshops are full of the nuts and bolts must have information you have asked us to bring back. Look for Social Science IRB, Federal Grants and Contracts, Successful Negotiation Strategies with Industry, Building Web Pages for Research Administration, Private Foundation Funding, Primer and Advanced Workshops on Intellectual Property, Pre-Award Primer: What Goes into a Proposal, Cost Sharing, Cradle to Grave (Financial Aspects of Research Administration) Contracting and Subcontracting under the FAR, NSF FastLane and NIH Commons.

While you soak in the wonderful offerings and networking that is the 42nd Annual Meeting, take advantage of your time in Washington to experience the in-depth slate of professional development that is Workshop 2000.
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<th>Sunday, November 5</th>
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<td>8:30 am-Noon</td>
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<td>MORNING WORKSHOP SESSIONS</td>
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<td>1 Social Science IRB: Regulation and Review</td>
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<td>2 Federal Grants and Contracts: An Overview</td>
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<td>3 Successful Negotiation Strategies With Industry</td>
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<td>4 Building Web Pages for Research Administration</td>
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<td>5 Private Foundation Funding: The Inside Track</td>
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<td>6 Indirect Costs for the Lay Audience</td>
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<td>7 The Other Side of the House: Understanding What the Pre-Award Folks Do</td>
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<td>8 International Students and the INS</td>
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<td>9 A Primer in Intellectual Property for the Research Administrator</td>
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<td>10 PreAward Primer: What Goes into a Proposal</td>
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<td>WORKSHOP SESSIONS</td>
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<td>20 Strengthening Managerial Writing</td>
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<td>22 Performance Management Through 5 Key Conversations</td>
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<td>23 The National Science Foundation: A Comprehensive Review</td>
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YOU STILL HAVE TIME TO REGISTER FOR NCURA’S 42ND ANNUAL MEETING & WORKSHOPS! GO TO WWW.NCURA.EDU FOR DETAILS!
NCURA and the Federal Demonstration Partnership Launch New Commission on ERA Practices In Private Organizations

by Sue Keehn

In response to the discussion and concerns voiced by the research administrators over the recent growth in the number of private organizations requiring electronic proposal submission, NCURA and the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) have partnered to explore what role the national research community (institutional administrators and faculty) might take with respect to establishing and promoting best practices among ERA systems and developments. The Commission on Private Organizations is co-chaired by Don Denson (Emory) for FDP and Sue Keehn (University of Arkansas at Little Rock) for NCURA. The Commission's mandate is to undertake the design and construction of a data collection and management system to establish a national repository of ERA-related systems being used by private organizations. The Commission will also identify mechanisms that could be used to promote information sharing and potential links both between non-profit grant-making organizations and the national research community (including federal agencies and the university community) and among non-profit grant-making organizations.

Our plan is to collect data from grant-making private organizations using a tool similar to the NCURA Cookbook. We'll create a web-based form designed to gather information on any current activity and/or future plans these organizations have in terms of conducting electronic business and the research community. The requested information will cover everything from funding announcements and proposal submission through review and award notification. We will do a beta test involving a number of already selected organizations. We will then review the data, making sure we are collecting all the necessary information. Once we have evaluated the beta test and make necessary adjustments, we will then go forward and invite other private funding organizations to become part of this project. We will use our leverage with our CASE and COGR representatives to encourage participation by these groups.

Thanks to the many volunteers who turned out in full force for both groups. The Commission members are:

NCURA volunteers: Peggy Brown, University of Nevada-Reno, Melody Page, University of Texas, Roger Wood, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Chris Cook, University of Delaware, Tim Atkinson, Arkansas Children's Hospital, and Margaret Carayonopoulis, Harvard.

FDP volunteers: Don Denson, Emory (co-chair), Susan Braunhut, University of Massachusetts-Lowell, Tammy Ordway-Guster, Cornell, George Stone, NIH.

Carole Liedtke, Case Western Reserve (special thanks to Carole for standing as FDP interim co-chair).

