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CONTENTS

FEATURES

President’s Message
By Robert Andrusesen .................................................................3

Transparency and How the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Shaped Us as Research Administrators
By Rady Rogers and Charlotte Gallant ........................................4

Evolved! Our Ever-Changing Skill Set(s)
By Brigette S. Pfister .................................................................6

Solving the Institutional Puzzle for Large Proposal Success
By Lorraine Mulfinger, Kevin Dressler, Niki Page, Eddie Serrano, Jorge L. Vazquez and L. Eric James ...........................................8

Risk Assessment without Burden: Part 1 - Suggestions for Managing Institutional Assessments
By Amanda Humphrey and Stephanie Stone ................................12

FDP Phase VI – Current Projects and Future Plans
By Cynthia Hope ........................................................................19

Thoroughness Today = Efficiency Tomorrow: Tips for Workload Management
By Johanna Zimmerman ..............................................................20

Research Administration in Asia Pacific: An Evolving Profession for University Research Administrators in China
By Xiaojun Lu, Lei Lyu, Li Zhou, and Jie Fan ..................................26

Grants.gov Workspace: Helping with Collaborative Applications
By Nicole Daniel ........................................................................35

Envisioning Tomorrow: Opportunities for Advancing a Culture of Grantseeking
By Jeremy T. Miner .....................................................................38

International Contracting — Global Currencies
By David Mayo ............................................................................42

Passport to Clinical Trials
By Donald Deyo ..........................................................................44

Ask the Leadership Coach
By Garry Sanders ........................................................................47

Research Administration in the Middle East Research: Collaborations in the Arab Countries
By Rigas Arvanitis and Sari Hanafi .............................................48

Tips For New and Seasoned Research Administrators In An Evolving Research Environment
By Kim Frazer and Sanaathia Aleshire ........................................53

Medicare Coverage Determination: A Multi-Purpose Financial Tool
By Mary Veazie ............................................................................55

Making the Case for Alternatives to Effort Reporting
By Lisa Mosley, Jeremy Forsberg and David Ngo ..........................58

Research Administration in Europe: The More the Merrier — Learning through Networking
By Tiina Berg .............................................................................61

Cool Research Project Spotlight
By Jack Costello ........................................................................68

IN THIS ISSUE

Building Bridges between Cuba and the US: A Path for Future Partnerships ........................................16
Work Smart .............................................................................22
Annual Meeting Update ..........................................................24
FRA 2016 Recap ......................................................................30
PRA 2016 Recap ......................................................................32
NCURA: Working Together .......................................................37
Research Administration Meme ..............................................40
Call for Editor ............................................................................52
Milestones ................................................................................52
On the National Level ..............................................................60
RMR Call for Articles ..............................................................60
Regional Corner ......................................................................62
NCURA Magazine e-Xtra Headline Highlights .........................64
Calendar of Events .................................................................64
Back Cover
As magazine co-editor and as a co-chair of AM58, I am thrilled to introduce this magazine issue which reflects the AM58 theme **Experiencing Today…Envisioning Tomorrow**.

What makes NCURA meetings and the magazine so invigorating and useful are the opportunities to push the boundaries of our general knowledge, examine our world from different perspectives, and connect with colleagues to build personal and professional relationships.

The **Experiencing Today…Envisioning Tomorrow** theme reminds us that we need to be in the now. We need to savor the moments we are in. Learn from them. And, grow from them. At the same time, it is critical to be forward thinking and envision the possibilities of tomorrow and use today’s experiences to strive for a stronger future. It is a magical tight rope walk between the present and the future while the research administration environment tosses things at us to juggle along the way.

As research administrators we assist researchers in obtaining and managing necessary funding to envision a tomorrow with new technology, theories, and therapies that will impact and forever change society. One of the AM58 keynotes, Dr. Geraldine Hamilton will discuss the role of research administration in developing organs on a chip and the future of treating disease. Imagine a world where you can test reactions to a new drug for an individual person on a chip, before exposing someone to any unnecessary side effects. It takes the small steps and experiences of today to realize these amazing advancements of tomorrow.

This issue of the magazine is full of articles that have an eye toward the future of research administration. For example, Brigitte Pfister’s article highlights changing skill sets to meet the needs of research administration tomorrow. Jeremy Miner’s article envisions tomorrow at primarily undergraduate institutions by building a culture of grantseeking. And, Rady Rogers and Charlotte Gallant of Harvard University examine how the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) shaped us as research administrators today. Cindy Hope, my fellow AM58 co-chair, shares with us an update on today’s Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) shaped us as research administrators today.

The diversity of authors, institutions, and perspectives never cease to amaze me. The AM58 theme is a rich theme. The meeting has some significant changes to reflect envisioning tomorrow including two new tracks: The New Research Administrator and Current and Aspiring Managers tracks. This issue of NCURA Magazine as well as the annual meeting has something to offer everyone.

Happy reading and see you at AM58 in August!

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Hello NCURA friends and colleagues. As we have all been experiencing, 2016 is a year of campaigning and elections across the country. Each of us, regardless of our political beliefs and affiliations, has been inundated with campaign messages to select the best leaders to take us into the future. So, perhaps it’s fitting that at its February meeting the Board of Directors had a lengthy discussion about the selection of NCURA’s leaders and the challenges facing the organization under our current processes.

NCURA is incredibly fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteers willing to help in a variety of responsibilities ranging from presenting a session at a regional or national meeting, serving on a committee, writing an article, and so much more. Volunteers are generous with their time and talents. However, there are some roles in the organization that are much more difficult to fill: serving as our elected officers.

The leadership roles of President, Vice President/President-Elect, Treasurer, and Secretary not only require a thorough understanding of the organization but also require a significant time commitment. Prospective officers must seek the approval of families, supervisors, co-workers, and institutional leadership to ensure that they have the needed support to take on these additional responsibilities; this can be an arduous task. Each year, the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee (NLDC) is charged with finding a suitable pool of possible candidates and reviewing application materials to evaluate individuals for placement on the official ballot. The application itself is a time-consuming process, requiring a nomination statement, vision statement, and nominating and supporting letters from colleagues. All of these requirements must be fulfilled just to be considered as a possible candidate. Only two candidates can be allowed to run per each officer position, so some applicants undergo this arduous process and may not be listed on the ballot. If a volunteer does get chosen to be included on the ballot, then there is an election which inevitably leads to one winner. For the volunteer who is not selected, this is a disappointing outcome and a likely deterrent from volunteering again for an officer role in the future.

As you can imagine, the NLDC has a daunting task and one that has become increasingly difficult. For the last two years, the committee has had to extend the nomination process because of a lack of nominations for officer candidates. A working group comprised of Board and NLDC members prepared a white paper outlining these issues and researched other non-profit volunteer organizations’ models for selecting leaders. During its February meeting, the Board asked this working group to continue its work in evaluating models used by other non-profits and to recommend options for improving both the application and election processes.

The Board also recognized a need to modify the bylaws to allow maximum flexibility for any new election process. While the working group completes this evaluation, the Board will be proposing a bylaws change to be presented for discussion at this year’s Annual Meeting in August. Changes in our bylaws require approval of the membership in a subsequent vote. Watch for more specific information on the proposed bylaw modification in the weeks ahead.

Since its founding in 1959, NCURA has grown into an organization of almost 8,000 members spanning the globe. One of NCURA’s strengths is its ability to adapt and stay relevant in our changing profession and times. I look forward to working with everyone as we take the next steps to ensure a continuation in strong leadership for NCURA’s future.
Rooted in Keynesian macroeconomic theory of offsetting the recession’s decrease in private spending by increasing public spending, the culmination of this unique economic reform was the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), also known as the Stimulus Package or Recovery Act. The Recovery Act would send us into a future of intense oversight of federal spending, the use of technology for tracking and reporting on government spending, and short- and long-term forecasting of federal spending on the basis of reliable and easily-retrievable data. The obligation for increased spending accountability was felt from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) all the way down to the most remote recipients of federal dollars, including our institutions and Principal Investigators (PIs).

ARRA was scurrying after its bigger brother, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), also known as the Transparency Act, signed into law by President George W. Bush in September 2006. This act required that all federal spending had to be transparent to those who funded it, or the taxpayers (i.e., you and I). Although the concept was neither new nor groundbreaking, transparency was brought to the forefront by FFATA in a defined and assertive way. ARRA was its first test of implementation.

In February 2009, President Barak Obama signed ARRA into law which sent an infusion of funds into multiple federal agencies who would issue those funds in the form of grants and contracts. Approximately one quarter of the $98B set out for education went to institutions of higher education, and our institution was the recipient of more than $244M. The act itself was intended to stimulate the economy with an eye for the reduction of fraud, waste and abuse through an abundance of reporting requirements set upon the recipients. These reporting requirements would give the public an openly available view into the translation of tax dollars to advancements in research not previously available.

The excitement of having new federally sponsored dollars infuse a dying economy of scientific research was quickly replaced by the administrative confusion of the new style of award management: vendor reporting, job creation and retention tracking, quarterly financial and progress reporting. The overkill of post-award reporting had a new buzzword attached to it, transparency, which also gave us meaning and propelled us forward through the uncharted reporting territory. However, it wasn’t easy. OMB was just as confused as we were, shown by the frequency of clarifying notices and tweaks of the reporting requirements issued. It was as frustrating as it was exciting. The recurrent back-and-forth was ultimately constructive as it paved the
way for establishing future conversations between the federal granting entities and their recipients that allowed for a more dialogical approach in the development of new federal guidance (such as Uniform Guidance).

The frequently changing reporting requirements of the Recovery Act and the short timeline for the spending ARRA dollars also taught us as awardees to be flexible, thoughtful, and accountable. We had to quickly develop new processes for the tracking of jobs, vendors, and subrecipients as we challenged already established methods of information flow and exchange in order to accomplish accuracy and efficiency, both on technical and administrative levels. Although FFATA had strong bipartisan support (and to some extent, ARRA did as well), the price tag associated with the Stimulus Package made ARRA somewhat, ARRA did as well), the price tag as-Thus, our newly established processes and ap-pods of information flow and exchange in order for the tracking of jobs, vendors, and subrecip-ents as we challenged already established meth-ods of information flow and exchange in order to accomplish accuracy and efficiency, both on technical and administrative levels. Although FFATA had strong bipartisan support (and to some extent, ARRA did as well), the price tag associated with the Stimulus Package made ARRA som-e extent, ARRA did as well), the price tag as-

Thus, our newly established processes and ap-ods of information flow and exchange in order for the tracking of jobs, vendors, and subrecip-ents as we challenged already established meth-
ods of information flow and exchange in order to accomplish accuracy and efficiency, both on technical and administrative levels. Although FFATA had strong bipartisan support (and to some extent, ARRA did as well), the price tag associated with the Stimulus Package made ARRA vulnerable to political scrutiny and discredit. Thus, our newly established processes and approaches to the onerous quarterly reporting had to be robust in order to withstand the scrutiny of an ARRA audit or potentially open questions from the public. Our worst fear was in seeing the name of our beloved institution associated with a Stimulus Package scandal in a newspaper headline.

The increased awareness of accountability and transparency in research administration prepared us to be better partners with OMB and the granting agencies in using federal dollars to advance research. It also initiated a movement in the creation of a well-defined profession, sparked new educational initiatives in research administration, and built the base for the development of more robust and transparent internal controls and compliance models within our institutions. We felt not only more scrutinized, but also more responsible as fiduciaries of sponsored dollars. Examining the nature of our sponsored awards more closely than ever before, managing technical progress reporting and high-level financials every quarter, and checking in on the progress of our subrecipients quarterly sparked new curiosities about what exactly our taxpayer dollars were funding. Suddenly, we wanted to know whether this paycheck’s deduction funded the cure for cancer or new ways of peering at distant galaxies. We began to realize that we were a meaningful part of the pursuit for truth, knowledge, and greater good. Transparency was not an administrative nightmare anymore; it was a revelation.

