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ON THE COVER: Transactions are, to borrow a commercial tag line, the fabric of our lives. No matter what our jobs, it would be virtually impossible for any of us to have a transaction-less day at the office. Perhaps because of the enormous volume of transactions we handle, research administration/sponsored projects offices are often viewed as barriers… paper shufflers whose only mission is to stop progress or at the very least make it more difficult.

While there are many references to the number of transactions a group may process over the course of a day, a week, or a year, we hope you also notice a subtext in the articles this issue—the ongoing effort to make transactions more efficient, less cumbersome, and more user friendly.

Rethinking how we manage transactions doesn’t always mean some new jazzy electronic system. This issue’s global contribution from Eva Björndal is an article on effective and efficient communication between research administrators and researchers. It provides another reminder of how many of the issues we handle are the same the world around. Stacy Riseman points out that not all of our researchers are “transactionally savvy” and taking the time to humanize processes can pay dividends. Jo Ann Smith provides an interesting article on communication/administration/sponsored projects offices are often viewed as barriers to progress or at the very least make it more difficult.

As important as all those transactions are, this issue’s spotlight on cool research helps remind us that our jobs aren’t just about The Transactions, but about The Research we help to facilitate. The story from the University of Michigan’s C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital includes video links showing 3D printing of tiny custom-fabricated splints for a baby’s trachea. Nice to know that we do can make something like that happen!

We hope you’ll enjoy this edition… stories of transactions gone bad, transactions re-imagined, and transactions gone exceptionally well.

Toni Shaklee, PhD, CRA, CPRA, Co-Editor

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Happy New Year fellow NCURA members! Can you believe that 2015 has arrived? On so many levels I feel like I am managing change on an ongoing basis these days, and it doesn’t look like 2015 will be any different. We have much to look forward to this year in research administration and I feel certain you will continue to find NCURA an invaluable source to assist you in navigating the challenges and changes ahead in research administration.

All of last year seemed overshadowed by the impending implementation of the Uniform Guidance (UG). We all banded together and sought out every possible source of information related to the UG to figure out what this was going to mean to our institutions. Well, here we are now in 2015 and we are all trying to ensure that things work correctly under the new rules. Now our policies and procedures need to be in step with the UG rules so we can properly manage our sponsored program portfolios. Even though some of the new rules have a grace period before going into effect, the majority of what we do regularly has been touched in some way by the UG. It is truly a game changer for all of us. We will all be looking at things through the UG lens to ensure that we are compliant going forward. The time for philosophical conversations on the topic is over and now we have to deal with the reality of it all at the lowest level – Transactions! The who, what, when, where and why’s as well as the how’s have to be updated for all of us so that we can make sure, at the most granular level, we get it right. Pre-award, post-award, departmental, F&A, audits, and on and on – all aspects along the sponsored project continuum have been impacted and we have to adjust accordingly.

With all this in mind, you will definitely want to make plans, if you haven’t already, to attend the Pre-Award Research Administration Conference (PRA) and the Financial Research Administration Conference (FRA) in March. Once again the two conferences will be held back-to-back and both of them will be packed full of the latest crucial information with a heavy dose of Uniform Guidance as you would expect. This year’s PRA theme is “Guiding PRA from Theory to Practice” and the co-chairs are Craig Reynolds and Tony Ventimiglia. The program is going to be excellent! This year, for the first time since the two conferences have been joined together, PRA will take place first with FRA kicking off immediately following the conclusion of the PRA. FRA’s theme is similarly “Guiding FRA from Theory to Practice” and the co-chairs are Charlene Blevens and Jeffrey Silber. This program is excellent as well and will definitely have advice and pertinent information on the impacts of the UG on financial research administration matters. We will be returning to the Swan and Dolphin Resort in Orlando, FL for these two conferences which proved to be a wonderful location for our group in 2012.

Finally, as I look towards 2015, I realize how proud I am to be a member of such a vital and wonderful association. Over the years, I have watched NCURA blossom into a clear leader amongst research administration associations. NCURA has earned the highest respect nationally and globally based on its continuing ability to deliver state-of-the-art training and education forums, unparalleled networking opportunities and professional development materials to our community. Being a part of such a high-performing and successful group has proven to be hugely beneficial for me professionally on my own campus as well. I am better prepared and informed to serve Vanderbilt due to my involvement with NCURA. With more than 7,000 members it appears that my colleagues agree with me on the value of NCURA. Our membership numbers also show a resounding vote of approval for NCURA’s strategic plans and directions. I am so excited to have the opportunity this year, as President, to contribute to the ongoing success and direction of this wonderful organization and I look forward to interacting with you along the way. I want to ensure that the leadership team stays in tune with the needs and aspirations of the membership and that we stay on the cutting edge of “what’s next and what’s hot” in research administration without losing sight of NCURA’s core mission. Supporting research…together – in 2015 and beyond!

Michelle Vazin is NCURA President and serves as the Director of Contract and Grant Accounting at Vanderbilt University. She can be reached at michelle.vazin@vanderbilt.edu
Conducting Business in a Newly Integrated Office:

A Transactional Process Improvement Approach

By Rosemary Madnick, Andrew Gray and Samantha Aleshire

Universities that want to improve and harness their grants and contracts operations can choose from several different approaches when designing their improvement plans. One of the options is merging offices or restructuring the pre- and post-award functions. This can improve efficiency, increase business flow, and benefit faculty and staff.

A fully integrated grants and contracts office (pre- and post-award) is a multi-faceted system of interrelated processes and transactions. By design, it supports the university community by providing a single location for assistance within the life cycle of a sponsored project - from inception to closeout. Paying attention to details is what ensures the plan will be successful. The process of integration can be daunting but the appropriate approach leads to less duplicated effort and provides more value to its stakeholders.

An effective process improvement plan normally follows these stages:

1. Developing the Plan and Setting the Course
2. Aligning the Office with the Plan
3. Executing the Plan
4. Assessing the Plan
5. Adapting the Plan and Being Flexible

Developing the Plan and Setting the Course

Strategic planning in a newly integrated office is an organizational activity that is used to set priorities, focus resources, strengthen operations, and ensure that the office is working towards a common goal in an ever-changing environment. Identify the critical needs, priority areas, and the business impact when developing the plan in order to keep the goals focused. It is crucial to develop a framework for action by using a systems approach that starts with the end in mind. Setting up a plan without considering the end users may cause the process to be derailed.

These are important elements in any integration plan: Provide actionable items, incorporate external and internal environments, and integrate existing systems to align the office around the strategy.

Break down the process silos by contributing to an understanding of how processes intersect and impact one another and stakeholders. With the combining of the pre- and post-award offices, there can be major stigmas regarding which office owns which process. Working through process mapping and looking at the grant and contract process with a holistic approach can breakdown the stigmas.

Aligning the Office with the Plan

Strategic alignment is the process of bringing the actions of the newly integrated offices and the staff into line with the office’s newly planned objectives.
Bringing the alignment into balance requires tough choices and difficult trade-offs that will position resources toward new behaviors within the office processes and practices. Strategic alignment also focuses on having the human capital strategy-aligned with the mission, vision, goals, and organizational objectives. The process must be backed by office members who bring positive energy, cooperation, and resources to the effort. Ensure that management focuses on sharing the best practices for the office. Obtaining best practice is done by breaking down old processes, sharing information, and outlining the break down points. Have the office help with this process to reinforce open communication and help align them with the new plan.

Human capital and workforce planning are critical factors for strategic alignment. Revising position descriptions and re-distributing workload based on the organizational direction may be necessary. When going through the alignment process, there may be members of the office that do not agree with the changes or cannot handle the changes. The first step is to meet with staff individually to peel back the layers on why they believe the process will fail. Give staff a safe place to voice their concerns to help sway their perceptions. Keep in mind that when change happens not everyone can handle it.

Executing the Plan

Executing the plan requires a certain degree of risk and a lot of hard work. Start to prepare for ongoing change by rolling out the initial processes and associated tools. Process improvement in a newly integrated office refers to making a process more effective, efficient, or transparent. A process is an orchestrated sequence of activities and associated tasks required to meet goals and objectives. An office that conducts process improvement focuses on proactive problem resolution in order to avoid operating in crisis management mode. A well-defined and designed process commands the flow of work and all its possible paths in meeting the office’s objectives.

Creating process maps and documents becomes a valuable tool for understanding and executing the plan. Documents help identify opportunities to enhance value, eliminate waste, redundancy and improve flow. Integrating the strategic priorities with other support functions helps document the process, the dependencies, assumptions and constraints. Lastly, view the process through the eyes of the stakeholders such as faculty, staff, and other peer departments.

Assessing the Plan

A basic key to assessing the plan is to set metrics that support the office’s strategy and values. The metrics ultimately tell the office where has it been, where is it heading, whether something is wrong, and when goals are reached.

Incorporate learning and feedback to promote continuous long term improvement. For example; place a link on the signature line of your emails to a survey where your stakeholders can evaluate the office and comment on the changes occurring. Receiving comments (good or bad) from the external users will help the office keep up with the changes. This process assists with maximizing for future operations. Give the office recognition in different ways to ensure they are appreciated for their contributions. Some examples include: a simple thank you, a note of gratitude, recognition in an all staff meeting or an afternoon desert in their honor.

Adapting the Plan and Being Flexible

Regularly evaluate, manage, and measure the process using data-driven information. Measuring impact creates a common vision. The very action of identifying the measures and collecting the data creates a set of shared expectations within a group. This helps when an idea for change comes up against an obstacle. Work with the external users to find out which process is not working and how it should be adjusted to ensure practical benefits.

The office needs to be flexible to the changes that are occurring and understand that the instability caused by this change will level out and become stable again. It may be difficult for some to see the bigger picture. After the plan is in place and the office has started to work in their new processes, it is a good idea to have “harmonization” meetings with outside stakeholders. The purpose of the harmonization meeting is for stakeholders to share information and solutions. The meeting should cover the changes that are happening or have occurred and how the stakeholders feel about the new services. This will give additional feedback on how the changes are affecting them as a whole.

A process improvement approach in a newly integrated office will result in better decision making and will help facilitate growth and success.

Rosemary Madnick is the Executive Director of Grants and Contracts Administration for the University of Alaska Fairbanks. As the Executive Director, she oversees the pre and post award functions for the University. Rosemary is actively involved in NCURA both at the regional and national level. She has served in a number of capacities including NCURA Peer Reviewer, 2012 Region VI Chair, and presenter to name a few. She is a graduate of NCURA’s Leadership Development Institute and the Executive Leadership Program. She can be reached at rmadnick@alaska.edu

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The UW Grant Analyst Team – 200 Transactions per Day

By Susan Wilbanks

It was like opening one’s door to find that an overnight delivery service had left a large pile of boxes on one’s porch, all marked “miscellaneous.” In reality they were all marked “Urgent!” but if everything was urgent, in Ivan’s view they might as well all be labeled miscellaneous.

Each box contained one of the following: live, venomous, agitated snakes on the verge of escape; quiescent venomous snakes; non-venomous garden snakes; dead snakes; or things that looked like snakes but weren’t, such as large, sluggish worms. It was Ivan’s morning duty to open each box, identify the species, vigor, mood, and fang-count of the writhing things inside, and sort them by genuine urgency.

The quote above, from Lois McMaster Bujold’s 2012 science fiction novel Captain Vorpatril’s Alliance, is as good a description of my role as a Grant Analyst as anything on my HR job description. Each day we deal with around 200 different customer requests, and on any given morning we never know what will be awaiting us.

At the University of Washington, the Grant and Contract Accounting Office (GCA) provides central management and support for all fiscal issues relevant to award budgets. We are a Lean office with multiple teams focused on functions such as budget setup, invoicing, and reporting.

Within this framework we seek to provide as seamless an interface as possible to our internal and external customers. To meet this goal we established a team of Grant Analysts whose role is to handle all front-line communication with our campus customers and our sponsors—phone, email, “snail mail,” or our internal GrantTracker system, which allows campus customers to see key information about their grant budget in one place and submit questions online.

Everything our team of six Grant Analysts does, from the most simple request for a copy of an invoice to the most complex analysis of an out-of-balance budget with delinquent payments and under-reported cost share, is a customer transaction. Our goal, in all cases, is to respond to the customer within one business day, either with an answer to their inquiry or a promise that their request has been routed to one of our dedicated topic teams for further processing.

In an ideal world, this transaction process would be smooth and consistent regardless of the nature of the customer inquiry. Our customers, after all, just want solutions. They’re no more concerned about the inner workings of our Lean process or the challenges of our invoicing software than I am with whether a package I order online is delivered by FedEx, UPS, USPS, or carrier pigeon as long as it arrives when I need it.

So to some degree our team works to present an illusion of simplicity in a world of complexity. We receive around 200 communications per day, covering every imaginable topic related to grant management. We strive to achieve the quality of transactions our customers need and want by daily tracking of metrics. Each morning begins with reviewing the number of requests received the prior day and how many still remain unanswered from the day before that. At 2:00 each afternoon, a designated team member reviews all remaining open requests from that day’s workload and makes sure they are assigned for completion.

We also depend on each other. Our managers deliberately assembled a team with varying types of previous experience. Some of us have worked in GCA for many years and are intimately familiar with even the most arcane of its processes and procedures. Others, like myself, joined the team with extensive experience in departmental research administration, enabling us to see challenges from the campus perspective, and still others bring private sector experience that is invaluable in dealing with sponsor expectations. Our days involve constant collaboration to make the best use of our wide-ranging work experience.

Customer service in the form of transactions with campus and sponsors is the essence a central office like GCA’s role in research administration. On the Grant Analyst team, we strive every day to provide a better quality of transaction for our customers.

References


Susan Wilbanks is a Grant Analyst in the Grant and Contract Accounting Office at the University of Washington. She has spent most of her career in an assortment of administrative and program management roles in academia. Susan received a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania. Outside of the office, she writes romance under the pen name Susanna Fraser—including Christmas Past, which features a time-traveling PhD student who has to obtain approval from the TRB (temporal review board) to carry out her epidemiological research among Napoleonic-era armies! She can be reached at stonewil@uw.edu
NCURA Members, this is a “Dear Colleague” note from Council on Financial Assistance Reform (COFAR) that has been distributed to a wide audience of professional organizations, including the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) which is where we received this information. COGR is working very hard to ensure the COFAR FAQ’s help the research community.

Colleagues, FYI, we have made revisions and updates to the following FAQs: 110-3 Effective Dates and Disclosure Statements (DS-2s); 110-5 Effective Dates, Applications, and DS-2s; and 431-1 Fringe Benefits and Indirect Costs. In addition, we made an edit to the lead-in paragraph to the FAQs. The updated FAQs are online at https://cfo.gov/cofar

**.110-3 Effective Dates and Disclosure Statements (DS-2s)**

When may institutions of higher education (IHEs) begin to submit revised DS-2s based on the Uniform Guidance?

IHEs subject to the requirements of section 200.419 should begin after December 26, 2014 to revise their DS-2 statements for fiscal years beginning on or after December 26, 2014. IHE’s with CAS covered-contracts meeting the dollar threshold (currently $25 million in aggregate) in 48 CFR 9903.202-1(f) should submit their revised DS-2 as soon as possible after 12/26/2014, but in any event no later than prior to the award of a CAS-covered contract or subcontract. In addition, IHE’s making voluntary changes in cost accounting practices other than those required in the Uniform Guidance or submitting indirect cost rate proposals that are currently due should submit their revised DS-2 as soon as possible after 12/26/2014, but in any event no later than prior to the award of a CAS-covered contract or subcontract. IHEs that do not meet the CAS covered contract threshold or are not submitting indirect cost rate proposals and that are only revising their DS-2 to meet the requirements of the Uniform Guidance do not need to submit their revised DS-2 unless requested to do so by their cognizant agency for indirect costs. If not requested by the cognizant agency for indirect costs to submit by an earlier date, the DS-2 must be submitted with the next submission of the IHE’s indirect cost rate proposals. The cognizant agency for indirect costs will determine if a review and approval is necessary for the submitted DS-2.

**.110-5 Effective Dates, Applications, and DS-2s**

May IHEs submit applications that are inconsistent with their DS-2 statement if that application is made in order to reflect the Uniform Guidance? For example: May IHE’s submit applications with budgets that include administrative support or computing devices in the proposal budget?

Yes. All awards made on or after 12/26/2014 will be made according to the new uniform guidance, and applications for Federal awards that would be granted after that date should reflect the new guidance. The new guidance will apply to new Federal awards made after that date and, if a Federal awarding agency considers its incremental funding actions to be opportunities to change terms and conditions on previously made awards, the new guidance will apply to that Federal awarding agency’s incremental funding actions also. DS-2 statements that need to be revised to reflect new policies should be revised as soon as possible after 12/26/2014. Non-Federal entities will not be penalized for discrepancies between their approved DS-2 and actual charging practices in accordance with the new uniform guidance, provided that an updated DS-2 (consistent with actual charging practices) has been revised and submitted in accordance with FAQ .110-3.

**.431-1 Fringe Benefits and Indirect Costs**

Will the COFAR consider deleting the requirement in 200.431(b)(3)(i) and 200.431(e)(3) that fringe benefits be charged as indirect costs when the non-Federal entity is using a cash basis of accounting?

Yes. Based on the COFAR’s recommendation, OMB will issue a technical correction with the Uniform Guidance implementing regulations to delete the requirement that indirect costs be used to charge payments of unused leave, worker’s compensation, unemployment compensation, severance pay, and similar employee benefits.
Greetings NCURA Colleagues

We are just a few short weeks away from the 9th Pre-Award Research Administration Conference. We hope that your arrangements are made, your bags are packed and you are ready to join us in sunny Florida! No matter what your weather, there is nothing better than a conference chock full of informative sessions, relevant updates, and smiling faces to take the chill out of old man winter. Registration is still open, so don’t miss this opportunity!