The Commission also includes liaisons from COGR (Alice Tangredi-Hannon) and from CASE (Juliam Bivins).

Sue Keehn is the Associate Director, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines “fundamental” as: “of, or forming, a foundation, or basis; basic; essential”. Many hundreds of research administrators have found that one essential for their career development, and their ability to serve their institutions, is attendance at NCURA's workshop “Fundamentals of Sponsored Projects Administration”.

by Regina White

Demand for Fundamentals continues to grow, with an overflow fourth session added to the normal three session schedule for four consecutive years, and a fifth session added in 2000. This consistent demand has resulted in a decision to offer a four session schedule in 2001, with an option for a fifth session if needed. While Fundamentals is targeted toward those who are new to research administration - normally a year or less in the profession - attendees also include experienced research administrators who are changing focus (eg., from pre-award to post-award); experts in related fields (technology transfer officers); senior higher education administrators (a vice provost who has just assumed responsibility for the sponsored projects office); and professionals outside higher education who need to understand university research administration (Federal agency officials; auditors). (We've even seen some NCURA staff learning research administration “on the road”!) All of these professionals come together for two and half days of lively sessions in which a faculty of three senior research administrators, selected by the Board of Directors of NCURA, teach the fundamentals of the profession, from funding information through pre-award, post award, closeout and audit. The 2001 Fundamentals will be offered in Orlando, FL– February 5-7, Boston, MA– April 2-4 and St. Louis, MO– June 18-20. See the NCURA website’s Fundamentals announcement at www.ncura.edu.

In his third year of teaching, Steve Smartt of Vanderbilt will lead the 2001 Fundamentals team, joined by Chris Hansen of UC Irvine and Pat Fitzgerald of MIT. In addition, a team of senior research administrators who have taught Fundamentals in the past has been formed to respond to the growing number of “special requests” for Fundamentals (eg., a university which reserves an entire workshop session for its campus) as well as providing backup for any necessary overflow sessions. This team includes Don Allen formerly of University of Washington, Kim Moreland of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center and Dick Seligman of the California Institute of Technology. The demand for Fundamentals is just one sign of the vibrant growth of research administration in all sectors of higher education, the need for professional development for research administrators of various levels of experience and specialty, and the ability of NCURA’s excellent programs to meet those needs in timely and relevant ways.

Regina H. White is the Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, University of Vermont and serves as NCURA’s Vice President/President-elect.
ERA-Chicago a Success
by Barbara Gray and David Wright,
ERA V Co-Chairs

Like Summer, ERA V has come and gone, but many happy memories remain. On August 2-5, 2000 almost 400 NCURA members and friends converged at the McCormick Place Convention Center in Chicago to informally network and to formally share knowledge and experiences in the world of Electronic Research Administration.

The meeting began on Thursday afternoon with a series of half-day workshops for novices, experts, generalists and technical specialists alike. That evening, with hot fudge sundaes in hand, ERA newcomers joined ERA Veterans in the Sunset Starter Session to meet, get oriented, and learn how to get the most out of the meeting.

Two and a half days of concurrent sessions, focus sessions, hands-on laboratories, and vendor exhibits and demonstrations followed. Highlights of the meeting included two threaded tracks (on ERA planning and databases); the Solutions Showcase where attendees comparison shopped vendor ERA solutions; a special plenary, “Talk Back to the Feds,” in which audience members were encouraged to make policy suggestions; and the keynote address.

“Business in the Age of Disruption” was the topic of the keynote address given by Jordan Ayan, Chicago businessman and consultant in technology and innovation. Through audience participation, Jordan first illustrated how easily creativity—be it our own or someone else’s—can be stifled. Then he led attendees through exercises aimed at stimulating creative thought, which is necessary to profit from technological change.

As the meeting concluded mid-day on Sunday, it was evident from conversations in the airport transportation waiting line that ERA V was a success—and that new knowledge was gained and new friendships were forged. Many thanks to the ERA V Program Committee, workshop faculty, moderators and presenters, and NCURA staff for their contributions to making ERA V a meeting to remember!

