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One article I hope you’ll pay particular attention to is Dave Kennedy’s article “Advocacy Works! The Procurement Case Study.” Dave and the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) have been instrumental in keeping dialogue going with OMB about the UG. Dave’s title says it all—advocacy does work. COGR and the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) also teamed with other important groups like the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI), and the National Association of Education Procurement (NAEPR) to create a compelling argument for why OMB should re-think/re-consider the proposed procurement regulations, and particularly the micro-purchase threshold. By the time you receive this edition, the Federal Register Notice concerning another public comment period should be published. Please take advantage of any public comment opportunities that we are afforded.

You’ll also see articles with slightly different perspectives on audits under the UG, like the article from Sam Gannon and Chris Green. It’s a wonderful illustration of how our sponsored projects offices and our internal audit offices work together. They also talk about baking as well, and who doesn’t like thinking about baked goods during the holiday season!

Speaking of the holiday season, the NCURA Education Scholarship Fund is inching closer to its $100,000 goal. Bernie Sanders Presidential bid showed “even a little means a lot.” Please consider contributing!

As I mentioned earlier, this is the last issue of 2016, and I want to acknowledge Kris Monahan, who steps down as a Co-Editor with this edition. It’s been a real pleasure working with Kris as a Co-Editor. Kris, thanks for all of your hard work. It’s especially meaningful to me in my first year as Senior Editor. You made it really easy for me, so thank you!

ON THE COVER: It is hard to believe we have come to the end of 2016. No matter how you think about it, 2016 has been a very interesting year. So a theme of “Icing on the Cake” seems fitting. This is the first year we’ve conducted audits under the Uniform Guidance (UG), so it’s no accident that the lead-off article by April Heyward discusses development and implementation of an audit program model under the UG. April’s done a very nice job in describing and relating her experience.

One article I hope you’ll pay particular attention to is Dave Kennedy’s article “Advocacy Works! The Procurement Case Study.” Dave and the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) have been instrumental in keeping dialogue going with OMB about the UG. Dave’s title says it all—advocacy does work. COGR and the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) also teamed with other important groups like the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI), and the National Association of Education Procurement (NAEPR) to create a compelling argument for why OMB should re-think/re-consider the proposed procurement regulations, and particularly the micro-purchase threshold. By the time you receive this edition, the Federal Register Notice concerning another public comment period should be published. Please take advantage of any public comment opportunities that we are afforded.

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Pat Hawk is Assistant Vice President, Office for Sponsored Research and Award Administration at Oregon State University. She has served NCURA in various capacities including President, traveling faculty and Professional Development Committee chair. She can be reached at Patricia.Hawk@oregonstate.edu
Hello NCURA Friends and Colleagues —

As this year comes to an end, so does my term as President. I want to take this opportunity to look back at this busy year for NCURA. It has been a year filled with great conferences, starting with the FRA and PRA meetings in New Orleans, the regional meetings across the U.S. and capped off with the 58th Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. The meetings were well attended and filled with interesting and informative sessions all led by volunteers whose enthusiasm and dedication are an inspiration.

This past year marked a significant milestone for NCURA as we reached out to Cuba to begin building collaborations. With the U.S. government easing restrictions on its embargo with Cuba, there is great interest in both countries to build stronger research and academic collaborations between faculty, students, and researchers. There also remain several administrative challenges that seem to be changing constantly. In other words, a perfect environment for research administrators who specialize in facilitating collaborations and dealing with administrative tasks. In April, NCURA sent a delegation to Cuba to meet with universities and the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education. At every stop along our trip, we learned of the significant interest in Cuba for joint collaborations. Our trip culminated in an agreement to develop a memorandum of understanding between NCURA and the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education for future collaborations.

In October, it was NCURA's turn to host a delegation of our Cuban friends and colleagues in Washington, D.C. for an in-depth conversation on the roles of research administrators and the opportunities offered by NCURA. The visit culminated with the signing of a memorandum of understanding that identifies five broad areas for future bilateral cooperation including global interchange programs, publications, and promotion of research in universities. NCURA was also invited to return to Cuba in 2017 for further work on developing programming on the roles and responsibilities of research administrators. It was a proud moment for all of us as NCURA continues to build awareness and increase appreciation of our profession.

I want to thank all of the volunteers throughout NCURA for everything that you did during the year on behalf of NCURA. You are what makes this organization such a special group of people. Thanks to everyone in the National Office for your dedication. Your professionalism and positive approach was an inspiration for me to always try to do things in the best possible manner. Also, a special thanks to my colleagues at UW-Madison, especially in my office, Research and Sponsored Programs. I really appreciate all of your support in this past year. Starting with my inauguration celebration party to all of the work you did to help me while I was away or on conference calls, I couldn’t have done this without you.

One last piece of advice as we head toward 2017: join your friends by volunteering in NCURA to support research administrators. Let’s work together to support each other and research around the globe.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Andresen

Robert Andresen is NCURA President and serves as the Director of Research Financial Services/Associate Director, Research and Sponsored Programs, at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Bob can be reached at randresen@rsp.wisc.edu
Throughout my career I have had the opportunity to be a pioneer; the first to create and build a framework or model or develop a point of reference for the future. I am often the person who builds the foundation over time and then someone else takes it from there (Heyward, 2014). My last appointment was at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) in the Division of STD/HIV. I co-administered a $65 million grant portfolio including Ryan White Part B Base and Supplemental, ADAP (AIDS Drugs Assistance Program), HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS), HIV Prevention, and Special Projects funding programs. We received funding from HRSA, HUD, CDC, and rebate funding from non-Federal entities. We awarded funding via a competitive process to a range of subrecipients including non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, state agencies, hospitals, health systems, clinics, and corporations around the state of South Carolina.

The Division created my position, Fiscal Manager (Grants Administrator II), to supervise the fiscal team, financial monitoring activities, and to conduct audit field work due to a Federal site visit. Our funders conduct site visits every three years unless there is a reason to visit more frequently. Site visits are planned in concert with our Project Officer and consist of an Administrative, Program, and Fiscal Review of our policies and procedures, databases, and accounting system. The accounting system is very complex and is not the most conducive system for our funding programs. We implemented an internal fiscal and audit infrastructure to track and monitor funding and the funding awarded to subrecipients. The purpose of this article is to describe the processes and procedures used when developing and implementing an audit program model in the Uniform Guidance era.

Developing and Implementing an Audit Program Model

In order to be effective in developing and implementing an audit program model, we need to understand the funding programs, engage and listen to stakeholders, integrate the Uniform Guidance and other regulations into the model, communicate the new model to stakeholders prior to implementation, and be flexible with updating the model. There were a number of challenges to overcome simultaneously in a short period of time in a newly created position. The first challenge was to understand the funding programs and how they translated to fiscal and audit operations. There are funding programs with service categories and funding requirements mandate that budgets, invoices, and reporting are based on service categories versus operating categories. I became the expert to effectively communicate with stakeholders, provide technical assistance to subrecipients, approve/disapprove invoices and budgets, develop criteria for audit programs, etc. The second part of this first challenge was integrating compliance with the Uniform Guidance into operations. This includes ensuring subrecipients are reimbursed within thirty calendar days after receipt of billing pursuant to 2 CFR 200.305 or determining which subrecipients where no longer required to have a Single Audit conducted due to the audit threshold being raised to $750,000 pursuant to 2 CFR 200.501. I developed a logic model for establishing an audit program. See Figure 1 for Audit Program Logic Model.

The second challenge was engaging stakeholders in the assessment process. Each position where I manage multiple stakeholders, I make it a practice to go out and meet with them in the first three to six months. When I worked in higher education, I went to laboratories and department meetings to meet researcher’s and learn about their research programs and interests. In my position as Fiscal Manager, I conducted site visits to meet subrecipients and learn about their programs, staff, and technical assistance needs. In my current position as Program Manager, I conduct site visits to institutions of higher education to learn about their research programs. These visits support my primary objective which is to increase research capacity in the state of South Carolina. This practice of going out and meeting stakeholders has allowed me to build relationships and for stakeholders to feel comfortable coming to me with questions, issues, or technical assistance needs. I worked with up to 50 subrecipient organizations and quickly
learned different accounting systems, allocation methods, staff structures, fiscal year ends, etc. When I received an invoice, I knew who was doing the work and understood the allocation method (Heyward, 2016).

The third challenge was developing an audit program model for multiple funding programs. I spent the first six months conducting an assessment of operations. I reviewed archival data to assess how often audits were being conducted, what policies and procedures were being utilized, what information was being collected, and if all funding programs were being audited. Upon review of archival data, I worked with my Project Officer to develop an audit program model. My Project Officer arranged for fiscal consultants to spend two days on site with me to develop a new audit program model. In addition to working with my Project Officer and fiscal consultants, I developed and implemented uniform audit policies and procedures across multiple funding programs by integrating Subpart F – Audit Requirements specifically 2 CFR 200.500 through 2 CFR 200.521.

There are subrecipients with multiple contracts and it made sense to reduce the administrative burden on subrecipients, my staff, and myself by implementing uniform policies and procedures.

I developed a new audit plan to streamline audit processes and to increase audit readiness. My first goal was to reduce the amount of time on site at subrecipient locations and the time spent on each audit. I implemented two phases for conducting audit field work: Pre-Site Visit Phase and On-Site Visit Phase. Subrecipients were provided a list of documents to send to my office prior to coming on site and to have available on site. Implementing two phases reduced the amount of time spent on site and the time spent on each audit. My second goal was to meet with the financial and program staff of subrecipient organizations who are involved in the audit process prior to implementing the new audit plan and audit tools. I hosted a Fiscal Administration meeting to introduce the new audit tools, policies and procedures, ascertain technical assistance needs of subrecipients, and to ensure audit readiness for the new audit cycle. In preparation for the meeting, I developed a Fiscal Monitoring Crosswalk tool. Subrecipients learned the standards they were being held to, performance measures that were to be met, how data was being collected to meet standards and performance measures, and their responsibilities as subrecipients in the fiscal and audit process.

There are times when an audit has to be defended and the response must be based on the executed contracts, Federal and state regulations, and facts. I developed a Financial Review Source Citation tool that is based on the Uniform Guidance, HRSA Ryan White Part B Fiscal Monitoring Standards, Government Auditing Standards (Yellow Book), and Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government (Green Book) to mitigate the challenges encountered in the audit field work process. Source citations are provided for each requirement of the audit process and it answers “where does it say that in the regulations.” Source citations are provided when a subrecipient asks why they need to provide a copy of their bank statement (e.g. 2 CFR 200.62, 2 CFR 200.106, 2 CFR 200.302, 2 CFR 200.303, 2 CFR 200.328, 2 CFR 200.331, 2 CFR 200.336, 2 CFR 200.508, 2 CFR 200.514) or they are referred to 2 CFR 200.331, 2 CFR 200.336, and the executed contracts when resistant to being audited. The source citations also reduced issues on site at subrecipient locations and confirmed why the audit requirements were in place.

Figure 1: Audit Program Logic Model

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Conclusion
In order to be effective in developing and implementing an audit program model, it is important to:

- Understand the funding programs
- Engage and listen to stakeholders
- Integrate the Uniform Guidance and other regulations into the model
- Communicate the new model to stakeholders prior to implementation
- Be flexible with updating the model

The money will never make sense until you learn the funding programs. Be an active listener with stakeholders and incorporate feedback in the model framework. Communicate with your stakeholders prior to implementing a new model or plan. Be flexible with the model framework as regulations and needs will change. 

References


April Heyward, MRA, is the Program Manager for the SC EPSCoR/IDEA Program at the South Carolina Research Authority. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Benedict College and a Master of Research Administration from the University of Central Florida where she serves on the MRA Advisory Board. She is the author and publisher of April Heyward Research Blog. She can be reached at april.heyward@outlook.com

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December 26, 2016 brings to a close the second year (or the sophomore year) of research administration under the guidance and requirements of 2 CFR 200. To ensure compliance, departmental administrators must be aware of all the pieces, how they fit together, and the anticipated outcome. Each institution’s policies are different depending on their resources and tolerance of risk. Gil Tran, senior policy analyst in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), has highlighted the following ten pieces of Uniform Guidance as key to successful internal controls.

1. Standard Data
2. Computing Devices as Supplies – 200.94
3. Fixed Award Amount – 200.201 (b)
4. Internal Controls – 200.303
5. Procurement Standards – 200.320
7. Direct Charges of Administrative Salaries – 200.413
8. Indirect Cost (F&A) Rate Acceptance – 200.414
10. Audit Report Transparency – 200.512

As these ten pieces have been highlighted in the overall internal controls puzzle, what is our role in putting them together in the compliance picture? As departmental administrators, we are typically the link between the PI, central office, department chair, dean’s office, etc. As such, we are the first piece (Key Piece 1, Standard Data) in interpreting policies and regulations as well as assisting the PI in implementing them.

Key Piece 2: Computing Devices as Supplies – 200.94. For many institutions, this was an exciting change! How many times has your PI told you they must have a new laptop in order to complete their research? That problem has been solved; however, the computing device must still benefit the award(s) to which it is charged. When your PI requests a purchase of a computing device, the same questions have to be asked: Is it allowable? Is it allocable? Is it reasonable? Is it being consistently treated? With this change it is important to know your institution’s policies regarding the purchase of computing devices and whether the institution will allow the purchase on a sponsored project. The purchase should be made early in the performance period so that the project has maximum benefit from the acquisition.

Key Piece 3: Fixed Award Amount – 200.201 (b). Although fixed award amounts reduce some of the administrative burden and record-keeping requirements in the department, the most significant assistance you can provide on fixed price agreements is to 1) assist in determining that the fixed amount proposed is based on a reasonable estimate of the actual anticipated cost, and 2) oversee the financial management of the project after it is awarded to ensure the award is expensed at a rate commensurate with the estimate. Remember that this form of award requires a written certification that the project or activity was completed, or the level of effort was expended. If not, the award must be adjusted.

Key Piece 4: Internal Controls – 200.303. A departmental administrator is key in the implementation of the institution’s internal controls, particularly in a heavily decentralized environment. When providing an explanation to the PI regarding policies and procedures in support of a particular action or decision, do so in writing so that you have the documentation during a possible audit. Documentation protects the PI and the institution, and shows internal controls within your department. However, you must take reasonable
measures to safeguard personal data. Make sure any information you retain does not contain unnecessary personal information, whether it is from within your institution or from a subrecipient. It is much easier to pull a file than to try and remember why an action was taken a year or more ago. It is good to keep this statement in mind: “If it is not written down, it did not happen.”

Key Piece 5: **Procurement Standards – 200.320.** The most significant change to purchasing requirements in the uniform guidance was to “micro-purchases.” Any purchase with an aggregate dollar amount between $3,000 and $5,000 now requires the purchaser to obtain at least two prices. This cost analysis must be documented. Because of the tremendous impact on educational institutions, the implementation of this change has been delayed.

Key Piece 6: **Subrecipient Monitoring – 200.331.** In monitoring subrecipients, the level of your assistance to the PI is dependent upon your institution’s policies and the perceived risk associated with a given subrecipient. It is clear the onus of monitoring subrecipients and ensuring compliance with federal regulations is on the flow-through entity. Auditors look for internal controls like having the PI sign the subrecipient’s invoices. It is important that the PI monitor both the programmatic and financial progress of the project and that the two remain in alignment. The departmental administrator can assist in maintaining this alignment by providing up-to-date financial statements at the time of project progress meetings. As the perceived risk increases, request back-up documentation for invoices (whether monthly, quarterly, etc.). Back-up documentation provides essential information, such as the effort of key personnel, types of purchases, persons traveling on the award, and other pertinent information. The budget, statement of work, and monitoring expectations are all part of a well-crafted subaward agreement. The guidance also requires that invoices are paid within 30 days. As a departmental administrator, you can assist the PI by pre-reviewing the invoices and then following up to ensure compliance within the 30-day window. Developing a good working relationship with your counterpart at the subrecipient institution and setting expectations are good ways to ensure a well-managed project.

Key Piece 7: **Direct Charges of Administrative Salaries – 200.413.** This clarification is most welcome; however, the same rules that apply to any other direct charge also apply to administrative salaries. The administrative or clerical costs must be integral to the project, specifically identified with the project, included in the budget justification, and cannot be recoverable as indirect costs. The salaries must be included in the budget justification at the time of the proposal, or prior approval from the sponsor or pass-through entity must be obtained after the award.

Key Piece 8: **Indirect Cost (F&A) Rate Acceptance – 200.414.** This piece is helpful during the budgeting phase of the proposal submission. Federal agencies and pass-through entities must accept any negotiated rate, except when required by federal statute, regulation, or documented justification. Also keep in mind that (except as noted in the guidance) non-federal entities that have never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs. The departmental administrator also has a responsibility to ensure the appropriate administration costs of the department are charged correctly so that the institution has the correct information for determining and negotiating F&A rates.

Key Piece 9: **Documentation for Personal Services – 200.430.** The documentation for personal services is managed at the institutional level through bi-weekly timesheets and an effort reporting system. The guidance specifies a process, supported by a system of internal controls, which provides reasonable assurance that the final amount charged to the federal award is accurate, allowable, and properly allocated. Here the departmental administrator is responsible for making sure the correct effort charges are made to the sponsored project and that any required adjustments are timely.

Key Piece 10: **Audit Report Transparency – 200.512.** Audit results must be available for public inspection. The departmental administrator is not typically the point of contact for an audit being conducted at your institution. However, it is not unusual to be contacted to provide specific documents. As such, it behooves departmental administrators to ensure all salary charges, purchases, changes (i.e., cost transfers, journal entries, etc.), and any other type of charges are well-documented and easily accessible. Also, any cost share expenditures are auditable and should be treated with the same care as direct charges to the project. When assisting PIs in proposal development, the departmental administrator may find it beneficial to access public information in determining the risk or possible debarment of possible partners in a proposal.

Even though we are at the close of the second year of Uniform Guidance implementation, we are still in the learning process regarding its impact on our work. We, the departmental administrators, play a key role in ensuring compliance for the faculty within our department. By continuing to share information and learning from our colleagues, we can provide the best support possible. Our role as the link in solving the puzzle for the faculty is key.

Citations

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Guidance… or More Confusion?
When Uniform Guidance (UG) was first announced, research administrators were hopeful that the unification of the OMB circulars would provide clarity in a consistent, singular source by removing duplicative language and contradictory requirements. As UG was rolled out and we put these pieces of the OMB puzzle together, we saw flaws and unforeseen impacts on procurement and other grants management (and tangentially related) processes. Now that UG has been finalized and implemented across our institutions, we are able to reflect on lessons learned and anticipate what the New Year will bring as the procurement standards become effective on July 1, 2017.

Many organizations have ended their fiscal years and are preparing for, or just wrapping up, an audit under UGF (Uniform Guidance, Subpart F). Looking at the results of these first audits, we consider the upcoming implementation of the new procurement standards and how to ensure internal control processes and documentation are in compliance moving forward.

What’s Actually Required and When?
While UG provides grant recipients greater flexibility, it also places greater importance on internal controls and policies. As the saying goes, document, document, document! Auditors are looking for new and increased documentation of processes, procedures, and internal controls in the following areas: environment, risk, activities, information, communication, and monitoring. With regard to procurement, these controls should be clearly outlined with evidence they are currently in place and being implemented. Documentation should illustrate how the UG standards are applied at your institution, and it is also recommended that training is evident for those involved in the procurement cycle. Procedures should clearly articulate the technical evaluation processes that will be followed for competitive purchases and document the entire lifecycle of the procurement, regardless of whether procurement occurs in a centralized or decentralized environment.

The procurement grace period is still in effect, but many organizations have already updated their procurement policies, practices, and controls. The next step is to communicate with your auditing firm (prior to the audit) to ensure there is a clear understanding from both parties about when the procurement guidance is applicable so the audit sample is tested using the applicable requirement and procurement policy (e.g. a procurement was made under old requirements/policies, but an expenditure occurred after the grace period expired).