We are coming to you one more time from the PRA Command and Control Center in a secret undisclosed location on the grounds of Walt Disney World to share with you some more exciting updates and opportunities.

This Just In...

It is truly a small world after all!! We are pleased to share some incredible news with an international flair (quite appropriate given our proximity to EPCOT Center…). Representatives from the Austrian research agency (FFG) will be joining us at PRA to host a workshop and concurrent session on Horizon 2020. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about the myriad opportunities available to our faculty for collaboration AND funding.

Calling all Extroverts (and Introverts as well!!)

Networking opportunities will abound at the conference. Hopefully, you have packed your Mickey Mouse ears and are ready to join us on the Behind the Dreams tour being led by our keynote speaker, C. McNair Wilson on Sunday, March 1st. Details for the event and a link to ticket information are on the PRA website. A Networking Wine and Cheese Reception and Appy Hour on Monday evening (March 2nd) will provide you with an opportunity to grab some hors d’oeuvres and get acquainted with NCURA on Twitter, YouTube and Collaborate. The NCURA Social Media Lounge (Tuesday, March 3rd and Wednesday, March 4th) will offer a relaxed environment where attendees can unwind for a minute, while receiving the latest information about all NCURA social platforms, learning about the latest news in research, plus finding out what NCURA is doing as it relates to the Research Community. The ever popular dinner groups will be heading to the four corners of the world (Disney World….) to dine at some of the most interesting and gastronomically diverse restaurants in the area. Of course, the most important networking opportunity may just be the discussion you have in the hall between sessions with a colleague and friend!

Track Highlights

In this, our final update before the meeting, we are highlighting the Funding Opportunities/Proposal Development, Human Capital, Medical and PUI tracks.

The Funding Opportunities/Proposal Development track contains eight concurrent sessions and three discussion groups covering a wide range of topics. For those who are new to the field of research administration, there will be sessions on Budgeting Fundamentals, the Basics of Proposal Development, and a session on How to Read an RFP. Beyond the basics, there are a number of innovative sessions that will benefit all members of the pre-award community. Highlights include a session on CRADLE, a novel Faculty Development program led by Lori Messer. Michelle Powell will lead a session on Research Portals and Research Business Intelligence examining best practices for the implementation of these systems. For those who are interested in collaborative proposals, the session on Large Collaborative Proposal Development and Contract Negotiations by Jean Mercer and Tammy Good will examine successful strategies for building partnerships and negotiating pre-award, inter-institutional agreements. The Funding Opportunities/ Professional Development track is sure to provide a number of “take-aways” for all members of the pre-award community.

The Human Capital track features sessions supporting us all as we try to support the investigators at our institutions. Check out “Serving our Internal Customers: Configuring Pre-Award to Reduce Faculty Burden” which will help people think about faculty-centered efficiency for Pre-Award offices. You might also consider a discussion group led by Lakita Brooks, “From Peer to Promoted,” centering on the expectations and challenges when a staff member is promoted to a research administration management position. Or learn from Robyn Remotigue and Rosemary Madnick about “Career Transitioning: Using your Network in
You’ve probably said, “There isn’t enough time” at least once today. Time is the most valuable resource we have and it’s the only resource that’s finite. Since we can’t make more time, we have to make more of our time. Here are four ideas that aren’t “time management tips”, but rather brain science.

1. Meditate for 10 minutes. No one has time for this, right? But, think of it as an investment. Meditation has been shown to improve information processing, memory, and concentration, so you’ll recoup those 10 minutes and get more done during the day.

2. Figure out why you procrastinate. There are three main types of procrastination: thrill seeking, avoidance, and indecision. Each of these causes us to lose time for different reasons. If we understand why we procrastinate, we can understand how to get those minutes back.

3. Be grateful for what you have. Studies have shown that when stressed, we resent the tasks that are causing us stress, which in turn creates more stress. To counteract this, think of something you’re grateful for. This simple step can improve your enthusiasm and determination, which will help you get the most from your day.

4. Work pomodoro style. This is a work technique where you set aside 25 minutes for a specific task and then, no matter what, take a five minute break. Then, repeat this process until the task is complete. This technique has been adopted by millions to help them get their most of their minutes.

From pen to the cloud, reaching out to our constituents as ambassadors or engaging them at their disciplines, working to streamline our offices and services available and measuring how we are doing: the PUI track has something for everyone. We will explore both broad perspectives and everyday issues, examining and discussing the nitty gritty of Uniform Guidance for primarily pre-award offices, using social media to build resources for faculty, hands on assistance to transform a humanities book into a proposal, and encouraging faculty engagement in sponsored research and other activities. For those of you who may be new to the PUI community, come to these sessions to meet others who share the small office but big responsibility challenge and have the desire to support and encourage success.

The 9th PRA Conference is going to be an event you do not want to miss! We look forward to you joining us on the path from theory to practice.

Yours in supporting research…together,
Craig and Tony

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION: PROVIDING SERVICE TO FACULTY
STAYING KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT SPONSORS
MANAGING IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES
RISK INFORMING LEADERSHIP
UPDATING IMPROVING SKILLS
POLICY
PROVIDING ENHANCING CONNECTIVITY
TRANSPARENCY BETWEEN FUNCTIONS
OVERSEEING REFINING BUSINESS
A FINANCIAL PROCESS
COMPLIANCE IMPROVEMENTS
PROGRAM
ENHANCING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN RESEARCH
COMMUNICATIONS ADMINISTRATORS

NCURA PEER REVIEW. RETAINING YOUR SANITY

Assessing your sponsored programs operation to help you excel in the fast pace of research administration.

NCURA supporting research...together

For questions or further information or to obtain a copy of the newly revised National Standards contact peerreview@ncura.edu or call (503) 364-1847. Learn more about the review process by visiting http://www.ncura.edu/content/peer_to_peer_review/
Dear Colleagues,

In less than two months we will be in warm sunny Orlando, Florida for the 16th Annual Meeting for the Financial Research Administrator. The conference will be held March 5-7, 2015 at the Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort. It immediately follows the 9th Annual Meeting for Pre-Award Research Administrators which will be March 2-4, 2015. If you haven’t already registered for the conference or booked your hotel arrangements; do so soon to take advantage of the great hotel rates and online discounted registration fees!

Hear from colleagues about taking the Uniform Guidance from the “theoretical” regulations issued by OMB and COFAR to “practice” through policies and procedures at our institutions.

A Few of the Hot Topic session titles on Uniform Guidance include:

- Understanding Uniform Guidance from the Departmental Perspective (Audit/Compliance – Departmental Focus)
- Uniform Guidance and Internal Controls – What Do You Really Need to know? (Audit/Compliance – Research Intensive Focus)
- Close-Out: What the Uniform Guidance Means (Audit/Compliance – Research Intensive Focus)
- Effort Reporting in the Age of the Uniform Guidance (Federal)
- Fringe Benefits – Uniform Guidance Impact, Revenue Maximization, Budgeting and Accounting Efficiencies (Costing/F&A – Research Intensive Focus)
- Uniform Guidance on Internal Controls – Are We Ready? (Post-Award Operations – PUI Focus)
- Effort Reporting and the OMB’s Uniform Guidance (Post-Award Operations – Research Intensive Focus)

In addition to the Uniform Guidance specific sessions, our program committee has done an excellent job of creating over 120 sessions including the popular discussion groups, spark sessions and breakfast roundtable discussions. Our sessions this year are structured on large topic areas, with a focus of representing the diverse roles of our attendees either in their type of organization or organizational role.

Conference Session Tracks:

- Costing/F&A
- Audit/Compliance
- Post Award/Operations
- Medical/Clinical Issues
- Communication/Human Capital
- Federal Update

Session Areas of Focus (perspectives):

- Research Institutions
- Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions
- Departments
- International Organizations

We look forward to having you join us in Sunny Orlando!

Program Committee Co-Chairs
Charlene Blevens
University of Miami
Jeffrey Silber
Cornell University

Track Leaders
Audit/Compliance
Kay Ellis, Scott Erwin, Pat Fitzgerald, Ann Holmes, Missy Peloso

Communications/Human Capital
Joan Kanner, Roseann Luongo

Costing/F&A
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Federal Updates
Pat Hawk

Medical/Clinical Issues
John Case, Randi Wasik

Post-Award/Operations
Joe Gindhart, Norm Hebert, Rosemary Madnick, Kris Monahan, Beth Seaton

Workshops
Lisa Mosley, Kerry Peluso, Cathy Snyder
Why Do You Need a RIO?

By Tracy Arwood

The theme of this issue of NCURA Magazine is Transactions — the action of conducting business; an exchange or interaction between people. Conducting research involves a series of transactions, interactions between people. How we undertake those transactions, from idea development to publication, can define the reputation of a researcher, a program, a University.

“Advances in science, engineering, and other fields of research depend on the reliability of the research record, as do the benefits associated with them in areas such as health and national security. Sustained public trust in the research enterprise also requires confidence in the research record and in the processes involved in its ongoing development.”

In 2011, the journal Nature reported an alarming increase in the number of retractions of scientific papers — a tenfold rise in the previous decade, to more than 300 a year across the scientific literature. … studies have suggested that most of these retractions resulted from honest errors. But a deeper analysis of retractions, being published this week, challenges that comforting assumption. In a 2012 study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, two scientists and a medical communications consultant analyzed 2,047 retracted papers in the biomedical and life sciences. They found that misconduct was the reason for three-quarters of the retractions for which they could determine the cause.”

In response to this apparent increase in unethical practices, federal funding agencies such as NIH, NSF, and USDA require awardee institutions to develop and implement training programs to educate our research communities in the ethical conduct of research (also known as Responsible Conduct of Research or RCR training).

Apart from the RCR training requirement, the regulations prescribing how research misconduct must be managed are a dizzying, complex set of standards. They dictate every aspect, from allegation to investigation through reporting, disposition and appeal. Failure to adhere to these requirements can land an institution in hot water, resulting in penalties or sanctions such as loss of funding to the institution.

NSF regulations, among others (NIH, USDA, DOE, for example), place primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct with the awardee institution. The institution also bears responsibility for the inquiry, investigation, and adjudication of alleged research misconduct. However, if the institution does not fulfill these responsibilities as prescribed and within stated deadlines, the Office of Inspector General (or a similar function) will take over. Certainly no institution wants to force OIG into that role.

How exactly does an institution successfully manage these hefty responsibilities? With a RIO. No, not an all-expenses paid, get-away-from-it-all-vacation in Brazil but rather with a Research Integrity Officer (RIO). Each research institution should appoint a RIO, an individual who can properly oversee compliance with these regulations prescribed by the various regulatory groups with which the institution interacts and at the various points at which misconduct may occur. In its sample policy and procedures, the DHHS Office of Research Integrity (ORI) says the RIO has lead responsibility for ensuring that the institution:

- Takes all reasonable and practical steps to foster a research environment that promotes the responsible conduct of research, research training, and activities related to that research or research training, discourages research misconduct, and deals promptly with allegations or evidence of possible research misconduct
- Has written policies and procedures for responding to allegations of research misconduct and reporting information about that response to ORI, as required by 42 CFR Part 93
- Complies with its own written policies and procedures and the requirements of 42 CFR Part 93. Informs its institutional members who are subject to 42 CFR Part 93 about its research misconduct policies and procedures and its
commitment to compliance with those policies and procedures

- Takes appropriate interim action during a research misconduct proceeding to protect public health, federal funds and equipment, and the integrity of the PHS supported research process

Identifying the appropriate person to appoint as RIO is critical to the success of the overall effort. A RIO must have the appropriate authority to implement both an education program and a policy that addresses the many requirements. Resource allocation is necessary as both financial and physical resources are generally needed. A RIO may need to hire consultants or purchase special software and support staff may be necessary to help manage scheduling, communication, and documentation.

The RIO must be willing and able to step away from his/her regular duties when an allegation is made. Proper handling of an allegation through investigation is an intense, time consuming process that leaves little time for other responsibilities because of the serious nature of the allegations. A person’s career is on the line. A research program is at stake. The public trust is in jeopardy. Allegations must be handled with the utmost care by both the RIO and his/her team including the committees of scientists impaneled to conduct inquiries and investigations. Identifying these committee members and convincing them to serve the University in this way requires positive relationships with academic leaders and the respect of the faculty and staff.

A RIO should have interpersonal skills to promote collegiality and cooperation while also being able to handle difficult situations and potentially difficult people. The process and documenting the work appropriately also requires excellent organizational skills. Inquiries and investigations have lots of moving parts in an organization. Simply ensuring that a committee is properly trained and meetings can be convened as needed can require significant work, especially when committee members have teaching responsibilities or during breaks when many may be off-campus.

Communicating what needs to be done and what has been done requires excellent written and verbal skills. Notifications of allegations must be handled sensitively. Confidentiality is a critical component of the entire process. Protecting the whistleblower while also protecting the reputation of the accused can be tricky but is necessary for due process. Findings from the inquiry and investigation committees must be thoughtful and deliberate. Recommendations to the deciding official must be clear and concise. Reports to oversight and funding agencies must be detailed and descriptive. Positive and collaborative interactions with agencies, journal editors, and other institutions are essential.

Often records, including lab notebooks and hard drives, must be sequestered at the same time when researchers are notified of the allegations to ensure the integrity of the records. Educating partners from various functions in the organizations such as the campus police, information technology experts, and general counsel’s office about the process is very important—they all need to be ready to assist the RIO quickly.

The RIO provides continuity to the overall effort and sets the tone for the campus’s experience with regards to research compliance. It is helpful to choose someone who can provide both relevant experience and institutional memory to the process. Inquiries and investigations do not happen in a bubble. Anticipating bumps in the road and having the confidence to navigate those can help promote a fair, impartial outcome.

Your campus needs to know who to contact when an issue arises. Routing a possible misconduct allegation through several administrators, before finding the RIO, can compromise any investigation that may need to happen and can place both the whistleblower and accused at risk. A deliberate campus education effort is necessary to provide information regarding misconduct and the appropriate reporting channels.

How does one train to be a RIO? DHHS Office of Research Integrity (ORI) offers training programs called RIO Boot Camp where a new (or not so new) RIO can participate in directed study of the regulations, draft policies and work through challenging cases with peers. The newly formed Association of Research Integrity Officers (ARIO) provides a professional association for networking, collaboration, and sometimes commiseration.

The role of the RIO is easy to forget when there are no problems. However, when unfortunate situations arise, this person is the focal point for both the internal and external processes. The public deserves to trust the research that informs policy, engineering, health, and scientific decision-making is conducted honestly and ethically. Sigma Xi notes that “scientific honesty is vital because there is no cop at the scientific research traffic light. Nor can there be, for scientific accuracy and honesty cannot normally be reduced to something as simple as whether the light was red or green.” [4] The importance of an engaged, knowledgeable research integrity officer cannot be understated for scientific integrity and preserving public trust.

References
Behind The Transaction at a PUI

By Stacy A. Riseman

Twenty-five years’ experience in sponsored programs, several years working with people at research intensive schools and smaller PUIs, working in different states and with different personalities, employed at profession-specific universities, medical institutions, art schools and liberal arts colleges, all this equates to being an expert in transactions in my field, right? Wrong. As time goes on, you would think that we’d get better at our profession and it would get easier conducting business with other folks. Transactions can be broken down into step-by-step guidelines, procedures, policies, forms, online applications, emails, phone calls, and meetings, but all of these things are only as good as the end users, their interpretation of these transaction media and what we are trying to accomplish. We can automate anything but at the end of the day, it’s still human beings at the end of the transactions. How they, in turn, interpret the medium of the transaction will determine the success or failure of the activity.

In order to have your transactions be successful, you must go above and beyond the activity to develop a professional yet human relationship with the end users. I’ve found that working at a PUI, as well as a liberal arts institution, yields end users who may not possess the same level of experience, education, or personality that I may have in sponsored programs. My end users have been exposed less to the daily transactions, rules, and regulations of activities related to the administration of research. It’s my job to help them see why, not just how, to do something a specific way. It is up to me to spend more time explaining something, and backing up my requests with examples or specific references to regulations and policy, while not putting them to sleep with long, drawn out details. At PUIs, we must realize that the end users not only need to trust the person asking for the completion of the activity but also feel confident in completing what has been asked of them as doing the right thing. It’s complicated and not an easy feat. I’ve learned that trust is what you need to build with each person from the beginning to the end of every transaction.

Here are some simple things to keep in mind that might aid your next transaction. Pick up the phone and call someone in lieu of using email. If you find that emailing brings a response which yields more confusion, pick up the phone before emailing back. At that point, a voice on the other end of the phone might help in getting a positive result much faster. When you call someone, notice the tone of your voice. A soothing and calm voice will help the person feel more comfortable listening to you and, in turn, will allow the person to feel safe enough to ask questions to satisfy any original apprehension. During your communications, use the person’s name if you can. This allows the individual to feel that you are invested and connected personally, and not just focused on the end result. Try to figure out the person’s communication style. This may take a couple of transactions with a person but if you pay attention to the individual instead of the business you are trying to accomplish, you will find this is quite simple. Individuals give clues such as being abrupt or detailed in their responses. If a person is abrupt, you might adjust your communication to be a little quicker and to the point. If a person is detailed, you might present a more in-depth view of what you are asking them to do. Also, offer to meet in person and discuss a situation that appears to make the individual uneasy in any way. Face-to-face meetings always seem to yield a more positive result, especially at a PUI where it is usually much easier to meet than at a larger institution.