Barbara Gray is the Director of Research and Grant Administration, College of Charleston. David Wright is Director of Research Information Systems, University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

ERA VI Conference Co-chairs Named

Ron Splittgerber, Director of Research Services at Colorado State University and Nancy Wray, Senior Associate Director, Grants and Contracts at Dartmouth College, have been named Conference Co-Chairs for NCURA’s ERA VI conference, “Stop Talking and Start Doing!”. Wray, who has been involved in the electronic aspect of research administration for a number of years is a natural for this position. When asked why she agreed to the monumental task of co-chairing this conference she responded, “ERA is a multifarious area, with talented people working towards solutions. Working with Ron Splittgerber to organize the ERA conference with a “hands-on approach” is an exciting opportunity for me. Brainstorming with our colleagues on the kinds of sessions that could be offered produced all kinds of ideas…some realistic, some not so…who could say no to this!!”

Other members of the ERA VI planning team are: Lois Brako, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Denise Clark of Cornell University; Steve Dowdy of MIT; Sue Keehn of University of Arkansas at Little Rock; Dick Keogh of Rhode Island College; Candi Poolman of Columbia University; Danny Powell of Rice University; Sarah Wasserman of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and Jon Peterson of Colorado State University heading up the tech support.

The team, already off and running, sent an electronic survey to the membership in NCURA’s September 11 E-News and are hard at work analyzing the results and putting the pieces together for the August 2001 conference.

Conference Co-chair Ron Splittgerber, another of ERA’s major players, feels this conference is a chance for those who attend to begin some meaningful work to take back to their campuses. “The ERA Conference is at a milestone. The solutions and their tools have been presented and now it is time to help each other understand how to apply them. Beginning with a conference primer, followed by technical sessions based on the ERA VI survey, Nancy and I have a goal to “Stop Talking and Start Doing!,” said Splittgerber.
I
n New Orleans in 1999, NCURA struggled with designing the architecture for what was to become the “restructured” NCURA. At that time – after much discussion – it was decided to eliminate what had been the Membership Committee and a number of the functions historically conducted by this Committee were absorbed into new NCURA homes. Still, everyone realized that the reallocation didn’t feel quite right; something critical was missing. It was ultimately decided to remand this to the first NCURA Board of Directors (after the restructuring was complete) to determine how best to accommodate the unmet needs.

Meanwhile, then-Vice-President Nancy Wilkinson’s “Strategic Systems” task forces had been hard at work, and visions such as a member profile database, a web-based conference planner, electronic voting and e-polling were rapidly developed into easily accessible tools. Concurrently, innovative uses of the Internet, including e-publishing, had been quietly and quickly growing and merging into the mainstream of our lives.

By March 2000, the Board had decided that the convergence of these activities provided the perfect foundation for a new group – the Select Committee on Communication and Member Services, or COMS for short. COMS was charged with examining and promoting member services, including outreach and retention; marketing of NCURA to its members, potential members, and the external community; and strategic planning for the design, coordination, and use of tools to connect members with each other and their communities. Because this concept was so new and the ongoing needs as yet unclear, the Board voted to create this group as a Select Committee – one that has a broad-based charge similar to a Standing Committee, but with a limited lifespan – in this case, through December 2001. At the end of that time, the Board will determine the ongoing need for the Committee and its endeavors. By June 2000, COMS had been populated, including three members selected by a national electronic “Call for Volunteers.” The committee met in Washington in late June, and began setting its agenda. Some of the topics slated for work over the next fifteen months include establishing an NCURA Newsroom, including

evaluating alternative modes for news delivery with customizable user profiles; enhancing volunteer opportunities, exploration of an on-line job posting service, enhancing and redesigning the NCURA web site, evaluating existing membership materials and services, working with regions to identify and analyze existing membership invitation and retention services, creation of a report to the membership outlining the achievements from the past year, developing and implementing a plan to significantly increase participation in the Member Profile database, expansion of ‘NCURA Gear’ and ongoing efforts to carefully plan for the seamless integration of NCURA’s suite of electronic tools.