For most entities, the challenge is finding just the right balance or “goldilocks” spot. Auditors will test each organization on specific organizational procedures; therefore, procedures should not be more or less restrictive than UG, but compliant and just right for your organization.

For most of us, written procurement policies and procedures are not new, but including cost and price analysis documentation for certain purchases in accordance with the OMB “bear claw” requirements might be. Sole source procurements also require more documented due diligence, which should be reflected in your policies and procedures. The new thresholds may also necessitate changes for some. For example, state entities generally have policies in place that require purchases over $5,000 to undergo competitive cost analysis, but for many of us, the new quote requirement for purchases valued between $3,000 and $15,000 will increase the population this practice applies to. The implementation of this requirement may be more or less challenging for organizations depending on the complexity of their procurement systems. The micro-purchase procurement option for purchases less than $3,000 provides additional flexibility, but will need to be documented and included in policies and procedures as a viable procurement method. It also may require a reduction or increase in current procurement thresholds.

Institutions will also need to be sure they define an “adequate number” of quotes for small purchase procurements. However your institute defines “adequate number,” you will need to be sure you consistently apply that across all small purchase procurements.

Non-competitive or sole source procurements also require consistent and thorough documentation of the purchasing decision in accordance with UG requirements.

What do Auditors Want to See?
During the audit, the auditor’s objective is to gain “an understanding of internal control, assess risk, and test internal control as required by 2 CFR...”
section 200.514(c),”and ascertain whether or not purchases are made in compliance with UG with vendors that are not suspended or debarred. To accomplish this, auditors will review procurement policies to ensure compliance with UG and determine if entities are adequately and ethically reviewing bids proposals and quotes to include appropriate documentation of decisions as discussed above. The auditors will also review a sample of procurements and review files to verify adequate documentation and determinations based upon UG requirements. The overarching objective is to ensure that all policies and procedures support full and open competition or sole source procurements are fully justified and documented.

Auditors are looking for a few new things under UGF, including “written standards of conduct that cover conflicts of interest and govern the performance of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts” and verification “that the procurement method used was appropriate based” on UG.

Until the Next Change…

Whether your first audit under the “new” UG is over, currently underway, or still a few months off, it’s important to reflect on the impact of the UG requirements on our individual institutions and ensure we understand how to make these requirements work best within each of our diverse organizations. Best practices are important, but the icing on this cake, so to speak, is to ensure that procurement or other processes and procedures are not under- or over-restrictive and that we embrace the “goldilocks” principle to find just the right balance between the regulations and our own policies. As the results of our first audits are rolling in and we head into the New Year, we should also reflect on lessons learned and share those lessons with the global research administration community. We will learn from each other and keep moving forward in this dynamic, increasingly regulated environment.

References
2 CFR Section 200, Part F
2 CFR Section 200, Appendix XI
GAO-14-704G

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December 2016
2017 is quickly approaching, and if you’re a grant professional who uses Grants.gov, the new year promises a raft of new features and enhancements for applicants for years to come.

In early 2017, you will have the option of completing federal grant application forms in an online environment that saves the application as it is completed. In addition, matching fields completed on one form will auto-fill the matching fields on other forms, saving keystrokes, as well as reducing the chance of data entry errors.

There will be no need to download individual PDF forms, although that option will remain available. Now, online forms will provide an alternative to downloading Adobe PDF forms and completing them offline.

Online forms will be, in fact, the centerpiece of Grants.gov’s next-generation application submission interface, Workspace.

**TABLE: Current & Future Methods to Apply on Grants.gov**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legacy Package</th>
<th>Workspace Forms</th>
<th>Online Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A single PDF containing multiple application forms</td>
<td>Individual application PDF forms that can be shared and filled out simultaneously</td>
<td>HTML5 application forms that autosave and do not need to be downloaded (coming in early 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled for retirement in late 2017</td>
<td>Launched in October 2015</td>
<td>Scheduled for launch in early 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They will be accessible only within Workspace, so learning the ins and outs of Workspace will ease your transition to online forms.

We recommend that you start using Workspace today, because the legacy application package consisting of a single PDF file is scheduled to be phased out by December 2017. (See table.)

Moving forward, applicants will apply for grants using Grants.gov Workspace, which separates the application package into individual forms that can either be completed online or offline as individual PDFs.

Please note: For any funding opportunities where applicants have downloaded the legacy PDF application package, they will be able to continue to submit that package. Applicants may continue to submit applications using whichever submission methods are available to them in the funding opportunity.

What will online forms look like? Below is an example of an online form that includes pull-down option and text fields. A navigation pane provides quick access to the sections of every form.

Online forms will provide context-sensitive feedback. Validation messages in online forms link to corresponding fields:

Part 2: What are the other benefits of using Grants.gov Workspace? Online forms aren’t the only highlight of Grants.gov’s Workspace feature. Workspace brings a range of benefits to applicants and their organizations:

1. **Workspace streamlines collaboration.** Multiple forms can be completed at once by a team of applicants.
2. **Workspace saves time.** Forms from old workspaces can be reused, reducing data-entry and increasing efficiency.
3. **Workspace helps applicants detect errors sooner.** Improved error-checking features allow applicants to catch and correct errors earlier, resulting in fewer rejected submissions.
4. **Workspace simplifies applying.** In Grants.gov Workspace, links and buttons are explained in context-sensitive help articles. Grants.gov has also created a series of video tutorials to walk applicants through the Workspace submission process.
The following Grants.gov Workspace features are already public:

**Reuse Old Forms:** Individual forms can be reused across multiple workspaces. Update form fields as needed and save you or your team from having to fill out the same form over and over again. Workspace now has a “Reuse” function built-in, so you are able to reuse completed forms from other workspace applications. This should help you to save time when completing grant applications. To reuse forms you need to apply using Workspace—the Reuse feature is only available for forms completed in Workspace.

**Form Data Cascades:** Key applicant information also cascades across all forms in a workspace if the SF424 form is completed first, which will save you time. Enter your information once, and it will populate in every other workspace form.

**Detect Errors Earlier:** Improved error-checking allows applicants to catch and correct errors earlier resulting in fewer rejected submissions.

**Preview Grantor Validation Feature:** This feature allows you to check your current application and all its forms against the grant-making agency’s submission validations. Basically, you can find out if there are any errors or missing data fields that would prevent your application from successfully submitting. This service is available when applying with Workspace but is currently only offered by NIH to its Grants.gov applicants.

**Grantor Image Feature:** Grantor Image is the name of a Workspace service that allows applicants (i.e., you) to download a full, printable version of your application. This includes all the forms, the data you’ve entered, and attachments you have uploaded to Grants.gov. At the present time, this feature is only provided by NIH, and no other agencies, so the Grantor Image won’t be available unless you’re applying for an NIH grant.

**Online Help:** When you use Workspace, help is always just a click away. Locate the nearest question mark icon and you will be taken to a context sensitive help article that explains the page or window in front of you.

Nicole Daniel is the Communications Lead for the Grants.gov Program Management Office, Department of Health and Human Services. If you need support or have questions contact community@hhs.gov.
THANKS TO OUR OUTGOING VOLUNTEER LEADERS!

As a member-staff driven organization, the success of NCURA is a result of the time and commitment provided by our member volunteers. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize those who have dedicated countless hours to support their colleagues and our professional staff by taking a leading role in furthering the goals and the values of the organization.

Thank you to the following volunteers, who are completing their service terms in 2016:

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NCURA would also like to thank ALL of our volunteers, who have dedicated time to plan, present, and assist in the execution of our conferences; contribute to the educational resources provided to our members; foster professional networking and knowledge exchange; and enhance the NCURA community.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with your professional association, visit NCURA’s Volunteer Central to learn more about available volunteer opportunities. Please contact Emily Ainsworth, Coordinator, Membership and Volunteer Services, for more information at ainsworth@ncura.edu or by calling 202-466-3894.

We’ve worked hard to ensure this list represents all of our volunteers completing service terms, but if we missed you, please accept our apology and our sincere thanks for your contributions to the research community.

December 2016

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We’re All Still on the Same Team, Right?

UG Offers Perfect Opportunity to Check In with Faculty

By Sam Gannon and Chris G. Green

We’re now about to cross the two-year mark on the Uniform Guidance (UG), and while many still do not fully understand what UG means to us, our institutions, or the field of research administration, we do know that it is a game-changer for how we work and how we must work with our faculty members into the future. We would also be the first to agree that many of our faculty members are oblivious to the UG and what it means to them—but whether our faculty members are fully engaged or in full denial of any administrative responsibility for their research, the UG provides a perfect opportunity to check in with our faculty, to ask and answer questions, to talk about systems and both federal and institutional policies, and most importantly, to convey support for them and their research.

Take a few minutes to work some PowerPoint magic and develop a presentation for an upcoming faculty meeting detailing some of the more important aspects of the UG and how it can potentially impact faculty members’ work. Be sure to include the institutional response, specifically noting any policies or systems that have changed or will be changing in the future. Create some slides that detail your efforts to provide support, and your availability to walk the faculty through any difficulties they may face.

Need inspiration for your presentation? Look back at your office’s mission and vision, and that of the institution as a whole. Less than half of employees actually know the vision and mission of their area, or consider how their area fits into the institution’s overall mission. We may know what we do and how we do it, but being able to talk about and clearly articulate why we do it is essential. Something like, “We deal with the boring paperwork so that you can focus on curing cancer,” never hurts. You don’t have to explain how exciting that “boring paperwork” really is; after all, we must all understand that we are each here to do our own jobs, and what drives you is not what drives your faculty.

The UG is also a big reset button for everyone. Sure, you have staff members in your post-award office that can quote passages from Section J of OMB Circular A-21, but the UG is a great opportunity for everyone to start fresh, with new rules to learn. Just be sure to provide some support for those making the transition to the UG from the old circulars. It can be difficult to let go of old rules and old ways of doing business, but clear and consistent communication will help. So will maintaining a positive outlook and setting an example of how to embrace change and, in the short-term, some confusion and frustration.
Speaking of change, while many significant changes brought about by the UG are mandated, recognize also that some are merely opportunities for consideration. In such cases, empower your faculty to have a voice in such institutional decisions. Take effort certification, for example. We faced challenges helping faculty to grasp the A-21 take on effort certification initially, and the UG now offers an opportunity to move away from more traditional means of effort certification to alternative methodologies, such as payroll confirmation. As increasing numbers of institutions are actively making a move toward payroll confirmation, seek the input of your faculty before leading your institution down such a path. Such shifts are made in the name of increased efficiency and reduced administrative burden on the faculty—but does the faculty support such a change? While we can all agree that change can be positive and even healthy, we must recognize those times when it may not be necessary. Look for ways to engage your faculty in decisions such as this; you may be surprised to learn that what we as research administrators perceive as a burden on our faculty, may not be so burdensome after all.

Whether you meet with your faculty members in a group or one-on-one, keep in mind that they are people too, just like you and I. Very different people, perhaps, but still people, with families, personal lives, stressors and passions. They have sick kids. They have fights with their spouses or significant others. Or maybe they wish they had kids and spouses or significant others. They know they need to go to the gym more often, or do a better job of keeping up with the laundry. Find ways to connect with them on a personal level. Ask questions about their passions outside of their research. You might be surprised what you learn.

It is important to keep in mind that faculty members are also employees. Granted, they are not the typical employee—especially faculty members that have tenure. Recent research shows that engaged employees are 21% happier and more productive in their jobs. Are there ways that you can better engage your faculty members? Not only can this increase their productivity and happiness, it can also encourage better responsiveness to your requests for information, a signature, an approval or a deliverable for a sponsor. For starters, try giving them honest and constructive feedback on how their role and their work impacts you, and other employees. While their satisfaction and engagement is important, so is yours—and balancing both effectively is the mark of a good leader. Nearly 70% of employees list respect as the number one factor in job satisfaction, so show them respect, but also remember that it is a two-way street.

Ask them for feedback on what you do. More than 25% of employees withhold information about problems or ideas for increasing productivity because they feel their opinions are not valued. Maybe your faculty members do not have this particular issue, but it never hurts to ask what you can do better. If you ask for feedback, you should be prepared to do something with the feedback you receive. We all have areas of strength and weakness and everyone has room for improvement. Show them you value their opinion by taking action when they share their thoughts with you, even if the response is that your hands are tied or that the decision is not yours to make. In your response, convey that you are listening and are thoughtfully considering their comments, and then dive into what you can (and cannot) do about it.

While it may be much easier and more efficient to hide in your office with ledgers and spreadsheets and mountains of work that needed to be completed yesterday, you do not want your faculty members to confuse busy and hardworking with unapproachable. Show them that you are concerned with more than numbers, deadlines and red tape by opening your door and removing your barricade of paperwork. Encourage interaction by telling faculty members to stop by your office any time and then be ready to receive them when they do.

Although it is easy to lump faculty members into a large homogenous amalgam, do not lose sight of the fact that each one is different, and each with his or her own needs for information. Some faculty members are happy with a “red light/green light” approach to the administration of their projects, letting them stay focused on their work while you focus on the rest, unless there is a yellow light issue to deal with. Others want to see every transaction, every change in effort, every invoice—in short, everything. Regardless of their needs, it is still your duty to ensure that they are informed and that your work is transparent. Research shows that transparency is essential for workplace happiness. When faculty members know what they can expect from you, it builds trust, establishes clear communication paths, and reduces the problems that inevitably arise.

Lastly, and with all modesty and humility aside, 94% of employees appreciate recognition for their accomplishments, and 89% feel more pride in their work after being recognized. You may be well versed in appreciating and recognizing your own staff, but remember that this concept carries over to the faculty as well. It may not be realistic or advisable to decorate her office door with a bagful of goodies from the dollar store or show up with a bag of celebratory bagels for each little accomplishment, but a simple “Congrats on your new publication in Science” in the hallway can convey a lot in seven words. Not only does it show that you are thoughtful, but it shows you are aware of their accomplishments—even those that do not necessarily intersect with your role. And always remember to fully use the lost art of face-to-face or verbal interaction as it continues to still be the most effective means of communication.

“Whether you meet with your faculty members in a group or one-on-one, keep in mind they are people too, just like you and I.”

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December 2016
Still using your Magic 8-Ball to guide you?

Contractor or Subrecipient? Reply hazy, try again
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Is this FAR clause acceptable? Signs point to yes
Will we need an ITAR export control license? Ask again later

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Case Study #1: Errors + Omissions = Four-Month Delay

Attention to detail in a research project is imperative. It is also quite important in the processes related to review and approval of the research, such as IRB applications and grant proposals. A lack of attention to detail became an issue for Dr. Hurryup, which caused a major delay in the implementation of a clinical trial.

Dr. Hurryup submitted an IRB application in December. Although he had an outside interest with the manufacturer of the drug under study, he erroneously answered “No” to the COI question in the IRB application. UMMS requires PIs and Co-Is to disclose potential conflicts of interest when they accept their roles as investigators via our electronic IRB application by answering the question: “Do you have an outside interest or relationship with a non-UM entity that relates to this research in one of the following ways: The entity is sponsoring this research; the entity’s products are used in this research; the entity has licensed your invention (e.g. device, compound, drug, software, survey, evaluation or other instrument) being used in this research; part of the work on this project will be subcontracted to the outside entity; or other relationship not listed above.” Since Dr. Hurryup was a paid consultant for a manufacturer of the study drug, he should have answered “Yes” to this question.

The study coordinator who entered the IRB application in our electronic system only listed the direct sponsor, Big Eastern Medical School, and omitted the prime sponsor, NIH. The coordinator also neglected to list the drug manufacturer as a non-financial sponsor or include the proposal approval form number, which is our link to the grant application in our electronic systems. Fortunately, another investigator on this study had correctly answered “Yes” to the COI question in the IRB application, which routed the application to the COI Office for review.

The errors and omissions in this IRB application caused a significant delay in the project approval due to the additional work required from the COI and Research Billing offices to find the omitted information, correct the errors, and wait for the PI to respond to questions. Four months after initial submission, the IRB application was approved. This delay represented a potential hardship for patients who may have benefited from the results of the trial.

Although Dr. Hurryup’s study coordinator completed the IRB application for him, as PI he was responsible for the content and should have reviewed it in detail to discover the omissions and errors prior to submission. The COI Office reinforced with Dr. Hurryup and his study coordinator the importance of including all of the sponsor information and the outside interest information in IRB applications.

In addition to delaying a potential solution for patients suffering from a debilitating condition, the errors and omissions in Dr. Hurryup’s IRB application could have caused a violation of 42 CFR Part 50, Subpart F, “Responsibility of Applicants for Promoting Objectivity in Research for which Public Health Service Funding is Sought.” In simple terms, this rule outlines the disclosure, training, and oversight requirements related to financial conflicts of interest, for institutions accepting Public Health Service (PHS) funding for research.
Case Study #2: Dr. Inattentive and the Informed Consent Process

One of the most important tenets of a COI management plan related to human subject research is a prohibition on participation in the informed consent process. As an investigator on more than 60 industry supported clinical trials, Dr. Inattentive had outside interests with five pharmaceutical companies, all of which were sponsors of the trials on which he was an investigator.

Dr. Inattentive had not thoroughly read his conflict of interest management plans, which prohibited him from participating in the informed consent process. He had only disclosed three of his five outside interests during the annual disclosure process; for those three outside interests, he failed to indicate that he was an investigator on research projects related to those interests. In addition, Dr. Inattentive had failed to indicate in the IRB applications of some of his industry-supported clinical trials that he had an outside interest related to the sponsor of the trial. A very alert IRB reviewer who was familiar with Dr. Inattentive’s COI management plans related to other studies brought these issues to the attention of the COI Office.

Due to Dr. Inattentive’s failure to disclose, his conflicts of interest were not reviewed or managed. Therefore, the participants in those trials did not receive information about his conflict of interest during the informed consent process. Further, due to Dr. Inattentive’s lack of awareness of the tenets of his conflict management plans, he inappropriately participated in the informed consent process of many human subject research participants.

The COI staff met with Dr. Inattentive along with representatives from the IRB, department leadership, and school regulatory leadership. We reviewed the tenets of his COI management plans, discussed the importance of transparency in the research process, and reinforced the importance of attention to the details of disclosure in IRB applications, informed consent documents, and publications. Fortunately, the IRB Board determined that since the affected clinical trials had advanced well past the enrollment stage, no re-consenting of subjects would be necessary. Subsequently Dr. Inattentive decided to end his outside interests with the sponsors of the trials.

Since Dr. Inattentive inappropriately participated in the informed consent process, there could have been actual or perceived undue influence over the human subjects to enroll in the trials. Because his COI was not disclosed to the participants, they were not given the option of deciding whether or not to participate based on the knowledge of that COI. As discussed in the August 2016 NCURA Magazine article “Is Disclosure of FCOI Effective and Is It Enough?” disclosure may be imperfect but we need to respect the subject’s right to know. Finally, since some of the clinical trials went forward without Dr. Inattentive’s COI being managed there could have been a perception of bias in the research.

Case Study #3: An Enthusiastic Entrepreneur and Prohibited Financial Actions

Like most academic medical centers, UMMS faculty are prolific inventors of new technology and many are entrepreneurial when it comes to developing and commercializing that intellectual property (IP). In one such case, the COI office became involved when Dr. Helpful, a high-volume researcher with a significant amount of IP licensed to a company she started, unintentionally violated an important tenet of her COI management plan.

Dr. Helpful’s startup company, Cures R Us, wanted to sponsor research at UMMS involving her IP. Dr. Helpful was understandably excited and enthusiastic about the potential advancement in science and the potential solution for patients that her IP could represent. However, the wheels of bureaucracy turned slowly and the negotiation of the research contract between UMMS and Cures R Us was taking longer than Dr. Helpful wished. Once the contract was finally ready, Dr. Helpful decided to speed up the approval process by signing the contract on behalf of UMMS. A staff member in the Grants Office wondered whether this was allowed and asked the COI Office.