Stacy A. Riseman is Director of the Office of Sponsored Research at College of the Holy Cross. She is an active NCURA member at the regional and national levels, presenting at conferences and serving on committees. For her significant contributions to Region 1, she received the Merit Award in 2013. She can be reached at sriseman@holycross.edu
The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to announce the Call for Nominations for the 2015 NCURA Awards. Recognizing the contributions of our colleagues is one of the highest honors we can bestow. Additionally, nurturing diversity expands the energy and creativity of our membership and builds a stronger volunteer organization. *Now is the time to acknowledge an extraordinary mentor, collaborator, or friend, and also identify a candidate for the minority travel award.*

**Catherine Core Minority Travel Award**  This program supports travel-related costs to attend the NCURA Annual Meeting for up to four individuals from under-represented groups who would not otherwise be able to attend this meeting. **Deadline for applications: March 23, 2015**

**Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award**  This award is given to up to five individuals who have made significant contributions to NCURA. [Note: Current National Officers and NCURA Standing Committee (FMC, NLDC, and PDC) Chairs and Vice Chairs are ineligible for nomination for this award.] **Deadline for nominations: March 23, 2015**

**Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration**  This award is given annually to an individual who has made 1) noteworthy contributions to NCURA, and 2) significant contributions to the profession of Research Administration. [Note: Current National Officers and NCURA Standing Committee (FMC, NLDC, and PDC) Chairs and Vice Chairs are ineligible for nomination for this award.] **Deadline for nominations: March 23, 2015**

**Joseph F. Carrabino Award**  This award is given to a current, or former, federal employee who has made a significant contribution to research administration, either through a single project, activity, or innovation, or by a lifetime of service. **Deadline for nominations: March 23, 2015**

Please email award nominations and applications to: awards@ncura.edu

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**Officers and Board Nominations**

The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to present the opportunity for all members of NCURA to nominate (or self-nominate) candidates to serve as the next leaders for our organization. We urge you to consider individuals for the following important positions

Vice President/President-Elect | Secretary | Treasurer-Elect | Two At-Large Board Members

NCURA provides many opportunities to volunteer within our professional organization—currently at a membership that exceeds 7000! By expanding your involvement, you are afforded a wealth of enriching experiences. Being active and involved in NCURA can be as simple as considering whom to nominate for these positions, and then making that nomination. In addition, if you are interested in these positions and would like to submit your name for consideration, we are waiting to hear from you.

For a detailed description of the current responsibilities of these positions as well as this year’s required nomination materials for each position, please visit [http://collaborate.ncura.edu/VolunteerOpportunities](http://collaborate.ncura.edu/VolunteerOpportunities)

Terms of these positions will begin on January 1, 2016

All nominations and supporting materials (candidate’s statement of interest and current resume/vita of 1-3 pages, etc.) from the nominees must be received electronically on or before March 23, 2015.
For several years I worked in a specific college as the director of a research center with oversight of all their grants and contracting efforts. When I arrived, the sponsored activities were minimal - about $4 million per year. However, after just six years the college was generating over $20 million in grant and contract activity. Working in a college, as opposed to a centralized research administration office, brought special challenges and rewards. I found that I had more immediate, varied, and frequent administrative transactions with researchers in a college compared to my experiences in a centralized research office. Recognizing that each of these transactions or exchanges was an “opportunity to generate transformation” played a key role in the phenomenal growth and success of our sponsored programs. Research administrators need to recognize that how well we conduct our transactions not only supports research, but can also help to advance it.

Transactions are important; each one contributes to the overall experience of the researcher and of those involved in the administration of research. Not only are transactions important in your own research office, but in those units and divisions across the institution and with our research collaborators. The definition of a transaction is an occurrence in which goods, services, or money passed from one person, account, etc., to another (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). I tend to recognize a broad scope of transactions which include financial transactions (payments, invoices, transfers); contractual transactions (agreements, schedules, terms & conditions); document or record transactions (proposals, reports, compliance audits, certifications); and informational transactions (communicating regulations, new policies/procedures, or best practices). In research administration transactions are exchanges that can occur between researchers conducting the research, academic administrators within a college/department, university business administrators, or between partnering organizations such as another university, hospital, school district, or an industry. During a transaction there is also a negotiation of information and understanding. It is through these transactions that we have the opportunity to learn more about researchers and how they go about their business of doing research. As a college level research administrator, I discovered most transactions needed to be completed quickly and were unique to the type of research being conducted. Therefore, it was important for me to focus on the nature of these transactions not only to provide accurate and timely transactions, but to provide services and assistance that would add value to the research enterprise within the college and institution.

From research studies we can learn about the critical components of a transaction that will help us better assist our researchers and organizations in delivering what they need and want, while adding value to the organization (Anderson & Swaminathan, 2011; Thongpapanl, De Clercq& Dimov, 2012). In this article I have focused on four key transaction factors: ease, adaptability, responsiveness, and connection. From experience I have found that these four factors can make a positive impact on the growth and success of research and can transform the level of productivity of a college or research center.
1. Transaction Ease:
First and foremost, we should make transactions as simple and straight-forward as possible. Traditionally research administration offices are viewed as barriers—a bureaucracy of red tape. Fenwick (2012) stated that research administration plays a critical role in research productivity—research administrative units “can either present a significant barrier to the success of the faculty” or “promote and enable institutional success by providing the faculty with a significant competitive advantage” (p. 50). Reducing the time to conduct a transaction can provide faculty a competitive advantage by decreasing their administrative burden. You can do this by examining transactions that occur most frequently and determine if you can automate the processes to make the transaction less time-consuming, more accurate, and efficient. In addition, forms, approval processes, and other written procedures can be reviewed to determine if they can be shortened, revised for clarity, eliminated, or merged together with other processes. In addition, it is wise to revisit your websites to determine if the user navigation is intuitive for researchers to easily find the contact or content they are looking for quickly. I recently suggested automating a new compliance requirement into an existing proposal submission process. It completely eliminated the additional time for researchers to sign into another system and upload their proposals a second time. Making transactions “user-friendly” for researchers and staff can often improve accuracy and efficiency; thus, adding value to your organization.

2. Transaction Adaptability:
Researchers in different scholarly fields have unique needs; one size does not fit all. Working within an academic or medical department can be an advantage when there are ways to adapt support services and transactions to meet the unique needs of the particular research field. In my case I made it a priority to become familiar with the pre and post award requirements of funding agencies that typically sponsored the type of research conducted in my college. In addition, I learned what research supplies were most often needed, and to be knowledgeable about the compliance and regulatory issues governing the particular field of research. With this information, we created specialized templates and forms to meet specific requirements. Identifying typical areas that could slow down the final negotiation of contractual terms and conditions with outside organizations and industries allowed for preliminary discussions on how those

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could be alleviated, expediting the research process. In addition, knowing the costs associated with different categories such as equipment, graduate students, consultants, and other common expenses allowed staff to anticipate budgetary requirements and run interference on potential barriers by adapting services to align with researcher needs. Research partners were able to establish common agreements, timelines, schedules, and discuss other issues before they arose later in the process. Other transactions could be adapted based on an understanding of the college’s tenure and promotion expectations, teaching requirements, and department policies, procedures and resources. When you can adapt transactions and processes based on specific needs, researchers are less likely to view your transactions with them as something done to them, but more likely as doing something for them.

**3. Transaction Responsiveness:**

Being responsive and addressing researchers’ problems and complaints is a reflection of our commitment to their research. As a director, I had an internal deadline to respond to a researcher within 48 hours with either a resolution or at least an update on the progress being made in finding a solution to their concern(s). It is important to find a solution that will result in the satisfaction of the researcher and your institution—to do this you must probe and listen to the researchers’ problems closely before offering a solution. The effective and timely resolution of a researcher’s problem is one of the most critical factors in how we add value to our organizations. Again, the advantage of focusing on one field of research is that it gives us greater ability to understand the needs of our specific research community and the confidence and competence to identify gaps between the current situation and what is ultimately the most advantageous situation. Building our knowledge of the specific research field can also allow us to comprehend the significance of the consequences or benefits of meeting the desired solution and one that will provide the most competitive advantage for sustaining our research programs. Value is also added when we become acclimated and committed to the ethics and values of the research in order to select the best transaction strategy or technique. Transactions that are based on in-depth understanding of the research environment allow us to be more responsive to our researchers and our organizations.

**4. Transaction Connections:**

Making transaction connections requires us to look at the big picture, focus on long-term college and institutional goals, and create innovative transactions that are more effective. Over the years the operations of research administration services have developed into multiple separate areas of specialization which can create operational solos that interfere or make it more difficult for us to communicate (Smith & Torres, 2011). To take full advantage of a transaction is to understand how one transaction connects with other transactions within a unit or organization. Connecting transactions from one area to another such as research development to compliance or export control to technology transfer can help streamline transitions between each of the operational functions and allow for synergistic activities that support more beneficial or symbiotic relationships. The aim of connecting transactions is to improve productivity not only within a single transaction, but by breaking down silos and integrating processes among administrative units and across other possible organizational boundaries. I have found that having connections in several other research administration units was helpful when developing new research programs. There were times that early transactions with technology transfer better prepared young researchers for when and who to contact to protect intellectual property and move a potential product forward at the appropriate time. Another connection that proved to be useful was with the IRB office. We were able to discuss current and future transactions associated with human-subject research compensation that helped to develop the structure and proper materials for integrating special protocol transactions. Connecting transactions helped us reach our goal to create and expand cross functional services, reduce cost, and improve access to core business services which all added value.

**Conclusion:**

Research administrators need to think how to innovate transactions that lead to transformation. Transformational transactions can increase productivity, advance research, provide a competitive advantage, and add value. Transformation in any organization emerges one transaction at a time. In our roles as research administrators we are all called to the principle and practice of transformation. We play a pivotal role in the lives of our researchers and we are often agents of transformation and change. Increased competition for shrinking resources requires creating innovative transactions and processes that align with strategic goals, engage people fully in the research, and move ideas quickly across institutional boundaries. Research administrators can be transformational leaders by being agile, innovative, responsive, collaborative, and strategic.

**References:**


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Jo Ann Smith, Ph.D, CRA is the Program Director of the Master of Research Administration (MRA) in the School of Public Administration at the second largest university in the U.S.—the University of Central Florida. She has developed multiple grant proposals with universities, hospitals, federal, state, and local agencies, and nonprofits that have collectively resulted in over $100 million in funding. She has experience in leading both central and college level research offices. Her areas of interest are related to proposal development, program evaluation, education and training, responsible conduct of research, and the research administration.
Grant Digestion 101:
How a Grant Moves Through the System

By Tricia L. Callahan
Writing a grant proposal and moving it through the appropriate system, from agency receipt to review and award (or rejection), can seem confusing and daunting. However, like digesting that juicy hamburger you ate for lunch, writing a proposal and moving it through the system is a complex process made up of a series of simple steps.

**Step 1: The teeth**

Grant digestion begins here. In order to write a successful grant proposal, you really have to “sink your teeth” into it. Teeth tear and crush food into small enough pieces so that they can fit down our throats. As a grant writer, it’s your job to break your ideas (goals and objectives) down into small enough pieces that most anyone who reads your proposal will be able to understand and replicate it.

When masticating your grant proposal, it’s important to remember that goals are generally broad, qualitative statements about an ideal or hoped-for-state. For example, it may be the goal of your research or project to address childhood obesity in your community.

Objectives, on the other hand, are specific, achievable, tangible, and measurable steps you plan to take toward accomplishing the stated goals. They define your methods. For the goal of addressing childhood obesity, sample objectives may be to:

- Increase physical activity levels during school hours to 30-minutes per day
- Replace high-calorie, low-nutrient cafeteria offerings with nutrient-dense offerings that contain, per serving, at least 5g of protein, fewer than 20g of carbohydrates, and fewer than 3g of saturated fat
- Reduce obesity rates among local elementary and middle school children by 6%

Objectives should flow organically from goals, and both should be based on the need or problem statement. It is of utmost importance that you define the problem to be addressed and support why it’s a problem that deserves attention — your attention in the form of research and the agency’s attention in terms of funding.

For example, your background research might show that:

- Unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity have been shown to contribute to type 2 diabetes;
- Recent statistics show that occurrences of type 2 diabetes are on the rise in the target population and are double what they were ten years ago; and
- Body Mass Indices for local elementary and middle school children show that 33% of the local youth are overweight or obese.

**Step 2: The salivary glands and tongue**

The salivary glands are located on the underneath, backside of our tongue. They create saliva, which contains chemicals that begin breaking down the food into even smaller bits than our teeth can manage. Along with the tongue, saliva works to ensure we have a ball of food that can be easily swallowed. In addition, the tongue contains glands we call taste buds that help us identify palatable or unpalatable tastes such as sweet, sour, salty, and bitter.

As a writer, it is your job to ensure you have a proposal that is relevant, understandable, and palatable. If the mission of a funding agency does not align with your goals and objectives, if reviewers cannot understand your proposal, or if reviewers find it unpalatable, the agency may end up spitting it out rather than swallowing it. This is what is referred to in the grants world as “returned without review.” A proposal may be returned without review — or reviewed and not funded — because it did not meet the review criteria or follow the proper agency guidelines. It is important that you read, understand, and follow all program guidelines when preparing a proposal.

It is also important that your proposal is palatable in that it fits with the mission of the funding agency. For example, you might not want to solicit Hostess or the makers of Little Debbie for funding on childhood obesity. Instead, seek funding sources whose mission aligns with your project’s goals and objectives. A quick Google search revealed the following sources of potential funding for preventing childhood obesity:

- American Heart Association
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Children’s Obesity Fund
- Several local, community foundations and programs that have a vested interest in the prevention of childhood obesity

**Step 3: The esophagus**

The esophagus is the transportation tube from the mouth to the stomach. In the grant world, the esophagus can be likened to the U.S. Postal Service or FEDEX/UPS back in the good ol’ days or, more currently, to an electronic submission system (like e-mail or Grants.gov). At Miami University, we are adopting an electronic submission system that will accommodate electronic routing and submission of proposals. It’s important to know upfront what transportation system needs to be used, whether it be an internal system, Grants.gov, e-mail, USPS, or other, and that your institution is registered with and has the ability to use the required system.

Prior to submitting a proposal, it’s important to ensure it is ready to be delivered (i.e., all the parts are included and have been sufficiently explained, documented, and are well within sponsor and university guidelines). Before swallowing, you must have university review and permission to submit your proposal. Prior to submission, check with your institution to determine who has the authority to approve and submit proposals.

**Step 4: The liver, gall bladder, and pancreas**

After being delivered to the funding agency, the grant proposal is assigned to a review panel and put through the review process. It’s here that the proposal really gets digested. Many Federal review panels are made up of peer research professionals and specialists in select fields. Proposals are assigned to panels at the discretion of the funding agency. You, as the proposal preparer, can make suggestions as to which panel or panels might be appropriate (or not appropriate) for your particular proposal.

Let’s take a moment to dissect a Federal review panel. We’ll use the NIH (National Institutes of Health) as an example.

For most proposals submitted to the NIH, the first level of review is carried out by a Scientific
Review Group (SRG). This group is made up of scientists who have expertise in relevant disciplines. The SRG is lead by a Scientific Review Officer (SRO). This person is typically a staff scientist with the NIH whose job is to:

- Analyze the content of each application, ensuring that it is complete
- Document and manage any reported conflicts of interest
- Recruit qualified reviewers

The SRG then reviews the proposal based on review criteria and scientific merit. Many proposals are given a score and recommendations for funding are made according to the scientific and technical merit of the proposal, the appropriateness of the budget, and other considerations such as use of human or animal participants.

The second level of review is carried out by the Institutes’ or Centers’ National Advisory Council. These councils are made up of people from the scientific community as well as public representatives chosen for their interest and expertise. Councils review the applications, the overall impact scores, the percentile rankings, and the summary statements provided by the review panel. Recommendations for funding are based on:

- Scores, rankings, and summary statements
- Goals and needs of the Institute or Center
- Center or Institute budget

It is the Institute or Center Director who makes the final funding decision based on the Council’s advice.

**Step 5: The small intestine**

It is in the small intestine that our food is put to use by our bodies. We can liken this point of the process to proposals that have been funded or recommended for funding. At this point, all the hard work put into a proposal has paid off, and the research or project can be implemented.

After a funding decision has been made, the Program Officer of the funding Institute or Center works with their Grants Management Office on budgetary and administrative issues. Typically the Grants Management Office will release the award to an institution, outlining all of the terms, conditions, requirements, and provisions of the award. Once an award is released, the institution will set up a spending account or grant account. For most institutions, someone in post-award accounting will assist with post-award spending and financial reporting.

It is important to remember that funds must be spent in accordance with the approved budget and during the timeframe (award period) outlined in the award document in order to conduct the research you proposed when you started this process months and months ago (Thank goodness that cheeseburger doesn’t take as long to digest!). It is here that you finally feel the full effects of the nutrients you’ve put into your body. And, like with good health and nutrition, the better the input, the better the outcome: high-quality proposals and award administration contribute to grant success just as high-quality foods contribute to nutritional success.