The first of the Committee’s efforts are already bearing fruit. Attendees at ERA V received an incentive for having completed their Member Profile record previously or on-site. Annual Meeting attendees will receive the same prize — a free NCURA mousepad. Brochures describing the benefits to the user of the Member Profile database as well as instructions for its use have also been developed for distribution at these meetings. Speakers from this year’s national conferences – including FRA, ERA V, and the Annual Meeting, will see their participation in these meetings automatically reflected in the “Service History” component of their Member Profile, courtesy of the link that has been implemented between the Conference Web planner and the Member Profile database. The NCURA Newsroom has posted its pilot production of the E-Newsletter, and the first ever E-News Editor has been selected (see companion article.) And last, but not least, attendees at the Annual Meeting will need to be sure to check out the NCURA Gear booth for the very latest in NCURA-related items, as well as look for the NCURA 2000 report in their packets!

These efforts, and the work to come, are the responsibility of a talented and committed group of individuals who bring diverse skills and abilities to the NCURA table — from web development to journalism, from marketing to member advocacy. Members include: Tara Bishop (NCURA), Vincent A. “Bo” Bogdanski (University of Utah), George Breeden (NCURA), Dan Dwyer (Cornell University), Joan Howeth (University of Oklahoma), Dick Keogh (Rhode Island College), Gunta Liders (University of Rochester), Janie Morales-Castro (Arizona State University), Carol Quintana (New Mexico State University), Sherilyn K. Rutenbeck (Palmer College of Chiropractic), William Sharp (University of Kansas), Janet Simons (University of Maryland at Baltimore), John Storer (State University of West Georgia) Jill Tincher (University of Miami), Pamela Webb (Northwestern University), Cynthia White (Washington University), and Tracy Williams (NCURA). Stay tuned for the latest developments from COMS!

Pamela Webb serves as NCURA Secretary and is the Director, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Chicago Campus, Northwestern University.

NCURA Member Profile Continues to Expand

The Member Profile Taskforce is working on a new pilot project to improve the features of NCURA’s Member Profile. Regions I and IV are cooperating with the taskforce and the NCURA staff to explore resource needs for an archive of regional and national service. The two regions are providing three years of data, including regional officers, committee chairs and committee member rosters. The results of the project will be presented at the November meeting of the NCURA Board of Directors, allowing Directors to determine the best course of action for easy access to archival service data helpful to members, e.g., past chairs of regional and national professional development committees, former regional chairs, and lists of national committee reps.

Sue Keehn, Cindy White, Bill Corbett, Kathy Taggart, George Breeden, Tara Bishop and Tracy Williams are working on the regional service pilot. They welcome member suggestions and input on all Member Profile developments. Contact whitec@msnotes.wustl.edu with your comments.

For instructions on how to update your own profile information, complete instructions are available on page 13.

Coming to the Annual Meeting?

Complete your Member Profile Record before you arrive, or complete it on-site at one of the computers provided and you will receive a FREE MOUSEPAD!
**EASY INSTRUCTIONS TO COMPLETE YOUR MEMBER PROFILE:**

- Log on to NCURA’s web site at www.ncura.edu
- Click on Especially for Members
- Click on NCURA’s On-Line Resource and type in your ID and Password. Your ID is your membership ID number (found on the mailing label on your newsletter), and initially your password is your last name
- Click on Submit
- Click on Change Your Personal Information
- Review and, as applicable, update your information on each of the following screens:

**Contact Information**

Information from this screen is derived directly from NCURA’s master database. Updated information on this screen will be emailed to the NCURA staff to be updated in your master record, and then in turn reflected in the member profile database—normally within 48 hours.

**Demographics**

This section provides information that provides a brief biographical sketch of each member. Updates you make to this section (as well as all remaining sections) are reflected immediately.

**Topics of Interest**

Members can quickly click on the topics for which they have responsibility, expertise, or interest.

**Service History (View Only)**

This section is managed by NCURA and will list NCURA Service History of the member, including committee participation and offices held and the dates of service.