Dr. Helpful was in such a rush to start her research project that she forgot about the tenet of her COI management plan that stated, “You may not take part in contract negotiations or approvals, or otherwise represent either party in the transactions.” Dr. Helpful was reminded of the prohibition on taking part in contract negotiations and approvals. The research contract was re-signed by the appropriate party. In this case, it was important that Dr. Helpful remain at arm’s length from the negotiations with her company and the university so that there would be no actual or perceived bias or preferential treatment in the purchasing and contracting processes.

Conclusion

These three cases show the importance of attention to detail when dealing with financial conflicts of interest in research. At UMMS, like many academic medical centers, our faculty members are focused on their research, education, and patient care responsibilities and tend to leave the details of bureaucracy to their staffs. We trust that they have good intentions to comply with their COI plans. Our philosophy in the COI Office is that we partner with our faculty members to assist with and ensure compliance.

References


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The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been funding international development projects since its founding in 1974 and, more recently, it has established programs in support of research related activities in developing countries. While Kyoto University has been an important implementing partner in these projects, it is also critical to note that non-Japanese institutions, including those in industrialized countries, are also potentially eligible to participate if they work in conjunction with a Japanese institution such as Kyoto University. Through close collaboration with various JICA regional offices, the Kyoto University Research Administration Office (KURA) provides support for both pre- and post-awarding periods of grants and can also serve as a contact point for non-Japanese institutions that are looking to partner with Kyoto University faculty, including on JICA projects.

Support Schemes for Japanese Universities and Research Institutions
At present, Science and Technology Diplomacy (STD) is a buzzword on the Japanese political scene. The Japanese government has envisioned science and technology as a part of its diplomatic toolbox. As a result, in 2015 it established a committee that would actively promote academic engagement overseas using the STD framework. JICA, a semi-governmental organization tasked to provide bilateral developmental aid to developing countries and emerging economies, has been at the forefront of the STD framework through one of its official developmental aid schemes, Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS). JICA is familiar with diplomatic approaches, but SATREPS is its first scheme that enables direct partnership with Japanese research institutions including universities.

JICA provides three main forms of aid: (1) technical cooperation, (2) loans, and (3) grants. Among these three, JICA’s engagements with universities are mainly in the form of technical cooperation. This realm traditionally involves sending Japanese experts or providing equipment to support the specific requirements of recipient countries. Out of several schemes under technical cooperation, SATREPS and JICA Partnership Program (JPP) are the most relevant to research institutions and universities.

SATREPS
SATREPS started in 2008 in collaboration with the Japan Science and Technology (JST). Since 2015, the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) also joined in the partnership with JICA. SATREPS provides research funds to Japanese research institutions and their partner institutions in developing countries. It focuses on research that addresses “global challenges” in the following four fields: (1) environment and energy (subdivided into climate change, environment, and low-carbon technologies); (2) bio-resources; (3) disaster prevention and mitigation; and (4) control of infectious diseases.

SATREPS projects are currently spread over 46 countries in Southeast Asia, Africa, Central and Latin America, and South Asia, among others. For successful applications of SATREPS, tangible social benefits need to be clearly stated as expected research outcomes in the project proposal.

JPP
JPP is another option for universities and non-governmental charitable organizations to obtain JICA funding. It has been available for more than a decade and has supported 490 projects across 58 countries. Its unique feature is that it is designed to promote Japanese citizens’ active participation in international development. It is divided into support and partner types depending on an organization’s experiences. Partner type targets more experienced organizations. For example, we at the Kyoto University apply for partner type when we formulate a project.

Most JPP projects are proposed and taken up by non-governmental organizations, but universities also receive a substantial share of its funding. JPP’s support areas vary and include health, education, skills training, agriculture, and disaster management.

For both SATREPS and JPP, prior consultation with the JICA office in Japan is essential. Contacting JICA overseas offices also helps to shape a realistic proposal that fits to the actual situation of developing countries.

Kyoto University’s Participation in JICA Projects
Kyoto University has a long history of conducting research in Asia and Africa. Previously, a number of researchers in the university engaged in Official Development Aid (ODA) projects through their appointment as experts on an individual basis. In general, researchers working in developing countries become aware of the challenges that society faces and start identifying practical applications of their expertise and research outcomes to address the issues. Since JICA launched JPP in 2002 and SATREPS in 2008, researchers have had opportunities to take a more proactive role and initiate projects that aim to address “global challenges.” These projects
lead to research outcomes that have practical benefits to local societies and humanity in general. More recently, Kyoto University researchers have been increasingly interested in applying for SATREPS or JPP.

KURA members offer support to researchers during the pre- and post-awarding period of these grants by clearly distinguishing the difference between SATREPS and JPP. The former offers funding for research that has elements of international cooperation and capacity building; the latter focuses solely on creating direct positive impact on people’s lives. Considering the unique characteristics of these grants, we help researchers understand the objectives of each grant and their differences from other research grants. We also give advice on how to formulate project proposals by working closely with JICA and its counterpart organizations in the target country.

Since 2008, Kyoto University has launched 11 SATREPS projects. Four of the 11 projects have been completed successfully; meanwhile, seven are ongoing in the areas of “environment/energy” and “disaster prevention and mitigation.” The most recent projects that started in 2015 include: (1) “Producing Biomass Energy and Material through Revegetation of Alang-alang (Imperata Cylindrica) Fields” in Indonesia by Professor Toshiaki Umezawa from the Research Institute for Sustainable Humanosphere, and (2) “Hazard Assessment of Large Earthquakes and Tsunamis in the Mexican Pacific Coast for Disaster Mitigation” by Associate Professor Yoshihiro Ito from the Disaster Prevention Research Institute.

Meanwhile, four JPP projects are conducted at Kyoto University. Two were continuous projects aiming to enhance community resilience and livelihood security in Central Vietnam, designed to help at-risk populations in coping with natural disasters. They were completed successfully by a group of researchers from Kyoto University’s Graduate School of Environmental Studies in partnership with Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry. Two are ongoing projects: (1) one in Ghana aims to enhance the livelihood of local people through improvement in native livestock production; (2) the other, in Vanuatu, focuses on vernacular constructions.

A Closer Look at the Newly Launched JPP in Vanuatu

Associate Professor Kazuyoshi Nishijima and his fellow researchers from the Disaster Prevention Research Institute of Kyoto University visited Vanuatu (an island nation in the South Pacific) to conduct a damage survey a month after Cyclone Pam hit the islands and caused extensive damages to the country. When they first visited Tanna Island in April 2015, about 80 percent of the total number of houses was destroyed. During the visit, they found that local people used existing vernacular constructions called Nim-utan as cyclone shelters in the event of a cyclone and were able to rebuild their homes within a month after Cyclone Pam hit using locally available materials. At the time, Nishijima also met a leader of a community-based local training center in Tanna Island who had a strong interest in providing

trainings on vernacular construction to his community and sharing ideas of reevaluating the potential of this type of construction. After meeting the leader, Nishijima proposed a JPP project in partnership with the local training center.

When Nishijima returned to Japan, he visited the JICA domestic office several times to formulate a realistic project proposal with the support of URAs. In the same year, he made another trip to Vanuatu in August and submitted the proposal in December 2015. JICA finally approved the project in March 2016. After several meetings and revisions, the final contract was signed with JICA in September of the same year. The project team members including URAs met in Vanuatu and held a series of meetings with the members of the local training center and chiefs of the local villages. They also held a kick-off meeting with Vanuatu’s Ministry of Education to ensure mutual understanding of the project and to share each other’s expectations.

Over the next two years, the project members from Kyoto University and the local training center in Vanuatu will work together to create an environment in which the local people have the capacity to build more wind-resistant vernacular cyclone shelters using locally available materials. For SATREPS and JPP applications, overseas entities and NGOs need to partner with Japanese research institutions, universities, or charitable organizations. However, there is no specific route for establishing a partnership. Those interested in any of JICA’s joint research programs should check Kyoto University’s database to find collaborators working in similar areas of interest. KURA always welcomes any queries regarding its work or general information on Kyoto University, including inquiries from non-Japanese universities and researchers who may be interested in partnering with Kyoto University researchers.
There has been an unprecedented level of civil conflict and human migration in many regions around the world, and it is often small, humanitarian organizations that are on the front line of serving the target groups most affected in a particular community. As a result, NCURA decided to provide five pro bono webinars on funding sources for grant managers in these organizations, which often do not have sufficient resources to maintain research administrators to apply for and manage grants that can enhance their capacities. These five free webinars were focused on best practices in developing customized proposals for different funding agencies specialized in foreign assistance, and they were broadcast during NCURA’s 58th Annual Meeting in August 2016. There was a total of 240 grant administrators and proposal writers registered from 172 humanitarian organizations in 38 countries, of which 29 were developing countries.

These webinars were taught by NCURA Volunteer Faculty with practical expertise in five key funding mechanisms for international aid: the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), private foundations, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and EuropeAid. NCURA drew upon the expertise among its 7,400+ members, including those based in Japan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States in order to share their decades of experience in working with these specific funding sources.

NCURA’s volunteer faculty for this webinar included Susan Clarke from Loyola University, Jerrold Keilson from the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Luca Polizzi from the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Jeffrey Ritchie from Lewis University, and Yu Sasaki from Kyoto University (in collaboration with Ayako Fujieda). NCURA was especially excited to work with Kyoto University’s experts given JICA’s relevant contribution of JPY 16.453 billion (approximately USD $162 million) in international aid supporting humanitarian, disaster relief, and migration projects and the fact that relatively few organizations outside of Japan were aware of the fact that non-Japanese organizations, including universities in industrialized countries can potentially receive funding from certain JICA programs under certain conditions.1 It is for this reason that Ms. Sasaki and Ms. Fujieda were invited to expand their presentation into a full article so that more organizations outside of Japan would become aware of the funding and research collaboration potential through a number of JICA programs.

It is our hope that the five webinars provided relevant professional development and best practices to humanitarian organizations around the world, many of which reached out to us afterwards. The webinars and presentations can be found on NCURA Global’s webpage: http://bit.ly/NCURAWebinar

References

Baking a cake and preparing for an audit have many similarities. Standardizing a recipe for an audit allows auditors and research administrators to prepare a consistent “product” repeatedly. Standard audit recipes reduce the amount of unexpected surprises that can be encountered during normal operations. Just like in baking, you can pick a simple recipe with limited ingredients or a multifaceted recipe depending on your level of expertise or upon the expectations of those eating the cake.

There are different types of audits: operational audits are a comprehensive review of an office, program, or process to evaluate central business practices for efficiency and effectiveness; compliance audits measure adherence with Federal and State laws and regulations such as 2 CFR 200, institutional policies and procedures, and sponsor grant and contract requirements; investigative audits identify the possible misappropriation of an entity’s assets or conflicts of interest.

With all audits, as the complexity increases it will require forethought and organization to successfully respond to an audit request. Taking the time to prepare for an audit is an investment — in ingredients (documentation), time, and pride. It is only logical that you do everything you can to guarantee that your audit (cake) is as smooth and tasty as possible. Follow the recipe below to ensure your institution is prepared and has a successful end product. While the steps for preparing for an audit vary considerably depending on the type, you will want to do the following before starting:

**Pre-Audit Preparation**

1. **Read through the recipe (often referred to as the purpose, scope or objectives of the audit)** – This may sound apparent, but audits have certain requirements, such as specific documentation, policies, and procedures that are specific to the type of audit and cannot be altered without causing an inability to meet the audit purpose, scope or objectives. You do not want to realize too late that the information and material you are providing does not meet the request, is not needed, or is in the wrong format. Don’t be afraid to ask the auditor for clarification on the requested items. If you are working with an external auditor, you might find it beneficial to reach out to your internal auditors as they may be able to help with interpretation of the request. Early and frequent communication can eliminate redundant work and enhance the quality of the audit. The success of the audit often hinges on the communication level established. It is important to be proactive especially if the purpose, scope, or objectives are not clear. Be open and candid, especially if there have been any structural changes to the University and/or the business systems. Reading through the recipe will give you an idea of how much time it will take and will allow you to be familiar with the details of the audit, such as determining the purpose of the audit, understanding the auditor’s requests, and noting any deadlines you will need to work around.

2. **Assemble and gather the ingredients (the information and materials)** – “Mise En Place” In French, the cooking term is to gather, prep, and organize what you will need for cooking. Organize all of your information and materials together in one place, preferably an electronic
location for easy access. For example, documented controls, in the form of written policies and procedures, will always be requested. Establish a file for regulatory documents such as grants and contracts, notice of award, proposal budget, budget narrative, financial correspondence, and any other relevant information. The auditor will systematically evaluate information obtained based on what is given. It is important that all records be up-to-date, accurate, and organized. Share any internal control concerns you may have. Depending upon the scope and objectives, the auditor may be able to offer advice informally. Of course, the advice may also be relayed formally through written recommendations.

Be prepared for two requests for information. There’s often a preliminary request for information that the auditor will make during planning or early in the fieldwork stage. This may include a request for a population of grants, contracts, or a listing of transactions for specific awards. The auditor may use this information to develop a second request for documentation necessary to perform testing of grant or contract requirements or transactions for compliance with award and agency terms.

3 Make sure your workspace and equipment are all in good working order and mix your ingredients. Prepare the individuals involved in the audit — Preparation, coordination, and cooperation builds confidence within the team. An audit is a collaborative process and the ingredients need to work together for consistency. Everyone has a responsibility: management and leadership, sponsored projects office, department and units, central administrative offices such as finance and accounting, procurement, human resources, and technology systems, to name a few. Coordination improves both audit effectiveness and efficiency. Although an audit can be time-consuming, strong investment in preparation and double-checking that all the ingredients are available translates to a well prepared audit which may in turn smooth the remainder of the audit process.

4 Baking — After compiling all of the ingredients (i.e. documentation, staff resources, and institutional knowledge), the auditor will test, compare, and confirm the evidence or field work until gaining reasonable assurance of the internal controls. They may also be testing for compliance against the grant or contract scope of work and budget. Though most auditors do not plan on “surprising” you, it may feel like a surprise if they bring a seemingly unrelated process or procedure into the scope of the audit. For example, information technology controls could possibly be included in the audit scope for systems that are necessary for recording and processing the transactions. Once you’ve handed off the documentation to the auditors, set your timer. If you’ve been proactive in anticipating the needs of the auditor, now is the time to wait for their questions and/or findings.

5 Test for completeness (the internal controls) — Determining a cake is done is informed by recipe instructions that generally are described by bake time and visual appearances. Internal controls need to be monitored in the same way. Highly effective and efficient organizations often develop a process to evaluate the quality of internal controls over time. Internal controls are policies and procedures put into place to safeguard an asset, provide reliable financial information, promote efficient and effective operations, and ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

There are three types of internal controls: like a kitchen timer, preventative controls are intended to discourage errors or irregularities from occurring; detective controls are intended to find errors or irregularities after they have occurred — in baking, this is akin to tasting the frosting before using it — one taste will let you know if you accidentally used salt instead of sugar and; directive controls which are intended to encourage a desirable event.

By following the recipe, you allow the control environment to set the tone of the Institution. These become fundamental attributes of the culture, providing a foundation that includes integrity, ethical values, management’s philosophy, and operating style. It will reveal the governance structure, the way management assigns authority and responsibility, and organizes and develops its human capital. It’s like the filling that holds the cake layers together. It is important to understand the importance of institutional culture because auditors are often tasked with reviewing the overall governance, risk, and controls during the performance of their audits.

6 Ice the cake (the report) — After baking and cooling it’s time for layering and icing your cake. The icing on your audit cake is the generated report, reviewed and finalized. Be sure to respond to any inquiries the auditors may make. It is important to follow up if there are any corrective actions indicated. This is often another opportunity to collaborate with other departments, as relevant, to develop practical corrective action plans that meet the intent of the recommendations without overburdening the organization.

In conclusion, a lot of work goes into preparing for an audit, just like baking a cake. Not every audit is equal and the way to prepare for them often differs depending on the techniques and ingredients used. Like cake recipes, there are some basic “culinary” components that need to be present in order to soar through an audit and achieve desirable outcomes. Understanding the recipe, taking the time to clarify unfamiliar ingredients, and preparing with intention can really help you whip together the elements of a successful audit from start to finish.

Want to learn more about audit preparation?

Check out our new publication

How to Manage a Financially Focused University Research Audit Effectively.
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Available at https://onlinelearning.ncura.edu

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December 2016 25
The NCURA Education Scholarship Fund was established to support the professional development of members who seek graduate education in research administration.

It was started with a generous gift by one visionary NCURA member. Since the Fund’s inception, we have raised over $81,000 in donations from individual NCURA members.

Regional contributions have made a huge difference, spurred on by a sense of healthy competition. Once collections were counted at the end of AM58, Region III emerged victorious in the 2016 Regional Bucket Challenge, bringing in $3,743.50. They just barely edged out Region II, which came in at $3,078.28. And the region that brought in the most money per member was…Region VIII (our newest region)!

But, despite the progress we’ve made, we cannot start making scholarship awards until we have raised at least $100K.

You can help us to grow the fund in various ways, in addition to putting change in your regional buckets at the Annual Meeting.

1) You can make a tax-deductible contribution to the fund via the NCURA website at www.ncura.edu/Education/EducationScholarshipFund/DonateToday.aspx

2) *The Best Job of All* children’s book is available for purchase from the NCURA online store with all proceeds going to the fund.

3) Regions are encouraged to get creative throughout the year with sales of T-shirts, blankets, and other NCURA swag to raise money for the fund—and compete for bragging rights. These fundraisers during the year count toward the Regional Bucket Challenge.

Please consider a contribution to help get us to our goal. Remember, even a little makes a difference!

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**NCURA President’s Circle** ($1000 - $4999)
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Steven Smartt

**NCURA Education Council** ($100 - $499)
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John Case
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Longitudinal Assessment of International Investment in U.S. University Research & Development
Gai L. Doran, Yale University

Evaluation of the Pilot Mentoring Program at the Research Foundation for SUNY
Amy Henderson-Harr, State University of New York College at Cortland; Kathleen Caggiano-Stino, Research Foundation for SUNY; Ashlee Prewitt, Binghamton University

Research Managers at Jamaica’s National University are Strategically Deploying a Modest Research Development Fund in Support of Impactful Research
Paul W. Ivey, University of Technology, Jamaica; Martin Henry, University of Technology, Jamaica

Disclosure, Evaluation and Management of Financial Conflict of Interest in Research
Winona Ward and Carolyn Strong, University of Central Florida

Return on Investment and Grants: A Review of Present Understandings and Recommendations for Change
Michael Preuss, Hanover Research

Monitoring Financial Conflict of Interest
Lorraine Hickson, Celebration Health Research Institute at Florida Hospital

STEM Faculty and Indirect Costs: What Administrators Need to Know
Susan Gossman, Northern Illinois University

BOOK REVIEW - Change Leadership in Higher Education: A Practical Guide to Academic Transformation
Sheila T. Lischew, Clemson University

www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore/ResearchManagementReview.aspx
Did you know that US research organisations could apply for a share of €80 billion of European funding?

Horizon 2020 is the biggest European Union Research and Innovation Programme in its history, with over €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020). It’s billed as being open to everyone, with the aim of reducing bureaucracy and time so participants can focus on the research, with the emphasis on cutting-edge science, sustainable projects and securing Europe’s competitiveness.

Am I likely to be successful?
Horizon 2020 is considered to be an eminent European research funding programme, but ne’er fear: US organisations have successfully become partners in both current Horizon 2020 projects and the previous programme FP7 projects. For example:

- The ongoing Horizon 2020 project BICYCLE project has a US partner and concerns the treatment of Crohn’s disease;
- The ongoing Horizon 2020 project PROTON project has a US partner and concerns the knowledge of organised crime and terrorist networks;
- The ongoing FP7 project EPAD has a US partner and concerns the prevention of Alzheimer’s dementia.