**Step 6: The large intestine**

What the body cannot use is sent to the large intestine and forced out of the body. In the grant process, this is proposal rejection. There are any number of reasons why a proposal might not be funded, including but not limited to:

- The goals of the proposal did not match the goals of the sponsor
- The proposal did not meet the technical grant requirements (i.e., guidelines were not followed)
- The proposal was full of jargon or otherwise difficult to understand
- The objectives were vague or difficult to measure
- The budget was not in line with the proposal objectives
- Personnel and/or resources to accomplish objectives were inadequate
- Competition was such that it prevented funding of the proposal, even though it was meritorious

If at first you don’t succeed, try again. Not every meal results in hunger satisfaction; not every proposal results in funding satisfaction. But just as a snack may fill the void in your stomach, a proposal resubmission may fill the void in your research budget. In fact, data show that chances of proposal success increase for second submissions, as long as the re-submitted proposal is responsive to the previous submission’s reviewer feedback.

Like many complex processes, many factors are involved in grant writing, submission, and administration. This article simplifies some of those factors and skips over others. For the best results, be sure to work with your pre-award office. They are experienced guides who can help you navigate each and every step, including:

- Finding an appropriate funding source for your research or project
- Locating institutional data required for many proposals
- Creating proposal budgets that comply with sponsor and university guidelines
- Reviewing and submitting proposals
- Communicating with funding agencies

One final tip: start early. They say breakfast is the most important meal of the day in part because it helps you stay on a virtuous nutritional path throughout the day. (No need for a mid-morning, pick-me-up snack if you’ve had a good breakfast!) The same is true for grant proposals: starting the process early helps ensure you have enough time to produce a high-quality proposal that efficiently secures the necessary approvals and gets submitted on time.

**Bon appétit!**
As Bob Dylan so accurately observed, “the times they are a changing.” Research Administration in its many varied facets continuously evolves, and most universities and colleges are challenged to keep up with this increasingly complex change environment. Perhaps the most compelling of these challenges is how institutions will create and sustain a knowledgeable professional workforce — research administrators who not only understand the new rules and regulations, but can also apply this knowledge in an increasingly fast-paced environment.

NCURA has developed a unique approach to meeting this challenge. The NCURA Professional Development Committee, through its On-line Program Development subcommittee, will offer a new webinar series, with a twist. The Life Cycle of a Sponsored Project series is designed to offer institutions options in providing professional growth opportunities for grant managers and research administration personnel. The series can be viewed as live webinars, and/or as a recorded training tool for institutions to build customizable training programs for grant managers at all levels. Each webinar will come with a companion “trainer’s manual” to be used by the single learner or by the home institution to supplement the on-line program. This new companion “workbook” will include multiple examples of forms, policies, case studies, and recommendations for using other NCURA resources available to the membership.

Viewers will be guided throughout each webinar to refer to the resources provided in the workbook as the webinar progresses. Each webinar will be strategically timed into structured segments so that institutions may use the recorded versions to pause the program in order to conduct specialized in-house training using their own forms, case studies, policies, etc. to reaffirm specific webinar content. By integrating NCURA materials such as NCURA YouTube videos and other materials as reference tools in the workbook, institutions can develop additional follow-up sessions and training updates as part of their continuing in-house professional development activities.

The series kicks off with The Toolbox for Research Administrators, featuring a lively discussion of the essential policies, procedures, rules and regulations that every institution should maintain for compliant management. It will also provide helpful forms, checklists, and other related work-friendly tools that support the daily activities of the grant management professional. Gleaned from examples provided by NCURA members, as well as related NCURA publications, etc., these resources will be a valuable asset in ensuring a comprehensive portfolio of research administration essentials. The webinar will also feature discussion of what policies and other resources might be necessary to implement the new federal Uniform Guidance.

The Life Cycle of a Sponsored Project series continues with additional webinars featuring topics on:

- Pre-award/Proposal Development
- Pre-award/Budgeting
- Award Negotiation and Acceptance
- Award Monitoring/Award Management
- Compliance

Stay tuned for additional information on this exciting new approach to professional development and training coming this spring!
In the past five years, the number of employees who had access to their office’s data and who based decisions on it rose from 33 to 50%, according to a new survey of business leaders. The survey was sponsored by SAP and conducted by Wakefield Research. These leaders said their employees will have to learn more about data-based decision making, and will need to become “data geeks”.

Electronic Research Administration (eRA) involves not only the support and maintenance of the systems we use for our daily work, but also the data that is entered into those systems regarding the various transactions we complete, and the reports we wish to produce with it. Getting the data generally isn’t the problem. It’s managing and understanding what the data tell you. The data often represent various transactions. And with this edition’s theme of Transactions, this article is meant to help you better understand and leverage the data about your daily transactions.

Understanding the data can help you leverage it. And it may be surprising to see that one in four business leaders gives their firm “a below average grade on their ability to leverage data for decision making,” according to the survey and “an alarming 61 percent of respondents acknowledge their company data is not being used to its full potential.” In addition, the results show that “those using data visualization tools report it would take an average of nine hours longer to see patterns, trends, and correlations in their company’s data without data visualization.”

A new book titled Data Fluency may provide the bridge we’re seeking between our data and our understanding of it by empowering us with effective data communication. It was written by Zach Gemignani and Chris Gemignani, founders of Juice Analytics, along with Richard Galantino, CEO of Stratalbe, Inc., a strategic planning consulting firm, and Dr. Patrick Schuermann, a research professor at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of Education.

“We’ve designed engaging interactive dashboards, reports, and analytical tools — all with the goal of helping real people make sense of and act on data,” says Zach Gemignani. One example is the online, interactive tool that Juice Analytics created for U. S. News called Academic Insights. It analyzes and explores University undergraduate and graduate data along with online school rankings in a uniform format time to make it more easily understood. This project and others taught Gemignani and his collaborators some important lessons about working with data that are shared in the book.

“Even with the best intentions, organizations can struggle to make good use of their data as they search for the information and metrics that will align with their emerging strategy,” says...
In *Data Fluency*, the authors present the four building blocks composing a data fluent organization:

1) “Data Consumers”: engaged and educated data consumers that have the abilities necessary to thoughtfully consume and understand the data presented;

2) “Data Authors”: skilled authors of data products to effectively communicate the data’s meaning;

3) “Data Fluent Culture”: a culture that encourages communication with data along with a shared definition of its meaning. It ensures the organization’s leadership, culture, policies, and processes support effective data communication using a set of key metrics to rally around; and

4) “Data Product Ecosystem”: an effective ecosystem of people, processes and tools that supports the production of quality data products. The book also discusses the six Ds of an effective ecosystem: Demand, Design, Develop, Discover, Discuss, and Distill.
Gemignani. “We knew that the world didn’t need another guide to dashboard design, or more lessons in visualization fundamentals that Stephen Few’s books have covered, or a practical guide for visualization practitioners that Nathan Yau addressed in his books Visualize This and Data Points. We wanted to provide a fresh perspective that answered a different question: How can organizations more effectively incorporate data into their decision-making?”

“It’s clear that there is an opportunity for companies to leverage data discovery tools in order to help with decision-making,” says Jayne Landry, global vice president and general manager of Business Intelligence, SAP. “The overwhelming amount of data in business today means we’re all going to have to become more data-savvy,” she adds. “Knowing what happened is no longer enough, we need to understand why it happened, what will happen next or even what the best that can happen is. And these types of insights are no longer confined to a handful of small experts in an organization — everyone within an organization should have the ability to contribute their knowledge and derive insights from data.”

Tools such as dashboards and portals can go a long way in revealing insights or the stories in the data. But a tool is only part of the equation. The answer involves people as much as the tools, techniques and technologies because “data communication is a social problem, not a technology problem” says Gemignani. “Making data useful is a problem that ultimately must be solved by people — people who understand the specific context of the data, people on the front-lines of decisions, and people who deeply understand the problems that data can illuminate. People are the missing ingredient.”

These four building blocks are a roadmap for transforming any organization with a lot of data to one that uses the data to share ideas and make more informed decisions. “There’s a distinction between data consumers and data authors” explains Gemignani. “Those who use data to inform their work versus those whose work it is to inform people with data. This distinction applies both at the individual level and at the organization level, where someone considers the data fluent culture (how do people consume and make use of data?) and the data product ecosystem (what capabilities, processes, and tools are in place to produce effective data products?).”

The book provides the tools to assess your own skills, or that of your organization, then explains how to leverage that assessment and move toward data fluency. On an individual level, this book can help boost your skills in data knowledge in order to increase your value within the workplace. For an organization or a team within it, Data Fluency can illuminate areas in which to provide training to improve data literacy at the organization level.

While our circumstances often dictate the tools we have at our disposal to help us communicate our data more effectively, this book is sure to become a valued resource. The guidance it offers can be applied across the tools and platforms we use and can help us make the best of them. And its perspectives will help regardless of whether you are among the 50% expected to be data geeks.

References

Excerpts and images used with permission from the publisher, Wiley, from Data Fluency: Empowering Your Organization with Effective Data Communication by Zach Gemignani, Chris Gemignani, Richard Galentino, Patrick Schuermann. Copyright © 2014.
It may not be as bad as this depicted cartoon, but working as a research administrator can certainly be tricky at times. As a research administrator, you interact with people in various different fields including lawyers, accountants, auditors, sponsors, and last but not least, research scientists. A skilled research administrator is someone who has the ability to translate the rules and regulations into understandable terminology to the researcher, to prioritize important information in order to facilitate decision-making and to try to find solutions to unexpected challenges. This article gives a few tips on how to avoid having the door slammed in your face by building efficient and effective transactions with the researchers.

One of the basic tips to increase the long-term effectiveness and efficiency with the researchers is simply to show interest in their research. From a central administration perspective you do not always work in close proximity to the researchers where it may be easier to learn about their research, as you sometimes do at department level.

When you meet a researcher for the first time, be sure to take a few minutes to ask about their specific research. It not only allows insight as to the higher purpose of what your institution is trying to accomplish, but you may also be able to more effectively reflect your role in it (yes, my nagging about effort reporting actually makes it possible for this specific researcher to receive NIH-funding in order to find a new treatment for brain tumors in children).

As an inquisitive research administrator, you will also learn something interesting along the way. My experience is that the research scientist appreciates your interest in their work. Ask how the research has been going since the last time you met. Are there any inte-
resting results on the way? It might cost you a few extra minutes when you first get to know a researcher, but you will regain that time in great dividends because you will gain trust, which in the long-term leads to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

A second tip is to make the researcher feel that you are helping him/her, not making their life more difficult. It can be quite challenging to give a researcher the bad news that the $100,000 that was just charged on the project is not eligible (oh, the joy of financial compliance!). The best way to begin such a meeting is to offer a solution. You should make it a point to give suggestions for what can be charged instead, and assure him or her that you will support them by taking the necessary administrative steps, such as amendments. This way you have secured compliance and, at the same time, made an effort to help to keep the money for his or her research.

Once you have learned about the specific research, you might even be able to come up with concrete suggestions on how to spend the money within the allowed frame. From the point that the researcher is convinced you work in their best interest, you are often able to have very efficient and direct conversations with them, whether by interacting face-to-face, using email or over the phone.

Another key to efficient communicative transactions with the researcher is to know what is important for him/her to know in order to make a decision. Adjust the level of detail to the receiver and focus on what you need to know in order to complete your task and then formulate the specific question clearly.

On several occasions, researchers have forwarded me emails asking for help because they do not understand what the research administrator wants. To give a very simple example, one research administrator had written to a researcher asking to sort out a travel cost. As it happened, the flight costs for one specific trip had been charged on one project but the hotel costs on another. The email from the research administrator was very detailed in describing the situation, the rules and the account numbers (instead of the name of the research projects).

I can see that a financial administrator would appreciate such an email, but for the researcher it was all very confusing. The only thing that would need to have been asked was which project it would be scientifically justifiable to charge the costs of this specific travel to.

To show the researcher that you are interested in the research they are carrying out, to make them feel you work in their interest, and to give them the right level of detail, is contributing to effective and efficient communications and transactions. My experience is that when you have reached that level of trust with the researcher the door is always open.

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Education Scholarship Fund

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Education Scholarship Fund in 2014. You made it possible to meet the $35,000 goal for the year.

The guiding principle behind the Education Scholarship Fund is the establishment of a fund, raising dollars through the support of engaged members and external sponsors who share the vision of maintaining currency in research administration through continued professional development. NCURA members are well known for paying it forward—teaching, volunteering their time, and always ready to share their knowledge and experiences. The Education Scholarship Fund is another avenue to do just that. By contributing, you can provide support to ensure that opportunities are available for professional development of our members in the future.

The Task Force members are busy developing plans for 2015. The upcoming FRA and PRA conferences in sunny Orlando this March will offer attendees the opportunity to contribute on-site and through pledges. Through your generosity you can help develop the next generation of research administrators. Even a little makes a difference.

Contributions can be made online at: http://www.ncura.edu/Education/EducationScholarshipFund.aspx
Amazing discoveries continuously pour out of our centers, institutes, and university labs. All of this wealth of knowledge shuffles into sundry repositories, to be shared with other researchers, but what does the wider public know of what edges are bleeding where, and for what purpose?

Aside from the usual approach of distributing releases to reporters, inviting media representatives to events, or engaging the public directly via outreach programs, a novel approach gathering interest among Japanese research administrators is the idea of making direct pitches to television producers.

If a paper is published and no one notices…

The Japan Association of Communication for Science and Technology (JACST) was founded in 2007 as an informal gathering of science and technology communications professionals, for the purpose of aiding all manner of media and public outreach efforts, and since that time has been a regular presence at large domestic science events, as well as hosting their own skills-building workshops.

But beginning in 2010 one of the mainstays for the association has been the planning of regular meetings between communicators and television producers, from which a number of significant documentary projects have already achieved notable success.

A good example is the first-ever filming of giant squid in their natural environment, an idea which came about as a result of a JACST sponsored pitch to Japanese national broadcaster NHK. Documentaries featuring astonishing footage of the animal become enormously popular both for NHK as well as for co-sponsor the Discovery Channel. [http://www.discovery.com/tv-shows/curiosity/videos/monster-squid](http://www.discovery.com/tv-shows/curiosity/videos/monster-squid)
...Was the research funding well spent?
The relatively new profession of research administration (for Japan) has also begun to take shape over the course of these same seven odd years, and with many URAs becoming involved in getting the word out about research findings, it is inevitable that JACST has seen a rise in administrator attendance at its gatherings.

At the most recent such event in late November, for example, 10 institutes and universities (as well as several observers, including from science ministry MEXT) met in Tokyo to present their organizations to representatives from a similar number of media companies, mainly television broadcasters and production firms, but also the Japanese publisher of National Geographic. Each presentation lasted around 15 minutes, with most of the communicators and administrators highlighting major projects and research endeavors at their institutions.

Kyoto University and the National Institute for Materials Science (NIMS) took a more focused approach, zeroing in on specific scientists and their personalities as a reflection of wider themes and institutional values.

In NIMS’ case the spotlight was on a team of scientists working to recreate and expand the research of a deceased colleague, whose discoveries in the late 1980s of certain high-temperature superconductive ceramics had helped fuel the first surge in interest in the field.

Kyoto University, meanwhile, presented the work of two maverick specialists: The first, Yutaka Yamauchi, is a management school researcher exploring the role of design in solving problems related to food service (from hamburgers to high-end sushi).

The second presentation highlighted the work of Hiroaki Isobe, an assistant professor at Kyoto University’s Unit for Synergetic Studies for Space, who reaches out not only to specialists in other fields but also to performing artists and even Buddhist temples, seeking to discover new ways for humanity to comprehend life in the space age.

Television as a communication medium of course heavily favors visually powerful content, and hence purely on this basis the ‘selling’ of certain scientific ideas will always be easier than others. And even with the internet gnawing at its grip on viewers’ eyeballs, well-crafted television can still deliver an unmatched immediacy and mass emotional reaction.

The JACST meetings therefore represent a unique opportunity for two worlds — science and mass media — to meet and freely discuss latest developments and new ideas. And for research administrators, these new tools can lead to innovations in extending the reach and overall value of investments in science.

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NCURA’s Traveling Workshops head to New Orleans

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Expand and enhance your job knowledge! Learn from well-respected senior research administrators and meet others who share similar job challenges. Choose from:

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- Management of the award
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**Fundamentals 2.0: Sponsored Project Administration Workshop**
- For the newcomer (less than 2 years’ experience) or for the individual who has worked primarily in only one area of sponsored projects administration
- Requires online pre-work (approximately 2 hours)
- Newly reformatted agenda allows for more interactive case studies
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**Level II: Sponsored Projects Administration Workshop – Critical Issues in Research Administration**
- For more experienced research administrators
- Institutional compliance responsibilities
- Proposal creation, budgeting and award administration
- Contract and subaward review
- Export controls
- Post award financial administration

Registration and hotel information is available at [www.ncura.edu](http://www.ncura.edu)
This article went to press prior to each agency’s issuance of Uniform Guidance implementing regulations. The authors encourage review of sponsor-specific regulations and policies expected to be released in December 2014.

Institutions engaged in federally sponsored projects abroad will find new and revised obligations in the new Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”) Uniform Guidance. The new regulations are a significant development for research and compliance professionals involved in the day-to-day administration of foreign projects, such as federally funded research collaborations, public health services, technical assistance, capacity building, and teaching initiatives.

More than OMB Circulars A-110, A-21, and A-122, the consolidated Uniform Guidance attempts to address some of the unique foreign-activity issues faced by recipients of federal grants and cooperative agreements. There are many positive changes, such as improved guidance on the allowability of foreign taxes and currency exchange losses. But there is some uncertainty in how federal sponsors will apply the new rules to special scenarios and unique costs that awardees deem necessary to operation at foreign outposts.

Highlighted below are some of the more significant Uniform Guidance developments that affect federally-sponsored transnational projects.