**Communications**

Members will be able to manage their participation and select levels of electronic messaging in all of NCURA’s current and emerging electronic initiatives (neighborhoods, regional & committee list serves, topical list serves, chat rooms, NCURA Newsroom) in this area.
Thinking inside the box: the effects of regulatory compliance on institutions and professional fields

by Tim Atkinson

It might be about institutional preservation, or about doing what you are told and liking it. In any case, some changes in the grant world start with new regulations that make us examine the level of trust we have in ourselves and others, and result in a comfortable isomorphism.

Walk across campus and look into the faces of the people you work with everyday. You may know these people very well, others you may only know by reputation or because you attended their seminar last week. Shake their hands, make eye contact, and discuss the new policy the PHS Office of Research Integrity (ORI) has on the table. Note the shaking heads, the grumpy looks and, hopefully, hear some good suggestions.

Back in your office, make a list of the people you really know and trust. Study the list carefully. You might measure trust based on performance, the number of grant awards or how well prepared the IRB applications usually are. It’s okay to scratch off a few of those names. Good. Now, crumple up that list and throw it in the trashcan.

Regardless of how conscientious you think someone is, just about everybody is a target for training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR).

For motivation, read the reports of scientific misconduct in the Office of Research Integrity newsletter or go back and read what happened to all those IRB offices that were deemed non-compliant by (now ex-) OPRR. It’s reality based programming minus a huge reward at the end. Dig out your list of trustworthy people from the trashcan and compare your list to ORI’s list, then maybe feel some relief that you don’t know anybody on ORI’s list.

If you re-print the ORI reports in your office newsletter, some of the more nervous faculty probably call you to complain about “witch hunts” and “unnecessary information”, and you can’t help but think, “What are they so nervous about?” Make another list of the faculty members that call you in this manner and later ask them to help you develop some RCR training materials.

Our success depends on the research faculty’s success in the grant world and that makes us nervous. Today’s spotlight shines on research not only because we are making amazing advances in science, but also because a few people in this world appear to think and act outside the rules they when they do research, and that makes us doubly nervous.

To fix the problem, PHS is going to change a few things and make sure taxpayers are protected from funding anything “illegal”. Their intentions are excellent and seemingly without much immediate concern for how it will affect the grantees in terms of costs, monetarily or psychologically. Somebody’s taking the lead and it is somewhat reassuring, and they leave us all with only one question; “Did you receive training in the Responsible Conduct of Research?” The answer must be “yes” for all the people we trust and all of the people we don’t trust. Otherwise, we don’t get the money as quickly or easily as we wanted it or we may not get the money at all.

Coercive Isomorphism

We are so dependent on extramural funds that our organizations are gently coerced into doing something new, not because we planned it, not because we are so incredibly creative, but because a federal agency responds to a wave of public scrutiny and the desire to protect its interests. This causes a small range of trickle down stress.

We just give into the changes primarily because it may be the right thing to do and because we fear the Office of the Inspector General. We fear audit and paying back grant funds. We also fear the newspaper and “60 Minutes” if we mess up. The result is, we incorporate the mantras of the federal government with our own when we tell the faculty they need to receive RCR training. It’s nice to be able to say, “federal regulations require it,” then proceed to quote from the section.

Mimetic Isomorphism

With the new federal rules wholeheartedly adopted and with a sense of duty, some of us will just rely on our own experience to pave the way to smooth compliance. Others will seek out colleagues for answers. We will send questions to the electronic discussion lists asking for examples of how other institutions are handling the RCR training. Some of our colleagues’ ideas will be irresistible and brilliant to us, so instead of creating our own plan, we will get a copy of someone else’s policy and adopt it and implement it for our institution. Benchmarking or copying other programs is not the most exciting or creative business solutions, but if our institutions are small, using the methods of a larger institution gives us a sense of legitimacy we might not have with our own plan. We identify with prestigious university A and we find comfort in knowing that the program we borrow has some history of success.