Whilst some of the participation in these projects may be at a no-cost benefit to the US participant, the kudos and collaboration links achieved are priceless, so there is absolutely nothing to lose by applying.

What can I apply for?
Funding for US institutions is only permitted on a handful of specific calls, and care must be taken to review the specific call text to ensure your organisation is eligible to receive funding. Check out the Horizon 2020 participant portal to browse current calls.

I’ve been successful, what now?
Congratulations, you’ve been awarded your grant, and there’s actual cash available to spend! Once the celebrations die down, you’ll need to administer the project in accordance with the myriad of EU rules. The Horizon 2020 Annotated Model Grant Agreement is your new bible, and it’s almost as long as the Uniform Guidance! To top it all off, you might need an audit at the end. So let’s focus on the specific nuances you’ll face when it comes to having a Horizon 2020 audit.
What are the key differences between a Horizon 2020 audit and a Single Audit of US Federal Funds?
The key difference between a Horizon 2020 audit and a Single Audit of US federal funds is the timing and requirement of a financial audit: a Horizon 2020 audit is required at the end of a project if its EU contribution for the entire project exceeds €325,000.00. A Single Audit of US federal funds is required, as we all know, on a financial year basis on the organisation if its federal expenditure exceeds $750,000.00. The Horizon 2020 audit is therefore on a project basis and will look solely at a sample of expenditure claimed on that project (10% of the number of items claimed in each budget line, or a minimum sample of 10 items, whichever is higher).

Given the limited parameters of a Horizon 2020 audit, the length of the on-site fieldwork is also much reduced compared to a Single Audit: we spend, on average, 3 days completing a Horizon 2020 audit, from planning to completion, compared to 10 days for a US Single Audit.

The scope of the audits are similar, concentrating on whether you are spending your grant on what you should be spending it on, in accordance with the regulations, and representing value-for-money.

What are the top 10 European grant audit issues?
We are often asked what kind of issues and errors we encounter when conducting grant audits, so we’ve counted down our top 10:

10. Unsubstantiated costs. In FP7 projects, Beneficiaries could claim indirect cost based on actual costs. In Horizon 2020, indirect costs are primarily based on flat rates, so hopefully this issue will disappear!
9. Equipment costs not depreciated in accordance with funder guidelines. In Horizon 2020 projects, you can only claim the depreciable element of equipment in accordance with evidence usage on the project. Make sure you maintain run logs and don’t claim any down time on that mass spectrometer!
8. Costs claimed not foreseen within the application form or budget. If you have any significant changes, make sure you get permission from your project officer.
7. Reckless or excessive costs claimed. We often use the “newspaper analogy” here. Would you be happy if those alcohol costs for a project dinner was put on the front page of a newspaper? (As a side note, a reasonable amount of alcohol for subsistence is deemed eligible under European funding).
6. Costs incurred outside the eligible project dates. Can you claim preparation costs? No! So don’t even try. Similarly, your project has an end date for a reason, and whilst you’re allowed 60 days to wrap up the project and incur additional management costs, this does not mean you can carry on and claim research costs after this end date.
5. Unsubstantiated direct costs. If you don’t have a supporting receipt or invoice, then please don’t even try to claim it. Whilst we’re practical to an extent, if you can’t support your costs, then our professional scepticism antennae will be raised.
4. Personnel costs charged do not correlate to time records. Gross payroll data. Timesheets. Employment contracts. The holy trinity of auditing personnel costs in European funding. Yes, you heard me right. Timesheets. A simple percentage statement of time is sufficient for a researcher works 100% on the project, but if not, then a timesheet showing project hours on a monthly basis is required, authorised by the PI or superior. We also need sight of HR records to ensure that project hours haven’t been booked when annual leave or another type of absence is recorded!
3. Ineligible VAT and taxes claimed. Fortunately, Horizon 2020 has addressed this and amended the terminology to read “irrecoverable” VAT and taxes, but previously FP7 rejected any identifiable taxes.
2. Beneficiary not following their own policies. PI has flown to London for a project meeting in first class? Your policy states that only economy travel is allowed? Uh-huh. Discrepancy!
1. Relevance to project unclear. This is our most frequent issue: expenditure has been claimed without any clear link to the delivery of the project. Always document: who, what, where, why and how and hopefully you’ll be able to demonstrate to both us, as independent auditors, and the European auditors, how that cost relates directly to your valuable project.

Are auditors the enemy?
No! We’re not your enemy. We’re independent, but on your side. After all, we appreciate your research and want it to be a success, but we do need to ensure all your costs claimed are in accordance with the relevant guidelines.

Who, Where & How Much?
A Horizon 2020 auditor can be one of three groups of people:

1. One who is qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents in accordance with European Directives;
2. A competent and independent Public Officer for which the relevant national authorities have established the legal capacity to audit the Beneficiary;
3. An internal or external auditor in accordance with internal financial regulations and procedures of the international organisation.

Most Beneficiaries tend to select Option One, to ensure they have a specialist auditor well-versed in the nuances of European funding and its auditing. LEES are Registered Auditors under the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in the UK, and currently audit over 250 European projects annually.

Audits can be carried out both on-site at the Beneficiary, or indeed remotely. There is no mandatory requirement for an on-the-spot audit visit in Horizon 2020 auditing. Most of our clients prefer audits to be conducted remotely via uploading the evidence onto our online Secure Document Exchange.

Asking how much a Horizon 2020 audit is like asking how long is a piece of string: like most things in Research Administration, it depends. Primarily it depends on the length of the Horizon 2020 project, the budget lines and the number of transactions within each budget line. As a ballpark figure, a Horizon 2020 audit may cost around $5,000.00 to $10,000.00. You can claim this audit cost however!

Horizon 2020: The Finale
As the great Captain James Tiberius Kirk once said: “The greatest fear facing us is ourselves, and our irrational fear of the unknown. There’s no such thing as ‘the unknown’, only things temporarily hidden, temporarily not understood”, we say this to you and to your PI’s: apply for Horizon 2020 funding. You have nothing to lose, and much to gain.

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These changes are no longer just the result of increased compliance regulations and policies, but also the varied sponsor types. Traditional Federal sponsors like the NIH or NSF are joined today by numerous other Federal agencies, city and local governments, industry sponsors, foreign entities (both academic and non-academic in nature), and non-profit foundations. Each of these entities have different priorities which are often not consistent with the priorities and policies of universities. So, what happens when a sponsor and a university are coming from different positions and there is no obvious middle ground to meet at?

Stanford University recently entered into a collaboration with the City of Oakland Police Department to explore the role of race in police officers. The impetus of project was driven by the City of Oakland leadership and the Oakland Police Department’s desire to have an outside review and analysis of Oakland’s Police Officers behavior. Stanford Professor Jennifer Eberhardt was sought out and the project was proposed by her and her team whose expertise is in the study of implicit or unconscious biases. The project was funded by the City of Oakland. (PBS, News Hour, 2016)

The City of Oakland Police Department and Stanford had many issues to work through during the negotiation of the award. When it was decided to fund the proposal, the City of Oakland awarded the project with what can only be defined a Services Agreement. Initially, from the City of Oakland’s perspective they were buying services from Dr. Eberhardt and her team to access, analyze and assess the data, and present and report the findings. From Stanford’s perspective without Professor Eberhardt and her team’s expertise and intellectual contribution and their ability to take the data to use for predictive analytics, user behavior analytics and other advanced data analytics method to extract value from the data to deliver the findings and recommendations, this project would not be possible and as an institution of higher education Stanford’s focus is on education and research. Rebecca Hetey, post-doctoral research associate was quoted “we’re using science to diagnose the problem and design solutions that can realistically work.” (Parker, 2016) Stanford’s determination was this project was research.

As researcher administrators it is sometimes difficult to make the determination if the work is research or is it services/consulting there is a fine line. It is important to work closely with the sponsors, PIs and institutional leadership to work to meet a compromise that allows both parties to achieve an optimal outcome = research.

While top issues of concern for Stanford included ownership and publication and ensuring that the project was treated with openness, the City of Oakland Police Department was concerned with confidentiality, ownership of the deliverable and ensuring that risk was mitigated. At first glance it seemed it might be difficult to overcome the competing priorities. There was a requirement for both parties to come together to discuss a collaborative approach to reaching a compromise. Here’s how we got there:

**THE APPROACH**

**Investigate and Understand** – it is important to understand the “big picture” as research administrators we can get caught up in the interpretation of the policy rather than leveraging the policy to help us solve the issue. It is a reminder to always start with what we can do rather than what we can’t do. In the investigation phase it is important to know who the stakeholders are and understand their perspective.

**Create a Plan** – have a strategy on your approach and identify the road blocks early and rather than later. Understand that you are looking for “win-win” versus positional negotiation, it is important to ensure that what we ask for is rational and realistic.
Communicate – we get caught up in the daily transactions and grind, sometimes we make assumptions that everyone knows that you are working on the issues or that they understand the implication of the issues. Keep the stakeholders and partners informed, it builds confidence and trust.

Agree on Outcome – when working with a sponsor, consider an approach to discuss and agree on what both parties want the outcome to be. If that is agreed upon up front then if negotiations go off the rails then you can come back to what your original outcome and intent.

Negotiate – know your priorities, know when you have flexibility, ask what flexibility the sponsor has and when you are outside your expertise enlist help.

The Stanford contract officer took a step back and followed the approach outlined above, with an in-depth review of the scope of work and discussion with Professor Edberhardt to ensure that there was understanding of intent of the project. The discussions were then expanded the City of Oakland’s contract officer who was highly motivated to get this agreement in place. The contract officers spent some time explaining the other’s point of view of the proposed project and where and why they did not have flexibility. Along the way, the stakeholders were included in communications and updates. After extensive negotiations and with the support of Stanford Risk Management, Office of General Counsel, and all the stakeholders, Stanford and the City of Oakland Police Department were able to come to an agreement which did not impede on Stanford’s Openness in Research policies and practices and meet the needs of City of Oakland. More information on the research can be found at http://news.stanford.edu/2016/06/15/stanford-big-data-study-finds-racial-disparities-oakland-calif-police-behavior-offers-solutions and www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/study-slam-troubled-oakland-police-department-for-racial-bias.

References


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NCURA’s 11th Pre-Award Research Administration (PRA) Conference is quickly approaching. We hope you have registered and booked your hotel already so you can enjoy the warm, sunny weather we are certain to have in Southern California in late winter! For those in pursuit of fascinating trivia, history, or just plain fun facts, San Diego and its vicinities are an authentic treasure-trove of secrets to discover. Did you know... the University of California San Diego’s Geisel Library in La Jolla houses the world’s largest collection of original Dr. Seuss manuscripts and other materials?

As you will see from the preliminary program, the PRA committee has put together a tremendous, vast series of offerings in which every participant at every level will be able to gain immediate knowledge and resources to take home with them to advance their career objectives.

Keynote Speaker, Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro, CHRL, CTDP
We are thrilled to announce that our keynote speaker will be Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro, a strong community advocate and a champion of initiatives to enhance multi-generational collaborations. She is a Peak Performance Strategist managing a successful consulting practice, Eye of the Tiger Consulting (www.eyeofthetigerconsulting.ca), in which she collaborates with leaders on change management, employee engagement, strategic planning, performance management, developing and sustaining high performing teams, and leadership development (for aspiring leaders, executives, and youth community). Carolin is also a Professor and Intellectual Lead for Leadership (MBA program, Faculty of Management, Royal Roads University, BC), Adjunct Professor (MA Education, Central Michigan University, USA), and visiting professor (MBA program, Mount Meru University in Tanzania, Africa). She is a partner at Monarch Safari Guides based in Tanzania which custom designs “the perfect safari experience”.

Her published work includes: developing and sustaining high performance teams; ROI from learning and development initiatives; leadership models for transitioning teams from dependence to interdependence; best practices in teaching and learning; wellness management of HR practitioners; bridging multi-generational differences; and, mentoring needs and expectations of Generation-Y HR practitioners. Carolin is the author of How to Manage the New Generation: Understanding and Meeting the Working Expectations of Generation Y, and she is currently working on her next book featuring Generation Z. We know you will find Dr. Rekar Munro engaging and inspiring, therefore supporting our program theme Together Towards Tomorrow.

Register for Pre-Conference Workshop Offerings!
The PRA workshop committee is thrilled to offer three all-day workshops and ten half-day workshops to be held on March 8, 2017. It is a great opportunity to attend a session in an area in which you are not familiar. Workshop offerings span a variety of topics in research administration to include post-award awareness for the research administrator, departmental boot camp, NIH training grants, building a budget, and a primer on federal contracting. Intermediate session workshop offerings include subrecipient monitoring with a strong emphasis on internal controls, FISMA/NIST standards/regulated data, strategic planning to improve processes and reduce administrative burden, and complex contract drafting and negotiating. New this year are two senior forums; one is focused on coaching a research administrator and the second is focused on leading and motivating a team through organizational change. With all of these outstanding offerings, whatever you choose will be full of tremendous, immediately useful content to enhance your research administration skills in an environment that will nurture learning and growth and extend existing expertise and knowledge.

Reminder – Register & Book Hotel!
At the time this magazine issue is released, you will most certainly be in the middle of a cold, dark winter. Come to San Diego where you can experience warm weather, waterfront views, world-class food, and, most of all, networking and learning opportunities with your friends and colleagues for three days. This will get you through the winter before embarking into spring. Join us in San Diego in March 2017!

Yours... Together Towards Tomorrow
Rosemary Madnick and Denise Moody
We never could have predicted that the higher education community would spend more time resolving Procurement than it would on any other issue in the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200). However, a new term in the world of Financial Assistance created three years of angst and concern. That term? “Micro-purchase threshold”. The term was not totally foreign, as this concept was well-known in the world of Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) and contracts. However, application to Financial Assistance (grants and cooperative agreements) was unusual. In one of its many letters of objection to implementation of the Procurement Standards (2 CFR 200.317-326), COGR wrote the following in a pivotal and precise January 20, 2016 letter to David Mader, Controller and Acting Deputy Director of Management of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB):

Implementing a $3,000 threshold for grants and cooperative agreements solely on the basis of making the threshold consistent with the FAR would be a breach of important principles established in the 1977 law [The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977], and in addition, would be counterproductive to grants reform.

A refresher is helpful. “Micro-purchase threshold” (or MPT) was not part of the February 1, 2013 Proposed Uniform Guidance. COGR, and many others, responded to the Proposed Uniform Guidance during the Public Comment period with no idea that an MPT would be part of the December 26, 2013 Final Uniform Guidance. However, 2 CFR 200.320, Methods of procurement to be followed, introduced the MPT as one of five allowable methods for conducting procurement actions. 2 CFR 200.67, Micro-purchase, defined the term:

Micro-purchase means a purchase of supplies or services using simplified acquisition procedures, the aggregate amount of which does not exceed the micro-purchase threshold. Micro-purchase procedures comprise a subset of a non-Federal entity’s small purchase procedures. The non-Federal entity uses such procedures in order to expedite the completion of its lowest-dollar small purchase transactions and minimize the associated administrative burden and cost. The micro-purchase threshold is set by the Federal Acquisition Regulation at 48 CFR Subpart 2.1 (Definitions). It is $3,000 except as otherwise discussed in Subpart 2.1 of that regulation, but this threshold is periodically adjusted for inflation.

The research community railed, and then rallied! Starting in early 2014 and throughout 2015, the research community raised regular objections to implementation of the MPT and the entire suite of Procurement Standards (2 CFR 200.317-326). Importantly, the community was successful in receiving a delay in implementation through the end of FY2017. With the cushion of the FY2017 grace period, COGR delivered the key on January 20, 2016 to David Mader at OMB (see above). The letter was co-signed by Association of American Universities (AAU), Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI), National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), National Association of Educational Procurement (NAEP), National Council of Nonprofits, and the Procurement Leadership Group. And in another show of support, the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB), an organization of 30 scientific societies and 125,000 researchers, penned a separate letter to David Mader articulating the concern from the Principal Investigator perspective.

OMB and the Council on Financial Assistance Reform (COFAR) responded to the January 20, 2016 letter with an invitation to COGR and AIRI for a March 24th meeting to present our case to a full room of Federal agency representatives at the White House Conference Center. COGR, AIRI, and five stellar, well-prepared individuals from the COGR and AIRI membership presented thoughtful and compelling case studies on the cost and burden impact that a $3,000 MPT would have on each of the five institutions. This was a lightbulb moment for many at the Federal level and began the serious opening of the door to a favorable resolution.

Next, and on the heels of important work paved by the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP), COGR and AIRI made the final case to OMB and COFAR. Soon after the March 24th meeting, OMB requested data to quantify the cost and burden impact. In 2014, the FDP first gathered data showing that an MPT of $3,000 (later inflation-adjusted to $3,500) would create a significant increase in administrative burden and result in...
additional FTEs at most research institutions across the country. COGR piggy-backed on the great work of the FDP in a survey of COGR member institutions. The results of the survey were submitted to OMB in a June 1, 2016 letter. The highlights of that letter included:

Implementation of 2 CFR 200.320(a), Procurement by micro-purchases, will result in a cumulative, annual burden estimated to be over $50 million for research universities, nonprofit research institutions, and hospitals. In order to shift from their current institutional thresholds, institutions will be required, on average, to hire over 5.0 FTEs in their central procurement offices at an average cost of over $420,000 per year in order to comply with a $3,500 micro-purchase threshold …

Furthermore, we asked each institution to respond to the following: “Have you had significant findings in your A-133/Single audit in the past 5 years related to inadequate internal controls as they relate to procurement practices? If so, describe the findings and the corrective actions taken.” Of the over 75 institutions that responded to this question, only four indicated they have had an A-133/Single audit finding over the past five years … we confidently can state that over at least the past five years findings related to inadequate controls specific to managing an institution’s internal micro-purchase threshold have been insignificant.

Almost 6 months have passed since the June 1 letter. As of the writing of this article, OMB has not released an official modification to the MPT. However, as COGR has reported, and based on feedback from OMB, we can expect:

1. An extension of the grace period for implementation of 2 CFR 200.317-326 to FY 2019 (July 1, 2018 for most institutions).
2. A Federal Register Notice proposing a significant modification to 2 CFR 200.320(a), Procurement by micro-purchases.
3. Unfolding of the rulemaking process (Public Comment period, Final Rule) over the remainder of 2016 and into the first-half of 2017.

Yes, advocacy works! And the formula? First, honest partnership with Federal policy-makers is necessary. It’s not always easy and there can be policy disagreement between well-meaning individuals on all sides. Still, appreciating that folks in the Federal government are professionals who want to do good public policy is necessary for an honest partnership. Second, diversify the coalition when possible. While we must stay focused on policy implications to research, working with other stakeholders can be a powerful tool. Third, good policy is data-driven and evidence-based data supporting a policy position is a must-have. Again, it’s not easy as policy-makers can get entrenched in a position, but convincing data often will carry the day. Finally, successful policy advocacy is about persistence and flexibility on outcomes. We may hear “no” often, but “no” really means “try again”. If we are passionate about our policy position, then the strategy must be to relentlessly pursue the best policy with an open mind to creative and productive solutions. OMB and the COFAR have been good and honest partners, the diverse voices of our coalition of stakeholders expanded the argument, evidence-based data supported our position, and ultimately, persistence and flexibility yielded the right outcome. And the ultimate lesson? Anything is possible — even the Cubs can win the World Series! 