**Foreign Value Added Taxes**

The allowability of foreign VAT historically has been the subject of inconsistent and ambiguous interpretation by regulators. VAT is a form of consumption tax that a buyer remits on the purchase of an item or service in the host country. VAT can be substantial—e.g., 25% or more added to the purchase price—and sometimes unbudgeted at the proposal stage.

Circular A-21 did not address VAT but stated in Section J.49 (Taxes) that “taxes which the institution is required to pay and which are paid or accrued in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles are allowable.” Conversely, HHS and NIH (and at times, USAID) have suggested in formal and informal guidance that VAT is an unallowable charge to foreign grants and domestic grants with foreign components. Whether this means that foreign VAT on supplies and services procured abroad are unreimbursable under federal awards has been a question. Several institutions have pursued time-consuming and uncertain VAT exemptions from foreign revenue authorities.

The Uniform Guidance offers some clarity. It provides that foreign VAT “charged for the purchase of goods or services that a non-Federal entity is legally required to pay in country is an allowable expense under Federal awards” (Section 200.470). This appears to be a welcome development, although it may depend on how sponsors interpret the “legal” obligation to pay VAT. Query whether an institution is “legally required to pay” VAT if a VAT exemption is available in the host country. Often an exemption is technically available to NGOs and nonprofits under local law or through a bilateral or diplomatic agreement, but procedurally the exemption is very difficult to obtain. Foreign authorities are not eager to afford local tax exemptions to U.S.
organizations, and where an exemption is granted, often it’s burdensome to operationalize. Where a VAT exemption is available in the host country, many institutions will continue to seek the exemption in order to relieve pressure on sponsored project budgets; these institutions also may require their foreign subrecipients to obtain such exemptions.

Note that with respect to awards funded by U.S. foreign assistance funds – e.g., many USAID and State Department awards – the Uniform Guidance does not appear to alleviate the statutorily-required interim and final foreign VAT reporting requirements.

Exchange Rates

The currency exchange rate used in a proposal is not the same exchange rate in effect on the day the award is funded, when funds are transferred to local bank accounts, when funds are obligated and disbursed for local goods and services, when funds are drawn down, or when financial reports are prepared and submitted. As a result of exchange rate fluctuations, the awardee or subawardee may wind up with less (or more) foreign currency than it originally anticipated. Without prior approval from the sponsor, federal awards typically do not allow for currency exchange cost reserves, currency hedging cost items, or direct charging of currency losses to federal awards.

Section 200.440 of the Uniform Guidance allows for “cost increases for fluctuations in exchange rates” subject to the availability of funding and prior approval from the sponsor. The Council on Financial Assistance Reform (COFAR) clarified that prior approval is not required every time the exchange rate changes and an award is charged; approval of exchange rate fluctuations is required only when the change results in the need for additional funding, or the increased cost results in the need to significantly reduce the scope of the project. Notwithstanding this new language, it seems unlikely that sponsors routinely will augment awards to neutralize currency losses. But the new language would seem to support reasonable rebudgeting to manage the effect of such losses.

Awardees also are advised to account for local currency gains prior to the expiration of the award, and to maintain “adequate source documentation from a commonly used source in effect at the time the expense was made.”

Missing from the Uniform Guidance is instruction on how to financially track currency exchange. Without concrete guidance, federal awardees will continue to implement a spectrum of accounting methods to manage and track foreign exchange gains and losses, including, for example:

- The “first in, first out method”: This method uses the oldest exchange rate realized to account for expenses until the funds exchanged at that rate have been fully expensed. Subsequent expenses are charged to the funds received at the next oldest exchange rate and so on.
- The “weighted average method”: This method uses an exchange rate that represents the weighted average of all the realized exchange rates in a given period.

Neither of these accounting methods eliminate the risk of a budget shortfall due to currency losses, and neither intend to suggest that exchanges of federal funds may occur well in advance of the incurrence of foreign costs (notwithstanding the currency insulation that such a practice could offer). Under the Uniform Guidance, awardees still must minimize the time that elapses between drawdown of federal funds and actual disbursement for project costs (Section 200.305). Accordingly, large advances of grant funds to foreign offices and bank accounts could be difficult to align with the applicable guidance.

Costs Related to Individuals Working Abroad

To recruit and maintain talent in foreign countries is a challenge. U.S. expatriates and foreign workers often expect a competitive package of benefits and allowances on par with multinational corporations. Institutions that post U.S. citizens to long-term foreign assignments often struggle to maintain clear and consistent guidelines on the availability and accounting treatment of “additional” benefits that expats customarily anticipate. Similarly, foreign nationals hired abroad often demand compensation packages that align not only with local law, but also host country norms and custom. As discussed below, costs associated with housing allowances, personal living expenses, severance payments, and relocation abroad present knotty allowability issues, even under the new Uniform Guidance.

Housing allowances and personal living expenses

In addition to basic salary, expats and foreign nationals working abroad may receive additional benefits, such as housing, transportation, meal, and education allowances, cost of living adjustments, utility supplements, and even international tax advice. Circular A-21 deemed unallowable “goods or services for personal use of the institution’s employees” and further prohibited “housing allowances and personal living expenses for/of the institution’s officers”. (Section J.22, J.23). The Uniform Guidance maintains the general prohibition on goods or services for personal use of the institution’s employees, but it appears to liberalize the rules on housing and personal living expenses: “Costs of housing (e.g., depreciation, maintenance, utilities, furnishings, rent), housing allowances and personal living expenses are only allowable as direct costs regardless of whether reported as taxable income to the employees. In addition, to be allowable direct costs must be approved in advance by a Federal awarding agency.” (Section 200.445.)

Where the awardee can justify a direct allocation of these costs to federal projects (which is no easy analysis in some situations), the new guidance suggests that express prior written approval is necessary to charge these expenses. Query whether approval of a budget that identifies these among many other costs constitutes the sponsor’s prior approval, or whether separate and more specific approval is needed. Query further whether an institutional policy – such as an expat benefits policy or a foreign employee handbook – should specify these benefits to support allowability. As always, sponsors are not bound by administrative budget approvals where later audits find costs to be unsupported as direct costs or inconsistent with cost accounting principles or institutional policy.

Note also that the Uniform Guidance provision on compensation for personal services makes clear that “Costs which are unallowable under
other sections of these principles must not be allowable under this section solely on the basis that they constitute personnel compensation.” (Section 200.430). Accordingly, awardees may need to decouple housing and similar expenses from an employee’s total compensation package, at least for prior approval purposes.

Severance payments to foreign nationals

Foreign employment regimes may provide for mandatory or customary severance payments to local workers who disengage from the awardee’s employment. The Uniform Guidance repeats Circular A-21’s admonition that severance is allowable only to the extent that in each case, it is required by (a) law, (b) employer-employee agreement, (c) established policy that constitutes, in effect, an implied agreement, or (d) circumstances of the particular employment. But Section 200.431(i) of the Uniform Guidance includes new guidance on severance payments to foreign nationals employed outside of the United States:

(4) Severance payments to foreign nationals employed by the non-Federal entity outside the United States, to the extent that the amount exceeds the customary or prevailing practices for the non-Federal entity in the United States, are unallowable, unless they are necessary for the performance of Federal programs and approved by the Federal awarding agency.

(5) Severance payments to foreign nationals employed by the non-Federal entity outside the United States due to the termination of the foreign national as a result of the closing of, or curtailment of activities by, the non-Federal entity in that country, are unallowable, unless they are necessary for the performance of Federal programs and approved by the Federal awarding agency.

Whether and how awardees will demonstrate that severance payments abroad do not exceed “customary or prevailing practices” of the institution in the U.S. remains to be seen. Institutions may need to review their domestic severance policies or be prepared to show necessity to the federal project and take prior approval from the sponsor. Query whether conformance with local law or custom will satisfy the necessity requirement. The new guidance also appears to establish a presumption against severance payments where positions are lost on account of project wind down or change in scope; this could be unwelcome news to many foreign nationals employed abroad who have come to expect some form of disengagement compensation upon federal project closeout.

Relocation costs

Whereas Circular A-21 made passing reference to relocation costs in the context of new employee recruitment, the Uniform Guidance offers “relocation” as a standalone cost principle, and as part of the recruitment cost principle. (Sections 200.463, 200.464.)

Relocation costs incident to recruitment of new employees continue to be allowable to the extent that such costs are incurred pursuant to the awardee’s standard recruitment program; if the employee resigns for reasons within the employee’s control within 12 months after hire, the awardee must credit the award. (Section 200.463.)

The Uniform Guidance provides for relocation costs incident to “the permanent change of duty assignment (for an indefinite period or for a stated period of not less than 12 months) of an existing employee or upon recruitment of a new employee”, provided that (1) the move is for the benefit of the employer, (2) reimbursement to the employee is in accordance with an established written policy consistently followed by the employer, and (3) reimbursement does not exceed the employee’s actual (or reasonably estimated) expenses. The obligation to follow an “established written policy” may put pressure on institutions to develop expatriate benefits policies and international employment guidelines, or at least to gauge whether and how domestic benefit policies accommodate international postings. (Section 200.464.)

The Uniform Guidance includes a generous list of relocation costs, such as the costs of transportation of the employee, his or her immediate family, and personal effects to the new location; the costs of finding a new home, such as advance trips; closing costs, such as brokerage, legal, and appraisal fees incident to the disposition of the employee’s former home (subject to limitations); the continuing costs of ownership (for up to six months) of the vacant former home; and other necessary and reasonable expenses normally incident to relocation, such as the costs of canceling an unexpired lease (limited to three times the monthly rental), and purchasing insurance against loss of or damages to personal property. (Section 200.464.)

As part of recruitment costs, the Uniform Guidance also makes clear that short-term travel visas (as opposed to longer-term, immigration visas) are generally allowable expenses that may be proposed as a direct cost. (Section 200.463.)

Security costs

Many institutions contract for security services under federal projects that entail travel to such places as Iraq and Afghanistan. Like Circular A-21, the Uniform Guidance allows for necessary and reasonable expenses incurred for security to protect facilities, personnel, and work products. (Section 200.457.) Justifying the need for security services in high-risk locations usually is straightforward; however, allocating those costs across multiple projects abroad presents a classic challenge.

Administrative obligations

Conflict of interest

The Uniform Guidance requires sponsors to establish procurement-related conflict of interest policies for Federal awards, and awardees to disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to the sponsor in accordance with those policies. (Section 200.112.) In the context of procurements under Federal awards, if the awardee has a “parent, affiliate, or subsidiary organization that is not a state, local government, or Indian tribe, the non-Federal entity must also maintain written standards of conduct covering organizational conflicts of interest.” (Section 200.318.) The reason for this rule is readily apparent: procurement transactions between related entities appear to be less than arm’s length and therefore are possibly a bad deal for the government.

Many awardees operate federal projects abroad through sophisticated legal structures—often motivated by legal or practical necessity—such as wholly controlled subsidiary entities formed.
Volunteer Pathways
NCURA has identified three distinct volunteer pathways for its members to get involved - Presenter, Leadership, and Volunteer at the regional and/or national level. “Pathways” is intended to inspire and inform NCURA members on how to engage NCURA as a volunteer in any or all of these opportunities. To get involved visit http://collaborate.ncura.edu/VolunteerOpportunities

Hollie Schreiber’s Journey
Looking back at my participation in NCURA, I realize that I didn’t choose my own pathway; it was kind of forced upon me. I don’t say that with negativity; I say that with appreciation.

My first involvement was as a presenter – before I was even a member. A colleague knew I had an “expertise” and recruited me to present at a regional meeting in 2008. Before I knew it, she had also given my name to the program chair for the next regional meeting. I ended up on that program committee and presenting two sessions. I was caught in a whirlwind of volunteerism that hasn’t stopped since. Since that first meeting in 2008, I have presented during at least five regional meetings, and several annual meetings.

I owe a big thanks to Kay Ellis. I wouldn’t have thrust myself onto that stage, but I’m very glad she pushed me out there.

Hollie Schreiber is the Manager of Sponsored Programs in the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University and Chair of Region V. She can be reached at hollie.schreiber@okstate.edu.

Subawards to foreign entities
A perennial challenge in cross-border projects is the obligation to monitor foreign subrecipients. Where foreign organizations lack cost accounting infrastructure or are otherwise “high risk”, some institutions have issued “fixed price” subawards, even in situations where the foreign organization is a substantive project collaborator (e.g., not a mere “vendor” of goods and services to the prime awardee).

The Uniform Guidance introduces the concept of a “fixed amount subaward” and eliminates the awardee’s discretion to award them. “With prior written approval from the Federal awarding agency, a pass-through entity may provide subawards based on fixed amounts up to the Simplified Acquisition Threshold”, currently $150,000. (Section 200.332) Such fixed amount awards are appropriate only where certain conditions listed in Section 200.201 are satisfied, such as where there is a specific project scope and adequate cost, historical, or unit pricing data available to establish a fixed amount award with assurance that no increment above actual cost is realized. These items may be tricky to establish relative to foreign organizations.

As to foreign subrecipient indirect costs, Section 200.414 provides a “de minimis” indirect cost rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) to those entities that have never had a negotiated indirect cost rate, thereby eliminating a potential administrative barrier to new foreign subrecipients participating in federal projects. Yet to be determined is whether this new language will influence or affect sponsor policies that currently appear to deny indirect costs to non-U.S. organizations (HHS) or limit such indirect cost recovery to 8% of modified total direct costs (NIH).

Also, Section 200.331 of the Uniform Guidance is newly prescriptive in terms of data and other elements that must be included in subawards, including foreign subawards. This may merit modifications to foreign subaward templates. Awardees must provide in the subaward: (1) more than ten basic award identification data points as listed in Section 200.331; (2) “all requirements imposed by the pass-through entity on the subrecipient so that the Federal award is used in accordance with Federal statutes, regulations and the terms and conditions of the Federal award”; (3) additional terms to ensure that the prime awardee can fulfill its own responsibility to the Federal sponsor (e.g., record retention, technical reporting); (4) indirect cost rates that apply to subrecipient (either federally approved, negotiated with the subawardee in accordance with applicable cost principles, or de minimis as defined in Section 200.414); (5) a requirement that the subrecipient make its records and financial statements available to the awardee and auditors; and (6) terms and conditions on closeout of the subaward. Collectively, these elements suggest that it would be insufficient to simply attach the prime award document to the subaward document to satisfy all these requirements.

With respect to federal audit requirements applicable to foreign subrecipients, the Uniform Guidance appears to make a change. Circular A-133 stated specifically that it did not apply to “non-U.S. based entities expending in the U.S. or in a host country. These related entities may “borrow” personnel and services from the other in advancement of the federal project. In many cases, corporate formalities and boundaries are blurred for federally sponsored project programmatic purposes, and project costs incurred by a wholly controlled foreign entity may be considered the parent awardee’s own costs. Whether the conflict of interest policies contemplated in the Uniform Guidance apply to such scenarios remains to be seen.
Federal awards received either directly as a recipient or indirectly as a subrecipient”, although many sponsors still applied A-133 or comparable audit standards to foreign recipients and subrecipients. The Uniform Guidance exempts for-profit subrecipients from the audit requirements of Subpart F, but there is no express exemption afforded to foreign subrecipients.

**Conclusion**

Many more aspects of the Uniform Guidance merit review by international project administrators, including, for example, the revised travel cost principle in Section 200.474; closeout requirements in Sections 200.331(a)(6) and 200.343; and documentation of salary costs in Section 200.430. Already some foreign collaborators have indicated to U.S. prime awardees that they intend to benefit from the Uniform Guidance changes that appear to liberalize rules governing, for example, allowability of VAT and documentation of compensation costs. As medical and scientific research becomes increasingly international, these and related issues will continue to challenge awardees and attract attention from sponsors. More clarity may come from sponsor-specific implementations of the Uniform Guidance, and also perhaps from audit and enforcement activity over the next several years.

The Uniform Guidance’s effective date was December 26, 2013, and awardees become subject to the new rules on December 26, 2014.

Bill Ferreira is a Partner and Marta Thompson is an Associate in the grants and contracts practice of Hogan Lovells. Hogan Lovells is a global law firm that advises colleges and universities. Bill and Marta are based in Washington DC and can be reached at william.ferreira@hoganlovells.com and marta.thompson@hoganlovells.com

**REFERENCES**


**WANT TO SHARE NUMBERS?**

email Heather Kubinec at hkubinec@uci.edu
Open for Business: NCURA is Horizon 2020 National Contact Point

BILAT USA 2.0

NCURA is an Official Partner of BILAT USA 2.0

What is a PIC, and how can you obtain one through the URF, and why do you need authentication from ECAS before you can do anything? New as all these acronyms and designations are for many U.S. research administrators, why isn’t there a specifically designated person to help you figure these things out, or are you expected to call the European Commission’s Help Desk in Brussels?

The good news is that as of September 2014, NCURA is designated, on a pilot basis, as the U.S. National Contact Point (NCP) for legal and financial issues for Horizon 2020, which is the European Union’s €80 billion (~$100 billion) grant program for 2014-2020. In the same way that generations of research administrators have turned to NCURA to make sense of the U.S. federal grant regulations and the latest policy changes and on-line systems from U.S. federal funding agencies, U.S. research administrators can turn to NCURA for legal and financial questions regarding Horizon 2020. Thus, we can tell you that all Horizon 2020 applicant institutions must first set up an account with ECAS, or the European Commission’s Authentication Service. Only then, can an institution register through the Unique Registration Facility (URF) to obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC), which is a unique 9-digit identifier for every validated institution.