Normative Isomorphism

Once we have the institution on the road to compliance and our supervisors are praising us for being so on top of the changes, we aim to advance the profession with our new knowledge. NCURA and SRA respond with roundtable discussions and some concurrent sessions on the issue. Training seminars are established. We seek professional or field level legitimacy. We want to be taken seriously for knowing the answers and being able to plan preventive measures. We go to Washington, D.C. or Chicago or wherever and surround ourselves with people who think and talk about the same things. Gradually we begin to feel some comfort knowing how to handle the changes and we begin to feel some level of normalcy about the change. To top it all off, we seek certification or continuing education credits to somehow document our legitimacy.

One of the greatest advantages of this is we can phone a colleague and hear, “I know what you mean, just the other day we did the same thing.”

It will happen again. One minute creativity will be flowing through us—we will have great ideas and brilliant moments in executive committee meetings. Then suddenly, our funding agencies will raise the bar and make us lose our balance. We will look to each other again for answers and seek to preserve our institutions and our professions through analogous threads.

Changes in regulations are just another piece of data in that strange attractor or pattern of meaning that frames our chaotic world. It’s only change, and we’ve been through that already. At most it might cause a little heartburn for some of us, and I hear physicians and nurses recommend taking some Tums or Rolaids or maybe even some refrigerated Mylanta for that. These are good sources of calcium, too, so we really can’t lose.

Tim Atkinson is the Director, Research Support Center, Arkansas Children’s Hospital Research Institute.

NOTE: The information contained in the editorial section reflects the opinions of the contributor, and not necessarily that of either the editors or NCURA.
SYNOPSIS of the OSTP and RAND REPORTS: Two Important Reports on F&A Costs at Universities
(Continued from Page 5)

Issue 1: Comparison of F&A Rates Across Sectors
The RAND analyzes and compares the federal F&A reimbursement rates paid to universities with those paid to other entities (e.g., industry, research hospitals, nonprofit institutions). Comparisons are difficult, because they are premised on comparing different organizations with different accounting regulations and reimbursement structures. Evidence indicates the fraction of awards to universities that pays for F&A costs is generally comparable with, or somewhat smaller than, F&A for other performers of research. The true share of costs for F&A appears to be about 31% of total costs. Federal payment to universities are about 24% - 28% for F&A, resulting in the federal government not reimbursing the true costs attributed to federal projects.

Issue 2: Distribution of F&A Rates by Spending Category
The RAND analyzes the distribution of the federal F&A reimbursement rates by category (e.g., facilities, administration). The overall trend in negotiated F&A rates have been basically level. Administration rates have declined somewhat, while the facilities rates have increased about equally. In terms of negotiated rates, the administrative cap narrowed differences between public and private universities, but the difference remains noticeable.

Issue 3: The Impact of Changes in OMB Circular A-21
The RAND analyzes the impact that changes in OMB Circular A-21 have, or may have had, on negotiated F&A rates. The changes and impact are briefly described as follows:

Cap on Administrative Rates: In 1993, when the revision took effect, the cap reduced negotiated administrative rates by approximately 2%.

Library Rates: Have remained constant since 1988.

Infrastructure Rates: Increases in negotiated rates for infrastructure have been offset by reductions in operations and maintenance areas. However, the 1982 legislation to allow interest costs have been offset by reductions in operations and maintenance areas.

Change in Equipment Threshold (from $500 to $5,000): The effect of this change is not known, but it is expected to produce savings for universities and the government because it reduces the need to track small items of equipment.

Utility Cost Adjustment: Special studies were eliminated and a fixed adjustment substituted. The precise effect of this change is not known, however it is unlikely to have a significant impact.

Issue 4: The Impact of Federal and State Law on F&A Rates
Federal, state, and local laws and regulations impose significant costs for universities engaged in federally sponsored research. While the laws and regulations are enacted for worthwhile purposes, they bring about real costs. Universities must design and maintain their facilities to comply with these requirements. The costs are substantial. The imposition of a cap on administrative costs that can be included in F&A rate negotiations means that universities must bear all administrative costs over the cap. The RAND suggests reducing some of the administrative requirements generated by these laws and regulations. The potential savings could benefit both the universities and the government.