David Kennedy is the Director of Costing Policies and Studies at the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR). David’s responsibilities encompass monitoring all federal financial and costing policies that affect research. He has led the COGR advocacy to improve implementation of the Uniform Guidance. He can be reached at DKennedy@cogr.edu
In our first three articles, we outlined an efficient methodology for subrecipient risk assessment and identification, at both project and institutional levels. We also discussed the implementation of mitigation plans via the subaward document draft by crafting business and legal terms tailored to the identified risk and communicating with the subrecipient about your findings. In the final article of our series, we will discuss best practices for monitoring your low and high risk subrecipients throughout the rest of the award.

A pass-through entity (PTE) must uphold both pillars of subrecipient monitoring: (1) confirming that the subrecipient is still a good partner at the institutional level and (2) ensuring that the subrecipient is providing programmatic work as promised and sound financial stewardship at the project level.

Let’s tackle the easy part, the ongoing obligation to assess subrecipients at an institutional level. 2 CFR 200.331, Requirements for Pass-through Entities, states: “monitoring of the subrecipient must include…(f) verification] that every subrecipient is audited as required by Subpart F – Audit Requirements of this part when it is expected that the subrecipient’s Federal awards … equaled or exceeded the [$750,000] threshold [i.e. single audit].” You have an obligation to confirm that a subrecipient has performed their single audit, if required. The same provision also states that even if a subrecipient is not subject to a single audit, the PTE has obligations to ensure that the subrecipient organization is adhering to the terms of the federal award, including via the procedures engaged allowed by 200.425, Audit Services (or other means of verification), which we will touch on later.

Currently, the industry standard is to follow Uniform Guidance in a fairly literal fashion: review everyone’s single audit on an annual basis. How do you do that? You have a few options for gathering audit information, some more burdensome than others. We want to start with the most burdensome: the dreaded audit questionnaire that comes attached to every agreement or modification. We have both issued and received audit forms in our careers and both feel strongly that while entirely understandable, these forms are not the best solution for ensuring that the PTE has the best and most accurate information on which to base their ongoing assessment. These forms pose a burden on both sides. For the PTE, there is a burden to issue, ensure a completed form is returned, ensure the form is consistent across the responders from the subrecipient institution, and to evaluate said forms. For the subrecipient, evaluating and completing the questions (the text is always slightly different) and ensuring accurate information is provided (multiple people in the same institution may receive and complete the same form) are onerous.

For those PTE institutions that require questionnaires for all subrecipients, Amanda has only this to say: "the burden you create is so great, it is unlikely you are reading the form in depth for low risk subrecipients or you would have caught the number of times I have answered various questions with see website, after getting annoyed around question 20.” Regardless, the most accurate and compliant thing to do is to just check the audit.

Both Partners and Harvard have developed subrecipient databases. We either review all subrecipient audits at one time every year or, on a rolling basis (audits must be posted 9 months from the end of the fiscal year), pull a list of which audits should be completed based on their fiscal year end. We pull the audits one by one through the following means: perusing their website (typically, state institutions must make these publically available), looking them up on https://harvester.census.gov/facweb/ or asking the subrecipient for a copy (foreign entities, even if subject to the single audit, are not posted to Harvester). Even if the subrecipient does not have to complete a UG-compliant single audit, we ask for any sort of audit (internal or external, ideally research-related) that can tell us more about their sponsored project stewardship skills. We may hold further renewals of the subcontract until that documentation is in place.

The FDP is also piloting a fantastic monitoring tool: the expanded clearinghouse. This database builds on the success of the Conflict of Interest Policies clearinghouse (required for PHS and other agencies, 42CFR Part 50 Subpart F). The clearinghouse includes standard demographics, like FWA assurances and EIN numbers and IDC rates, as well as audit information.
Through these objective, singular mediums, we are able to efficiently assess every subrecipient once every year. We spend time and resources on subrecipients whose information cannot be easily obtained and we are also more compliant with subrecipient monitoring obligations. We are verifying the completion of the audit and reading the findings (if any) with our own eyes and not relying on a form that could be misread.

If the audit is clean, no further action should be required. If there are findings, put them into context. Significant deficiencies or material weaknesses should be treated with great care: review their audit management plan and reach out to the subrecipient. Be specific about any concerns that you have regarding their management plan and your subwards to them. You may consider changing them from low to high risk until the next year’s audit reveals their progress (or lack thereof). You may even want to change their subward from cost reimbursable to fixed price to further mitigate risk.

You must be thoughtful not to overact to what could be anomalous immaterial findings (i.e. a single alcohol charge or a large equipment charge that lacked prior approval or appropriate back up). No matter the quality of the finding, it is important to get a sense of the subrecipient’s management plan, which is often included in the audit (if not, ask for it). Especially in the case of a minor finding (such as the alcohol example above), the management plan may be sufficient to allay any fears.

When considering additional steps when you see a finding, ask yourself if you will be adding any value by implementing additional requirements. Auditors will test the cited deficiency again in a year and if it is not addressed, then you should think about elevating the risk. Luckily, we have some documents and legislation in the wings that support taking a more liberal approach.

The National Academy of Sciences recently published *Optimizing the Nation’s Investment in Academic Research: a Framework for the 21st Century*. This report very clearly lays out the justification for PTEs to NOT step into the shoes of the government with respect to evaluating peer institution’s every business process. As a result, two bills have arisen, one in the House (H.R. 5583) and one in the Senate (S.2742) that would obviate the need for extensive monitoring with other institutions subject to a single audit. If an institution is subject to a single audit, they are already being assessed on an annual basis by objective auditors. What more do other research institutions have to add to the process other than burden from the PTE to the subrecipient?

In addition to reviewing audits, it is worth noting there are other opportunities to streamline institutional processes to minimize PI burden such as annual assurances, leveraging your invoicing process, and making strategic site monitoring visits.

Invoice or milestone review are key components to subrecipient monitoring. If your subagreement is milestone-based you have the opportunity to ensure the work is done prior to issuing the payment. However, milestone payment structures should be reserved for high risk subrecipients or projects, such as developing research institutions in foreign countries or subcontractors with a high percentage of the overall project budget. Conversely, cost reimbursable payment structures allow low risk subrecipients more flexibility in spending and budgeting. If the subrecipient is making reasonable progress on the statement of work, their invoices (generally speaking) should be paid quickly. You can always stop and ask questions even for a low risk entity, but save your energy for true high-risk situations. You can be reasonably assured that a low risk institution is a good fiscal steward absent any evidence brought to your attention during the collaboration.

You may not always be able to pay the low risk subrecipient right away – you may see high-risk invoices from low-risk subrecipients. We suggest setting a threshold for a low risk invoice: the subrecipient must be low risk and the dollar amount must be under a threshold set by the institution. If the invoice meets the low-risk criteria, auto pay after a negative assurance window has lapsed. The expectation for the PI and their administrators is that they should let the finance office know if there are any issues with the subrecipient when invoices are sent for review. Encourage your PIs to bring issues to the attention of relevant administrative and financial colleagues early and often. In the absence of a response, one can assume the low risk invoices have no issues and should be paid in a timely fashion. Notwithstanding, even low-risk invoices should be briefly scanned to make sure they contain no unallowable costs and are reasonably consistent with the budget and level of progress. If your PI is not explicitly signing off on every invoice, make sure the PI periodically (such as annually, at renewal stage) certifies that they have no concerns with the subrecipient.

High-risk invoices should be classified as those over a certain institutionally designated minimum and all invoices from high-risk entities. All high-risk invoices should require explicit PI approval. However, you may decide not to require back-up for all high-risk invoices: your decision should be based on project and cultural context. Review the invoice against a line item detailed budget. If the high-risk subrecipient appears to be doing well, exhibiting consistent progress and invoicing close to the outlined budget, don’t overburden yourself or cause unnecessary tension with the subrecipient by constantly going through stacks of backup documents.

“As institutional research portfolios and diversity of sponsor requirements increases, our budgets are becoming tighter; we must find innovative ways to do more with less.”

If you do want to require automatic back-up for a particular subrecipient, be precise about tying the back-up to potential or actual causes for concern. For example, if the subrecipient has a history of effort reporting issues (but no other particular financial issues) limit the automatic back-up requirement to personnel related documentation. Do not ask for support for every single charge; you always have the right to request more information if you suspect a compliance issue. In place of or on top of back-up you could also require progress reports (even brief email updates) to accompany every invoice.

With the rollout of Uniform Guidance, we have yet another alternative to requiring back up with every invoice for non-Single Audit Institutions: the PTE may request funds for a desk or spot audit of the subrecipient. Spot auditing is a great way to pinpoint issues without burdening yourself in the day-to-day relationship with the subrecipient. You may either hire a third party or you as the PTE may perform the audit yourself. If you anticipate spot audit pushback from a subrecipient, make sure to include very specific rights in your subawards. Here is a suggested spot audit process: select one month of one project. Ask for a list of expenditures, opening bank balance, closing bank balance, and all transactions against the sponsored account. Ask for receipts for all expenses. If necessary, get the petty cash log and human subject payment log or other project specific documents. With respect to travel or events charges, ask for an attendance list, meeting minutes, and the agenda. Relay the results of your audit in person (via
As different as each small institution is, what remains similar is that each is often challenged by understanding the proper balance of teaching, research/scholarship, and service for their institutional context. To promote research/scholarly and creative activities, the institution must first identify a clear and common definition for these activities. Faculty, administrators, and staff should share this common understanding. NCURA Peer Reviewers have observed institutions come to a shared understanding in different ways. Many institutions use several of the strategies below simultaneously, or in concert with each other.

- Focus groups with faculty to discuss research/scholarly activity. Membership typically involves representatives of both junior and senior faculty across varied disciplines.
- Faculty Senate committees working with academic administration to discuss and share drafts of definition.
- Creation of short-term task forces or advisory committees to the Provost or Vice President for Research. Membership is appointed, short-term, and comes from across the institution to examine the role of research at an institution.
- Attempts to benchmark against similar peer institutions.
- Clear and consistent promotion and tenure (P&T) guidelines defining the role of research/scholarly activity and providing examples of what “counts” as research/scholarship by discipline.
- Clear statements on undergraduate research (UR) at the institution (For example, What role does UR play in P&T?)

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NOTABLE PRACTICES

Whether you work at a research institution or a predominantly undergraduate institution, the importance of providing quality services to your faculty in support of their research and scholarship is undeniable. NCURA offers a number of programs to assist your research administration operations and to ensure a high-quality infrastructure that supports your faculty and protects the institution. Please contact Peggy Lowry, Director for NCURA Peer Programs: NCURA Peer Advisory Services and NCURA Peer Review Program at peerreview@ncura.edu or (503) 364-1847.

video chat or onsite); write those results down to keep on file to support your diligent monitoring efforts.

The subrecipient should be invoicing you either on a monthly or quarterly basis (as outlined by the FDP Subaward template). If you are receiving invoices less frequently, or not seeing progress from a low risk institution, you may want to consider changing the risk level for that particular project to high. Sometimes otherwise good financial stewards just have projects go wrong: PIs or administrators may miscommunicate or make honest mistakes. If you work with the subrecipient, but can’t get the project back on track, you may want to revise the agreement from cost reimbursable to milestone-based, to ensure the deliverables are completed to specifications before payment is made.

Another handy tool in your subrecipient monitoring arsenal, especially for those institutions that like to have standard forms for all transactions, is the Continuing Assessment Tool (CAT) recently released by the FDP. While we think for most projects this tool is a little more detail than is strictly necessary, it is a very handy starting point for those of us that are looking at a high-risk project/subrecipient institution and need something to guide us in making a fair assessment.

Site visits are another effective option for monitoring high risk sub-recipients or projects. Especially with a foreign entity, your personal presence can cut through cultural or language barriers. Depending on the grant rules, budget direct costs for a portion of an administrator’s time to manage risky sub-recipients. If a foreign subrecipient needs to hire specific people to work on project administration, consider having the subrecipient budget for those costs directly, as the NIH 8% (or other federal agency 10%) might not be enough. Aside from grant funding, reserve sundry funds to pay for site visits if you plan on entering into much potentially risky collaboration.

If you can’t pull together additional funds, many low cost technological options like Skype are available for face-to-face meetings. If you can’t be on site, find out of there are other research institutions near the subrecipient that do run a good operation and set up some time for knowledge sharing. Above all else, ensure you have bi-weekly or weekly meetings (on Skype or at least via phone) with the project and financial managers at the subrecipient. These meetings make the subrecipient personnel feel included, promoting responsibility and teamwork.

In summary, the NAS report authors put it best when they recommended that research institutions “Revise self-imposed burdensome institutional policies that go beyond those necessary and sufficient to comply with federal, state, and local requirements.” As institutional research portfolios and diversity of sponsor requirements increases, our budgets are becoming tighter; we must find innovative ways to do more with less. Our equally important goals of compliance and reducing administrative burden for PIs are best met by taking a risk-based approach to subrecipient monitoring.

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As research administrators, we get to work with the leading research minds in the country to move research forward. We have a front row seat to see how teaching and discovery go hand in hand, improving and saving lives, improving quality of life, or illuminating the mysteries of nature. But let’s face it, research administration can also be very stressful. A 2010 survey found that an astounding 90% of research administrators reported that their jobs had become increasingly demanding (Shambrook, 2012).

Sure, changing regulations, proposal deadlines, and institutional politics can keep us awake at night. Add to this burden the fact that faculty and administrators reported that their jobs had become increasingly demanding (Shambrook, 2012). Stressful. A 2010 survey found that an astounding 90% of research administrators reported that their jobs had become increasingly demanding (Shambrook, 2012).

How are we to deal with the stress of ever-loom ing deadlines, precise attention to detail, and last minute proposals? (Alice: “This is impossible.” Hatter: “Only if you believe it is.”) Reach out to others. Learn from them; teach them, and find encouragement. Only by communicating and sharing with people, within and outside our own institutions, can we refill our cup so that we can continue to help others.

For instance, effective implementation of the Uniform Guidance demands the attention of multiple departments: preaward, post-award, academic departments, purchasing, academic affairs, legal counsel, internal audit, purchasing, and others. We cannot do it alone. One place to start is by registering for a webinar and inviting several offices to attend. Follow the event with ten to fifteen minutes of idea sharing and discussion to illuminate local challenges and clear up questions. These experiences can not only serve to improve research administration processes, but can also open channels of communication and build trust.

Even faculty become interested when you let them know that the Uniform Guidance is the “biggest change to research administration in fifty years” (Christy, Kennedy, Hope, Luther, Davis, Moreland, 2014). Now is the perfect time to ask college deans to allow twenty minutes to talk with department chairpersons about what these changes mean to faculty and departmental administrators. These talks will help academic leaders understand the context in which we work when reviewing proposals, and again, serve to encourage communication and trust.

What seems impossible becomes possible with help from others. Fortunately, there are many resources outside of our institutions to help us do our jobs. Most of us are familiar with the resources provided by the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP). This group of federal agencies and university partners has translated regulation updates into useful subaward forms that many of us use on a daily basis. Of course, NCURA is also a tremendous source of knowledge and encouragement. Take the time to participate, get to know people, and grow. Get involved at the regional and/or national level. Commit yourself to giving a presentation with a colleague, writing an article, or volunteering in some way. You will get more out of it than you put in. Similarly, organizations such as the Society for Research Administration International (SRA), the National Organization for Research Development Professionals (NORDP), the Grants Resource Center (GRC) of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and even regional and statewide research administration groups can be helpful.

Research administration is not for the faint of heart. It is a field of opportunity. Keep working and know that you are not alone. Reach out to others when you feel overwhelmed, and believe that you can do it. Be like Alice and try to “believe in as many as six impossible things before breakfast”. And, if you feel your mind slipping away, just remember what Alice said when the Hatter asked if he had gone mad, “I’m afraid so. You’re entirely bonkers. But I’ll tell you a secret. All the best people are.”

References

Dawn Underwood is associate dean for sponsored programs and IRB administrator at Indiana State University. She has been an active member in NCURA since 2001, including presenting concurrent sessions at regional and national meetings and serving as the 2017 EARM-A-NCURA fellow. She can be reached at dawnd@indstate.edu
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The Uniform Guidance is here. The Office of Management and Budget’s *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (“Uniform Guidance”) introduces key changes in the administrative requirements affecting us all. From its heightened focus on subrecipient monitoring to its renewed emphasis on performance and internal controls to its substantial provisions regarding procurement standards, the Uniform Guidance requires significant changes to our policies. As the Director of Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) at Pepperdine University, a PUI, I oversee a department which includes both Pre-Award and Post-Award functions. An important part of my job is to successfully identify the best methods by which to educate PIs and School Budget managers about Federal regulations pertaining to grants, contracts and cooperative agreements and thereby promote University compliance. As a practicing attorney for over twenty years, I can admit to you, my NCURA colleagues, I find myself occasionally jealous of the resources of R1 Research Universities: these larger institutions can afford to outsource the development of customized research administration courses or certificate programs that provide post-award training for PIs, other faculty and staff, as well as software updates in accordance with changes to Federal codes.

When I was hired into my role, a senior administrator at my institution remarked upon the recent trend to hire lawyers to run RSP departments, especially those which oversee post-award. “To have successful Federally funded research, universities must be able to navigate an increasingly complex and challenging Federally regulatory environment,” he stated, “Government regulations are constantly evolving and changing, our institutions need to stay abreast of these changes and be able to implement them quickly.” But as those of us employed as research administrators know, remaining in compliance with Federal regulations, including the Uniform Guidance, requires not only written policies, but faculty and staff knowledge of these policies.

I have a distinct memory of the moment which prompted the creation of our interactive, eLearning training program for PIs and Budget Managers. After spending the past year drafting and updating policies for a comprehensive *Pepperdine Research and Sponsored Programs Handbook*, I was eager to find the best way to disseminate this information. I worried that despite everyone’s best intentions, PIs and School Budget Managers would have difficulty engaging with 72 pages of a handbook (no matter how exciting a read it was to RSP, General Counsel and Auditing Services). “It costs how much?” I gawked at the phone after a vendor had shared preliminary pricing information for an online system. I knew then despite my institution’s serious commitment to compliance, this solution was likely cost-prohibitive. But we recognized the need of having a customized, interactive online grants training program for faculty and staff to ensure compliance. This belief led to the decision for Pepperdine RSP to create our own system.

**OUR GOAL**
The ultimate purpose of the proposed training was to familiarize faculty and staff with the highlights of Pepperdine’s RSP Handbook and important University and funder guidelines, including those mandated by the Uniform
Identifying the Software

First, we needed to identify an eLearning program with which to create educational grants management modules, without any assistance from IT or hired consultants. The RSP team at Pepperdine consists of an administrative coordinator, two pre-award staff, a post-award staff member, an accountant and a part-time independent contractor. For us, this was an ambitious undertaking. None of my staff had ever created an eLearning program before. But we figured if we could create PowerPoint or Prezi presentations, it couldn’t be that much harder. After performing a software environmental scan, we settled on Adobe Captivate. Adobe Captivate is a popular e-Learning development platform that can transform stagnant PowerPoints into dynamic, interactive learning tools with tracking functionality. Adobe Captivate was also particularly attractive because it offered an extensive library of pre-made templates and graphics, including character/images, which could deliver dialogue and contribute to RSP “real-life” scenarios. Further, Adobe Captivate provided us with the opportunity to publish the modules, ready-to-use on personal computers, tablets and cell phones. It was easy to make updates to published modules. To modify the contents of a module after it had been published, we simply duplicate the course, integrate changes as needed and then republish. Modifying the course is almost as simple as adding or deleting a PowerPoint slide. Therefore, when there are changes to Federal code or institutional policies, there is no need to scrap a program or buy an expensive bolt-on. An RSP team can quickly make the changes themselves and republish.