The Obama Administration continued to influence this newly emerging culture of transparency and accountability by launching the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act). Intended as an expansion and continuation of FFATA, it implemented many of the approaches developed by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, the agency in charge of ARRA. The intent of Recovery.gov for tracking the Stimulus spending morphed into the objective of USAspending.gov to standardize the data of all federal spending in order for it to be available to the taxpayers and usable for tracking, reporting, and forecasting. The goal was also to simplify and streamline the reporting requirements of the awardees, thus reducing administrative burden in the long run. This would make it easier for the public to compare spending trends across federal agencies. In an age of technology, we are becoming increasingly accustomed to having information at our fingertips with an increased scrutiny on the spending of our tax dollars. Standardizing grant funding, financial reporting, making research more transparent, and spending details more publically available, move us forward toward a future of transparency and accountability.

OMB was charged with creating consistency in oversight of federal funds and while in the pilot phase of the DATA Act, it successfully launched 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, dubbed Uniform Guidance (UG). The UG shares with its predecessors the call for transparency, accountability, and responsibility in monitoring and reporting of federal spending with the goal of reducing the administrative burden of all these activities. With an increased focus on the development and strengthening of internal controls, the recipients of federal funding have yet to see reduction of the administrative burden; however, we are all hopeful that our efforts are expended in a more meaningful way, working in partnership with our sponsors to reveal that the federal investment in the research enterprise is purposeful, transformative, and necessary.

How did all this shape us as research administrators of a new era of sponsored research? New federal regulations, when driven by the principles of accountability and transparency, are easier to accept and adhere to. The complaint of burden in this context is unbecoming to us as taxpayers. We all play a meaningful role in the research enterprise along with our PIs, institutions, sponsors, and clients, and together we are moving toward the goal of greater good. We occupy a unique position to ascertain first-hand that the federal dollars funding non-profitable humanitarian causes are spent wisely and responsibly. Our fiduciary duty is to protect only the financial assets of our sponsors but also the aspirations of our PIs’ research goals and the reputation of our institutions.

House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) said in response to the passing of the DATA Act in the Senate: “The DATA Act is but a first shot of a technological revolution that will transform the way we govern.” We echo this sentiment by adding that embarking on this journey has radically transformed our profession of research administration, infusing it with meaning, purpose, fulfillment, and pride. We are not just number-crunchers, rule-makers, bureaucrats, obstacles, secretaries, pen-pushers, paperwork-lovers, nine-to-fivers; we are guardians of research and protectors of our tax dollars!

References


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What does it take to be a good research administrator? The answer, like everything in our field, depends on many different variables. What kind of research administrator? At what level — department, college or school, or central? Pre-award or post-award? The variables increase from there. Once it is understood the kind of administrator, the skillset/toolbox needs to be determined and implemented. For instance, a pre-award research administrator in a central office must have a very different skillset than a post-award administrator in a department, or a proposal development specialist in a center or institute. Pre-award relies heavily on time management skills and stress management, while post-award relies more on accounting skills and compliance. Proposal development requires a project management focus, with emphasis on planning and technical writing. All three require computer skills and strong professional judgment. Central offices generally have high workloads and deadline pressures, while departments may work on fewer projects, but become more extensively involved in each one. Centers or institutes may be in the middle of the workload spectrum. If you add supervision into the mix, regardless of level or location, things get infinitely more complicated. In fact, complexity is the very stuff of which research administrators are made!

Once upon a time, research administrators’ job descriptions were relatively easy to write. Generally, a research administrator could have little to no experience, as long as they were able to type, perform financial calculations, keep things organized, and communicate reasonably well with our sometimes-eccentric faculty clientele. In the early days, it helped to be able to operate a copying machine and coordinate last-minute proposal pickups with the FedEx courier as well! Neat handwriting or typewriter manipulation was a plus.

Research administration has certainly evolved as a profession since then! Even within the last decade, our profession has changed dramatically. As the profession evolves, so do the skillsets we need to cultivate in ourselves and in newcomers to the field. We now even have the opportunity to earn a master’s degree in research administration. Let’s take a look at some of the primary changes:

The Computer Revolution
The move toward electronic systems has had a major impact on research administration. Gone are the days of typewriters and copiers! Now research administrators must be proficient in multiple types of software and systems, from word processors and spreadsheets to project management software and database systems. It seems that every sponsor has at least one online system we must use, and every institution has multiple internal systems that we must also be able to use. Basic proficiency is a must now, but really outstanding research administrators, be they pre- or post-award, know how to use productivity tools to maximize their time!

Though electronic tools give us many advantages, they also have a downside. System malfunctions can wreak havoc on us, if we’re not careful. Systems also require their own infrastructure to remain healthy, so we now need system administrators and information technology experts in the research office as well! Now that there are system-to-system capabilities in pre-award that allow us to import sponsor forms and make it possible for us to complete proposals without an exhaustive and painstaking review of the guidelines and regulations, we must be careful that certain important skills are not eroded from our pre-award teams. It can be tempting and deceptively easy to skim through the guide-
lines when things are busy, and to depend on the system to catch any problems. However, if this becomes the norm, important mistakes can and will eventually be missed. Systems, after all, can only do so much. A research administrator’s professional judgment and analytical ability are still our biggest assets! Another potential pitfall with electronic systems is that while they streamline submissions and make reviews faster and easier, when there are problems, they are often big problems that require programmers to fix. And when the system goes down, it brings the entire process to a screeching halt! If we let our timelines slip because of the ease of working in an electronic system, we could miss important deadlines. It’s still important to allow ourselves a little extra time to manage the inevitable last-minute hiccups and errors!

The Great Recession
Why is maximizing productivity so important these days? Well, we all know what happened when our economy took a nosedive in the mid-2000s. Sponsor funding began to shrink, and faculty became increasingly worried as budgets tightened and awards became more competitive. Many institutions, especially public ones, were forced to cut budgets, often resulting in extremely high workloads for infrastructure staff like us! In other words, budget woes often meant we had to do more with less. Many institutions have turned to shared services and teaming to solve this problem. As the economy improve, institutions resumed the hiring of new faculty, but the hiring of new staff often lags behind in the recovery. As a result, our workloads continue to increase.

The economic downturn also precipitated a trend toward more complex projects that involve multiple institutions and multiple disciplines. Interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, translational, transformational, collaborative research, and team science are the buzzwords of the past few years. While these projects are definitely worthwhile, they require significantly more input and effort from research administrators both pre- and post-award.

Increasing Regulatory Burden
Another trend over the past few years has been the enactment of new regulations and requirements. The biggest of these has been Uniform Guidance (UG), which was the single largest change to our profession in fifty years! While UG does incorporate much of what we were used to with the old OMB circulars, there were substantive changes that are still being worked out by the powers that be. We all had to take the time to learn the new rules and how to implement them, and the difficulty of that task definitely depends on your focus and level in research administration. If you’re a post-award administrator at a university, you may still be reeling from the changes to UG’s procurement thresholds!

There’s no doubt that our administrative burden is increasing, whether it be as a result of PPFA, UG, or the move toward sub-accounting at NIH. This leads many institutions to add services and staff at the central level, which, while necessary and positive for the university as a whole, can erode services and support at the departmental level. As workloads increase, whether it’s from shrinking budgets and stagnant staffing levels, or additional duties required by regulations, or both (aren’t we lucky?), it is more important than ever for research administrators to have strong time management and organization skills, and the ability to prioritize tasks and execute or delegate accordingly.

The Rise of Research Development
Many institutions have begun investing in research development, which I like to think of as “pre-pre-award.” Some have created independent proposal development offices that offer grant writing services and host regular networking and educational events for faculty. Others have added proposal development duties to their research administrators’ responsibilities, while still others have created research development or scientific writer positions. There has been a trend toward research administrators becoming involved earlier in the proposal process, and increased educational opportunities aimed at teaching faculty how to successfully compete for sponsor funding. Generally this is a good thing, as it fosters better relationships between research administrators and their faculty, and helps stem the tide of last-minute proposals. Research development also tends to yield higher quality proposals, which are (at least theoretically) more likely to be awarded.

But the trend toward research development potentially adds more new skill requirements to the average research administrator. These may include advanced communication and project management skills, technical writing expertise, and even event planning!

... the trend toward research development potentially adds more new skill requirements to the average research administrator. These may include advanced communication and project management skills, technical writing expertise, and even event planning!

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Many research administrators want to know what “piece” they play in developing their institution’s large proposal process.

This is the very question we asked ourselves more than a year ago while trying to determine how universities focus and expand their pre-award activities to win the illusive Big ONE.
W e’ve all noticed the heavy increase in sponsor demands, a simultaneous trend toward collaborative, large-scale, multi-investigator awards, and the growing phenomenon of “team science.” These are but a few of the puzzle pieces that universities need to fit together when positioning pre-award resources. These trends are leading many major research institutions to consider new avenues to enhance support for multi-investigator teams that have accepted the challenge of developing a complex, interdisciplinary application. To better understand how universities are supporting their faculty and research portfolios, the Pennsylvania State University and Huron Consulting Group teamed up to survey leading research institutions currently supporting large research proposals at their respective institutions.

Our goal was to gather additional puzzle pieces to get a clear picture of what today’s landscape looks like. We were fortunate to have 20 respondents of the 100 invited top-ranked research institutions (NSF, 2014b) participate in our survey. A descriptive profile of these institutions is provided below in Figure 1.

The Penn State/Huron survey was designed to determine how large proposals are currently supported at different research institutions. The survey objectives were seemingly simple: 1) to characterize the large proposal support models, and 2) determine a possible correlation between funding success rates and proposal support services and the models themselves. Our support models included LPO (Large Proposal Office) offices, LPO-type activity across different units, and combinations of support elements that can range from fully-centralized to fully-decentralized (See Figure 2.).

A key focus of the study was to better understand whether an institution supports strategic or large (i.e. >$1 million, multi-persons/site) proposals differently than other proposals, and if so, how. Success in our initial base-line study was only measured as the percent of submitted proposals that were ultimately funded by the target agency (i.e. funding rates).

As can occur in research, there were no absolute results from our 20 participants that would solve every institution’s large proposal support puzzle, only more questions and theories of missing pieces. Our team hosted follow-up webinars with the survey respondents and presented our findings at conferences. We learned there was no one-size-fits-all model; rather, there are many ways to support a research institution’s growing portfolio and future strategic proposal hit rate. What we did find are some important steps institutions are taking to support large efforts, including:

- Establishment of a specialized Large Proposal Office (LPO)
- Institutional level commitments for team building and development capacity
- Recruitment of partners and key faculty to strategically prepare for future opportunities
- Faculty quality surveys to measure institutional support and possibility of repeat attempts
- Incentives for faculty: teaching buy-outs, travel support, administrative support

As mentioned above, we set out to investigate three strategic puzzle pieces all research institutions are faced with:

![Figure 2: Survey Support Models](image)

**Target Strategic Proposal Puzzle #1: Collaborations across Science Disciplines**

As discussed in detail in Mulfinger et al., 2016, there has been an increased emphasis by funding agencies on collaborations across scientific disciplines, evident in the growth of multiple principal investigator (multi-PI) grants and larger average award sizes. This trend is highlighted by new target programs in the most common of federal sponsors such as NSF, NIH, and DOE.