Issue 5: Options to Reduce or Control the Rate of Growth of Federal F&A Reimbursement Rates
The RAND indicates if the federal government further reduces support, universities may opt not to construct new facilities or modernize old ones. In this case, universities will have less capacity to pursue scientific research.

Issue 6: Options for Creating an F&A Database
The RAND suggests a database of federal research F&A costs could be created and maintained. However, it would require an organization within the government to take responsibility for its operation. Adequate funding would also be needed to ensure that the operation would be properly staffed to design, maintain, and keep accurate F&A rate data.

VALUABLE RESOURCES and LINKS to REPORTS
The OSTP and RAND reports provide valuable resources in their appendices that include:


Rate Types Allowed in Circular A-21 – an excellent description and explanation of the four rate types: predetermined, negotiated fixed and carry-forward provisions, provisional and final, and negotiated lump sum.

Bibliography – a superb list of information on federal government publications, web sites, and nongovernmental organizational publications, articles, and books.

Links to Reports:
For the RAND report:

For the OSTP report:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OSTP/html/00727_2.html

In addition, NCURA has published an informative and helpful resource on F&A costs as part of their micrograph series entitled, “Facilities and Administrative Costs in Higher Education.” For information on how to order the micrograph, visit the publications page on the NCURA Web site: https://www.ncura.edu/publications/

This article was written as a shared collaboration by Jack Beaudoin, Associate Director Cost Analysis, Carol H. Berdar, Compliance Specialist, and Bob Stevens, Cost Accountant, at The Research Foundation of State University of New York.
NCURA 2000-2001 Calendar of Education and Events

November 5, 2000
Workshop 2000
Washington, DC

November 6-8, 2000
42nd Annual Meeting
Washington, DC

January 23, 2001
Live Video Satellite Conference, Part II of the 2000-2001
Subscription Series Electronic Research Administration (ERA) –
Where are We Today and What Can We Expect Tomorrow?

February 5-7, 2001
Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration
Orlando, FL

February 25-27, 2001
Financial Research Administration II
Orlando, FL

March 21, 2001
Subscription Series Divergent Views and Issues When
Contracting with Industry

April 2-4, 2001
Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration
Boston, MA

April 16-18, 2001
Regions VI & VII Joint Spring Meeting
Santa Fe, NM

April 28-May 1, 2001
Region IV Spring Meeting
Minneapolis, MN

April 29-May 1, 2001
Region II Spring Meeting
Hershey, PA

April 29-May 2, 2001
Region V Spring Meeting
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

May 13-16, 2001
Region I Spring Meeting
Burlington, VT

May 15, 2001
Live Video Satellite Conference, Part IV of the 2000-2001
Subscription Series Compliance Issues Impacting Financial
Research Administration

June 18-20, 2001
Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration
St. Louis, MO

August 16-18, 2001 (Tentative)
ERA VI
Portland, OR

November 11, 2001
Workshop 2001
Washington, DC

November 12-14, 2001
43nd Annual Meeting
Washington, DC

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES:
December 2000/January 2001 Issue
Submission of Articles: December 8, 2000
Space Reservation for Ads: December 8, 2000
Submission of Display Ads: December 15, 2000

REGISTRATION – 2000/2001 Videoconference Series

The cost of the full series (all four workshops) is $2,800.00 per campus. To purchase a “ticket” to an individual session the
cost is $950.00 per campus.

Live: Those institutions that choose the live presentation will receive the handout information, satellite coordinates to receive the
show live on their campus, and a telephone number to call in their questions on the day of the broadcast.

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A check, purchase order or credit card information must accompany registration form. For credit card payments, please complete the
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U.S. currency to NCURA and send payment and registration to NCURA, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20036.