The Actual Process

The first step in the development process was to carefully review the handbook to identify the most important policies from a University compliance standpoint. Adhering to Handbook structure was critical both to ensure we did not inadvertently exclude a section and to enable us to add or edit policies with ease. Developing the script took approximately six months, with one part-time employee managing it and the entire team reviewing. In each module’s introduction, the script identified the corresponding sections of the handbook. We were careful to ensure that scenarios only drew from previously covered sections, thereby ensuring that changes made to a Handbook Section could be easily and correctly integrated into the respective modules. Finally, we wanted to be sure that PIs and School Budget Managers understood that this was a training program, not the complete RSP Handbook. Each module includes the admonition: “Remember: This training is not meant to be a substitute for reading and consulting the RSP Handbook.” Upon completion of the scripts, we purchased Adobe Captivate, and one staff member was tasked with learning the program.

Converting the scripts into slides and recording/adding the narration was the most time consuming piece of the project. In particular, having text slide on and off the screen was challenging, but resulted in a more polished, engaging end product. Adding graphics is easiest if you have a staff member with a marketing or graphic design background.

When speaking to fellow PUI research administrators about the project, a common reaction is “Wow, sounds amazing, we need a tool to highlight the changes to the Uniform Guidance. Given how busy our offices are, how do you actually ensure it gets done?” The answer is you need to identify a team member who is willing to take ownership of the project, someone who wants to grow or move towards promotion.

The Result

A year and a half later, I am pleased to report that we have eight eLearning modules (a set of four training modules for PIs and for Budget Managers) created by RSP staff with inexpensive Adobe Captivate software (under $500). Translated from our RSP Handbook into a dramatic script, the modules include voice-overs, attractive graphics and quizzes. One of the most notable things about the project was that the only technical training the team needed to create the modules was watching YouTube or Lynda.com tutorial videos. The entire RSP team contributed to the project, with one of the pre-award staff devoting the most time. I would say the most challenging aspect of the project, beside the time constraints of the RSP staff, was learning to work with the program. The program can be clumsy to work with at times. After developing proficiency with the program, making changes can be accomplished very quickly. Further, since the time of our program’s initial development, a new and improved version of Adobe Captivate software became available.

Keys to Success

To successfully move forward with an in-house eLearning project, there needs to be support from your RSP Team. I am blessed to work with very dedicated people who love what they do. My team expressed that the greatest obstacle for them to overcome was intimidation concerning the scope and feasibility of the project. Support from senior administration is critical. As part of the recent implementation, Pepperdine RSP was encouraged to require all new PI awardees to undergo the training. We believe this educational tool will encourage University compliance with the new regulations promulgated by the Uniform Guidance. Please feel free to contact me directly, if you would like to learn more about the Pepperdine University RSP training modules. □

Alexandra Marmion Roosa serves as the Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at Pepperdine University (ORSP). An experienced attorney and former museum director, Marmion Roosa also serves as an adjunct law professor at Pepperdine University’s School of Law. Prior to her affiliation with Pepperdine, Marmion Roosa managed a national initiative for the American Association of Museums (AAM) in Washington D.C. whereby she worked to strategically identify best practices for museums-community engagement. While at AAM, she also co-authored a legal manual, The AAM Guide to Writing an Employee Handbook, to assist non-profits with human resource management. She can be reached at alexandra.roosa@pepperdine.edu

“But as those of us employed as research administrators know, remaining in compliance with federal regulations...requires not only written policies, but faculty and staff knowledge of these policies.”
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Research Administration in Asia Pacific

Struggles and Competition to Establish Our Own Way of Management

By Manami Tomioka and Masataka Sakurai

Characteristics of Japanese University Research Administrators
Since the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology started the establishment of systems to foster and secure university administrators in 2011, the Japanese URA has become popular in each university. University specialists, such as postdoctoral students who have turned from being researchers and coordinators in academic-industrial alliances, account for a high percentage of the URA backgrounds. They therefore lack sufficient knowledge of accounting or auditing in general.

In the United States, URA is positioned as one academic subject in the society. Students can systematically learn general knowledge in research, organizational theory, management of marketing, accounting, and auditing at their universities, which leads many students to work in URA just after they have graduated from their universities. URA is a relatively new occupation in Japan, however; and we rarely have opportunities to gain general knowledge in management. In fact, we have to cooperate with departments such as the accounting or legal department in order to manage the research funds.

Process of the birth and the target of TMU Research Administration Office
In the Tokyo Metropolitan University “TMU,” we carried out a great reformation of the support system for researchers in 2011 and established the present department in 2014. In order to explain the process to establish this department, we need to touch on the bad habits in the researcher support system in Japan. In Japan, we have made efforts toward academia-industry cooperation under the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Legislative development is one of the good examples of these efforts, such as the 1998 Technology Licensing Organization Law, which aims to set TLO and the Japanese version of Bayh Dole Act based on the Act on Special Measures concerning Industrial Revitalization in 1999. However, the structure of the organization mainly comprises company workers who are over 55 years old and in their second careers. Although introduction of some of the systems of project management and commercialization had been tried at the university, it was difficult to integrate faculty members and 55-year-old businessmen who are set in their ways and who originally worked under different missions and cultures in their respective professional fields. Many universities therefore experience little generational change due to the aging of retiree members from the company and transplanting a business system to a university system makes no progress. As a result, a US-style system for academia-industrial alliance has in fact not yet been established in Japan.

TMU was in the same situation at the point of the great reformation launched in 2011, as the average age of each research-support professional was over 65, and the older the professional got, the lower their productivity became. Toward improvement, we first launched a major reshuffle of specialist human resources, reworked the requirements for skillset and job description, and clarified the character for ideal human resources, which was completely different from before. By applying the former system of vertically divided operations, we estimated that it was impossible to adopt the process to acknowledge a wide range of issues of each research stage and to assess the solution mutually with the researcher, from the fundamental research to practical research.

As a result, we employed human resources who have endowments and experience in business consulting or in a trading company, made a twofold increase in our budget, and successfully transformed the system into a kind of professional consulting firm organization.

“GO HARD OR GO HOME”
Outline of TMU Research Administration office activity
TMU has unique status based on the fact that it is a public university established by the world’s leading scale local authority of the “Tokyo Metropolitan Government”. Since the Tokyo Metropolitan Government holds various urban issues, TMU maintains close cooperation with them, especially in fields with a high worldwide presence such as “Water-Supply” and “Environment and Energy.” Moreover, we make individual suggestions in the fields of Financial Engineering, Tourism, Disaster Prevention, Welfare and Regional Revitalization towards the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. To be more precise, we established the Research Center for Water System Engineering, the Research Center for a Hydrogen Energy-Based Society, and the Research Center for Quantitative Finance, and we promote joint
research with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which is backed by several hundred millions of yen in financial resources.

The center for Water System Engineering supports a water-supply administration of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, known as “the best waterworks in the world,” as a think tank for more than 20 years. In fact, three former Office Chiefs of Waterworks at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government earned their Ph.Ds at TMU. The Research Center for a Hydrogen Energy-Based Society built a system to research three steps of the “Initiative for Hydrogen Society,” which the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the regional collaboration among local governments that is seeking their unique character in regional revitalization, and the insurance of biodiversity accompanied by the symbiosis between urban and green areas. There is a saying that embodies the characteristics of the URA organization in TMU: “Go hard or go home.” Japanese universities tend to be deliberate for new activities and prefer operating the organization based on precedents. However, passion, speed and risk taking with a sense of accountability are vital elements to introduce an entirely new URA social system. While this organizational management would be generally accepted in US universities, it is not prevalent in Japanese universities. There is a famous business saying: “advantage of backwardness.” In the situation of TMU, this means that the analysis in cases of failure at other universities and incorporating successful examples into the TMU scale would efficiently create a more effective organization. We believe that these activities would bring the “cultivation and establishment of human resources for university management,” which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology expects for Japanese URA organizations.

The center for Water System Engineering supports a water-supply administration of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, known as “the best waterworks in the world,” as a think tank for more than 20 years. In fact, three former Office Chiefs of Waterworks at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government earned their Ph.Ds at TMU. The Research Center for a Hydrogen Energy-Based Society built a system to research three steps of the “Initiative for Hydrogen Society,” which the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the regional collaboration among local governments that is seeking their unique character in regional revitalization, and the insurance of biodiversity accompanied by the symbiosis between urban and green areas. There is a saying that embodies the characteristics of the URA organization in TMU: “Go hard or go home.” Japanese universities tend to be deliberate for new activities and prefer operating the organization based on precedents. However, passion, speed and risk taking with a sense of accountability are vital elements to introduce an entirely new URA social system. While this organizational management would be generally accepted in US universities, it is not prevalent in Japanese universities. There is a famous business saying: “advantage of backwardness.” In the situation of TMU, this means that the analysis in cases of failure at other universities and incorporating successful examples into the TMU scale would efficiently create a more effective organization. We believe that these activities would bring the “cultivation and establishment of human resources for university management,” which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology expects for Japanese URA organizations.

Government earned their Ph.Ds at TMU. The Research Center for a Hydrogen Energy-Based Society built a system to research three steps of Hydrogen, to manufacture, transport and utilize in one place in order to achieve the concept of the “Initiative for Hydrogen Society,” which the Tokyo Metropolitan Government holds, and we are now advancing several large projects requested by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. To bring the concept of the “Tokyo Global Financial Center” to fruition, the research center of Quantitative Finance was set in the center of the Marunouchi area of Tokyo, and it invites top researchers to nurture financial experts who can be active on the front lines of the world. In addition, public universities have to promote not only global academic activities but also the significance of their existence in regional contributing activities.

We at TMU play a central role in urban issues solving activities. For example, the development in the suburban agriculture supports the sextiary sector propelled by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the regional collaboration among local governments that is seeking their unique character in regional revitalization, and the insurance of biodiversity accompanied by the symbiosis between urban and green areas. There is a saying that embodies the characteristics of the URA organization in TMU: “Go hard or go home.” Japanese universities tend to be deliberate for new activities and prefer operating the organization based on precedents. However, passion, speed and risk taking with a sense of accountability are vital elements to introduce an entirely new URA social system. While this organizational management would be generally accepted in US universities, it is not prevalent in Japanese universities. There is a famous business saying: “advantage of backwardness.” In the situation of TMU, this means that the analysis in cases of failure at other universities and incorporating successful examples into the TMU scale would efficiently create a more effective organization. We believe that these activities would bring the “cultivation and establishment of human resources for university management,” which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology expects for Japanese URA organizations.

The Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan “RMAN-J,” the Japanese national URA organization, was established two years ago, and the second annual conference was held this September. Considering the fact that there are over 700 URAs working for universities and research institutions in Japan, it can be said that the conference was a huge success with more than 500 participants. RMAN-J now has 22 organizing committees and over 400 individual members, which shows potential growth in the future. Since our URA office’s key person has managerial talent, TMU has been participating as a volunteer from the first stage of planning in order to establish the RMAN-J. We contributed to the discussion of organizational design and financial management. In URA work, the correspondence of compliance and auditing is a function for the organization and it is also essential for individual endowments.

Hence, since our URA members have experience in finance and business management, we were able to make a contribution to RMAN-J as a behind-the-scenes player when it was first launched. It is vital for RMAN-J to customize the best practices of overseas URA organizations in order to attain the position for leading the Japanese URA. We must take the initiative overseas in advance and acquire successful cases of foreign URA not only through systematic cooperation as RMAN-J, but also by each Japanese university respectively. We have participated in the NCURA Annual Meeting every year since 2014 and studied NCURA methodology in order to incorporate it into the TMU version. RMAN-J has recently decided to join INORMS members as a first step. This is a huge step, and we must greatly foster RMAN-J to enable the INORMS congress to convene in Japan.

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There is a saying that embodies the characteristics of the URA organization in TMU: "Go hard or go home."
“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.” Madame Curie

I wanted to begin my response to your question with the above quote from Marie Curie, the early twentieth century Polish physicist who conducted pioneering research on radioactivity. My reason is to help you help yourself and your team by being a student of organizational change. The more you understand, the more able you are to realistically assess possible outcomes and be emotionally present for your team. Being a learner will help you be curious about what is happening at your institution in a broader sense, and may help you convey a greater sense of calm and predictability about the processes of change and what to expect.

Also, you are probably aware of the broader changes going on within higher education and the pressures on most all colleges and universities to reduce operating costs and refocus missions on students and the educational experience, including how curriculum is developed and delivered. Your institution is one of many colleges undergoing such change.

Here are a couple of resources for you to get started:

1. “Ten Reasons People Resist Change,” by Professor Rosabeth Kanter of Harvard Business School. I believe you can search for this brief article on the internet. Among Dr. Kanter’s ten reasons is past resentments. “The ghosts of the past are always lying in wait to haunt us. As long as everything is steady state, they remain out of sight. But the minute you need cooperation for something new or different, the ghosts spring into action. Old wounds reopen, historic resentments are remembered — sometimes going back many generations. Leaders should consider gestures to heal the past before sailing into the future.” Ten Reasons People Resist Change by Rosabeth Kanter, Harvard Business Review, September 25, 2012.

2. Leading Change, by John Kotter, Harvard Business Review Press; First edition (November 6, 2012). One of Kotter’s expressions that sticks with me is his sense of some organizations being “over-managed” and “under-led”. In the context of change, this means that people are thirsty for leadership: transparency and integrity and communication and engagement. Also, Kotter suggests that those implementing change foster a sense of urgency within the organization. “A higher rate of urgency does not imply ever-present panic, anxiety, or fear. It means a state in which complacency is virtually absent.” This thought may indeed scare you or your team, but the objective here is for you to help design and define your own future and your team’s. Be an active participant in the change process. It is better for you and your team’s well-being.

Being there for your team does not mean becoming a pollyanna. It means listening to your team members (and your own mind) and the messages and emotions coming forth. It means asking your team members what are they most concerned about with change, and what bases do they have for believing a particular outcome will happen. Propose alternative outcomes. What are some of the better possibilities at play? Ask them if they believe there is anything that you personally can do to help them cope with their fears. Ask them what they believe they, personally, can do to help themselves be prepared for a changing organization, such as more training and learning about other organizational roles and functions. Counter negative impressions or expectations by stating other more positive possibilities. This is called reframing. It is normal and natural to fear the worst, and an alert mind can help bring positive possibilities to the forefront.

You may find yourself able to influence organizational change by being a steady and reliable presence and advocate for your team and its functions. This means being a good listener and observer of the forces of change driving your institution.

Other advice? Ask yourself this question a few times a week: “How can I help my organization discuss change and implement change in the most effective ways that advance the college or university’s mission?” Take the broad view as a citizen of the campus. Do not be solely focused parochially on your office and function. Use the opportunities of change to educate your campus about what roles your office plays and who the key stakeholders are (e.g. faculty, sponsors, regulators, students) that your team supports. Put these words on sticky notes and put it next to your computer screen while your institution is going through this change process: “Be A Learner and A Teacher”. —

Do you have a leadership question? Send questions to me at the email below. Thank you to those who have sent questions and comments!

Garry Sanders is an executive coach and graduate of Georgetown University’s Certificate Program in Leadership Coaching. Garry is a long-time research administrator and recipient of NCURA’s Distinguished Service Award. He can be reached at gsanders@assistleadership.com and (518) 588-0992.
So You Want to Be a Consultant

By Susan Wyatt Sedwick, Cindy White and Evan Roberts

As the Uniform Guidance got you thinking about a career change? If the lure of being your own boss, working from home or travel to exotic locations (college towns that require a full day of travel) has piqued your interest, the Uniform Guidance has produced a spike in need and business opportunity for all consultants and a new market for generating business with both new and existing clients.

Attributes that are essential in consulting include keen observational skills, a breadth of knowledge of the complete research administration life-cycle, an understanding of organizational dynamics and acumen at managing change. As a consultant, you will be expected to be an agent of change and since you will often work in unfamiliar surroundings and with people you do not know well, you must be adaptable and know how to quickly gain the trust of others. Professional versatility is a plus. If you enjoy mentoring others, you have an immense opportunity to expand that reach beyond a single institution. Early and mid-career individuals will seek out your expertise.

There are several options for positioning yourself in the consulting marketplace: 1) employed by a firm; 2) independent; or 3) the hybrid independent contractor affiliated with a firm. Three senior consultants representing each of these vantage points offer these insights you might want to consider if you make the move to the consulting world.

Employee or Contractor: There are pros and cons to each form of consulting. Whether you are an employee of a consulting firm or an independent contractor, the goal is to be engaged with clients and actively working on projects. Your status as an employee or independent contractor may significantly affect who your clients will be. As an independent, you may be more likely to find business in assisting emerging research institutions and Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs). Generally, the larger institutions tend to seek assistance from larger consulting groups. Many opportunities are sought through the competitive bid process. You may find opportunities to work with research-intensive universities if you have existing relationships with senior leadership at those institutions or niche or widely recognized expertise. The size or type of your professional network informs your choice on this aspect. Regarding all-important compensation, as an employee you have the security of a paycheck, benefits and paid leave but with that comes the expectation that you will account for how you spend all of your time (yes, effort reporting). As an independent contractor, you don’t need to meet a certain number of hours and have a little more freedom to choose which projects you want to accept and when you work but downtime is also your responsibility. You will also be responsible for much of your overhead—computer, software, office space, etc., and the technical support team at your friendly computer store will be your new best friends.

Business Development: Whether or not you want to be, as a consultant you are in sales. The Uniform Guidance has produced opportunities for new and existing clients. You need to be comfortable with selling yourself, your team and your ideas whether formally through a proposal or brochure or informally in conversation with regular clients and contacts. Your product is your expertise, your dedication to getting a sometimes tedious job completed, and your ability to solve problems no one else wants to tackle. Again, networking is essential and one cannot discount the opportunities afforded by professional conferences. You may find yourself feeling like a principal investigator in responding to competitive bids so strive to avoid creating those last minute frenzies that drove you to consulting in the first place.

Working from Home: If you are going to be working from a home office, it is important to have a designated workspace and even more importantly, to exercise restraint in setting boundaries for the diversions that abound at home. While it is nice to be available for the repairman or to load the dishwasher, it is imperative that you learn to schedule those tasks and to be “present” when you sit down to work. In other words, go to work.
Granted the dress code can be a lot more casual. Unless you are predisposed to embrace technology, you are going to need to become a lot more astute and resourceful in solving the inevitable problems that pop up every day. When your server goes down, you can’t just call your information technology support team or grab Morgan down the hall who has a knack with computers; you are going to need to fix that yourself. If you are independent you are going to be responsible for your technology, hardware and software. Having a reliable computer comes first and foremost. You must subscribe or purchase software such as Adobe Pro so you can take apart and rearrange pdf docs, have access to scanning capabilities and a color printer that can handle large print jobs, insure only when you need assistance. Unless you attend professional meetings regularly, that camaraderie you used to take for granted will be a challenge to maintain.

Time: Whatever your consulting status is, you will live by tracking your time. If you are employed or affiliated with a company, the manner or tool you use may be dictated. As an independent, you may have more flexibility but you need to be able to defend your billings. This is just as important when bidding firm fixed price amounts. As a consultant you will live in that world so familiar to PIs!

Project Management: This is probably the biggest adjustment and related to time management. If you want to go into consulting, start thinking now about how long it takes you to plan, develop and execute projects such as strategic planning, organizational assessments, or software implementations. It is critical to be accurate when estimating the amount of time needed for completing a scope of work. It is far better to have that first project with a client come in early and under budget than the opposite. The adage “under promise and over deliver” is a reality especially when you are first starting out.

Rates: When working through a firm as an employee or, to some extent as an affiliated consultant, setting your rates will be outside of your control. If you are an independent, you can set your rates at what the market will bear while cutting out the middleman. There is little doubt that your clients understand rate structures and will expect a significantly reduced rate from that of someone engaged through a firm.

Expenses: Every consultant must be meticulous at tracking expenses. This means all of your expenses, even those that are not reimbursed by the client because you want to track those for tax purposes. Perhaps the wisest move you will make as you contemplate a career change is to schedule a conversation with an expert who can advise you of the tax implications and record-keeping responsibilities associated with your choice. Finally, think about how to mitigate the professional liability you may be assuming as an independent consultant by either purchasing malpractice insurance and/or setting up a separate consulting company.