As previously reported (NSF, 2014c), the incidence of multi-PI grants has increased more than 18 percent over the period 2004-2013 which significantly outpaced the increase in single PI awards. One should also note that the NIH has also experienced a massive growth for multi-PI grants over the period 2006 to 2013 (National Research Council Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and...
Sensory Sciences Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, 2015). The NIH growth has directly resulted in a current allocation of multiple PI projects that is approximately one fifth of the external awards (Chronicle Staff, 2014).

So how does a university support these new relationships and collaborative efforts? Our survey suggested a key corner piece to our puzzle - more institutional-level focus on the cross pollination of ideas and interdisciplinary science teams. University endorsed Institutes or Centers can be a breeding ground for such collaborations that need to be cultivated and supported with internal seed funding. These focused units also supply other physical support infrastructure for a team environment such as communication, data management, and user facilities for jointly-used equipment. Team building is not a simple process; it takes time to foster these unique and interdisciplinary relationships. Management of such awards should be a priority as well and may mean non-traditional thinking about budget structures and multi-PI responsibilities in operations and management.

Target Strategic Proposal Puzzle #2: Team Collaborations for High Dollars

As team science continues to evolve, agencies have responded by creating more collaborative high dollar awards. Between 2000 and 2014 (OMB, 2014), a general influx of more awards in either or both the $1-$5M and $5M-$25M ranges has been reported across at least four major agencies: NIH, NSF, USDA, and DoD.

Our survey was designed to dig into the details of these higher funding-value awards. After all, these are the strategic investments that create new ideas in our research institutions and are highly sought after by all. We wondered, “Is there a more efficient or unique way to handle these applications? Have some institutions found the optimal set of missing puzzle pieces and increased their hit rates for these larger award values?”

We asked our survey participants to report proposal funding success rates across five dollar ranges defined by $250K steps up to $1M. These results are summarized in Figure 3 as below $1M and above $1M. As expected, proposals above $1M had a lower hit rate as an averaged group (25%) than all ranges (48%). A clear trend is evident for a lower hit rate as proposal values increase. Of interest, however, is the larger range of institutional success rates for proposals above $1M. This uniquely larger range implies that certain institutions may have adjusted their approach to better their odds in winning higher dollar applications.

Is there enough information to show that more institutional resources seem to be working on larger efforts? It appears that more universities are inviting their institutional experts to join the proposal development team to help with data metrics, cost volumes, facilities, and management structures.

Target Strategic Proposal Puzzle #3: Collaborative Research Support

Is it just us, or have sponsors raised the bar to a new level? Have we moved to a more complex 3D puzzle eclipsing our mastery of the more traditional 2D-type? It seems every year more and more changes are implemented under funding opportunities. Some are technical in nature such as data management plans, increasing management requirements with explicit milestone and timeline coordination, outreach, diversity, and education components which require special attention to institutional data and regional, national or even global impacts. Many of these sponsor requirements are non-technical and lean more on the administrative side of proposal preparation. What is an institution to do? Are there better research administrative service support models to assist with large, complex, collaborative, and strategic applications?

Figure 4 (below) showcases the results from the 20 participant institutions. The data analysis sought a correlation of proposal success rates with any of the six models for large proposal support reported by institutions.

When analyzed with respect to >$1M funding rates, we found a clear diversity in support model infrastructure among the institutions with 50% employing a combination of models. The College, Departments, and Centers (CDC) support model was most prevalent and present in 70% of the institutions. Only three institutions reported separate LPO models.

The study’s conclusive findings were: 1) The decentralized College/Department/Center model is the most commonly used large proposal support model, 2) large proposal offices and units have similar criteria in selecting proposals to be supported, the most common of which is awards equaling or exceeding $1M, and 3) institutional setting is a factor in success rates for larger proposals. The baseline study provided a clear line at $1M but as the value of proposals continues to increase, the next higher class of award values should be defined and studied (e.g., >$5M or greater), as indicated by many respondents during follow-up conversations.

Figure 3: Proposal Funding Success Rates

Figure 4: Support Models across Survey Participants

Data adapted from Mulfinger et al., 2016.
Our baseline survey provided valuable information about how research institutions are currently supporting their strategic efforts, but there is more to discover. While there may not be a perfect model for winning, there surely are common support activities that foster these wins.

For all, success metrics are key when evaluating resources. Should success be measured on wins alone? What about sparking and helping to fuel a researcher’s passion? If an institution can alleviate a bulk of the administrative proposal components, it would free our scientists to do what they do best – science. If an interdisciplinary team came together for one effort but several smaller groups spun out other ideas, isn’t that a win? Do we “dare to dream” when a principal investigator of a 20+ person team is excited about resubmitting or leading another collaborative effort for additional funding opportunities?

Another metric that was not measured is faculty response to large proposal support services. Compiling this type of feedback may reveal another piece of how the programmatic and administrative components may perform better when envisioning an institution’s future.

What else can we do? Our baseline survey demonstrated a positive trend when the amount of personnel time spent on large proposals was considered. There may not be one right way to win, but it’s certain that institutions need to think about how trends towards large-scale collaborative research should influence their strategic planning in its administrative support. What we do know is that one key puzzle piece is an enthusiastic research support office willing to go the extra mile for their team. Will you be the missing piece of the success puzzle for winning large proposals?

References


W ith the roll out of Uniform Guidance (UG), the research administration community faces a number of changes that are both heartening (for example, the ability to charge an audit to a grant for subcontractors not subject to single audit) and problematic. One of the more problematic areas is subrecipient monitoring. We all struggle with what to do and how to do it while balancing compliance with efficiency.

The Uniform Guidance asks Pass-through Entities (PTEs) to step into the shoes of the government in many respects. Managing subcontracts to entities both domestic and foreign, non-profit and for-profit is a big burden and a big risk. What if you make the wrong determination about someone’s risk level? What will that mean for your organization? How much information is enough? 

The PTE is tasked by the government to “evaluate each subrecipient’s risk of noncompliance with Federal statutes, regulations and the terms and conditions of the Subaward for purposes of determining the appropriate subrecipient monitoring” (see 2 CFR 200.331(b) for complete text). The PTE clearly has the responsibility to validate subrecipient information and use that information as the basis for their assessment.

In this article, we want to take a step back to look at some key aspects of the UG requirements and argue for an approach that allows institutions to streamline their approach, hopefully making less work in the long run for both the PTE and the subrecipient. By putting in a little additional upfront work, PTEs will be able to track and generate assessments that can easily be reviewed in the future and minimize downstream burden to subrecipients.

While reducing the burden to your subrecipients may not seem like a big deal, we have heard some say if you want the funds you have to prove you can manage them. However, in addition to being PTEs, we are also subrecipients. Living by the golden rule of do unto others as you would have others do unto to you simply makes practical sense.
First, let us consider the scope of the UG requirements. The government suggests several factors one might use in evaluating a subrecipient’s risk but ultimately leaves the burden to the PTE to determine the extent of the vetting process. The government specifically names four key components to consider in vetting subrecipients:

1. Subrecipient’s prior experience with similar subawards;
2. Results of previous audits;
3. New personnel or new or substantially changed systems; and
4. The extent/results of Federal awarding agency monitoring.

Let us focus on how these four elements can be checked with 3-4 quick online resources, which will lessen the burden for both the PTE and the subrecipient.

A diligent research administrator’s goal is to judiciously conduct an initial vetting that is quick, simple and requires very little information from the subrecipient. A DUNS number and a legal name are all you need to check some simple facts that will clear the way for you and your team to focus your assessment efforts on truly high risk institutions. Legal names and DUNS numbers should be on most Letters of Intent (LOIs), allowing the PTE to perform an initial risk assessment for all subrecipients without any additional forms.

Asking a subrecipient to complete detailed forms and questionnaires is certainly prudent in some instances, however, when and why are worth further consideration. With high proposal volume and low success rates, why indiscriminately ask subrecipients for additional information at proposal time? If you do want to assess an institution quickly prior to proposal submission, we suggest building a subrecipient database below using information on most LOIs that will allow you to vet a potential subcontractor in less than five minutes.

The Just In Time (JIT) stage is the ideal time to conduct a full risk assessment. Conducting assessments at JIT will allow you several weeks to finish the assessment and complete the requisite documentation before the award arrives. If a particular sponsor does not have a JIT phase, the award stage is the next best option. Assuming your organization’s proposal success rate is 15-20%, conducting assessments at JIT saves evaluating subcontractors for 75-80% of the proposals you submit, which is a huge win. Moreover, establishing a database of existing subcontractors as outlined below will make the risk assessment faster each time you issue a new subcontract. As you build your database, over time you will run into repeat subcontractors.

A subrecipient database doesn’t have to be extremely sophisticated or complex. Depending on your volume and business needs, you may be able to use Excel, Sharepoint, or other widely available software, so long as the database can be simultaneously viewed and edited by multiple people in your office. We recommend the following data elements: the subrecipient’s full legal name, address, designation as foreign or domestic, DUNS number, EIN (if applicable), website, link to latest audit (either through Harvester or the subrecipient’s website), risk designation (i.e. high or low), contact information, a comments field for history notes (if any), and a list of all current active subawards in place with them. The last element is most likely the most difficult data element to achieve, but is important to being able to assess current and present risk.

To start a new database, gather a list of all subrecipients currently active in your system. If your current system is not capable of pulling all active subrecipients, ask your Accounts Payable department for a list of all payments, by recipient, made on research subcontract invoices in the last year. Compare your list of subrecipients against Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) members. You may be able to quickly label FDP institutions as low risk because these institutions conduct a single audit annually, are well-versed in federal funding, and have a federally compliant FCOI policy. Even if you initially label a subrecipient as low risk due to their FDP member status, you may later decide to re-label them high risk in light of certain audit findings or experiences with them. Keep in mind that your high/low risk categorization should be dynamic. As the PTE, you should be conducting an annual risk assessment of all entities in your subrecipient database and of how the subrecipient presents themselves via their own website. They will most likely describe their mission and history in detail, including their research portfolio, financial statements, and audit results. Even if the subrecipient is not required to conduct a single audit, a non-research specific audit may give you enough information about the subrecipient’s operations to conduct a full risk assessment.

You need to go through this initial evaluation first to discern if any information, such as the subrecipient being a foreign entity and/or not having a single audit, triggers the high risk designation. Only send the more robust subrecipient commitment forms after you, as the PTE, have done your due diligence in objectively evaluating the potential subrecipient. This process may take some time at the front end but the savings on the

“A diligent research administrator’s goal is to judiciously conduct an initial vetting that is quick, simple and requires very little information from the subrecipient.”
back end are innumerable. All of the diligent work you have put into the initial evaluation should be saved in your database so that you won’t have to fully replicate your assessment every time you issue a new subcontract.

Implementing risk management criteria may vary from institution to institution. Some institutions, such as Partners, choose to use two levels: high and low risk. Harvard University uses three levels: low, medium, and high risk. Your criteria choice may come down to the style of institution - each has its pros and cons. Including a third designation of medium risk allows for a more refined approach to ongoing subrecipient monitoring, while having only two levels of risk may simplify business rules and processes. For institutions with high volume, a simple approach has a certain value; training and adherence to process are easier when there are fewer business rules. We urge institutions to think about their business needs and volume when contemplating risk levels.

Generally speaking, as long as the subrecipient has a single audit and the single audit presents no material weaknesses there should be no reason to go past initial review and conduct a full on risk assessment. A single finding isn’t necessarily cause for concern because a cure plan is also required to be posted publically and you can review both the new audit and the update on the cure plan annually to see how they manage findings over time. The cure plan gets re-tested at next year’s audit. Based on this, a single, relatively minor finding may be such that an organization can still be deemed low risk and no changes need to be implemented.

For organizations with more extensive findings, we recommend asking audit-specific questions and inputting some protective measures in the initial subcontract. However it is not necessary to send the subrecipient the full vetting documentation appropriate for a high risk institution, unless material weaknesses are identified.