☐ Full subscription ☐ Intellectual Property (9/21/00)
☐ ERA (1/23/01) ☐ Contracting with Industry (3/21/01)
☐ Compliance Issues/ERA VI (5/15/01)

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CANCELLATIONS: Notification of cancellation must be received in writing no later than 14 business days prior to the each telecast and are
subject to a $50 cancellation fee. Cancellations received after the deadline will not be refunded. You must receive confirmation from NCURA to
receive a refund.
management of the Council, including the realm of finances. The FMC is a Standing Committee made up of individuals who have financial expertise, specific skills or competencies and are experienced in dealing with complex fiscal issues. The purpose of the FMC is to provide sound financial advice to the Officers and the Board of NCURA and relieve some of the burden on the Treasurer. (For more information on the FMC, refer to the April/May issue of the Newsletter found at http://www.ncura.edu)

Professional Development Committee: The PDC, now chaired by the Vice President, and comprised of a combination of the former PDC, the former Publications Committee, and newly appointed volunteers continues to be focussed on NCURA’s principle goal of providing excellence in professional development. As Chair, the Vice President has the opportunity to begin setting priorities and planning programming for his/her Presidency, and to devote attention to the core of NCURA’s activities. Professional development, through conferences, meetings, computer based training, publications, and the evaluation of all such offerings, is now concentrated in the PDC.

Task Forces: In an effort to be responsive to emerging issues in a timely and efficient way, a mechanism is in place wherein Task Forces are established, charged to address the issue at hand, do their work and then disband. The old committee structure is one that is difficult to shed after forty-some years, but the flexibility and efficiency of the “temporary committee system” can only be an advantage to NCURA in the rapidly changing environment in which we operate.

As you can see, there have been many changes in the Council through this restructuring process. The Board has worked extremely hard to implement these changes, and is confident that NCURA now looks to the future as a stronger organization. One thing is certain, when the leadership of an organization “steers” as it should, the “rowing” is easier and the goals are accomplished in a more efficient manner.

Regina H. White is the Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, University of Vermont and serves as NCURA’s Vice President/President-elect. F. John Case is the Executive Director, Office of Contracts and Grants, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and serves as National Treasurer.

**NCURA Staff Observations (Continued from page 2)**

The most compelling part of that weekend in Philadelphia was an exercise on creating a vision statement. The facilitator asked them to project themselves 10 years into the future and write a letter or article about NCURA “today” which would have been the year 2008. What an awesome experience it was to hear in their words how much they loved NCURA, how they valued each other, and how they wanted to bring the strengths, resources and professional development of NCURA to all of the people in this community.

**N:** For several years now, you’ve been heavily involved in NCURA’s technology. We know you interact with many associations, too. How does NCURA measure up compared to the other organizations?

**B:** NCURA’s approach to employing technology is our strength. With our team of staff and NCURA members, we stay up on what are the emerging technologies, but our brainstorming always begins with the member need. We look at what kinds of service and connection we want to give the members, and then look at the technologies we can employ to make that happen. There is never a feeling of technology as an end in itself.

In addition, we have built a suite of applications that integrate beautifully...another priority for us. Any new component we add works well with what we have and what we are planning down the road. It’s like playing a game of chess...you’re always planning a few moves ahead of the one you’re making.

These two factors bring NCURA to the forefront in the Association Community and a model of what a focused and progressive organization can accomplish.

**N:** So, it sounds like you both feel you are working for a different organization.

**L:** Absolutely. And it will, most likely, change again over the next few years. We recently heard NCURA’s ERA V keynote speaker tell us, we are living in the “age of disruption.” Every day, we all walk into our offices and there are differences: new technologies; more regulation; new staff to fill newly created positions, and every day the pace picks up. We can either look at these things as disruptions or accept that our lives are now in constant change and learn to adapt. We need to be fast on our feet and learn how to ride these waves. That 90 day window of member need/opportunity I spoke of earlier has already narrowed to 45 days. With the pace rapidly increasing it will surely narrow again in the near future and NCURA will have only 30 days to react and respond. We are already preparing. That’s part of our job; to make sure we are out there looking toward the future and creating opportunities for NCURA and its members.