Work Life Balance: If that is your goal, understand there will be different stressors once you enter the consulting world and to some degree this may be an even larger struggle. Client needs don’t always fit nicely into your schedule. If you are employed by or affiliated with a firm, your work hours may be more structured than if you are independent but consulting and working from home allows you a bit more flexibility to take a two hour break in the middle of the day for personal reasons and make up that time later in the evening. Travel, from physically surviving the inherent frustrations of delayed or cancelled flights to making sure you have flights, rooms and rental cars booked, will add a whole new dimension to your stress level. Be prepared to spend more time away from home that when you are a university employee.

“You will need to become much more intentional in maintaining your professional relationships…”

conference calling capability and brush up on “infographics” to create reports and presentations.

Solitude: You need to be self-motivated and you must be resourceful in new ways. You will need to seek out much of the information that was pushed out to you from organizations like the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) and Council on Governmental Relations (COGR). If you don’t currently scan the Federal Register or subscribe to list serves, your world is going to change. When you think those constant interruptions from your colleagues stopping by your office are nothing but a diversion and drain on your productivity, rest assured you will miss them. Walking down the hall to bounce ideas off someone else becomes a waiting game when at the mercy of email when someone must take time out of their day to respond to your call or email. You will need to become much more intentional in maintaining your professional relationships lest you communicate
The 2017 Financial Research Administration Program Committee invites you once again to mark your calendars, buy your tickets, and get ready to join us in sunny San Diego for what is sure to be an amazing conference. The committee has put together an outstanding program to ensure that everyone who attends not only has a fantastic experience, but also takes back to his/her institution new tools and/or techniques to share with colleagues. Put in your requests for travel authorization now!

Our track leaders have been hard at work recruiting presenters, leaders, and panelists for a range of sessions that encompass everything from F&A rate development and negotiation to how to get your Predominantly Undergraduate Institution ready for Federal contracts. We are also excited to offer a number of panel discussions on topics including the rollout of new financial management systems and how the FLSA changes are impacting our organizations.

As we mentioned in our previous article, for this meeting we decided to change up the track offerings just a bit, streamlining the tracks to 9 overarching areas—Academic Medical Center/Hospital, Compliance, Departmental, Federal Updates, Human Capital Management, International, PUI, Sponsored Projects Accounting, and Systems/Emerging Technologies—so that we would also be able to identify the sessions as covering specific content areas/ideas. This “tagging” is readily underway, and our team has currently identified 12 distinct tags:

- Billing/Invoicing
- Infrastructure Development
- Uniform Guidance
- Career Development
- Process Improvement
- Non-Financial Post-Award
- Budgeting/Forecasting
- Industry Sponsored Research
- Federal Regulation
- Reporting & Metrics
- Clinical Trials/Clinical Research
- Policy Development

In addition to the fantastic work on the program, our team has been working diligently to identify a keynote speaker. Our goal was to find someone who could speak to the WHY we spend our time learning better ways to support our institutions, our colleagues, and, most importantly, our faculty. We are honored to announce that this year’s keynote speaker will be Dr. James Allison, presently of MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Dr. Allison was born in Texas, and obtained both his BS and PhD at the University of Texas at Austin. From here, he pursued a research career beginning with a postdoctoral fellowship at Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation and returning him to Texas in 2012, following appointments at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Science Park, the University of California Berkeley, and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Dr. Allison is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine. His research discoveries include the definition of the structure of the T cell antigen receptor, demonstration that the T cell molecule CD28 provides co-stimulatory signals necessary for full T cells activation, and the identification of the inhibitory checkpoint molecule CTLA-4, which inhibits activated T cells. He proposed that immune checkpoint blockade might be a powerful strategy for therapy of many cancer types and conducted preclinical experiments demonstrating its potential. His development of this immune checkpoint blockade has transformed cancer therapy and been responsible for saving the lives of thousands of cancer patients.

Dr. Allison is a highly sought after speaker, and we are excited and humbled that he has agreed to come to San Diego and remind us that what we do has an incredible impact on our world.

We look forward to seeing you this spring as we all work on Charting our Course in Research Administration!
When embarking on new international collaboration there are several factors to consider in support of your researchers. First and foremost: “What will it take?” Another (albeit obvious) factor is that it takes a good idea. One that helps the funder achieve its’ interests and priorities. It is prudent to consider why an agency should fund you. The task at hand involves you convincing the funder that you and your team have a good idea and can carry out the project. Hence, it is critical to have a team that possesses the right skills and experience, communicates well together, and can work together to deliver a high quality competitive proposal on time.

Funders pursuing global initiatives may require international teams and/or teams including indigenous organizations. When pursuing international collaborations it is critical to develop a consensus on essential issues such as project concept and budget; roles and responsibilities; and the assignment of lead writing and co-writing for the multinational project. It is also important to come to an agreement on the means, methods and expectations for communication.

There could be a multitude of challenges to collaboration: the idea is insufficiently focused; there is no proposal development plan; the project lacks familiarity or understanding of funder’s interests; the project lacks required expertise; the project lacks adequate and true partnerships; there is insufficient time to plan, write, reflect and edit the proposal. It should be noted that these challenges can be overcome. You and your team can be ready to collaborate when: you have a good idea; there is a demonstrable need for the project that requires collaboration; your project matches the sponsor’s interest; there is robust expertise and knowledge amongst the collaborators to conduct the project; there are legitimate and committed partners who will contribute to the proposal and the funded project effort; there is adequate time and support to develop the idea and the proposal; and that your respective institutions support your idea.

We recognize that there is never enough time and the complexities of global collaborations compound this situation. However, it is important to incorporate time into the proposal development process that allows sufficient opportunity to reflect and refine the project idea; recruit team and secure partners; gather support data; share drafts and rewrites; review and critique; and obtain commitments and signatures.

The role of the sponsored projects office is essential to the success of collaborative efforts. It is the critical component for submitting accurate proposals since research administrators function as the link to the funder, other university offices and the collaborators’ research administrators. The research administrator is a key contributor to keeping the lines of communication open and transparent. They are committed to protecting the PI and the institution, and possess the expertise on rules, regulations and procedures for funding. Research administrators are a valuable and essential component to the collaboration team.

Once the collaborators have been identified, should the organizations enter into an agreement? A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between organizations is useful to describe the framework of anticipated collaborations, including proposal development and submission. MOUs can be non-binding and may not be legally enforceable, but many organizations consider them desirable as a way of documenting the relationship, the intention of the parties to collaboration, and the general goals of the collaboration. The University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) has had international MOUs in place for several years. In some cases there is no expectation of any proposal or subaward; rather, the partners are pursuing mutually beneficial goals and/or supporting faculty exchanges.

A teaming agreement (TA) documents the partners’ strategy to develop and submit a proposal, usually in response to a specific funding opportunity. It sets expectations and responsibilities for proposal activities —
Multitasking Does Not Work!

We all do it. We all try to balance multiple tasks at one time. Recently, while reviewing proposal A, I stopped to answer an email regarding proposal B, then answered a phone call about proposal C. Before I knew it, I was making mistakes. After sending my third email admitting I made a mistake, I had learned my lesson, multitasking does not work! When we try, mistakes happen. In research administration (and in life), these mistakes can be costly. Research has shown that it can take up to 15 minutes to return to your original task after being distracted.

Here are some suggestions to help you put the icing on the cake and cut back on multitasking:

1. Check email less often. We all receive tons of emails daily, but when you are focused on the task in front of you, the email can wait. Set aside time to check your email or only check emails after you complete a task.

2. Prioritize your to-do list. Figure out the most important tasks that need to get done and then work on them one at a time. If something pops into your head while working on one task, make a note and get back to the task at hand.

3. Shut your door (or, if you are in a cubicle, put up a sign asking not to be disturbed). Now, I realize most of us can’t keep our doors shut all day, but if you really need to focus on one important task, your colleagues will understand that you are temporarily unavailable. Think of that time as being in a meeting with your task (put it on your calendar if you have to).

While we can’t put an end to distractions all together, when one does arise, make a conscious decision to refocus as quickly as possible.

References


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Co-Funding Mechanisms: How Non-European Researchers Can Receive Funding from Their Own National Agencies to Cooperate with European Partners in Horizon 2020 Projects

By Elli B. Tzatzanis-Stepanovic and Epaminondas Christofiopoulos

What Are Co-Funding Mechanisms and How Did They Come About?

While research collaborations across national boundaries have been a growing trend among researchers, universities, and research organizations, research funding has stubbornly remained parochial, i.e., funding agencies as a rule generally fund their own researchers and organizations. While there are stellar exceptions to this, e.g., the U.S. National Institutes of Health, which accepts proposals and funds projects from anywhere in the world, national funding agencies generally do not fund researchers and research organizations in other countries, or they do so only on a very limited basis. However, in the case of the European Union (EU), a two decade long trend of International Science Technology and Innovation (STI) co-operation between the EU and non-European countries has resulted in an innovative way of securing funding for non-European researchers to collaborate with their European counterparts.

This can be traced back to the 1990’s when the EU signed its first Science and Technology Agreements with Australia, Canada, South Africa, the U.S., and China. In the next decade, the EU deepened these Agreements with Strategic Partnerships with China, Japan, South Korea, and India in order to facilitate policy dialogue and engage in confidence-building measures on both sides. In the current decade, advancing international STI collaboration has meant investing even more in building mutual trust and embracing Innovation Cooperation Dialogues that follow the principles of mutual benefit and the alignment of innovation strategies. One critical outcome of this process is the implementation of agreements on Co-Funding Mechanisms (CFMs) between the European Union and non-European countries. These CFMs can serve as a basis of allowing research funding to no longer be an obstacle for non-European countries to collaborate with European countries.

To address this obstacle, the European Union requested and began to negotiate the establishment of Co-Funding Mechanisms (CFMs) for Research and Innovation Cooperation with the start of Horizon 2020, which is the European Union’s approximately USD $90 billion research program for 2014-2020. In some cases, namely South Korea, Mexico, Russia, and Taiwan, all thematic areas of Horizon 2020 are eligible for co-funding from the corresponding national research agency. In other cases, namely Australia, China, Hong Kong and Macao, India, and Japan, selected thematic areas of Horizon 2020 are eligible for co-funding from these governments’ national funding agency. Finally, in a third set of countries, namely, Brazil and Canada, specific regions are eligible to receive co-funding from their national funding agency. In addition, these third countries offer National Contact Point (NCP) support for their scientists who are interested in participating in Horizon 2020. While the U.S. government is unfortunately not currently offering any CFMs for U.S. researchers interested in participating in Horizon 2020, there is at least a pilot National Contact Point (NCURA) dedicated to legal and financial issues to aid U.S. researchers and research administrators that are interested in Horizon 2020.

How Do CFMs Work?

In general, Horizon 2020 does not provide funding to non-EU researchers based in industrialized countries. Co-funding mechanisms (CFMs), however, provide national sources of funding for non-European participants in successful projects funded by Horizon 2020. How this works is that the non-European researchers apply for co-funding for their portion of the project from their national research agency as soon as the Horizon 2020 proposal is successfully evaluated. As a rule, the non-European researcher’s application is a separate application after the successful evaluation of the Horizon 2020 proposal. In the case of coordinated calls, the Horizon 2020 deadline and the national research agency’s deadline may be the same, in which case two applications need to be submitted in parallel, must be aligned, and must explicitly refer to each other.

However, special attention should be given to the different program characteristics of each CFM as no CFM is directly equivalent to another. It is critical to study the different CFM regulations and deadlines as well as to contact the responsible national authorities in order to learn how the CFM functions in a particular country and when the national deadline is as it may not be the same as the Horizon 2020 deadline.

Global Research for Addressing Global Challenges

Co-Funding Mechanisms (CFMs) are designed to primarily be beneficial for the two parties that set them up. Nevertheless, the entire international research consortium can benefit in some cases, e.g., Chinese researchers, funded through a CFM, may work in partnership with a Horizon 2020-funded consortium that includes U.S. participants.

METIS II and Ageing with elegans are Horizon 2020 projects that incorporate partners from China and the U.S. in addition to the European members of the consortium.
DRAGON STAR Plus – Enhancing Research and Innovation cooperation between the European Union and China

DRAGON STAR Plus is a project supported by the European Commission to encourage and streamline research and innovation cooperation between the European Union and China. It is similar to the BILAT USA 4.0 project, of which NCURA is an implementing partner, which aims to foster greater research collaboration between the European Union and the U.S. Included in the DRAGON STAR Plus project are European and Chinese research and academic organizations, innovation intermediaries, governmental bodies, funding agencies, and SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises). Since February 2013 this consortium has focused on enhancing and sustaining technology and research collaboration between European and Chinese researchers and facilitating policy discussions between European and Chinese policy makers and stakeholders. The 3-year project (February 2015 - January 2018), funded within the European Commission’s research funding program (Horizon 2020), provides support services to European and Chinese researchers and organizations on three levels:

- supporting both research communities to establish joint collaborations within Horizon 2020 and beyond by organizing brokerage events and workshops
- supporting policy makers to exchange information and visions by providing a cooperation platform
- supporting funding agencies to exchange best practices and plan joint activities by organizing meetings

For example, DRAGON STAR Plus organized a think tank workshop on Science, Technology & Innovation in Beijing in September 2016 in order to discuss the potential implications of China’s 13th Five-Year-Plan and the Chinese research funding reform on joint Science Technology and Innovation (STI) cooperation with China.

The Experts’ meeting in Sustainable Urbanisation in Ningbo in November 2016 gathered European and Chinese stakeholders from policy, research and industry with the objective of exchanging best practices and discussing future EU-China priorities and actions for cooperation in the field of sustainable and innovative urbanization.

More information, news and events addressing STI cooperation between Europe and China can be found on the DRAGON STAR Plus homepage.
The Horizon 2020-funded consortium of METIS II is focusing on research on the 5th generation of mobile and wireless communications (5G). 5G is expected to significantly improve current, mainly human-type, wireless communications, and enable a wide range of machine-type communication applications, such as, eHealth, vehicular safety, industry automation, and augmented reality. METIS II has partners from all regions with strong 5G R&D initiatives (EU, US, China, Japan, Korea) comprising most of the major international vendors, major operators, and key scientists, among others from the New York University (USA) and Huawei Technologies (China). https://metis-ii.5g-ppp.eu

The research of ‘Ageing with elegance’ is based on better understanding the factors responsible for healthy ageing, and will develop evidence-based prevention, diagnostic, and therapeutic strategies. It comprises a collaboration of thirteen academic research groups and four companies from thirteen EU and three non-EU countries, among others Tsinghua University (China) and University of Pennsylvania (USA). www.h2020awe.eu

CFMs are, consequently, able to add a new dimension towards a global approach of STI co-operation based on mutual trust, more adaptable approaches of governance, and a more flexible funding mechanism that does not leave any research partner “out in the cold” without any funding. It remains to be seen how many other countries may potentially take part in CFMs in order to encourage their researchers to participate in international consortia such as those funded by Horizon 2020.

Information, details, and contact data regarding the above mentioned co-funding and support mechanisms can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?lg=en&pg=participate

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Epaminondas Christofilopoulos is Head of International Cooperation in PRAXI Network/FORTH and freelance consultant and trainer on Foresight. Since 2004, he specifically focuses on international research cooperation, coordinating several projects around the globe (Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central and East Asia, the Gulf Peninsula, Central America) and delivering seminars in Europe and Overseas. A substantial work experience is specifically addressed to China, since 2008, coordinating several European activities, setting up a joint lab, and acting as an expert for the Greek Ministry for Research and Education. Since, 2012 Epaminondas is coordinating the Dragon-Star and Dragon-Star Plus projects, funded by the EC (FP7/H2020) aiming to enhance bilateral S&T cooperation between EU and China, to identify common research priorities and to support reciprocity in funding programs www.dragon-star.eu/dragon-star-plus

Elli B. Tzatzanis-Stepanovic has been an expert for international cooperation in the European and International Programmes (EIP) of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) since 2009 and has been certified senior project manager (IPMA) since 2013. She was coordinating the first bilateral project between the EU and the USA, i.e. BILAT USA (FP7), and was mainly responsible for enhancing EU-US research partnerships in the follow-up project BILAT USA 2.0 (FP7). She is currently responsible for establishing a policy coordination platform between Europe and China in the Dragon Star Plus project (H2020).
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What was the genesis of the Oyez Project – your motivations and reasons for documenting this important facet of Supreme Court history?

In the late 1980s I was shocked that the Supreme Court proceedings existed but they were not easily available to the general public. At the time, you could purchase a copy from the National Archives, but you could only use it for research purposes. The first case I heard on tape had to do with whether women could automatically exempt from jury service. (Hoyt v. Florida, 368 U.S. 57 (1961)). This was during a presentation at Northwestern by Dr. Linda Kerber of the University of Kansas, sometime between 1987 – 1990.

Another important event on my journey also occurred in the late 1980s. The Northwestern University Provost sponsored a seminar by English faculty from the University of Illinois demonstrating a system integrating text and performance. The example was Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet – on a Mac SE computer. This illustrated to me quite vividly the advances in technology even at that time. This made a significant impression on me and illustrated the possibility of total control of the digital environment.

By the early 1990s Dr. Peter Irons (UC – San Diego) published edited versions of Supreme Court proceedings. While that was a great idea for its time, I thought it was best to take it one step further and publish an entire proceeding or oral argument. Thus, the idea of Oyez was due to advances in technology, the willingness to deploy it from literature to social science to the U.S. Supreme Court, the ability to create randomized controlled experiments to push the idea further, and then use a baseball metaphor (9 players on a team, members on the Supreme Court). All these factors came together to allow me to see beyond the horizon for experimentation and for information integration and delivery.

When the Oyez Project began in 1993, what were the realities about obtaining funding to ensure its success?

At that time, while at Northwestern, I had virtually no help in putting grants together at the department or college level. The assistance came from ORSP staff like the author of this article, who helped to make the opaque grant system much more easy to understand, and thus more effective.

Another reality of that time – which continued for years in the future – was that the Political Science Department was not terribly excited about sponsored projects. In fact, my success in that realm was not universally appreciated during those years. I believe in some sense my success worked against me both for envy and for the expectation that if I could land big grants, others should be expected to do the same.

During my years at Northwestern University and Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago – Kent College of Law, I received nearly $4 million in sponsored research funding, the majority of which went to spoken word research of which Oyez was the dominant component.

During your tenures at Northwestern University and IIT Chicago - Kent College of Law, what was your experience working with research administrators? What were the successes and challenges?

In my experience, at both universities, ORSP office staff were helpful to me in understanding better what was an opaque system. It was especially challenging at the law school because the administration was largely unfamiliar with the federal grant process. And the university grants office was unfamiliar with private foundation grants. The private grants supporting my research were closer in format to gifts without the complex reporting requirements for federally sponsored research. But these private grants could not be booked as gifts and had to be pounded into the federal grant reporting structure. This was a classic case of pounding the square peg into the round hole. During those years, communication...
at the college and department levels pertaining to grants award management was not always clear or consistent. I hear that Northwestern, in particular, has made strides in department/college support since I left. That is a good thing.

What observations and suggestions do you have for research administrators that work with faculty?

One major need is more assistance for “lone wolves” like myself who worked in departments with very little or no grant support. All departments are different, and if the university is going to expect more grants, in some locations the infrastructure needs to be better. For example, the faculty need a competent intermediary to translate grant application budgets into grant administration terms. One place to begin would be a simple explanation of monthly expenditure reports. My department was barely competent on administering my grants and utterly unhelpful in explaining grant expenditures.

Another observation — shared by many faculty — is that indirect costs take too much funding out of grants. During many of my years at Northwestern, it was not clear what the indirect cost distribution formula was — the distribution just happened. I never fully understood that policy when I was a faculty member there or the benefits that should have come back to me and my department.