Once you have identified the criteria under which you will make your initial assessment, it is also worth contemplating your approach. Does your institution take the stance of high risk until proven otherwise? Or low risk until proven high? The tools we have suggested here allow institutions to break away from considering all institutions high risk until proven low risk and encourage a low until proven high risk approach, yet this approach includes enough information that any auditor would be able to consider it consistently applied and adhering to the requirements of Uniform Guidance.

When you do identify a potentially higher risk institution as a collaborator, it is important to have a very robust form that gets all the information you need to perform a thorough assessment of their ability to manage federal funds. In order to ensure that subrecipients get a clear, consistent message, we recommend that you generate a cover letter for your form clearly articulating the legal requirements that underlie your initial efforts to assess them and enforcing that this is the first step in a successful collaboration. The letter must make clear who needs to verify the information in the form (i.e., an institutional official).

Of course, all the information provided in a risk assessment form only tells you about the overall level of risk associated with providing federal funds to a subrecipient. When all is said and done, you may find that the institutional level risk assessment does not address your concerns about a specific project. You may be working with a low risk institution on a high risk project, such as stem cell research or a clinical trial. We will cover this in great detail in our next installment.

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Stephanie Stone is a Manager on the Post-Award team in Research Management at Partners HealthCare. Stephanie holds degrees from the University of Michigan and the University of San Diego-School of Law and is a licensed attorney in Massachusetts. She can be reached at sestone@partners.org

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14 NCURA Magazine
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STAFF & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
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SUBAWARDS
In December of 2014, President Obama announced his intentions to begin opening up a dialogue with Cuba about normalization of relations. In May of 2015, NCURA member Suzanne Rivera visited Cuba and came back to the U.S. with a hope that NCURA could take a leading role in establishing partnerships between Cuban and American Universities. Unbeknown to Sue, NCURA President Bob Andresen also was thinking about how NCURA could reach out to Cuban research institutions. The re-opening of the Cuban embassy in Washington last summer provided an opportunity for Sue and Bob to explore the possibility of an official NCURA visit to Cuba. After several overtures by Sue and her colleague, Valerie Landau, to the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education, NCURA was invited to send a delegation. Early on, Bob and NCURA Executive Director Kathleen Larmett discussed how to manage the costs of the visit responsibly. It was agreed that to fund the delegation the NCURA Board would forego its autumn in-person meeting and, instead, meet during the Annual Meeting. In addition, each member of the delegation would need to cost-share the expenses of the trip.

Nine months of negotiations eventually led to NCURA’s guided delegation trip, including visits to multiple universities and meetings with Cuban dignitaries from the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of International Affairs. The trip took place from April 7 - 14. Staff from both ministries served as our escorts throughout the visit and helped facilitate the meetings between NCURA and the Cuban institutions. For some of our Cuban counterparts, it was the first time they had met with representatives of institutions based in the United States. At the beginning of the visit, the Ministry of Higher Education provided an outline of their educational priorities to include food production, biomedicine, physical culture and sport (wellness), environment, technology, energy, and construction/habitat. Energy remains their “priority of priorities” with a goal to increase renewable energy from 4.5% to 24% by 2030.

Here are some highlights from the multiple presentations and discussions:

**University of Havana** – We met with the University’s Rector (President) Dr. Gustavo Cobreiro Suárez, school deans, and various administrators. The University of Havana served as the only university until 1952 and was the originator of all other Cuban institutions of higher education. There have been 1.5M graduates to-date and more than half are women. Women also make up 63% of the Cuban labor force. Dr. Suárez stated, “We are the bridge builders” in order to emphasize the importance of personal collaborations, for which the University has 500 across the globe.

**The José Antonio Echeverría Higher Polytechnic Institute** – The Institute is an undergraduate, post-graduate (post-bachelor’s) and doctoral research university located in Mariana, Havana. CUJAE (by its Spanish acronym), was inaugurated in 1964 to focus on the engineering and architecture disciplines. NCURA met with senior leadership, faculty, and students to review the Institute’s achievements and numerous research interests. CUJAE represents 36% of Cuba’s technical science graduates and has 300+ agreements with foreign institutions. The priority programs in which they would be most interested in US collaborations include information and communication technologies, life sciences, and renewable energy.

**The University of Information Sciences (UCI)** – The University teaches software development by having students solve real-world computer needs and problems. Using open-source software, the emphasis is on teaching and research through the production of electronic solutions which are licensed and used...
throughout Cuba and other countries. UCI is located in Boyeros, Havana on a campus featuring several pieces of artwork by international painters and sculptors.

Union de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC)/ Artists and Writer’s Union – NCURA had the privilege to meet with the President of UNEAC, Dr. Miguel Barnet, and other prominent UNEAC members in their beautiful building complex. The Artists and Writer’s Union was started in 1961 and now includes 9,000+ members. Dr. Barnet is a renowned author and poet and is best known for his novel *The Biography of a Runaway Slave*. He stated “We are united to making a better Cuba, not a new Cuba.”

Las Terrazas Biopreserve – NCURA met with Fidel Hernandez at the Nature Research Center. He oriented us to their projects, which mainly are focused on sustainable development, responsible agriculture, species diversity, and other management of natural resources.

National Institute of Agricultural Sciences (INCA) – NCURA met with the President, Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and other senior leadership of the Institute. The Institute represents nearly 50 years of tropical animal research. A researcher stated “We want to make up time we have lost in doing important research” to support the growth of international collaboration in order to advance science. There was a second presentation about the National Center for Animal and Plant Health (CENSA), CENLAC, the Trial Lab for Food Control Quality, CEDESAP, a training center for reduction of sanitary disasters in plants and animals, and MYCOLAB, a national laboratory that specializes in mycoplasma diagnoses. During the visit, we learned that Auburn University is already collaborating with scientists at this Institute. We were also treated to a very delicious traditional Cuban feast from food either grown or raised at the Institute. It was a very special moment to sit down to a communal lunch with our hosts.

Fundación Fernando Ortiz – The Fundación Fernando Ortiz is a non-governmental humanities foundation named for the “father of Cuban anthropology and culture.” The headquarters are housed in Ortiz’ former family home. We visited with the Vice-President, who accepted a donation of three hand-held scanners from NCURA to assist with digitizing their archives.

University of Matanzas – The University was started in 1972 in Matanzas, a city representing “Bridges of Friendship” and accounting for 45% of Cuba’s tourism. Following the theme of the Ministry’s priorities, the University has performed significant research on climate change and envisions international collaborations in areas such as energy, education, information, environment, and high performance sports (or wellness). The University offers a “hybrid” approach to education, where undergraduate students undergo a flexible work-study program and have access to long-distance education. Recently, the University received accreditation for its distance learning program.

Everywhere we visited we were warmly greeted and welcomed. Our meetings revealed a common interest in research and desire to pursue future collaborations. The vibrant and creative environment of Cuba infused our discussions and offers promise for future collaborations and exchanges. We know we speak for all of the delegation when we say we look forward to ongoing partnership with our Cuban colleagues.

**Delegates:**
Robert Andresen, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Barbara Gray, East Carolina University
Heather Offhaus, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
Anthony Ventimiglia, Auburn University
Michelle Vazin, Vanderbilt University
Kathleen Larmett, NCURA
Tara Bishop, NCURA
Glenda Bullock, Washington University in St. Louis
Scott Davis, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Judy Fredenberg, University of Montana
Patricia Hawk, Oregon State University
Vivian Holmes, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard
Caroline Jones, Stanford University
Agatha Keller, University of Zurich
Valerie Landau, Samuel Merritt University
David Mayo, California Institute of Technology
Jeremy Miner, University of Wisconsin-East Claire
Denise Moody, Harvard University
Kim Moreland, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Craig Reynolds, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
David Richardson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Campaign
Suzanne Rivera, Case Western Reserve University
Leslie Schmidt, Montana State University
Toni Shaklee, Oklahoma State University
Amanda Snyder, University of Washington
Bryony Wakefield, University of Melbourne
Denise Wallen, University of New Mexico
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Since its beginning thirty years ago as the Florida Demonstration Project, the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) has successfully worked to reduce administrative burden while accommodating continuous changes to the policies and regulations most significant to research administration. Through the unique forum provided by the FDP, federal agency officials work collaboratively with administrative, faculty and technical representatives from a broad range of academic research institutions to identify and assess unnecessary burden resulting from policies and processes that can be addressed only through cooperation among our partners.

The FDP entered Phase VI on October 1, 2014 recognizing the importance of addressing the administrative burdens most relevant to our faculty. Multiple committees are using the results of the 2012 FDP Faculty Workload Survey to view general categories of administrative workload more precisely, such as by the type of research, the type of institution and the source of funding. This allows us to identify particular policies and processes that seem to create the most work but provide the least value. It was no surprise that compliance topics were often perceived to involve such policies and processes. The Faculty and Research Compliance committees have formed subcommittees and workgroups to look at ways to address burden associated with administrative requirements such as those related to human subjects protections, animal use and care, conflicts of interest, data stewardship and laboratory safety. Not stopping there, the Administrative Cost working group is analyzing the results of the 2012 survey in comparison to feedback available on the “National Dialogue: Improving Federal Procurement and Grants Processes” website https://cxo.dialogue2.cao.gov with the intention of identifying additional, specific policies and processes that the FDP might next address. The Faculty committee, meanwhile, is beginning preliminary planning for the next Faculty Workload Survey and is considering broadening the survey to include the administrative burdens faced by research administrators.

The Expanded Clearinghouse working group of the Research Administration committee is also addressing research administrator burden through its recently launched pilot. Forty institutions are participating in a pilot designed to expand on the success of the FDP Financial Conflict of Interest Clearinghouse. Each institution participating in the pilot completed and certified an institutional profile, which was used to populate the Expanded Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse contains audit, demographic and fiscal information needed by pass-through entities when they are issuing subawards. Each pilot institution will use the clearinghouse to gather the information it needs about fellow pilot institutions rather than gathering this information directly from each institution through, for example, subrecipient commitment forms. It is recognized that additional, transaction-specific data (e.g., IRB and IACUC approvals, etc.) will still need to be collected but there are also plans to develop and test a standard transaction specific form. During the pilot, information will be gathered to test whether use of the clearinghouse effectively reduces the data collection and review burden for pass-through entities and subrecipients while still ensuring stewardship over federal funding. Looking forward, we hope to collaborate with our Federal partners in not only broadening participation in the Expanded Clearinghouse but eventually using the information collected to assess the burden of these activities compared to the benefits and determine if a case can be made for further streamlining.

The Electronic Research Administration Committee continues to focus on issues with Grants.gov, SAM and other Federal systems. It recently partnered with the Open Government subcommittee in following DATA Act activities and has participated in several discussions with OMB, Treasury and the HHS DATA Act Section 5 Pilot PMO to provide input and also to ensure the FDP receives accurate and current information regarding DATA Act implementation.

Meanwhile, FDP leadership began Phase VI with an inventory of the various committees, subcommittees and workgroups that formed over the years and developed definitions and a structure to better understand the groups, their relationships and their activities. This allows us to better communicate about our activities and to ensure we continue to strengthen relationships between our institutional and federal partners to support our common vision of “Researchers doing science, not administration.”

Cynthia Hope Hope is the Assistant Vice President for Research and the Director of the Office for Sponsored Programs at the University of Alabama. She is the Chair of the Federal Demonstration Partnership www.thefdp.org and a member of the Board of Directors for the Council on Governmental Relations. She can be reached at chope@research.ua.edu
In the ever-evolving environment of research administration, it is often challenging for research administrators to manage their daily workload while staying on top of regulatory changes — it might not seem like there are enough hours in the day. However, an organizational system tailored to your needs may help. This article provides tips designed to make your workload more manageable and increase efficiency, allowing more time for special projects, review of regulatory changes, and professional development.