With more than 6,000 applications and an impressive 20% success rate in the previous grant program (2007-2013), U.S. researchers have been one of the most successful groups of applicants for European Union research grants. In addition, the European Commission has been very explicit in welcoming even greater participation from U.S. researchers for Horizon 2020. Thus, the likelihood is high that U.S. research administrators, if they have not already done so, will be called upon to submit an application to Horizon 2020, to evaluate the terms and conditions of the template agreement, and to ensure compliance with European Commission grant regulations.

NCURA’s new role as Legal and Financial NCP will enable us to connect with the relevant units within the European Commission to do the following:

- Provide information at the earliest possible time on work programs and roadmaps, upcoming calls, changes in priorities or administrative procedures, and funding statistics.
- Resolve common and systematic issues identified by U.S. researchers and administrators who encounter difficulties in submitting proposals, accepting awards, and managing projects.
- Partner with other countries’ Legal and Financial NCPs to advocate for simpler and more efficient policies and procedures.

In fact, Kathleen Larmett, NCURA Executive Director, participated as the first U.S. NCP of any kind in an NCP meeting with the European Commission on Horizon 2020 legal and financial matters from November 10-11, 2014, in Brussels, Belgium. She was warmly welcomed by the European Commission and the other NCPs, and then they all proceeded to work through 155 questions that the NCPs had submitted based on the issues that their researchers and research administrators encountered in Horizon 2020. In addition to this annual meeting of Legal & Financial NCPs with the European Commission, NCURA now has access to the entire network of NCPs from other countries ranging from Ireland to New Zealand (and everywhere in between), all of which have had a more established NCP system than the U.S. This is in addition to the contacts that NCURA already has developed with the Legal & Financial NCPs from Germany and Austria, who generously offered insights and shared best practices on how to encourage and facilitate researchers from their respective countries to participate successfully in Horizon 2020.

The following resources are critical for U.S. researchers and research administrators who are applying for or managing Horizon 2020 grants:


Also be on the lookout for updates from NCURA Global and BILAT USA 2.0:

- [http://www.euusscienceotechnology.eu/](http://www.euusscienceotechnology.eu/)
The Catherine Core Minority Travel Award supports travel-related costs to the NCURA Annual Meeting for up to four minority applicants who, because of institutional financial constraints, could not otherwise attend the conference. The awardees receive up to $1,500 toward travel expenses associated with attending the Annual Meeting. This award, however, does not only assist in the financial aspects of attending the meeting, it also offers a wide variety of services and opportunities for the awardees to interact with colleagues from other educational institutions around the country, and now the world.

The 2014 award recipients are: Tanya Blackwell, Georgia Institute of Technology; Josyel Castellon, University of California – Los Angeles; and Katina Merritt, University of Chicago.

The Nominating & Leadership Development Committee (N&LDC) eagerly anticipates the participation and leadership that our award recipients will bring to future NCURA activities. Here’s what this year’s award recipients had to say about their Annual Meeting experience:

**Tanya Blackwell, Georgia Institute of Technology**
The 56th Annual Meeting for me served the very important purpose of allowing me to meet, network with, and learn from my colleagues from across the country. In the words of the late Dr. Seuss, “it’s opener there, in the wide open air”. From the Sunday dinner to the last session on Wednesday afternoon, the summarizing message I received from my attendance at the AM56 is that we truly do support research, together.

Being a recipient of the 2014 Catherine Core Travel Award symbolizes so much more than receiving financial support to travel to the meeting. For me, it represents an African proverb that states, “when you climb a good tree, you get help.” I was making efforts to progress in my career and to develop as a research administrator and NCURA provided that help.

**Josyel Castellon, University of California – Los Angeles**
My experience at the meeting was very insightful in terms of learning about NCURA’s role on policy changes, the role the organization plays in disseminating critical information to its membership, and role in training and developing leaders in the field. Not only did I get the opportunity to learn valuable information from senior administrators via the training sessions, but I was also very impressed with the multitude of platforms the conference provided for networking. Overall the atmosphere was that of a well-managed, volunteer driven, professional organization, with an effective network system for the exchange of ideas.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Catherine Core. It was wonderful to meet her during the luncheon and I was very pleased to have that opportunity. Overall my experience was very positive. I came back to work motivated, energized, and immediately made changes with my staff and my own operations within my department. I reached out to those I met at the conference with hopes of building lasting relationships with key individuals. NCURA is developing leaders, and as a member, I feel the need to integrate myself to learn some of these skillset and most importantly, pass them on to others.

**Katina Merritt, University of Chicago**
This experience is one that I will never forget. I am looking forward to attending many more meetings and becoming more involved with my regional colleagues as well as national, international colleagues. I am extremely impressed with the huge knowledge base and all the resources available amongst the NCURA membership. I have begun forming great professional connections with a network of individuals that before now, I never knew existed.

I have nothing but high praise for the NCURA team – everything was well planned, well organized and everyone was willing to serve with a smile… I am indeed honored to have been selected as a recipient of the 2014 Catherine Core Minority Travel Award, as well as sharing lunch with Ms. Core, Emily Ainsworth, Pamela Webb, Pamela Napier, and the two other award recipients, Tanya Blackwell and Josyel Castellon on Tuesday during the conference.

If you are interested in applying or nominating someone for the Catherine Core Minority Travel Award, please find more information at [http://www.ncura.edu/MembershipVolunteering/Awards/CatherineCore.aspx](http://www.ncura.edu/MembershipVolunteering/Awards/CatherineCore.aspx).

The application deadline is March 23, 2015.
NCURA was pleased to have recently had the opportunity to share the global editions of our popular traveling workshops with our colleagues at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). The university, located in Thuwal, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, just celebrated its 5th year in existence and has quickly established itself as one of the most productive research institutions in the world. The institution’s transformation from a small Red Sea village known regionally for its fresh fish to a world-class graduate research university was made possible by the generous support of the 3rd largest academic endowment in the world. In endowing the university, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud stated, “The University shall be a beacon for peace, hope, and reconciliation and shall serve the people of the Kingdom and benefit all the peoples of the world.” The positive impact the institution is having on the region was evident throughout our stay as we experienced a great sense of pride and understanding that KAUST holds a special place in the world. While KAUST investigators do not lack for resources, they long for administrative best practices to ensure the most efficient use of their generous research support. It is under these conditions that the workshop faculty of Joe Gindhart of Washington University in St. Louis, Dave Richardson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Bob Andresen of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and John Hanold of Pennsylvania State University found themselves. The traveling faculty were warmly welcomed by our colleagues of the KAUST Office of Research Services and felt privileged to have had the opportunity to represent NCURA and to share and exchange their research administrative experiences with our Saudi Arabian colleagues.

For information on scheduling a global edition of our traveling workshops outside the U.S. contact Jesse Szeto, Senior Manager, NCURA Global at szeto@ncura.edu
**Michelle Auerbach** has accepted a position as Executive Director of Research Integrity and Assurance at Boston University. She was at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center as Director, Research Compliance.

**Michael Nichols** has been named Director, Office of Sponsored Programs at University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) effective November 10, 2014. This is actually a welcome home for Michael, who previously worked as senior grants and contracts manager at UMBC.

**Amanda Snyder** is now an Associate Director in the Office of Sponsored Programs at the University of Washington. Prior to this position, she was the Assistant Director for Sponsored Programs Administration at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Amanda participated in the Leadership Development Institute class of 2010 and was in the 2014 Executive Leadership Program.
By Charlene Blevens

In 2014, in addition to the large number of audit reports released, there have been several Department of Justice press releases related to grant fraud. Two press releases issued in late October 2014 announced settlement agreements in relation to grant fraud cases originating from whistleblower complaints, a press release issued in July 2014 related to falsification of data by an Iowa researcher and in April of 2014 a press release related to fraud claims against two Houston professors and a related SBIR.

The HHS OIG & US Attorney for Southern District of New York issued a press release in late October announcing the filing of a civil fraud lawsuit against a University and its School of Public Health’s International Center for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs (ICAP). The University settled the lawsuit simultaneous to the filing and agreed to repay over $9 million to resolve the Government’s claims. The suit stemmed from complaints filed in 2011 by a former Director of Finance for the Center which alleged that the University used grant money for work that was not dedicated to the funded projects.

In its suit, the US alleged that the University as the grant administrator received millions of dollars in federal grants and pursuant to the rules applicable to such grants was required to use a suitable means of verifying that the employees had actually performed the work charged to a particular grant. The Complaint alleged that the University was well aware that this was not being done, yet continued wrongly to charge many federal grants for work that was not devoted to the projects they funded. Specifically, over 200 employees never generated work reports and their work tasks were never verified for compliance with the grant’s requirements. The University’s Finance Department generated reports for these 200 individuals, using “limited or no knowledge of which grants the individuals actually worked on.” Principal investigators on the grants would approve large batches of reports at once, never actually inquiring into the information contained in each individual document.

What was unusual in this case was that in the settlement agreement the University admitted to failing to use a suitable means of verifying whether the salaries and wage charges to specific federal grants were based on an employee’s actual effort for that grant. The University also admitted that as a result, certain effort reports contained inaccurate information and for a number of years ICAP mischarged certain federal grants for work that was not allocable to those agreements. The US District Attorney remarked that grantees are required to use federal money for the purpose for which the grants was given and nothing else. “Educational institutions, like everyone else, should be held accountable when they fail to follow those rules.”

Also in late October, the FBI Chicago Division announced that a former cancer research physician at a Chicago University Cancer Center would pay $475,000 to settle claims of federal research grant fraud. Dr. Charles L. Bennett agreed to the settlement in a federal false claims act lawsuit which was made public last year after the government investigated the claims made by a former employee and whistleblower. The former employee was a departmental purchasing coordinator in the University’s Medical School. The 2009 whistleblower suit, which the government settled on her behalf, alleged that Dr. Bennett and others directed and authorized the spending of grant funds on goods and services that did not meet NIH and government grant guidelines. The government filed a civil lawsuit in January 2014 contending that Dr. Bennett submitted false claims under research grants with NIH in which he was the principle investigator for professional and consulting services, food, hotels, travel, conference registration fees and other expenses benefiting Dr. Bennett, his friends and family from January 2003 to August 2010. According to the complaint, Dr. Bennett allegedly billed federal grants for family trips, meals and hotels for himself and friends and “consulting fees” for unqualified friends and family members, including his brother and cousin.

A former assistant professor of biomedical sciences at an Iowa University was charged with four felony counts of making false statements, a July 2014 indictment filed in federal court shows. The professor admitted to faking lab results used to obtain millions of dollars in grant money for AIDS research. In July 2014 the Department of Justice issued a press release that Dr. Han was arraigned on four counts related to his falsification of scientific data to make it appear an experimental HIV/Aids vaccine neutralized or controlled the virus in rabbits when in fact it did not. The false data was reported to the National Institutes of Health in a research grant application and funded grant progress reports. A jury trial schedule for September 2014 was delayed and in October The Des Moines Register reported that prosecutors had offered a plea deal to the former scientist. News reports announced that Han resigned from his position and was banned from participating in federally funded research for three years. Subsequently NIH decided to withhold $1.4 million in grant funding from the University after critics, including U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley, questioned whether the agency responded strongly enough to the allegations of brazen fraud. Han managed the laboratory and conducted research under another researcher as part of a team working to find a vaccine against HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The pair had previously performed research at a University in Ohio before moving to Iowa in 2009. Their research had been awarded $19 million in grants from the federal National Institutes of Health. The Des Moines Register reported that a federal administrator said $10 million in grant money was given to the research team based on promising reports that were the result of Han’s manipulations. The Iowa University repaid $496,832 related to Han’s salary.

A routine audit of NASA small business grants to a company owned by two Houston University Professors prompted a two-year investigation that landed them both in court. In April of 2014 the US Attorney’s Of-
Office for the Southern District of Texas announced that two professors of a Houston University were charged with making false statements and wire fraud in connection with obtaining federal funds for research grants. The two Physics professors where accused of falsely obtaining approximately $1.3 million from the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. They allegedly started a small business known as Integrated Micro Sensors Inc. (IMS) which applied for and received SBIR grants or contracts from NASA, National Science Foundation, Department of Energy and the United States Air Force. On behalf of the small business they created, IMS, they both allegedly used false and fraudulent letters of support and made false representations with regards to facilities, equipment and materials. Additionally, the indictment alleges the defendants stated in proposals that IMS would pay a required subcontract fee to the University, which it failed to pay on four of five contracts. From 2008 through 2013, the defendants and IMS allegedly received at least five SBIR contracts for approximately $1.3 million. The defendants allegedly attempted to hide their scheme from detection from the government and university officials. The University stated that it was cooperating with authorities on the investigation and described itself as a victim of the fraud case.

Charlene Blevens, CPA is the Director of Post Award Operations at the University of Miami. She is a Certified Fraud Examiner. She has worked in the financial area in both the public and private sector in various capacities for more than 23 years with more than 11 years experience at universities in research. She has presented at the NCURA, FRA, SRA and NACCA conferences. In addition she is the author of the Summary of University Audits, Settlements and Investigations located on the National Conference on College Cost Accounting (NACCA) website at www.costaccounting.org. She can be reached at c.blevens@med.miami.edu
Do you ever stop and think about what “progress” would look like? When asked to write this article, we decided that in research, progress looks a lot like a train. The PI determines what track is used, but it takes many people and a lot of transactions to make the train move down that track. Transactions? Why transactions? Because every minute of our day involves transactions of some sort. Transactions come in many types of packages: payroll, travel, pre-award and post-award processes, and of course, purchasing. Some transactions are carried on the train and some make it go. Each of us deals with some combination of these varied transactions all the time. While we will discuss our individual dealings with transactions, we would like to pinpoint one very important transaction: communication. We spend time each day comparing notes and communicating about what is going on. If we don’t have effective communication with those we work with, our efficient train of transactions would come to a grinding halt. Please keep in mind as you review our processes that communication is what keeps our departmental train of research and education on track.

The first car on our research train is Max and the transaction processes in which he specializes.

My job primarily focuses on two areas: purchasing supplies and travel. Every communication is a transaction of the utmost importance. The perspective I give is from the need to manage a large volume of transactions on an ongoing basis.

Doing the majority of the supply purchases for our department (over 20 labs) means processing (ordering, logging and verifying) between 120 and 200 transactions each month. The standard for purchase requests that come into our office is that they are placed within one working day. It is very important to maintain a high level of organization to stay on top of that volume.

My purchasing file drawer is split into 4 sections:

1. Order Confirmations and Invoices
2. Packing Slips
3. Ready to Reconcile
4. Reconciled & Ready to File

I pass my transactions on to others, as I rarely touch packages when they come into the department. It is important that my transactions are understandable for those checking things in. Each order’s shipping address contains my initials and the last name of the PI. This communication makes it easy to determine where the package goes after it comes in, and it assures that I receive the packing slip. It is important to have communication from the labs if something is slow in arriving. Then I can provide lab personnel with the order confirmation so that we can follow up with the vendor. I also keep track of vendors that we have problems with so I can advise lab personnel on who is reliable.

Another transaction I deal with is travel, which starts with making sure we have all the compliance paperwork on file. This prevents issues with conflict of interest and difficulties during the reimbursement process. In order to be reimbursed, the traveler needs to complete a form to communicate the details of their trip. Our researchers have a lot going on so keeping “busy work” to a minimum is important. The form also assists in determining what docu-
Machinery and Equipment (M&E) Tax Exemption. By carefully evaluating each request, we can usually justify the purchases through the vendor requested. This means we only use a bidding process once or twice a year. The paperwork is sent to Purchasing Services and they do the rest!

Payroll is a vital component of my duties. It requires frequent communication with my supervisor, who communicates with the faculty regarding the research staffing needs and the available funding to fill those needs. Without the personnel to research and educate, our train goes nowhere. Speaking of our train, it also needs to be kept in good repair to move forward with the research goals of the department. My supervisor and I work together closely on facility issues. Whether it is arranging space or repairs, we make sure the researchers have the framework they need to succeed.

The other important part of our train is Ty. He can be either the Coal Car or the Caboose depending on the day, but I will let him tell you about that.

My job involves communicating both with our researchers and with administrative departments on campus. A failure to communicate what is needed and expected with either party can cause serious delays or derail the train altogether. Here are a few of the transactions I am part of each month on the pre-award side: preparing proposal budgets to show researchers how far the money is likely to go, modifying budgets according to the proposal budget justification, and occasionally preparing financial forecasts to see if a PI can hire a post-doc/lab technician. The post-award side can range from following up on grant allocations, confirming that F&A is being charged correctly, and delivering budget statements to the researchers to help them review expenditures. Other transactions of note include being the point of contact for invoices that need to be paid, helping determine which lab a package belongs to, and entering time cards in our payroll system for temporary employees. Details, details, details. The nuts and bolts of preparing proposal budgets, paying invoices, following up on delinquent invoices (why didn’t we receive it?), reconciling expenditures, etc., require me to focus on details. The reasons for the details are vital: research and education. My job removes some of the day-to-day burden from the researchers and instructors. Ideally, this gives faculty more time to focus their talent, training, and experience on their research and students.

Every transaction helps move the train toward its goal. This allows our researchers to focus on their strengths and, ultimately, promote the greater good. We recognize that each transaction plays a part in creating a climate where research, education, and public service can prosper. We work hard to treat our colleagues with dignity and respect, knowing we are all part of a significant undertaking. We do our best with each transaction and never know what we may be helping to bring to fruition. In other words, “We don’t know where this track leads, but riding the train is a hoot!”

My primary responsibilities are procurement, payroll, and facilities. The vast majority of procurement from my desk involves research equipment and any purchase request above the direct buy limit. For our purposes, equipment is defined as durable goods that have a useful life of more than a year. Equipment also includes items that are added to an existing piece of equipment. These should be vital to or improve the usefulness of that equipment, i.e., adding a light source to a microscope system.