Grants offices should be clearer in their communication to faculty as to what the benefits are when they receive grant awards.

Lastly, the author of this piece exhibited infinite patience working with me during his tenure at NU. That is his best skill, to be frank, and is something that all research administrators should have.

What is the legacy of the Oyez Project?

Oyez will continue to operate well into the future, providing clear educational and societal benefits. While Oyez has obvious benefits to legal education, even more significant has been its usage by high school and undergraduate students. Debaters in high school are significant users of Oyez, as are undergraduates taking law courses. Oyez provides an excellent introduction into the area of constitutional law.

Oyez is a significant benefit to practicing attorneys. Among elite users, I would rank the Office of Solicitor General in the Justice Department at the top. Attorneys using Oyez learn very quickly about the type of grilling that the Supreme Court Justices will subject them to. That is of immense benefit for case preparation.

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Newly Signed US-EU Agreement Offers Greater Opportunities for Research Cooperation

On October 17th, 2016, the European Commission and the U.S. Government signed an Implementing Arrangement which will facilitate greater cooperation between U.S. and European researchers. This agreement will allow U.S. organizations that want to participate in Horizon 2020 projects with their own funding to be able to do so WITHOUT signing the Horizon 2020 grant agreement. For more information, please visit the BILAT USA 4.0’s website: www.euusscienceandtechnology.eu

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If you have any favorite links from e-Xtra that you would like to see in a future issue of NCURA Magazine, please email suggestions to Matt Michener at matthew.michener@wsu.edu.

NCURA Magazine e-Xtra Headline Highlights
Enjoy some of our favorite links from prior e-Xtra mailings!

POLICY/REGULATION/COMPLIANCE NEWS:

Updated Resource for Biosafety Assessment Now Available: October is National Biosafety Month – a yearly reminder to refocus attention on biosafety policies, practices and procedures.

Steps to Increase Transparency about Clinical Trials to the Public: HHS takes steps to provide more information about clinical trials to the public: In an effort to make information about clinical trials widely available to the public, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services today issued a final rule that specifies requirements for registering certain clinical trials and submitting summary results information to ClinicalTrials.gov.

AGENCY NEWS:

Big Money: NIH Awards more than $150 million for research on environmental influences on child health: The National Institutes of Health today announced $157 million in awards in fiscal year 2016 to launch a seven-year initiative called Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO).

What’s My (Application) Type?: If remembering the difference between a renewal and a revision has you stumped, we have a page on types of applications that can help.
https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2016/09/30/whats-my-application-type/

FUNDING NEWS:


Home Depot Foundation Commits Big to Veterans: Home Depot Foundation Boosts Commitment to Veterans to $250 Million by 2020: The Home Depot Foundation has announced that it is increasing its commitment to veterans-related causes to $250 million through 2020.

FUN, CHUCKLES, AND COOL RESEARCH INFO:

Sad movies help us bond with those around us—and alleviate pain: Viewing tragic dramas together may increase pain tolerance and social bonding.

Say Yes: The Benefits and Risks of Working for Free.

Building a bionic spine: Using a stentrode device, researchers want people to control robotic limbs via thought.

E-XTRA NOTABLE AND INTERESTING:

How to Make the Most of Conferences: Advice for networking, presenting, and having a good time.

How "Working from Home" Became "Just Working": Something has changed. This change has occurred so gradually that we may be having trouble noticing the shift. This change is that working from home has become - just - working.

“Sixth Sense” may be more than just a feeling: NIH study of rare genetic disorder reveals importance of touch and body awareness.

Flight attendants share the 21 things they wish passengers would stop doing - Business Insider: We all have annoying habits, and travel tends to bring out the worst in people.
www.businessinsider.com/things-flight-attendants-wish-passengers-would-stop-doing-2016-9#/1
Greetings Region I!

Thank you for allowing me to chair Region I this year. By the time you read this magazine, I will be finishing up serving you as the 2016 Chair. Jill Mortali, of Dartmouth College, will be taking the reigns as 2017 Chair and has some exciting ideas in mind for next year. Over the past year, Region I has:

- Held three Research Administrator Discussion Group (RADG) Meetings, including a federal update with FDP and NSF at the December Holiday Party at the MIT Broad Institute;
- Held a Spring meeting in Falmouth, MA with more than 225 members attending exceeding our sponsorship goals and receiving favorable evaluations;
- Piloted a new Emerging Leader’s Institute and New Professionals cohort at the Spring Meeting;
- Held three successful workshops at Emmanuel College (Essentials of Sponsored Research, Current Challenges, and Excel for Budgeting);
- Signed a partnership agreement with Emmanuel College for 2016 to provide space for our workshop;
- Solicited nominations for Executive Shadow Program and Mentor/Mentee Program;
- Held a networking event at Providence College in October for more than 20 members in the RI/SE MA area;
- Added to our travel award budget, offering more travel awards for members;
- Started planning for the 2017 Spring Meeting at the Hotel Viking in Newport, RI and selecting and negotiating a contract for our 2018 meeting to be held in Portsmouth, NH.
- Enhanced our social media presence with a linked-in group, more frequent Facebook posts, and activity in twitter.

It takes an effort of many individuals and groups working in concert to achieve so much. Our volunteers make these events and activities possible. There is a labor of love by so many who work very hard. THANK YOU to all the elected officers, advisory committee, committee chairs and members, and volunteers who gave of themselves to make NCURA Region I-New England a thriving and fun professional community.

Kris Monahan is Chair of Region I and serves as Director of Sponsored Research & Programs at Providence College. She can be reached at chair@ncuraregioni.org

As this is my last Regional Corner article, I would like to close with a few words of thanks and appreciation: Thank you to all the members for all of your support and dedication to Region II. Our Region can only continue to thrive and grow through your effort. Please consider volunteering as an officer, committee member, and presenter or volunteer at a meeting. You will learn and develop so many new skills and grow as a research administrator.

Mark your calendars now for the 2017 spring meeting in Saratoga Springs, New York. The keynote speaker and sessions are still in development at the time of this writing but I promise this will be an outstanding meeting. If you have any questions please contact the meeting chair, Katie M. McKeon at kpetrone@umd.edu, or co-chair Charnel Bohn at bohnem@rwjms.rutgers.edu

I would like to congratulate Region II members Ann Holmes as one of four recipients of the NCURA Distinguished Educator award given out at AMS8. Ann is the Assistant Dean, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland College Park, and Patricia Watts, PhD the recipient of the Joseph F. Carrabino Award. Patricia is the National Program Director, Air Transportation Centers of Excellence in New Jersey.

Finally, it has been my great privilege to serve Region II as your Chair in 2016. It has been a rewarding experience that has given me the opportunity to work closely with exceptional colleagues and to meet many members. I want to thank the Region II Officers, Professional Development Committee, Communications Committee, Leadership Development and Nomination Committee, Spring Meeting Program Committee, the Mentor Me Program as well as Committee Chairs and Members for the wonderful support you provided to me. Best wishes to your 2017 officers Tim Schailey (Chair) Charles Bartunek (Treasurer) Jennifer Harrman (Secretary) and Dennis Paffrath (Chair Elect) and happy holidays to all of you!

If you’d like to learn more about maximizing the benefits of your Region II membership, feel free to contact me directly or through our website: http://ncuraregionii.org/contact/

Erin Bailey, MSM, CRA, serves as the Chair of Region II and is the Chief Financial Officer, Clinical Translational Science Award, University at Buffalo. She can be reached at cedh@buffalo.edu
Happy Holidays from Region III! The days are getting shorter, signifying that the end of 2016 is nearing; and Region III is proud to share with you a review of a productive and prosperous year for research administration in the southeast. Our regional membership is continuing to remain at a number over 1,600 members! Coming together over phone calls, emails, meetings, and conferences, our members and leaders have had an extremely busy year!

The Executive Committee, regional standing committees, and other volunteers brought the benefits of NCURA membership to life by providing opportunities for members to learn, share, and network on both the regional and national levels. We would be remiss not to thank the volunteers for their continuous efforts. Thank you all for being a part of our successful 2016! In anticipation of an even greater year to come, we want every Region III member to know that there are many ways to get involved. If you are interested in lending your time and talent to our region, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Sandy Barber, at sandra.barber@business.gatech.edu to find out how you can get involved.

We are busy planning the 2017 Regional Meeting and are expecting an amazing turn-out at the Hilton Desoto Savannah for which registration will open in January. The preliminary program will also be available in January. In the meantime, we’d like to thank those who responded to our Call for Proposals. Another thanks goes to the Program Committee for their tireless commitment to bringing us the best in workshops, concurrent sessions, and discussion groups. We hope to see you in Savannah, Georgia, May 7-10, 2017!

We’d also like to thank Alex Atkinson from Tennessee State University for his dedication as Treasurer in 2015 and 2016. We look forward to Alex’s involvement in the future. The Executive Committee welcomed two new officers this year: Justo Torres from North Carolina State University as Chair-Appointed Executive Committee Member and Laura Lethbetter from Georgia Institute of Technology as Regionally-Elected Board Member.

Stay in touch with Region III and keep informed about what is happening in the region by visiting our website at http://www.ncuraregioniii.com/ signing up for the monthly newsletters, and following us on social media (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter). You don’t want to miss out on all the things that are happening in 2017!

Kay Gilstrap is Chair of Region III and serves as Grants & Contracts Officer, Center for Molecular and Translational Medicine at Georgia State University. She can be reached at kgilstrap@gsu.edu

Happy Holidays! Another year is coming to a close. This is a perfect time for reflection and renewal. This makes me stand firm in my life motto, “Do your Best, Never Give up, and Do the Right Thing!” This motto is a good fit in our changing world of Research Administration.

Congratulations to the Region IV 2015-2016 award winners!

- **Distinguished Service Award:**
  - Jeff Ritchie, Lewis University

- **Special Merit & Distinction Award:**
  - Sue Kelch, University of Michigan Health System

- **National Meeting Travel Award:**
  - Katie Schortgen, Eastern Michigan University

- **Regional Meeting Travel Award:**
  - Caroline McClenahan, University of Wisconsin-Madison

- **John Philipps Regional Meeting Travel Award for Mentoring Our Own (M00) Mentees:**
  - Deborah Turnbow, University of Central Missouri

Region IV would like to thank all of the volunteers that step forward to make our region a success. Without you, not much would get done! A new Volunteer Recognition Program is in the process of being implemented. Look for more details on how to become a Region IV *athlete* and earn a bronze, silver, or gold award.

Another initiative that Region IV is working on is traveling workshops. After National Board approval, the region will be able to potentially bring a workshop to your area. If you have any interest in hosting a workshop, please let me know at Diane.Hillebrand@med.UND.edu and I will get your name and university to the sub-committee chair.

The region is also working on reviewing and organizing our information to help make volunteering easier. All volunteer positions duties and committee structures are being reviewed to ensure they meet the region’s needs. Information will also be available to these volunteer positions in an organized format to help make their jobs easier. Think about becoming involved in Region IV; it is a very rewarding experience.

Save the date for the Region IV Spring Meeting in Madison, WI! The meeting will be held from April 23-26, 2017 at the Concourse Hotel. The theme is *The Sport of Research Administration*. Registration will open early spring 2017. Check out the NCURA Region IV website – http://www.ncuraregioniv.com/conferences.html or the NCURA Region IV Facebook page – https://www.facebook.com/Ncura-Region-IV-134667746605561 for more information as it becomes available.

Diane Hillebrand, CRA is Chair of Region IV and serves as the Grants Manager for the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences. She can be reached at Diane.Hillebrand@med.UND.edu
Happy Holidays from down South! I hope that everyone has had a great fall semester, and you are all going to be able to take some well-deserved time off for the holidays.

Thomas Spencer, Chair-Elect, is putting together a great team for Region V’s Annual Meeting in April. As a reminder, we will be heading to Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 30-May 3, 2017. We are looking forward to a great meeting with lots of networking opportunities.

Region V would like to congratulate some of our officers on recent accomplishments. August was a busy month for our Chair-Elect Dr. Thomas Spencer and newly elected Secretary, Dr. Tonya Pinkerton. Thomas received his Ph.D. in Public Affairs with a focus on Research Administration. His dissertation was entitled “Research Administrative Burden: Policy Analysis into the Components and Definitions.” Tonya received her Ph.D. in Higher Education Research with the dissertation entitled “Federally-funded Research Proposals: Voluntary Components and the Interpretation of Their Effects on Institutional Resources.” We know you two have worked hard for this and wish you the very best!

We would also like to recognize our current Secretary, Melody Bell. Melody was recently named Assistant Vice President for Academic Information Systems at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Take care and we will be in touch next year!

Shelly Berry Hebb is Chair of Region V and serves as Assistant Director, Sponsored Research Services at Texas A&M University. She can be reached at sberry@tamu.edu

Dear Region VI,

It has been an amazing journey into leadership this year serving as your chair. I’ve learned so much about myself and about you as a region. We are definitely some awesome Research Administrators here in the west. We had an amazing conference in Hawaii. Mahalo to all of you who came and participated. You made RMHawaii2016 one of the best conferences on record. You all are rock stars for making it the best. I would like to give a special thanks to Allison Ramos, Derek Brown, Marj Townsend and Lee Pettit for all of their hard work and leadership. In addition, I would like to thank Darren Bystrom, Lisa Jordan, Melissa Mullen, Tolise Miles and all of the other onsite volunteers who made the conference memorable.

This year, as chair, my goal was to make a difference in the region. I took on some major initiatives. I established an ad hoc committee to develop educational workshops for our region outside of our joint regional meeting. I am pleased to announce that our first workshop will be held in early 2017, hosted by The University of California-Irvine. Details on content will be published soon. I would like to thank Melissa Mullen, Csilla Csaplar, Sinnamoi Tierney, David Lynch, Sam Westcott and Nancy Lewis for answering the call and working to make this vision come to fruition. Your dedication and service to the region is greatly appreciated.

Lastly, I would like to thank you all for the privilege of serving as chair of Region VI. It was my goal that we left the region better off than we found it and I do believe we accomplished that goal. I am confident that the incoming chair, Sinnamoi Tierney, will elevate us even higher during her chair year. I’m asking everyone to sign up now to volunteer for the upcoming Portland regional meeting. Let’s give her all the support we can to make it just as memorable. I look forward to working with all of you to do so. We are an amazing region filled with amazing people. Let’s continue to rock and make this region the flagship of NCURA.

Derick Jones is Chair of Region VI and serves as program manager for the Institute for Translational Genomics and Population Science at LA BioMed. He can be reached at derickjones@labiomed.org
Greetings! RMHawaii2016 is now in the books. What a wonderful meeting! Tropical paradise mixed with awesome sessions. Thank you to everyone who helped put the meeting together. It was a huge success. I am simply amazed at everyone’s effort. Our region rocks! I especially loved the luau and our special dancers on stage. I didn’t realize you all could bust a move.

As we are wrapping up our election selection to move forward with the ballot, I want to take this time to encourage anyone who is interested in one of our officer positions to please let us know. It is truly a wonderful and rewarding experience. I have not only developed and increased my knowledge, but also have gained a vast amount of friends and colleagues.

I am very pleased to follow our fellow regions by having our own gavel. Sandra Logue presented it to me at our regional meeting. After our chair moves into the “past chair” position, the gavel will be presented to the incoming chair. What a great start to a new tradition.

Speaking of tradition, Rocky, our new mascot, made his appearance in Maui. Lee Pettit did a fabulous job getting the pins for our meeting. Everyone who received a pin commented how nice they look. Rocky will be around for many years!

Please make sure you visit our webpage often for upcoming announcements.

Marj Townsend serves as Region VII Chair and is the Research Advancement Manager for the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. She can be reached at Marj.Townsend@asu.edu

As 2016 is coming to an end, I reflect on the year that has passed and all the accomplishments, hard work, and friendship that has made it so successful! The International Region has continued to grow and develop. Some of this year’s highlights were our record attendance at the Annual Meeting (64 attendees from 21 countries) as well as our all-time high in terms of region members (161 members) – this in itself is pretty amazing!

Worth noting is that the region held its first chair-elect electronic ballot and has worked on developing administrative polices. In addition, the Region was able to award two travel awards: one to Barbara Slattery, University of Melbourne, to attend the annual meeting in Washington, DC, and one to Jessica Brody, also from the University of Melbourne, to attend the Regional meeting in Hawaii. And speaking of Regional meeting… what a wonderful chance we had to tag-along with Region VI and VII to Hawaii! Mahalo nui loa (meaning thank you very much in Hawaiian) to Regions VI and VII!

It has been an honor to serve as the Regional Chair this year, but by no means could I have done it alone. I would like to give a heartfelt thanks to the Region VIII board members for all their hard work, support and teamwork. Annika Glauner, Bella Blaher, Susanne Rahner, and Siegfried Huemer: you have done amazing work for the region! Thank you also to our national board member and twitter star, Bryony Wakefield, as well as our regional meeting chair, Julie Ward, for both your contribution to region.

As I prepare to pass the Region VIII torch on to Annika Glauner, I want to end this message by giving an extra warm thank you to the NCURA office. As a young and growing Region, your support is simply invaluable!

Wishing you all a happy, safe and healthy holiday season!

Eva Björndal is Chair of Region VIII and serves as Team Leader Post-Contract and Financial Compliance at Karolinska Institutet. She can be reached at eva.bjorndal@ki.se
University of Alaska Fairbanks researchers have received $2.2 million to study Arctic marine ecosystems while on board the Sikuliaq, the research vessel owned by the National Science Foundation and operated by the UAF School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences.

The project will help researchers better understand the processes that prime oceans for summer productivity and better anticipate changes resulting from declining ice cover.

Six SFO S researchers, along with staff, students and international collaborators, will study oceanography and food web dynamics in the northern Bering Sea and southern Chukchi Sea through the North Pacific Research Board’s Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program.

Fieldwork in early spring 2017 and 2018 will take place on board the ice-capable Sikuliaq, a $200 million vessel that arrived at its home port of Seward in March 2015.

“We are excited about this project because in a lot of respects this project is exactly why we built the Sikuliaq,” said Seth Danielson, an SFO S research associate professor and the project’s lead principal investigator. “We are seeking to head to the ice edge right in the shoulder season between winter and the summer months.”

The researchers will measure growth rates, oxygen consumption rates, productivity rates, sinking rates of particles and how quickly currents affect the flow of water and materials from south to north. They’ll take samples from the water column and the seafloor sediments.

Andrew McDonnell, SFO S assistant professor and principal investigator, explained that most fieldwork for these regions has been done between July and September, because that’s traditionally when access to the region has been easier.

But “biological activity in the late spring — late May through June — sets the stage for energy flow and ecosystem processes for the rest of the summer,” he said.

Danielson said this “spring bloom” is one of the most biologically important events of the year.

“We hope to measure the system during or just after this annual peak in phytoplankton growth so that we can better understand how the energy stored in the phytoplankton during spring is subsequently passed on to support fishes, clams and crabs as well as the marine mammals that feed on them,” he said.

The research will help explain connections between physical and biological systems. This will be critical for managers looking to preserve thriving Arctic ecosystems as sea ice concentrations continue to decline.

The UAF research team includes Danielson (studying physical oceanography) and McDonnell (particles) but also Sarah Hardy (benthic invertebrates), Russell Hopcroft (zooplankton), Dean Stockwell (nutrient chemistry and phytoplankton) and Arny Blanchard (biostatistics).

Four other Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program projects are also focused in the Bering and Chukchi seas. Two research teams led by NOAA will study physical and biological systems in the Chukchi Sea in the summer and fall. A University of Washington group will focus on marine mammals and the underwater sound environment. A social science project will investigate Chukchi coastal communities’ understanding of and responses to environmental change.

The AIERP is sponsored by the North Pacific Research Board, the Collaborative Alaskan Arctic Studies Program, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and the Office of Naval Research Marine Mammals and Biology Program, along with in-kind support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and UAF.
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