The most important step in managing your workload is taking extra time now to setup an organizational system that works for you. Here are some techniques to evaluate, manage, and organize your workload now.

**Step 1: Evaluate your current workload**

Take an inventory of your work by evaluating your regular tasks and how long they take.

Daily or weekly tasks are usually quick and easy to complete and thus do not require additional organization. However, you might want to set up a filing system to streamline processing and prioritize daily tasks. This will ensure that when urgent issues arise your daily work will already be organized and ready to complete.

Monthly tasks are usually more time consuming and need organizational preparation. Do you have trouble remembering these? Do you complete these in a timely manner? Creating a schedule with monthly reminders or staggering the work may help.

Semiannual or annual tasks usually take the longest and are the most involved. Do you often forget about these and then scramble right before the due date? You may want to start these tasks early and break them up into smaller, more manageable, segments.

To evaluate your workload, review your job duties to make a list of the tasks that you are responsible for, thinking also of tasks that you should be doing but have never had time to do. Then, organize them into priorities (i.e., what must get done, what should get done) and...
identify the time it takes to complete them. Once you have this list, you are ready to set up a system to manage your workload.

Step 2: Create a workload management system that works for you

What are your tools?

When creating an organizational system you need to know your tools, understand their capabilities, and use them. Getting training on your office software can help you use your tools quicker and more efficiently. Here are some standard research administration tools:

- **Email**: email providers (i.e., Google, Outlook, etc.) offer tools that can assist with organization. Here are some questions to consider: Can you flag emails to help with prioritization? Can you create a folder or filing system within your emails? Can you create a task list with weekly or monthly reminders?
- **Reporting system**: does your institution have a report system that you can use? If so, can you automate reports to run on a certain frequency (i.e., monthly or weekly)? Do you have raw data that can be manipulated into a useable report? If so, does investing time to write a macro make sense for routine tasks?
- **Calendar**: how do you use your calendar? Do you list due dates for proposals, reports, monthly tasks? Using a calendar to organize your time is a great way to visualize your workday, what needs to be done each day or week, and the amount of time it will take.
- **Task lists**: can you create task lists and incorporate them into your email or calendar?
- **Visual reminders**: would a wall calendar or whiteboard help you visualize upcoming due dates?
- **Note-taking software**: consider using Onenote, Evernote, or note-taking, cloud-base software that is integrated with your computer to be able to take notes at meetings, create task lists, etc.

What works for you?

When deciding on the tools to implement into your system, consider your preferences.

- **Format**: do you prefer paper or electronic? Does writing things down help you remember? Or, do you prefer keeping things electronically to easily modify and copy them for the future?
- **Visual or Lists**: are you visually or linearly minded? Do you need to see things to remember them?
- **Color coding**: an individualized color coding system may also help. Consider assigning colors to emails, tasks, or calendar items.

This is where you customize your management approach to fit your needs. The possibilities are endless since you define the rules and parameters for your own system.

Step 3: Workload management tips and ways to increase efficiency

General tips:

Here are some general tips to manage your workload now and create a system geared toward efficiency. Remember: these tips should help you be organized and thorough in your daily tasks. The system you create should help minimize errors, miscommunications, and oversight, and thus increase efficiency without decreasing thoroughness.

- **Create a tracking system** — create an excel spreadsheet or list that tracks the status of outstanding items. By tracking tasks that you are involved in, but that are not totally in your control (e.g., personnel hiring), you can follow the progress of a task to make sure it gets done. Taking extra time to track the progress of outstanding work now can reduce mistakes in the future.
- **Create templates** — use template emails, lists, proposal documents, budgets, etc., whenever possible. If you explain sponsored projects concepts, regulations, policies, or processes over and over again, then a template email will help. You will be consistent in the information you provide while saving time. A word of caution: although copying previous emails, budgets, and documents can be helpful, remember to review and update templates for each specific situation. This is especially important for template emails, making sure your messages are personalized without being obvious that you cut and pasted the text.
- **Double check** — taking extra time to be thorough and double check things while you are completing them will lead to efficiency in the future. Double checking formulas, re-reading emails before sending, and reviewing numbers for accuracy can save you from errors, last minute issues, and miscommunications.
- **Notes** — write notes or create logs in complicated situations or as reminders. Since it’s impossible to remember everything, notes provide a record of what happened, what worked, and will help you remember what to do in the future.

Examples of management techniques:

For email: since research administrators complete their work predominately via email, here are some approaches for managing your email:

- **Inbox to zero**: One strategy is to have zero (or a limited number) items in your inbox. Anything left in the inbox are either items to complete (usually flagged) or items to follow up. Once you have read, responded, and/or completed the task associated with an email, move it to a corresponding email folder so that it is no longer in the inbox.
- **Folders and filing**: creating a folder or filing system helps organize and retain previous emails. Using a detailed system may take additional time to create, but allows for easy organizing. Create an email folder (or label) for each department. If you work over the lifecycle, create a post award and pre award folder under each department. In the post award folder, have a folder for each PI and each award. In the pre award folder, have a folder for each proposal (with due date listed) and a completed and cancelled folder. Moving proposals to completed or cancelled ensures that the only remaining items in the proposal folder are proposals that are due, helping you easily visualize upcoming proposals and their due dates.
- **Bold or “unread” emails**: Another strategy is to use the bold or “unread” function to prioritize emails. Read emails and then mark them as unread as a visual reminder that you still need to complete a task associated with them.

For deadlines: deadlines are crucial to research administration. Here are some ways to manage deadlines to make sure the work is completed on time:

- **Visualize**: putting deadlines on your calendar allows you to visualize what needs to be done and when. Color code deadlines based on the type. For example, use yellow for proposal due dates and red for award terming dates. Another way to visualize deadlines is to list them on a white board (or in a spreadsheet printout).
- **Reminders**: setting calendar reminders days or weeks before the due date enables you to determine the status of the task and follow
When I “envision tomorrow,” one of the first things that comes to mind is technology. There is a new app for productivity every day, and while I use some of them (Producteev, Dropbox, and my synced e-mail and calendar), my favorite method for increasing productivity involves a spiral notebook, a pencil, and “envisioning” what tomorrow’s workday will look like. I am most productive when I follow these basic rules:

1. Schedule fifteen minutes at the end of the workday to review what you need to do tomorrow. The beginning of the day has co-workers to greet, coffee to drink, and “fires” to put out. The best time to plan is at the end of the previous day. Think of it like a teacher planning a lesson. Ms. Jones won’t be at her best if she arrives and decides to wing it and see what happens. Without a plan, everything you do during the day is re-acting to something, rather than pro-actively taking charge of your time.

2. During your planning time, create a list of three things to accomplish the next day—no more than three—and write them down. This is where the spiral notebook is great. My tasks are as big or as small as necessary. Something like “call Jane about the no-cost extension” is fine, as long as it fits the criteria of “must get done tomorrow.” This is a tool to help organize thoughts, not to rank-order my projects.

3. Get away from your e-mail. Sorry Luddites, but this last rule does use technology. I prefer to use task-organizing software, like Producteev, so I am not working right out of my e-mail. E-mail is one of the fastest ways to throw a day off track, so I always try to accomplish at least one of the tasks on my list before I look at my e-mail.

The overarching goal is to establish a mindset where I arrive at work ready to start my day, and don’t get sucked into wasting time doing things that encourage procrastination. If I know what I need to do right when I walk in the door, I am more likely to get started on the right foot.

For paperwork: using a filing system to organize paperwork with trays for your inbox, outbox, to file, etc., will help you complete paperwork in a timely way. A tray or inbox also acts as a visual reminder of things that need to be completed or followed up.

Step 4: Review, revise, and re-implement – is your process working?
Evaluate your system:
Are you noticing that you are better organized or able to get more done? Has your stress level changed even if the workload seems the same? Are tasks that took longer taking less time due to automation or change in process?
If you keep forgetting to use your system, then it probably isn’t working for you. Habits are hard to create, so give it a few months before abandoning one system and trying another.

Step 5: Be open to change
Some things don’t work for everyone –
You may need to change your system to fit a particular PI or department. Some PIs will need more reminders than others to complete tasks on time. In the end, creating a successful working relationship with your PIs and other offices will facilitate efficiency.

Big project?
As you are assigned big projects, you may need to change your approach to make it a priority.
• Spend time on it daily – try taking an hour in the morning or afternoon and close your email, if possible, to spend time on it. Carving out uninterrupted time daily allows for ongoing progress without getting overwhelmed.
• Break it up into smaller tasks with distinct deadlines – smaller tasks will break a large project up into manageable segments, facilitating on-time completion. Since smaller tasks have a psychological effect of making it feel like you are working on smaller projects, this approach can make you feel less overwhelmed and thus reduce stress. Setting deadlines for each task will be important to maintain ongoing progress.

Give it a try and don’t be afraid to ask for help
If workload management is a challenge for you, then try using some of these tips and examples. Also, ask your colleagues to see how they organize their workload and what works for them. In the end, it is important to create a system that works for you. Creating strong organizational habits now should increase efficiency in the future so you are ready to tackle the changes and challenges of research administration as it evolves.

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Have a Work Smart tip to share with your colleagues?
Contact Co-Editor David Smelser at dsmelser@utk.edu

Johanna Zimmerman, a Department Research Administrator at Portland State University (PSU) in Portland, Oregon, has a Master’s and Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and is a recent member to NCURA. Johanna’s responsibilities at PSU include pre-award and post-award activities. She can be reached at johanna7@pdx.edu
Do you have your copy of our Uniform Guidance desk reference?

Contents Overview

Subpart A – Acronyms and Definitions
Subpart B – General Provisions
Subpart C – Pre-Federal Award Requirements and Contents of Federal Awards
Subpart D – Post-Federal Award Requirements
Subpart E – Cost Principles
Subpart F – Audit Requirements
Appendix I to Part 200 – Full Text of Notice of Funding Opportunity
Appendix III to Part 200 – Indirect (F&A) Costs Identification and Assignment, and Rate Determination for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)
Appendix IV to Part 200 – Indirect (F&A) Costs Identification and Assignment, and Rate Determination for Nonprofit Organizations
Appendix V to Part 200 – State/Local Governmentwide Central Service Cost Allocation Plans
Appendix VI to Part 200 – Public Assistance Cost Allocation Plans
Appendix VII to Part 200 – States and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals
Appendix VIII to Part 200 – Nonprofit Organizations Exempted from Subpart E – Cost Principles of Part 200
Appendix IX to Part 200 – Hospital Cost Principles
Appendix X to Part 200 – Data Collection Form (Form SF-SAC)
Appendix XI to Part 200 – Compliance Supplement
Appendix XII to Part 200 – Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters
Preamble to the Uniform Guidance (Published in Federal Register/ Vol. 78, No. 248/Thursday, December 26, 2013, 78590-78608)

Additional Resources
Frequently Asked Questions

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The AV68 Program Committee is busy putting the finishing touches on the 58th Annual Meeting program. The preliminary program has been released (www.ncura.edu/annualmeeting/Home.aspx), registrations are pouring in, and room blocks are filling quickly. Don’t miss this exciting opportunity to reconnect with your colleagues and build knowledge that will help you in your everyday work and throughout your career. Register and make your travel plans now!