We evaluate procurement requests by two methods: 1) does the total cost exceed the direct buy limit and/or 2) can the item be defined as equipment? If either qualification is met, the request is forwarded to me to begin the procurement process through our central Purchasing Services office. My job is to communicate through the process with our researchers and evaluate the requests from the end users. When a request comes in, I need to figure out how to make it happen while still adhering to state regulations. I evaluate the request for tax exemption status. I determine if we can justify purchasing it through the specific vendor requested or if a bidding process is necessary. In Integrative Physiology & Neuroscience, almost all our equipment orders meet the qualifications of the State of Washington.
LinkedIn Touchpoints—
By Samantha Westcott

There are many aspects of LinkedIn one may enjoy as a Research Administrator. Here are a few:

Professional Development LinkedIn is highly useful to those who are consistently seeking opportunities for growth and learning in all aspects of the job. From the LinkedIn homepage, the update feed provides tremendously useful information. Recommended articles are posted from colleagues, people one may follow, or areas of interest. It’s also easy to see who has a new job title, find job opportunities, or learn about what is going on in the field.

Profile Management and Review Managing a profile allows one to centralize all those updates and enhancements to a resume very easily. The fact that LinkedIn is the central point of resume information for other sites—such as Collaborate for NCURA—gives the user confidence that updates may be seen. Visiting a profile also allows one to think about how someone can get to know a person better professionally.

LinkedIn profiles are key to the hiring manager and for networking. Every business card collected and then followed up by a LinkedIn profile visit can lead to a variety of possibilities.

Recruitment Planning on hiring, a Research Administrator may immediately send a status update out on LinkedIn and link it to a Twitter feed. It can remind people to look for a job posting on an institution’s job board, NCURA, and other sites through LinkedIn. By the time the job is posted and the institution has caught up, the hiring manager may have received and reviewed resumes, possibly interviewed, and may even be ready to hire. Something as challenging as finding a team of potential grant writers for a major grant can be accomplished by sending a note out via LinkedIn. Not having to go through a lengthy recruitment effort is a key bonus with LinkedIn.

Give it a try. Look me up: www.linkedin.com/in/sjwestcott

LinkedIn Touchpoints—
By Pauline Gonen-Smith

When I first saw the title for this new social networking service shortly after it was launched in 2002 I read "lin ke din" and thought it was a new referral site for good food in the U.S.! Well, not exactly. As it turns out, LinkedIn is becoming the place to network globally and find jobs; this will undoubtedly be a good recipe for success. Success, however you want to define it in your life. My experience has been in a research administration environment that meant getting myself educated, hired for positions that allow me to get exposure to all aspects of the trade (permitting both a micro and macro perspective) and meeting some truly extraordinary, devoted and “good” human beings. But after 30 years of working, the economic downturn dealt me an unlucky blow and I became unemployed.

LinkedIn is now my lifeline to keeping up with what is being discussed in research administration by groups like NCURA and others. I reached out to three categories of individuals as connections: (i) people I know and have known very well during my career; (ii) people I know about in research administration and would like to know more about; (iii) people I do not know but who have positions in healthcare, social services or philanthropy, pharmaceutical companies, government, the arts and other attractive positions that I would like to learn more about. The “learning about someone” part comes from following articles or information that they “like” or contribute to on the Pulse. (Note that once you post on the Pulse you cannot edit or delete that post). I like this feature though occasionally an (irretrievable) spelling error crops up. Neither can you “like” comments made by others to a posting, just the original posting. This keeps (more or less) the focus on the original posting.

Once you have topped 500 connections (note “contacts” are people whom you have reached out to and invited but whom have not responded or accepted whereas “connections” have accepted your invitation) LinkedIn no longer shows how many more you have. Obtaining these 500 connections is not
LinkedIn Touchpoints—By Gai Doran

What are my touchpoints with LinkedIn? I frequently read articles that are shared in the groups I’ve subscribed to — both those related to my own field (research administration) and those of friends and colleagues in other fields. As an administrator of an NIMH-funded P30 HIV prevention center, I closely follow and sometimes emulate ways that some of my counterparts disseminate research findings through their own centers’ LinkedIn groups. I’m interested in getting a glimpse of issues that organizations like EARMA or the Australasian Research Management Society is grappling with, and comparing those with my own research administration directions. I try to keep tabs on what’s happening in groups of some peripheral professions, such as leadership, fundraising, and higher education administration. I like getting notices about colleagues who have new jobs or work anniversaries — it’s an opportunity for me to say hello and congratulate them. My most meaningful LinkedIn exchange was giving the insider view to a prospective candidate (now student) of Rush University’s Masters of Science in Research Administration Program.

Twitter Touchpoints—By Dan Nordquist

According to wikiHow.com, Twitter could be called a ‘real time social networking’ site, a place for sharing information as it happens, and for connecting with others in real time, often resulting in lasting friendships and contacts. I would call it my ‘real time information gathering source’, a place for obtaining information as it happens, and for connecting with others in real time, often resulting in lasting professional resources and networking. My Twitter List is full of data from federal sponsors, professional organizations, science news and policy publications, inspectors general and compliance, vendor information, institutional ranking entities, and much more. I utilize the information I find to notify PI’s, Chairs, Deans, etc. as well as research administrators at WSU of upcoming issues connected to research and scholarship in general plus many of the issues that face us in research administration.
Ann Arbor, Mich. — In his 18 months of life, Garrett Peterson has never gone home, spending his days in hospital beds tethered to ventilators that even at the highest settings couldn’t prevent his breathing from periodically stopping.

His condition was so tenuous that often his parents could not hold him for fear of compromising his breathing. But after surgeons at the University of Michigan’s C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital implanted 3D printed devices to open up Garrett’s airways, his parents are now planning to take their son home to their house in Utah for the very first time.

Garrett is just the second person whose life was saved with a new, bioresorbable device developed at the University of Michigan by Glenn Green, M.D., associate professor of pediatric otolaryngology and Scott Hollister, Ph.D., professor of biomedical engineering and mechanical engineering and associate professor of surgery at U-M.

Garrett has a condition called tetralogy of Fallot with absent pulmonary valve, which can put tremendous pressure on the airways. In Garrett’s case, he developed severe tracheobronchomalacia, or softening of his trachea and bronchi, and his airways collapsed to the point that they were reduced to just small slits.

The Petersons spent months watching their child stop breathing and turn blue sometimes four to five times a day — forcing medical personnel to resuscitate him with heavy medication or other interventions.

Garrett needed to be on a ventilator at pressure levels that had reached the maximum, and he was not improving. He was often on strong medication and even had been put into a medically-induced coma because he would work against the ventilator if he was awake.

“It’s really hard to watch your child basically suffocate and pass out before you could revive him and bring him back, over and over,” says Jake Peterson, Garrett’s father.

“Nothing would stop him from turning blue. Just lifting his legs for diaper change would collapse his airways and that was it. There was nothing we could do to help him,” says Natalie Peterson, Garrett’s mother.

The Petersons had read an article in May 2013 about the first baby saved by Hollister and Green’s device and believed Garrett’s case might be similar. That baby just celebrated his second birthday and continues to be free of all symptoms related to his tracheobronchomalacia.

The Petersons contacted Green at U-M.

“We thought this could be Garrett’s chance of not only getting home but also getting off a ventilator,” Natalie Peterson says.

During much of 2013, the Petersons went back and forth trying to decide if the 3D printed device was the right option. In December, Garrett’s condition took a turn for the worse. His gut was shutting down from the high ventilator pressures. He had been in an intensive care unit for over a month and was in critical condition.

The Petersons decided to come to C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital.

“It was highly questionable whether or not he would survive,” Green says about Garrett’s condition.

“It’s horrible not knowing whether or not he would survive,” Green says about Garrett’s condition.

“It’s horrible not knowing when your child is going to die. It’s horrible not knowing when one of these episodes is going to be the one he doesn’t make it through.”

Hollister and Green used provisions for emergency clearance from the Food and Drug Administration to create and implant a tracheal splint for Garrett made from a biopolymer called polycaprolactone.

Hollister created a 3D model of Garrett’s airway and specially designed splints for a custom fit on the baby’s bronchi.

Hollister was able to make the custom-designed, custom-fabricated de-
vice using high-resolution imaging and computer-aided design. The device was created directly from a CT scan of Garrett’s trachea and bronchi, integrating an image-based computer model with laser-based 3D printing to produce the splint.

Watch a video demonstrating the 3D printing:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iflca2KQWP4

On Jan. 31, 2014, Richard G. Ohye, M.D., the head of pediatric cardiovascular surgery at C.S. Mott, took on the intricate task of sewing two devices on two spots of Garrett’s airway, assisted by Green. The splints were sewn around Garrett’s right and left bronchi to expand the airways and give it external support to aid proper growth. Over about three years, the splint will be reabsorbed by the body.

“There we go, up and down,” said Green as the lungs began to inflate during the surgery. “We know the splint is working, he’s able to ventilate both lungs. I’m very optimistic for him.”

As he gets strong enough to breathe on his own for the first time, Garrett is on continually decreasing ventilator support, now at less than a quarter of the pressure needed before. He’s also done short stints completely off the ventilator.

Even if he needs some ventilator support for a little while longer, it’s low enough now that he can use a home ventilator and his gut is working again.

“It is a tremendous feeling to know that this device has saved another child,” says Hollister. “We believe there are many other applications for these techniques, but to see the impact living and breathing in front of you is overwhelming.”

Hollister says it is hoped that Garrett will need about two to three years for his trachea to remodel and grow into a healthy state. That’s about how long this material will take to dissolve into the body, says Hollister.

Severe tracheobronchomalacia is rare. About 1 in 2,200 babies are born with tracheobronchomalacia and most children grow out of it by age 2 or 3, although it often is misdiagnosed as asthma that doesn’t respond to treatment.

Severe cases, like Garrett’s, are about 10 percent of that number. And they are frightening, says Green. A normal cold can cause a baby to stop breathing.

“We needed to give him a chance and that’s what these splints have done,” says Natalie Peterson.

“And now he’ll show us what he can do.”

3D Printed Device Saves Baby’s Life flickr site:
https://www.flickr.com/photos/unhealthsystem/sets/72157642306030575/

About C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital: Since 1903, the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital has led the way in providing comprehensive, specialized health care for children. From leading-edge heart surgery that’s performed in the womb to complete emergency care that’s there when you need it, families from all over come to the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital for our pediatric expertise. In 2013, C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital was ranked eighth in the nation in Parents Magazine’s 10 Best Children’s Hospitals ranking. To learn more, go to www.mottchildren.org.

C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital provides innovative care for children with a wide variety of complex airway disorders. Learn more here: www.mottchildren.org/airwaydisorders

The original story can be found here: http://www.uofmhealth.org/news/archive/201403/babys-life-saved-after-3d-printed-devices-were-implanted-u

If you want to share a “cool” project idea, please email Kellie Klein at kellie.klein@wsu.edu
December 26, 2014 marks the transition from OMB Circulars to Uniform Guidance (UG). During my 28 years in higher education, much of my time has been spent dealing with the OMB Circulars’ “three R’s”: “Reading,” “Reciting” and “Referring to” A-21, A-110 and A-133. I wonder how long it will take me to shift to the new regulations. I also wonder how quickly federal officials will transition from past Circulars to the Uniform Guidance. Will the direct-charging of administrative salaries really be acceptable to agencies? Will auditors allow the direct-charging of computing devices not exclusively for project use? Will we truly be able to suspend our effort reporting systems, or will auditors still reference A-21 requirements and pre-Uniform Guidance audit findings? We will soon find out.

Although Uniform Guidance is a hot topic for many, Export Control Reform tops my list. We have been trying to interpret the on-going changes to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) and how those changes affect our current export controlled research projects and licenses. In addition, we are looking at multiple situations that most likely will require a license from the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Although some positive changes have been made in the OFAC’s Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations that affect universities, there still remains ambiguity in the interpretation of certain sections. Have you ever tried calling OFAC for guidance? I rest my case. Apply for that license - you have nothing to lose.

In Mac Anderson’s Book, “Change Is Great….You Go First”, he states “Deciding to make changes is the easy part…. We manage change, or it manages us” As we begin 2015, there are many changes and opportunities in front of us. One of the biggest is the implementation of the OMB's new Uniform Guidance (UG). Many of us have been planning on its implementation for over 18 months. So have the Federal agencies. Some of the Feds will adopt the UG for their entire portfolio of assistance agreements as of Dec 26, 2014. Others will go with UG for any new funding after that date. And others still have no idea what they will do… The first audits 18 months from now will tell the tale…

What I Found on Twitter

Amanda Snyder: Please follow me @travelgirl76 and follow @NCURA

Inc. – @Inc – “5 Things Your Boss Loves To Hear” @LollyDaskal http://bit.ly/1x0BQjY

I Am Biotech – @IAmBiotech – Cleveland Clinic Survey Shows Big Pharma Innovation Renaissance http://ow.ly/EkvWA

Scientific American – @sciam – Popular on our site: Depression could finally get more research attention http://ow.ly/Efloa #mentalhealth

U.S. EPA – @EPA – We’re partnering with @NIEHS to fund Children’s Environmental Health & Disease Prevention Research Centers. http://go.usa.gov/vSYw

US Dept of Education – @usedgov – Looking for data? The data files from @IES_NCEE’s evaluation files are available for researchers to use. Learn more: http://1.usa.gov/1DcaLZ

LinkedIn Pulse – @LinkedInPulse – (No Subject). FWD: Re: Re: Re.: Don’t waste time with sloppy emails: http://linkd.in/19c0yV

Mental Floss – @MentalFloss – 6 Ways Kids Enjoyed Snow Days 100 Years Ago — http://bit.ly/1xZhKuq

I just started following @AECFNews, @LinkedInPulse, and @FordFoundation.
Enhance your professional development with these easily readable, brief and affordable offerings from NCURA!

The Role of Research Administration
Third Edition, 42 pages
Provides a comprehensive overview of the many functions and varied roles and responsibilities of research administrators.

Writing and Negotiating Subawards Under Federal Prime Awards
A practical guide to understanding and improving subaward practices.

Establishing and Managing an Office of Sponsored Programs at Non-Research Intensive Colleges and Universities
Third Edition, 32 pages
Reviews the basic functions & strategies of organizing and managing an office of sponsored programs at a PUI.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE NCURA STORE:

✓ A Primer on Clinical Trials
✓ Cost Sharing: An Overview
✓ Effort Reporting: An Overview
✓ A Primer on Intellectual Property
✓ Facilities and Administrative Costs in Higher Education
✓ Cost Accounting Standards
✓ OMB Circular A-21 Mini Guide
✓ OMB Circular A-110 Mini Guide
✓ OMB Circular A-133 Mini Guide

http://www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore.aspx
Greetings Region I!

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to what 2015 will have in store for you.

One thing I’m looking forward to this year is the Spring Meeting in Portland, Maine (May 3-5, 2015 at the Westin Hotel). Like many New Englanders, I love Maine and I love Portland, and it will serve as a truly fantastic backdrop for what promises to be a memorable meeting. Kris Monahan, Donna Smith and their planning committee have been hard at work putting together their cleverly themed “Mission Possible: You CAN get there from here” meeting. You lurkers from other regions checking out what we have going on here in Region I, I’m sure your regional meetings will also be great but I think this year, ours may be best.

Another thing I’m excited about is our region’s new committee chairs, I cannot emphasize enough how lucky we are to have so many amazing volunteers in Region I. Elizabeth Demski will be leading the Professional Development Committee, Lorraine Kiley is at the helm of the Volunteer and Membership Committee, Linda Crocker will oversee the Governance Committee, Pattie McNultie is leading the charge of the Sponsorship Committee, Minessa Konecky will be guiding the Curriculum Committee, and Deb Elek will be chairing the Awards Committee.

In this coming year I also have an ask for you, I’d like you to think about and share with us how the region can best serve you as a member. You can email me with your thoughts at chair@ncuraregioni.org. I really do want to hear from you. Tell me what we are doing well and what we could be doing better.

As an organization that relies heavily on the good intentions and commitment of devoted volunteers, I’m hopeful that we will continue to build on the excellent work of the outgoing chairs, officers and advisory board members. Please join me in thanking Karen Woodward Massey, Patrick Fitzgerald, Bob Stemple, Donna Smith, Charlotte Gallant, John Harris, Shella Batelman, Kristin Pennarun, Ben Prince, Barbara Richard, Stacy Riseman, Denise Rouleau and Susan Zipkin for all their service to our region.

Over the next year I will be encouraging you to get involved and volunteer: Sign up to be a mentor or a mentee in our awesome Mentor Program; Apply for a spot in our groundbreaking Executive Shadow Program; Help staff the registration table at RADGs, the Spring and National meetings; Run for an elected position; Nominate someone for a service award; or Apply for a travel award. Why? Because volunteering is good for you (really, it can help reduce stress), you learn a lot, it brings people together and it’s a great way for you to make a difference in our organization.

Michelle Auerbach serves as the Chair of Region I and is the Executive Director of Research Integrity and Assurance at Boston University. Michelle can be reached at chair@ncuraregioni.org

Happy New Year Region II!

I’m looking forward to a busy and exciting year in Region II! First, please welcome our new Officers for 2015.

Chair-Elect: Erin Bailey, University at Buffalo
Treasurer: Tim Schailey, Christiana Care Health System
Regionally Elected Member to the National Board: Cheryl Williams, University of Rochester

Please join me in thanking Past Treasurer Debra Murray, Georgetown University, for her service in 2014 keeping track of the Region’s finances. In addition, Brian Squilla, Thomas Jefferson University, will be serving another year as Past Chair in 2015 – Thanks Brian!