This year’s program features traditional half- and full-day pre-conference workshops, a post-conference full-day NIH workshop, senior forums, and a plethora of concurrent sessions, discussion groups, and sparked sessions in fourteen different tracks for varying knowledge levels from basic to advanced. New this year are tracks for newcomers to the field and for current and aspiring managers. Ten federal agencies, along with OMB, COGR, and FDP are represented on the program, and we will hear numerous regulatory updates. International sessions complement the domestic offerings. And, by popular demand are Office Hours, so don’t forget to make an appointment to speak with some of NCURA’s most seasoned research administrators to get questions about specific institutional issues answered. Truly, AM68 offers something for everyone.

What makes NCURA meetings so invigorating and rewarding are, in addition to excellent sessions, the opportunities to push the boundaries of our general knowledge, examine our world from different perspectives, and connect with colleagues to build personal and professional relationships. We do this in part through specially planned events. This year, we offer four very special events that are sure to interest and delight meeting-goers:

- **SUNDAY EVENING:** Join your colleagues for a relaxed Dinner and an Evening of Magic featuring comedian, magician, and ventriloquist Andy Gross. One of the hottest corporate entertainers working today, Andy also performs at comedy clubs, Las Vegas venues, cruise ships, colleges, and performing arts theaters nationwide and has appeared on The Ellen Show and an NBC television special. His ad-libbing in stand-up routines has been compared to that of Don Rickles and Robin Williams, and his ventriloquist skills are impressive. But he is perhaps most well-known for his “split man illusion,” which is not for the faint of heart (smelling salts available on demand!) and his ability to levitate. We can’t wait to see what else he has in store for us!

- **MONDAY MORNING:** Following our annual NCURA awards presentation, Dr. Geraldine Hamilton, cell biologist and toxicologist, will challenge us to envision tomorrow as she presents the Keynote address, Organs-on-Chips: Predicting Human Physiology and Pathobiology.

Dr. Hamilton’s career spans from pharma to academia to biotech start-ups. As a Lead Senior Staff Scientist at Harvard’s Wyss Institute, Dr. Hamilton directed the extensive Organs-on-Chips project, focusing on the development of new human-relevant cell-based models and their application to drug discovery. Now, as President and Chief Scientific Officer of Emulate, Inc., a successful spin-off company, Dr. Hamilton continues her work to further develop Organs-on-Chips technology as well as to drive and facilitate its adoption for commercial use. Her research offers a fascinating look into the future of drug discovery and testing.

- **MONDAY LUNCH:** No NCURA meeting during a presidential election year would be complete without some comment on politics in America. Kelly O’Donnell, Capitol Hill Correspondent for NBC News, joins us for lunch and will offer her insights on the 2016 Presidential Election. A veteran of presidential politics, Ms. O’Donnell contributes regularly to the NBC Nightly News, TODAY, and MSNBC and appears as a panelist on Meet the Press and The Chris Matthews Show.

- **TUESDAY EVENING:** See one of the Nation’s treasures as we enjoy a Night at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. Bus transportation to and from the museum and on-site light American fare will be provided. Members are encouraged to bring their families to enjoy this exclusive access to museum exhibitions. Ongoing exhibitions include, among others, America on the Move; American Enterprise; The American Presidency; American Stories; The Dolls’ House; Fantastic Worlds: Science and Fiction; The First Ladies; FOOD: Transforming the American Table; numerous exhibitions focusing on inventions; On the Water: Stories from Maritime America; The Price of Freedom: America at War; Stories on Money; and SparkLab, an interactive exploration space for children 6-12 years. A number of special exhibitions will be featured during August including a preview of the National Museum of African American History. Just like the program, there’s something for everyone at this museum! Afterwards, come back to the Hilton and enjoy a coffee and dessert bar with your colleagues.

Many thanks to the Program Committee and NCURA staff for putting together what promises to be a truly wonderful AM68 experience. See you in DC!

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Kelly O’Donnell, NBC Capitol Hill Correspondent will give us the latest inside perspective on the 2016 Presidential Election

MONDAY KEYNOTE:
Dr. Geraldine Hamilton, cell biologist and toxicologist, will challenge us to envision tomorrow as she presents the Keynote address

TUESDAY EVENING EVENT:
See one of the nation’s treasures as we enjoy a Night at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History

SUNDAY BANQUET:
Join your colleagues for Dinner and a Night of Magic featuring comedian, magician, and ventriloquist Andy Gross

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New! Annual Meeting Travel Awards Now Available
The earliest universities or their likely predecessors for higher education can be traced back to the 6th century. The oldest continuously-operating university in Guinness World Records, University of Al-Karaouine, dates back to 859. Over their centuries of history, as a place where talents, cultures and knowledge converge and idea sharing and knowledge creation are imbedded, universities have been evolving from relatively loose structures that supported voluntary activities exploring the nature of our world into highly organized institutions that have research as one of their key functions. The dramatically increasing university research activities in modern history, especially sponsored by governments and industries, have mandated universities to allocate significant amounts of resources for research activity management and thus created the profession of university research administration.

Like any profession that survives over decades, effectively interacting with its working environment, university research administration has not only been adapting to the changing university systems but also has helped shape how the universities operate. Even today, university research administrators face all kinds of challenges either inherited from the start of this profession or caused by the changing working environment they probably would never have foreseen. External pressures, such as changes in legislations, economic

Today, university research administration faces various challenges either inherited or recently emerged due to rapid changes in technologies and merging of cultures. Under such circumstances, university research administrators must develop a more comprehensive understanding of the ever changing working environment in a more and more globalized context and quickly adopt new skills and knowledge that are becoming essential for conducting the job in the future.

By Xiaojun Lu, Lei Lyu, Li Zhou, and Jie Fan
situations, social value expectations, international exchanges, etc., and internal development needs for attracting world class talents, infrastructure building, and maintaining public recognition, all have been driving university research administrators to actively seek new ways of conducting their day-to-day jobs, so they can wander through uncharted waters while providing additional value to university operations.

If asked what have been the most significant changes for university research administrators, three items surface. First, moving from governing research to facilitating research. Unlike the early days when the key functions for university research administrators were to make policies for regulating research activities and to seek compliance of those policies by faculty and students, now they have to focus on building an environment where researchers can efficiently conduct research with comfort and ease. While helping the university understand its research strengths and weaknesses, developing strategic research development plans, integrating research resources for more efficient utilizations, and developing key projects are important roles, directly supporting researchers to lay out research plans, to find physical and financial support, and to protect and transfer research results for generating greater social values are no longer new to most university research administrators.

Second, moving from working in a culture to working with cultures. New technologies for travel and information sharing have nearly globalized every people group. As a converging point for people, universities inevitably become the most dynamic place for culture exchanges, fusions, and sometimes conflicts. While such gathering of different cultures brings in new perspectives and inspires new ideas, it also creates a more complicated working environment. Like teachers facing students with different native languages in a single classroom today and having to struggle to effectively convey information, university research administrators now have to make researchers from different cultures work within one system while giving recognition and respect to each individual culture they may encounter, which can be significantly different from the old local social norms. This is especially true in Asian countries where the original local cultures are quite different from western cultures but later adopted western education systems. So knowledge about foreign languages, laws, customs, and even foods and costumes suddenly become part of the essential knowledge required.

Third, moving from general to specific. Given the much larger size and more complex scope of disciplines and related research of modern universities, research administration has become very finely categorized, which may include R&D policy-making, legal documents review, grant application and management, patent filing and technology transfer, training for researchers, etc. These finely defined functions require much more specialized new knowledge and skills. For instance, while the research results become more and more valuable, legal documents review for sponsored research or joint research has accordingly changed from focusing on general legal terms to more specific technical bases to ensure the protection of potential research achievements, which then requires the reviewer to have certain scientific knowledge or at least know how to work with people who have such knowledge.

Additionally, university researchers are becoming more and more internationalized. This has served as a key factor in shaping up a university's public image and attracting public resources and talents. Many universities
are extending their already internationalized campuses into globally-located campuses to capitalize on non-domestic local resources and manpower. This new development trend requires university research administrators to jump out of the traditional domestic way of thinking and develop a more globalized view for research collaboration and management.

Take Tsinghua University in China as an example. Founded in 1911, the university has quickly developed into a comprehensive university since the 1980s, and now covers a very wide range of disciplines in 19 schools and 55 departments. Its annual research spending has increased four times since 2001 to approximately $700 million in 2015, which accounts for one third of its total operational budget. The Office for Scientific R&D, first established in 1956, now manages all university research related activities through its finely categorized sub-offices, including Office for Government Sponsored Projects, Office for Organizational Collaborations, Office for Domestic R&D Management, Office for Overseas R&D Management, and Office for Achievements and IP Management. The quick increase in research funding in recent years has challenged each sub-office to find more efficient ways of operation, and over 400 contracts per year with overseas partners (about 10% of total research contracts) have made the Overseas R&D Management Office a key window for the university’s international connections in addition to its normal managing functions. It also has become routine for the Overseas R&D Management Office to engage and support the building and improvement of international research and education platforms for the university considering the importance of globalization in today’s research and education. To better suit the needs for managing international research collaborations, foreign languages, and science or law backgrounds, communication skills all became mandated for the personnel in the Overseas R&D Management Office.

With even more intensified globalization expected in the academic world facilitated by new communication technologies, how university research administrators utilize the ever improving technologies to support university research and its management will be a continuous challenge. Although nobody can predict if remote and virtual technologies like MOOCs can impact university research as they have done with university education, a university research administrator will have to stay alert for anything that may cause such a dramatic change in the future. 

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In early March about 1,100 of us gathered in New Orleans for three fantastic days of “Creating Possibilities” with lots of sharing, learning, partnering, teaching, networking and growing. Our program started on Sunday when hundreds of pre-conference attendees participated in one or two of the 25 plus half- or full day workshops. These pre-conference workshops were offered at all levels, with topics ranging from Allowability to Uniform Guidance — and everything in between — with no shortage of opportunities to learn more about sponsored program management.

FRA 2016 wouldn’t have been possible without our outstanding Program Committee, the stellar presenters, facilitators and hosts who volunteered their time and talent to make this an FRA conference to remember! The NCURA staff are simply incredible — always there provide support, guidance, reassurance and answer everyone’s questions… with a smile.

The conference kicked off with our keynote speaker Mr. James Carville. Carville talked about the current election, candidates and how this election is still anyone’s guess. He also discussed a new documentary examining current funding issues at many major state funded institutions titled “Starving the Beast: The Battle to Disrupt and Reform America’s Public Universities.” This film was recently premiered at the SXSW festival in Austin, Texas and covers events as they recently played out at Louisiana State University, the University of Virginia, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The 130-plus concurrent sessions, discussion groups, spark sessions, and breakfast roundtables provided attendees a wide range of session topics. The full breadth of financial research administration was covered, providing attendees with the latest practical information on audits, F&A, post-award management, departmental finance, service centers, international considerations, government updates and professional development at levels for both research-intensive and primarily undergraduate institutions. Additionally, FRA specifically included a series of sessions on personal development giving attendees a chance at improving individual skills we sometimes overlook. Exhibits, breakfasts, luncheons, dinner groups, receptions, and the fitness track provided opportunities for informal learning and networking.

We were wonderfully hosted by the Sheraton New Orleans. While there were no reported ghost-sightings at the conference, many individuals took a late night or pre- or post- conference opportunity to take a break from the pressures of the profession at one of New Orleans’s many restaurants, music venues and the famous French Quarter.

Finally, thank YOU for your participation and attendance — FRA 2016 wouldn’t have been as incredibly successful without each of you. We hope you left with increased knowledge of something personal and lots of ideas for helping your institution to create possibilities. Please share what you learned and make a difference. Notwithstanding the overwhelming success of FRA 2016 we know that “Creating Possibilities” is a never-ending process. To that end we look forward to continuing our journey together and seeing you again at the 18th Annual Financial Research Administration meeting, March 11-13, 2017 in San Diego, CA.

Best Regards,
Roseann Luongo and W. Scott Erwin
**Laissez les bons temps rouler!** For those who joined us for PRA 2016, you know that means – *Let the good times roll!* And we did just that for three amazing days in the great city of New Orleans! Here is a recap of all PRA 2016 had to offer its 500+ attendees!

Day one kicked off with a full menu of workshops that embodied the PRA theme – *Change, Challenge, Opportunity: Building for the Future.* From the half-day workshop offerings of *Uniform Guidance – It’s Here, It’s Now* and *Subrecipient Monitoring – Building or Enhancing Your Internal Controls* to the full day workshops on *Pre-Award Basics* and *Department Administrator’s Boot Camp,* suffice it to say that attendees harnessed a wealth of information on workshop day!

Day two began with a warm welcome from NCURA’s Executive Director, Kathleen Larmett, and NCURA’s President, Bob Andresen. This was followed up with an introduction to this year’s PRA keynote – Shari Harley. Shari gave a very informative and empowering presentation on promoting a candid culture, which centered around proven and practical ways to be more candid in the workplace. Every attendee received a copy of Shari’s book entitled, “How to Say Anything to Anyone,” and Shari made herself available after her presentation to autograph books. Shari has been described as “inspiring, hilarious, and very practical” – and she was just that as she delivered her 8-Step Feedback Formula using real-life scenarios research administrators encounter.

Over the next two days, PRA attendees had a wide variety of sessions to choose from – with nine primary tracks (Compliance, Departmental, Federal, International, Medical/Clinical, Professional Development, PUI and Research Development) and new this year – a Case Study track that provided a problem-based approach to applying knowledge to everyday challenges we face. New material was delivered in the traditional formats many of us are used to (preconference workshops, concurrent sessions, and discussion groups), as well as newer forms of delivery, such as spark sessions that pack it all in a 15 – 20 minute, high energy, high deliverable offering that gets right to the good stuff.

Networking was the name of the game during breakfast roundtable discussions and dinner groups. With no shortage of good eats out and about in the nearby French Quarter, attendees were able to take in all of the sights, sounds and good food that is uniquely New Orleans! Though PRA 2016 marks the end of another chapter in our meeting history book, it leaves with us fond memories of a meeting that reminded us that there will always be change, challenge and opportunity. Let’s use the opportunity to build for the future!

We want to thank the many hardworking folks who helped make this meeting a success, all of whom we owe a special debt of gratitude — beginning with the Program Committee team who put together a remarkable and strong program — thank you! We also extend a special thank you to all of the distinguished meeting presenters and volunteers who turned ideas into reality. And to all of the NCURA “krewe” who worked tirelessly throughout the FRA and PRA meetings (and to Kati Barber who was a fantastic partner to us) THANK YOU — you made it look easy in the Big Easy! Last but certainly not least, a special thank you to NCURA’s President, Bob Andresen, who afforded us the opportunity to serve as your PRA 2016 co-chairs. It was a great experience, and we are honored to have served!

Mark your calendar for next year — March 8-10, 2017 in San Diego!
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Helping with Collaborative Applications

By Nicole Daniel

Universities without a proposal development system often struggle with a process to complete the various components of a funding opportunity from Grants.gov. Using email to send the application package to the appropriate individuals, and then re-assemble the package using most the most recent version of a form is a challenging endeavor. Some institutions developed a shared network location or “dropbox” to avoid shortcomings of sorting through many copies of the package. Invariably, someone must re-key information in many pages of the application package.

You might ask, “Short of purchasing an expensive proposal development software product, what are my options?” Grants.gov turned to the “Cloud” for an answer and appropriately named it simply “Workspace.” Indeed, the Grants.gov Workspace is an evolutionary resource according to its user community. Recent enhancements include ability to re-use forms in another application, automatically populate forms from a previous submission, and share workspace resources with another institution or sup-recipient.

What is Workspace?

- A shared, online cloud environment where collaborators may simultaneously access and edit different forms for a federal grant application.
- It makes the application design easier when there are many collaborators.
- Teams can work on individual forms at the same time.
- In the end, the forms are stitched back together as a single submission.

Why use Workspace?

- Workspace allows organizational applicants to collaborate when completing an application package.
- Users can work on individual forms concurrently.
- Forms can be upload/download as needed.
- Separate workspaces can be created for each application underway.
- Workspace allows applicants to reuse individual workspace forms for multiple opportunities.

How is Workspace Different?

- Traditionally, applicants who collaborated needed to share a single application package or PDF file.
- Easier to use – context sensitive help is available.
- In Workspace, the package is broken out into individual forms that can be filled out separately by applicants.
- Individual forms may be ‘locked’ – for example, previously approved budget pages may be locked while the science portion of the application is prepared for submission.
- The assembled application is checked for errors before submission.

Reusing Previous Forms

- Applicants can reuse individual workspace forms when applying for multiple opportunities.
- When a reused form is uploaded in a new workspace, the opportunity information on the cover sheet will be updated automatically.
How Does Workspace Work?
Workspace utilizes varying account types, access levels, and roles to allow for flexible use across the spectrum of potential grant applicants. After creating a new Workspace, users with the Authorized Applicant (AOR) or Manage Workspace roles may add Workspace Participants to a workspace. Each Workspace Participant (i.e., a team member with access to the workspace), has access to all the forms and the ability to contribute to the application.

Below is a basic process chart to illustrate how Workspace works. This does not capture all of the functionality or processes; rather it provides a basic framework for understanding Workspace.

Roles for Workspace Participants
The Workspace Participant access level is considered a category of access. Any user listed in the Participants tab, thereby defined as a Workspace Participant, may also have the Authorized Applicant (AOR) role, the Manage Workspace role, the Workspace Owner access level, a combination of these roles and access levels, or no additional role or access level. All of these users are still Workspace Participants contributing their part in that workspace.

Authorized Applicant (AOR)
The Authorized Applicant (AOR) role enables a Workspace Participant to submit applications on behalf of the organization. The AOR role may only be assigned to a user by the organization’s EBiz POC or an AOR with expanded access or the organization’s MPIN. If a workspace does not have a participant with the AOR role, the application cannot be submitted.

Manage Workspace Role
The Manage Workspace role enables a user to create new workspaces. Upon initially creating a workspace, the user with the Manage Workspace role inherits the Workspace Owner access. However, any Participant with the Manage Workspace role may have the Workspace Owner access level assigned to them by the existing Workspace Owner, EBiz POC, or a user with the AOR role and MPIN access.

Workspace Owner
A Participant with the Workspace Owner access level allows the user to manage other users’ access to a workspace. There can only be one Workspace Owner per workspace, which is initially granted to the user with the Manage Workspace role who created the workspace. After initial creation of a workspace, the Workspace Owner access can be reassigned to any Workspace Participant with the Manage Workspace role.

Try it Out!
Grants.gov provides a “Staging Environment” for user acceptance testing and plan to enhance Workspace based on user feedback. Plans for future releases include an agency print web service allowing an applicant to print the entire application (with attachments), and an enhanced validation capability allowing a package to check both Grants.gov and agency-specific validations prior to submission.

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
Whether supporting the research enterprise at your institution, volunteering to take on unfunded tasks and projects for your local community, or providing the volunteer power that helps fuels the engine of your professional society, it’s hard to imagine moving projects and visions forward without the help of a well-run and inspired team.

NCURA is a team — a very large team. When you make your tag line “Supporting research… together” you know it’s going to take a lot of hands to do something this big and NCURA began doing it long before we ever thought to say it out loud. For going on 60 years, NCURA’s members have stepped up to the plate to volunteer their time and knowledge for the good of the profession. Even now, with major assistance from professional staff, NCURA’s members continue to contribute in many necessary ways with both groups understanding their need to work in unity as they work to support each other and the research endeavor.

The programs you benefit from would not exist were it not for the time you and your colleagues devote to developing them. Have you or one of your staff attended one of our “traveling” workshops – Fundamentals and SPA II or FRA, DRA, or our newest programs Export Controls or The Practical Side of Leadership? Every one of these workshops was envisioned, designed, and developed by NCURA’s volunteers. And, after the development is complete, NCURA invests in adult education training for each of its volunteer traveling faculty to be sure you and other participants have an exceptional experience when attending these programs. After that, each year as new volunteer faculty come on board they, too, attend training — all in preparation for your continuing education.

Live broadcasts such as those produced by NCURA on the Uniform Guidance would not take place without the knowledge of volunteers and the expertise of our staff working together to provide important information to as many as 4,000 individuals at one given time. Webinars are developed by our volunteers and produced with the expertise of staff who make sure each program is rehearsed with speakers prior to “going live.” National conferences such as FRA and PRA which continue to attract almost 1,600 participants and our Annual Meeting, on its own path to over 2,000 attendees, are ALL the result of numerous NCURA members giving of their time and knowledge to organize themes and develop programmatic material.

NCURA Magazine continues to be a premier publication with the content, look, and appeal of what other associations wish to emulate. The magazine and all of our other publications – the Sponsored Research Administration Guide, Regulation and Compliance, our professional journal, Research Management Review, and with NCURA’s other publications, would not exist without our volunteers taking the time to write them, and then, turning the raw copy over to the expertise of our production staff.

Our NCURA Global volunteers and staff are hard at work to ensure our U.S. members and their counterparts outside the U.S. have opportunities to connect, while our continued work with the European Union under a Horizon 2020 grant benefits all members as we work to enhance and develop science, technology, and innovation partnerships between the European Union and the U.S. And, certainly, high quality and meaningful programs such as NCURA’s Peer Advisory Services or Peer Review Program would not exist without the many, many hours of volunteer and staff time it takes to design and implement them. Add several hundred more dedicated volunteers in our regions, both in the U.S. and around the globe, and you will begin to see an NCURA that never sleeps; many people working together to benefit the profession.

I recently spoke at a conference of 800 association executives and heard how many organizations have a difficult time finding volunteers. My remarks that we have over 400 of our members volunteer, regularly, met with stunned surprise and then, numerous questions. I responded that ideas from many quarters — from the Board of Directors, to our hardworking committee members, select committees, working groups, task forces, staff, Collaborate Communities, and emails and phones calls — are constantly coming and are an indication of a very healthy, vibrant organization. It’s all about engagement and caring about both the profession and the association — the first and largest there is — that supports them. If you’ve ever considered volunteering, this is the place to do it — just ask! And, if you’re curious about opportunities we have that fit your interests, please let me hear from you and we’ll set up a time to talk.

NCURA: it’s a place, an idea, a community where everyone supports each other while working in concert to envision and prepare for where we will go in the future…together.
One of the challenges faced by many research administrators at predominantly undergraduate institutions is advancing a culture of grantseeking. Because teaching is recognized as the top institutional priority, often far ahead of service and scholarship, research administrators frequently find themselves educating faculty about the grants process as well as persuading them that it is a worthwhile and rewarding activity. Some research administration offices even offer a range of incentives to encourage faculty to write grants, such as additional summertime compensation, reassigned time during the academic year, access to human resources in the form of student research assistants and technical consultants, matching funds for equipment purchases, and supplemental funding for travel to conferences, project supplies, and professional development opportunities.

Beyond incentivizations, there’s another place where changes can occur that would help facilitate a positive culture of grantseeking: doctoral programs.

It is axiomatic that some of today’s graduate students will become tomorrow’s college faculty. As such, an obligation exists to train doctoral students not only to be “better students” and “better college teachers” but also to be “better assistant professors” (Gaff & Lambert, 1996, p.44). Graduate programs are effective in developing students’ skills in researching and scholarly publishing but sometimes fall short in developing their skills in teaching, advising, mentoring, time management, service, and administration (Austin, 2002; Campbell, Fuller, & Patrick, 2005; Nerad, Aanerud, & Germ, 2004; Solem & Foote, 2004; Wright, et al., 2004). Future faculty need to know that grantseeking will be an integral part of their scholarly expectations, not an added responsibility.