Spring Meeting Updates
April 26–April 29, 2015, Baltimore, MD
“Quoth the Regulations: Solving the Mysteries of Research Administration”

Have a session you would like to see at the Baltimore meeting or want to share your knowledge as a presenter? Please visit the following link to suggest a session: http://www.empliant.com/survey/F28915249-B849-9476-69C4/

April 30 – May 4, 2016, Philadelphia, PA

Thank you to everyone that participated in the poll to determine the location for the 2016 meeting. It was close, but Region II will be returning to Philly in 2016. Will the members of Region II run up the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art like Rocky or finally settle the debate over whether Pat’s or Geno’s makes the best cheesesteaks? Mark your calendars!

Professional Development Committee Update
Visit the PDC section of the Region II website for a current listing of PDC workshops near you! Interested in hosting a workshop? Institutions hosting a workshop receive either two free workshop registrations or one free Region II spring meeting registration! http://ncuraregionii.org/pdc

Want to Get Involved? Do you want to be more involved in Region II? We are looking for members for our various committees including the Volunteer and Membership Committee and the Communications Committee. Please visit the Region II website www.ncuraregionii.org to sign-up. The Spring Meeting Program Committee will also need volunteers in April so keep a look out for emails about volunteer opportunities!

Other activities planned for the year include a Logo Contest, the Mentor-Me Retreat and more! Stay tuned!

Don’t forget to follow us on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ncuraregionii and Twitter: @NCURAREGIONII

Michelle Auerbach serves as the Chair of Region I and is the Executive Director of Research Integrity and Assurance at Boston University. Michelle can be reached at chair@ncuraregioni.org

Jill A. Frankenfield serves as the Chair of Region II and is an Assistant Director, Officer of Research Administration, University of Maryland, College Park.
With the holidays past us and reenergized spirits from time with our families, Region III is ready to make 2015 another remarkable year. Our first order of business for 2015: officially welcoming Erica Gambrell as our new Regionally Elected National Board Member and Alex Atkinson as our Regional Treasurer. We know they will represent and serve the region well and we thank them in advance for their contributions.

As you know, NCURA is a volunteer-centric organization and we would not be able to function without the help of all those who dedicate their time to making our region successful. While all volunteers are greatly appreciated, we’d like to give special recognition to James Denney for his outstanding assistance on the AV team over the last several years. Thanks, James! We’re currently reorganizing our committees to allow for more opportunities to lend a helping hand. Please be on the lookout for important details coming soon. We will certainly need “all hands on deck” for the 2015 Spring Meeting in the Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Once again, the Wild Dunes Resort will be hosting NCURA’s largest region May 9 -13, 2015 as we spend time developing professionally and networking. This year’s theme, “Uncharted Waters. Exploring Together,” focuses on the implementation of the Uniform Guidance. The program will offer workshops and sessions for the novice and experienced research administrator alike! Below are some ways that you can get prepared for the Spring Meeting:

- **Register as soon as possible to take advantage of the Early Bird discount.**
- **Apply for a Travel Award.**
- **Buy your Region III T-Shirt.**
- **Volunteer.**

We look forward to seeing everyone in May but until then, stay connected with us on LinkedIn and Facebook!

Many more exciting things are coming through for Region III and we want you to be the first to know.

Tanya Blackwell serves as Region III’s magazine contributor and is a Contracting Officer at Georgia Institute of Technology/GTRC.
their knowledge or have changed positions and need to develop skills in a new area of research administration.

Volunteer mentors and mentees are matched based upon criteria such as specific area of interest, institution type, years in research administration, and goals. Once matched, the pair is responsible for coordinating the collaboration that works best for them. The Region IV NCURA Professional Development Committee (PDC) expects mentor applicants to be committed to taking a lead role in the membership relationships; however, it is imperative that mentees actively participate throughout the year. We encourage a regular schedule of communications, whether meeting in person or connecting by e-mail, telephone, or in person at NCURA conferences! NCURA Region IV PDC members will check in throughout the year with both participants to gain feedback and to monitor the fit and success of their relationship.

Congratulations to our first class of mentor/mentee pairs:

**Mentor/Mentee**

- **Aaron Campbell**, University of Wisconsin-Madison/
- **Lorelei Sells**, University of Missouri – Kansas City
- **Diane Hillebrand**, University of North Dakota/
- **Ann Waterbury**, University of South Dakota
- **Darren Howard**, Moraine Valley Community College/
- **Ina Justis**, SE Missouri State University
- **Justine Karungi**, University of Kansas Medical Center/
- **Ingrid Fowler-Wrather**, Northwestern University
- **Sue Kelch**, University of Michigan/
- **Jeff Pethick**, University of Notre Dame
- **Kristin Martinez**, Marshfield Clinical Research Foundation/
- **Jessica Bowen**, University of Nebraska
- **Craig Reynolds**, University of Michigan/
- **Susan Morgan**, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- **Dawn Underwood**, Indiana State University/
- **Jill Ferguson**, University of Missouri

**Region IV Joint Spring Meeting** And of course I cannot go without saying that our upcoming spring meeting in Chicago is taking shape. You will be able to find all of the latest information here http://www.ncuraregioniv.com/conferences.html on the conference page. Look for all of the details including conference and hotel registration information, program updates, and special activities including a sign up link for the CRA Review, volunteering and special events.

It has been a great pleasure planning this meeting and working with the International Region, and we look forward to seeing you there!

**Warm Regards, Sue Kelch, Chair, Region IV**

Sue Kelch serves as the Chair of Region IV and is Research Finance Manager in the Department of Otolaryngology, University of Michigan.
Another program that the Executive Committee has identified as a priority is Leadership Development. Chair Hollie Schreiber has appointed Scott Erwin of Texas State University to lead this committee. In addition to identifying Region V members for development for regional and national offices and the Executive Leadership Program, this committee will be working with the Membership Committee to identify leadership talent in our existing and new members. Be looking for opportunities related to both of these committees at the Spring Meeting in Houston.

Hollie Schreiber serves as Chair of Region V and is Manager, Ag Sponsored Programs Administration, at Oklahoma State University.

REGION VI
Western
www.ogrd.wsu.edu/r6ncura

Serving as Chair of Region VI has been so rewarding and so challenging. I am grateful for all who made this time so successful. As I move to the coveted position of Immediate Past Chair. While I will be in a more supportive role in the coming year, I look forward to being helpful for the exciting events and opportunities that will be coming in 2015 and 2016.

There are so many people to recognize that it is hard to start to list them; however, I will try and name those that have been standing shoulder to shoulder together to achieve our goals in 2014. Derick Jones, Secretary, and Sharon Elenbaas, Treasurer, have been partners with everything and demonstrated amazing leadership. Allison Ramos, your work and your efforts are often hidden but are central to everything that goes right in our Region. Thank you, Melissa Mullen, Chair-Elect, who is constantly supportive of the goals that will move us forward. Leslie Schmidt, Region VII Chair, and my partner in our effort. Leslie stepped up without a Chair-Elect year and worked side-by-side with us. Sandra Logue from Region VII was there with us with leadership and with amazing teamwork. Lisa Jordan is our tech team lead for the Regional Meeting and is a gem we are so glad to have back in the Region.

More recognition needs to go to the RAC members, who have been instrumental in guiding our efforts. The LeadMe program leaders, mentors, trainees, and participants enhance our region and form our next generation of leaders. The many other Regional leaders that support us and help us succeed by sharing their successes. Thanks to those who served on the program committee and delivered an outstanding meeting in Reno. To all those who support the Region VI activities on committees, with volunteer service, and in their membership, thank you. Deep appreciation is directed to anyone who volunteers, as it is the volunteer effort that holds our region and profession together. And thanks to the National staff and leadership. Finally, to my team of colleagues at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles who work tremendously hard and make room for growth for all of us, you are the best reasons to go to work each day.

If I missed naming anyone, my apologies to you.

Our regional members are welcoming and warm and I am grateful to this tremendous asset to this profession. I am proud to call myself a Research Administrator and a member of NCURA Region VI.

With gratitude, Sam

Samantha Westcott serves as Region VI Chair and is the Manager, Sponsored Projects Team, The Saban Research Institute - Children’s Hospital, Los Angeles.

REGION VII
Rocky Mountain
http://ncuraregionvii.asu.edu

Dear Region VII Friends,

When I found out that I had been selected to serve as chair for our region I must admit that I experienced a sea of emotions. Everything from excitement, feeling honored, fear of failure and anticipation of “what does this responsibility entail” all raced through my mind. I tried to project exactly how this year might play out and I’m happy to say that none of my nightmare scenarios played out and instead my year was one of expanded and renewed friendships, an increased knowledge of our wonderful NCURA organization and such a feeling of support and help. Whenever I asked for assistance it was there and I was so reminded that NCURA truly is an organization of volunteers and that people are so willing to give their time and expertise even then I know that they are already very busy with their “day” jobs. So, I owe everyone that helped this past year a huge debt of gratitude for everything that you did to make our region function and shine. You were most patient, kind and understanding even when I asked a dumb question for the eleventh time.

I want to thank this year’s slate of officers (Tony Onofretti, Christine Marquez, Sandra Logue, Julie Gallegos, Marj Townsend) for their help at the national and regional meetings among other tasks, and Elizabeth Sexton for serving as the Volunteer Coordinator. Thanks as well to the numerous volunteers that so graciously helped with the many behind the scenes activities that need to be performed. I also want to thank Vicki Krell for her service on the NCURA Board and Kathy Delehoy (recently retired) for her service on the N&LDC. And last, but certainly not least, I need to thank all of you presenters and co-presenters – without your help there would not even be a program or meeting to worry about.

Hopefully you had a relaxing and enjoyable holiday season. I want to welcome Christine Marquez as the 2015 Chair of Region VII. She and I have worked together closely this year and I am confident that she will be excellent in representing our region at every level. Thank you again.
for allowing me the privilege of serving as Region VII Chair. It has been a rewarding and fun experience.

Leslie

And from your new Chair, Christine Marquez:

Region VII friends,

As January 1st fast approaches, I have been anticipating the coming year and look forward to serving as your chair for 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Leslie, for all the hard work and dedication she has put into 2014. Leslie really stepped up to the plate and I know that I will reach out to her for suggestions and advice in the coming year.

Save the dates: October 4-7, 2015
Salt Lake City - Life Elevated: Reaching New Heights in Research Administration.

In the next few months, we will be reaching out to our membership to call for proposals for sessions, suggestions, volunteer opportunities and opportunities that you feel will be valuable to our region. I would like to see Region VII’s membership grow in numbers through outreach to our member institutions, as well as the professional opportunities that we provide at our Regional Meeting. Region VI and VII look forward to any input you may have for SLC2015. Please do not hesitate to contact me at chmarquez@unm.edu if you have any questions, suggestions, or would like to find out more about volunteer opportunities.

Thank you and see you all in SLC in 2015!
Christine Marquez, M.A.

Leslie Schmidt, is the Region VII Immediate Past Chair and Assistant Vice President for Research at The Montana State University. Christine Marquez started her term as Region VII Chair in January 2015 and is a Senior Sponsored Projects Officer at the University of New Mexico.

REGION VIII
International

http://www.ncuraintlregion.org

Happy New Year to Region VIII members! Was one of your resolutions this year to become more involved in NCURA? The international region is very new and we would welcome your participation. A list of volunteering opportunities is available at http://ncuraintlregion.org/volunteer-opportunities.

One way to get involved is to grab a phone/camera as it is research administration selfie time! To capture the breadth of our members from across the globe, as mentioned in the December magazine, we are creating an “around-the-globe photo-collage”. To be involved, send in a picture of yourself in front of your University’s logo to eva.bjorndal@ki.se

In preparing for the year ahead, we have also taken a look back at 2014. This was an exceptional year for the international region, highlights include:

International region chair Patriq Fagerstedt, followed by Eva Björndal, inspiring the international region members to become more involved in NCURA.

The 1st international region meeting was held in D.C. in April. The one day meeting, Going Global: Fostering Innovation and Strengthening Synergies, brought together leading thinkers to address the synergies between four hotly debated issues in research and higher education: internationalization and mobility, excellence, funding and social inclusion. Committee Chair, Agatha Keller, with committee members Annika Glauner and Bryony Wakefield were very appreciative of the presenters, those attending and the NCURA staff for their help and support.

The Regional Nominating and Leadership Development Committee was established.

By-laws were drafted and adopted.

In 2015 there are several adventures on the horizon. Most excitingly, Region VIII is partnering with Region IV for our spring meeting from April 26-29 in Chicago and registration will open early February. Check out the program and learn more at the international region website http://ncuraintlregion.org or Region IV’s website http://www.ncuraregioniv.org/conferences.html. It’s a meeting that can’t be missed!

We are also happy to announce that the first International Region Travel Award will be introduced in 2015. More information about the travel award is to be found on the international region website http://ncuraintlregion.org

Mark your calendar, book your flights and remember that New Year’s resolution to become more involved in NCURA!

Best wishes
Bryony Wakefield, Chair, Region VIII
Eva Björndal, Immediate Past Chair, Region VIII

Bryony Wakefield serves as the Chair of Region VIII and is the Director, Research Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at The University of Melbourne.

Eva Björndal is the Immediate Past Chair of Region VIII and is the Team Leader Post-Contract and Financial Compliance at the Karolinska Institutet.
I hope this issue of *NCURA Magazine*, dear readers, finds you happy and well. I recognize that the mental state of happiness and well-being is no small feat if one is stuck in the bleak midwinter of Regions I, II, IV, northern VII, and parts of VIII. But perhaps you are one of the lucky ones in Region III, V, southern VII, and other parts of VIII. Like Richard the Third, now could even be the winter of your discontent, but made glorious summer by sunny beaches and warm breezes. But I digress.

At Livlonenprosser, the nights are cold and long, the days are cold and short, and all available outdoor activities are cold. Such activities are mostly limited to 1) shoveling snow while secretly hoping a heart attack will release me from my misery, and 2) fueling my vehicle at the gas station while secretly hoping a cell phone might accidentally create a spark that will send the place up in flames just so that I might, however briefly, be warm. Ah, the joys of winter. A season where – for many of us – the devil drifts along on the wind and snow rather than reclining amongst the coals (soon to burn more brightly from multiple copies of A-21 and A-110) and entertaining our relatives.

Every winter night in the Neffert household we play a literal variant of a favorite childhood game “Freeze Tag.” In our version, the fireplace hearth is a safety zone and all others search for blankets. It’s fairly intuitive as to which players win and which do not.

As you might guess, there is also plenty of time for the winner of the aforementioned game to sit around the fireplace contemplating the mysteries of life. A personal favorite is: “Why don’t I move to St. Thomas? Surely they must need someone to submit proposals.” The answer, of course, is that happiness is not like real estate as location, location, location doesn’t matter. As my contemplation continues, a surprising hypothesis emerges:

My attitude can control the thermostat of the climate in which I live. From this hypothesis, I arrive at an overarching truth: Regardless of one’s NCURA region, the best one can do is make the best of what one does.

Life is only as good as we decide it will be. Sometimes the only thing we have the power to control is how we react to the details of any situation. Sure, the devil may be in those details, but – as research administrators – we know that the one who considers, understands, and controls those details ultimately wins the day. This perspective allows us to distill some happiness from situations over which we have little or no control.

So, yes, the onslaught of awards before the close of the Federal fiscal year causes a lot of hard work and late evenings, but it makes the lulls — when they come — all the more precious.

And, yes, the last minute proposals submitted seconds before the 5 p.m. deadline create stress, but they are also emblems of our strength and ability to weather the storm. We are resilient and should not overlook what we can accomplish.

Finally, yes, denying a powerful PI’s sketchy cost transfer might tie one’s stomach in knots, but it also signifies possession of the character necessary to do what is right. It is this realization that allows research administrators to sleep well at night.

Sometimes, though, we might find ourselves in control of decision-making. My fire-side contemplation has resulted in this advice: *Consider the situation, make a choice, and live with it.* What’s done is done. Made a mistake? No worries. It’s been known to happen. Learn from the experience, don’t make it again, and move forward.

And, yes, the weather may not be optimal now, but it makes spring all the more delightful and all the more welcome. Take my word for it: Spring is coming, my friends. It always does. Until then, throw another copy of A-133 on the fire and stay warm.

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*NCURAbly Pedantic* is written by long-standing NCURA members, all under pseudonym protection.
There was much discussion of warm August sunshine on a cold, wintry day in Washington this past November as the AM57 Program Committee held its initial meeting to plan for next summer’s Annual Meeting. The committee led by NCURA Vice President Robert Andresen and his co-chairs Lisa Mosley and Brenda Kavanaugh shared their ideas for workshops, concurrent sessions, discussion groups, and other offerings for the meeting which will be held at the Washington Hilton on August 2-5, 2015. With the meeting theme “New Guidance, Renewed Partnerships,” the planning focused on developing content for nine tracks, including Pre-award, Post-award, Clinical Research, Federal, PUI, and others. “I think this meeting will be a great opportunity for us as research administrators to share our ideas and experiences in not only implementing the Uniform Guidance, but also continuing our roles in supporting faculty and research at our institutions,” said Robert Andresen. “We have lots of ideas for topics and some exciting plans for some new things during the August meeting. People should mark their calendars now; we’re looking forward to sharing more information in the months ahead.”
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WRITTEN BY: Jane Youngers, Assistant Vice President for Research Administration, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and Pamela Webb, Associate Vice President for Research Administration, University of Minnesota

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