Although the National Science Board (1998) has long acknowledged that the competitive grant system itself helps “shape the culture and working environment in universities,” grantseeking has a limited role and low-to-modest profile in many graduate programs. Its standing tends to be influenced by the interests of individual students and the expertise of particular
faculty rather than a deliberate structure of the program. While a topic such as ethics is often woven into the fabric of the curriculum, students interested in grants must assemble their own patchwork of internships, independent studies, advising relationships, and, when available, specific grant writing courses. Tightly structured graduate programs compel doctoral students to place value on curricular offerings that, first and foremost, meet degree requirements and second, are perceived to prepare them adequately for academia. Unfortunately, many students complete their graduate programs without a clear understanding of the true breadth of responsibility that goes along with being a member of the faculty. Consider: of two common indicators of scholarly activity, graduate students are quick to recognize peer-reviewed publication; less well-known is serving as a principal or co-principal investigator on an externally funded grant (Abbott & Sanders, 1991; Fairweather, 2005; Massey & Wilger, 1995; Stratten & Owens, 1993).

By incorporating grantseeking activities into an overall professional development plan, doctoral programs and faculty mentors can assist graduate students in their transition from incipient to ardent academicians. Put differently, doctoral programs must recognize that the traditional three-legged stool of academia has braces on it, rungs that join each of the legs together. Grant dollars represent rungs that connect, support, and enhance faculty teaching, service, and scholarship. Grantseeking is integral to, not separate from, achieving individual, departmental, and institutional goals. Myriad opportunities exist to infuse an appreciation for grantseeking into doctoral programs:

• **Show students how to identify and qualify sources of project funding.** Basic reference tools are available online through most universities, colleges, and large public libraries for finding public and private grantmakers. These database tools offer tutorials for conducting effective keyword searches.

• **Involve students in the process of designing projects and writing grants.** Analyzing RFPs (Requests for Proposals) involves asking a series of questions to determine whether the grant program is a good match for a potential project and how much work will need to go into developing a competitive application. Immersing students in strategy and writing sessions helps to demystify the process by which proposals evolve from “good” to “excellent.”

• **Engage students in the administration of grant awards.** Winning a grant is not an end in itself; it is a means to enhancing teaching, service, and scholarship. Implementing a project once a grant has been awarded may involve navigating through both institutional and sponsor administrative processes to hire personnel, issue purchase orders for equipment and supplies, submit travel requests, secure approvals from the IRB (Institutional Review Board) or IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee), manage regulatory agency compliance requirements, formalize subcontract agreements, reallocate budget funds, and request no-cost extensions.

• **Inform students when they are benefitting directly from grant support.** Sponsors trust that awardees will be good stewards of their funds. When items such as research assistantships, conference registration and travel, and materials and supplies are supported by internal and external grants rather than departmental funds, convey to students that this represents a strategic investment by the sponsor. An awareness of the source of funding may increase their respect for the grant-maker, their commitment to the project, and their appreciation for the support itself.

• **Provide access to networks of academics, community members, and other professionals who might serve as resources on grant projects.** The value of networking cannot be understated. A casual introduction among colleagues in the office hallway, at a school board meeting, or between sessions at a national conference can lead to short-term benefits such as timely information exchanges, and long-term benefits such as productive research collaborations. Program officers from federal agencies regularly attend the regional and national conferences of professional associations to provide agency updates, meet grantseekers, and discuss project ideas.

• **Expose students to the different types of collaborations that exist within academia, between academia and industry, and between academia and nonprofits.** As a way to maximize their funding, some public and private sponsors are strongly encouraging, or even requiring, collaboration in grant applications. Partners, whether within academia or across industry and nonprofit organizations, do not always share the same definition of “collaboration.” Further, partners do not always recognize that different types of collaborations exist, varying in their degrees of goal sharing and interaction. This awareness in itself helps to manage grant project expectations.

• **Build discussions of grants into research methods courses.** The responsible conduct of research includes considering legal, moral, and ethical dimensions of the grant project’s design and the qualifications of the principal investigator. Thought may be given as to whether a proposed project truly reflects the principal investigator’s scholarly agenda or simply amounts to chasing grant funding. Deliberations may also occur as to whether funding should be accepted from a particular sponsor, depending on terms and conditions that are associated with a grant award.
in these activities may have the capacity and inclination to support the development of a grant.

- **Celebrate successes.** Preparing major grant proposals can take a great deal of time and energy. In recognition of this commitment, it is important to acknowledge individual and collective efforts. Funding rates vary widely among sponsors, so celebrations should recognize a job well-done, independent of a grant award. That is, students need to know that trying “counts.” A pat on the back, a handwritten note of thanks, a celebratory meal, an announcement in a department meeting, or an update in an internal newsletter, represent but a few of the numerous ways to reinforce desired behavior. Grantseekers who feel good about the process are more likely to continue writing proposals, regardless of the outcome of any particular submission.

In an era when stiff competition exists for limited internal university budget dollars, grantseeking takes on an even more pronounced role: faculty who have the ability to secure external funding to support their teaching, service, and scholarship enjoy greater license to pursue an uninterrupted scholarly agenda. Accordingly, the time to learn grant writing is during graduate school. By embedding the topic of grants into a deliberate structure, doctoral programs can provide ongoing exposure to a range of grant-related experiences, from planning and writing proposals to networking with potential collaborators and program officers, to administering awards and celebrating successes. This programmatic change holds the potential to lay the foundation for a positive culture of grantseeking, shaping the way future faculty perceive and react to the constructive advances of research administrators, as well as to enrich the preparation of graduate students for their impending careers in academia.

**References**


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What IF

- An A-133 audit only happened after a problem was identified?
- Operational budgets were only created and monitored after you ran out of money?
- Award budgets were itemized and approved only after you accepted the award?

Program effectiveness needs periodic feedback to help provide “course” corrections, fresh perspectives, and best practices.

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For questions or further information or to obtain a copy of the National Standards contact peerreview@ncura.edu or call (503) 364-1847. Learn more about the Peer Programs: http://www.ncura.edu/InstitutionalPrograms.aspx
At the most recent Pre-Award Research Administration Meeting in New Orleans, I participated in a Discussion Group on international contracting. One of the topics that arose was how institutions handle currencies other than their own when undertaking research funded by out-of-country sponsors.

Of course each party to a multi-national agreement would prefer to have payments made in their own currency – it’s simple and leads to few surprises down the road related to fluctuations in exchange rates. However, when each party to a sponsored agreement utilizes different currencies, one of them is going to have to give in; the institution that gives in will have to accept the risk of any fluctuations in the exchange rate between the negotiated amount and its converted value when the payment is received.

Some institutions have strict policies about accepting only their native currency – strict enough that they will walk away from the agreement if it does not work out the way they want. Usually one institution will give way, but in some cases neither has the flexibility to accept the other’s currency and the collaboration fails.

In our group, we discussed ways that our institutions mitigate the risk associated with accepting another currency, or at least the way we managed the risk. Following are some current practices:

1. If the sponsor insists on using its currency, then counter offer that payment must be in-full within a short time after execution of the agreement; this will lessen the likelihood of significant currency fluctuations between signing the agreement and receipt of funds.

2. Invest advance payments in an interest bearing account.

3. Centrally retain over-recovery resulting from currency fluctuations and use that to help fund under-recoveries.

4. Obtain the PI’s agreement that he understands he will be responsible for reductions resulting from fluctuations in exchange rates.

5. Fund the expenditure account only as a result of cash received. For example, activate the expenditure account with a zero balance; then let the PI know the estimated value of the award based upon exchange rates at that time. Further, let the PI know that he will be responsible for expenditures in excess of the amount actually received, even if the amount is less than anticipated due to currency fluctuations. As payments are made, obligate funds to the expenditure account based on actual funds received. This will allow the PI to continuously adjust the project budget based upon actual cash received. In this scenario its important that the final payment be no later than six months before the end date, otherwise the PI will not have time enough to adjust project expenditures to match the cash available.

Another idea came out of our discussion, assuming you decide to accept the sponsor’s currency: 1) determine the value of the sponsor’s currency in your local currency; 2) find out from the PI what percentage budget reduction in your currency he or she could accommodate and still complete the project; let’s say the PI’s response is “10%”; 3) negotiate into the payment terms that if currency fluctuations result in a reduction of more than 10% of your local currency, then you will have the option to: (i) request additional funds from the sponsor to supplement losses due to currency fluctuations, or (ii) re-negotiate the SOW, or (iii) terminate for convenience. Any or all of these three are viable options for mitigating the risk associated with currency fluctuations.

I hope you find one or more of these ideas useful in your ongoing international collaborations.

David Mayo is the Director of Sponsored Research at the California Institute of Technology. He has been in research administration for 35 years and is experienced with U.S. federal, industrial and international contracting. He can be reached at david.mayo@caltech.edu
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PASSPORT to Clinical Trials

By Donald Deyo

The conduct of clinical trials outside the United States and Western Europe is advantageous to pharmaceutical and medical device companies for several reasons:

1. **Cost:** It is generally less expensive to conduct clinical trials outside the United States, and substantial savings are possible for pharmaceutical and medical device companies due to the lower costs. The estimated cost of conducting a clinical trial in India is about one tenth of the cost in the United States (Da Silva, 2016). Overall clinical trial costs in Russia, Argentina, and China are about half the cost in the United States (Ayalew, 2013). This is due in part to significant savings from labor costs, as the salaries of doctors, study coordinators, and other staff are generally lower. Such personnel costs are a large portion of the costs of conducting clinical trials. In particular, due to the high cost of phase two and phase three clinical trials, for example, such trials now often take place outside the United States.

2. **Timelines:** We are all familiar with the long timelines associated with the development of new therapeutic agents, which can often exceed a decade. In addition, the number of promising therapeutic agents identified in pre-clinical work rapidly decreases as such agents move into the arena of clinical trials. The vast majority of new therapeutic candidates...
never make it to market (it is interesting to note that most of the pre-
clinical work on new therapeutic agents still takes place in developed
countries, while clinical trials are increasingly international).

The duration of clinical trials can generally be shortened with the use of
more international sites. Enrollment times in international clinical trials
can be shorter, since the large number of potential research subjects
may make recruitment faster. Research subjects in less developed coun-
tries also expedite enrollment, as some see participation in clinical trials
as a method of obtaining better healthcare (National Bioethics Advisory
Commission, 2001). Another factor contributing to shorter durations is
that the regulatory burden in conducting a clinical trial is usually lower
in less developed countries. Indeed, the expensive bureaucracy neces-
sary to the conduct of clinical trials in the United States and Western Eu-
rope is a significant contributor to the increasing globalization of clinical
trials, given the heavy burden associated with proper training, approvals,
and documentation.

3. Availability of CROs: The establishment of Contract Research
Organizations (CROs) focused on global clinical trials has grown signifi-
cantly in the last decade and CROs have become major players in the
field. Increasingly, pharmaceutical and medical device companies out-
source recruitment of research subjects, identification of appropriate
investigators and sites, negotiating agreements, and monitoring and inter-
acting with regulatory agencies to CROs. With proven expertise in inter-
national issues, CROs make it easier for the pharmaceutical industry to
expand into international clinical trials. Sponsors may transfer responsibil-
ity for any or all of their obligations to CROs.

4. Approvals: The implementation of international guidelines, such as
the International Council for Harmonization’s guidelines for Good Clini-
cal Practice (ICH-GCP), has resulted in the ability to use data and results
from international clinical trials in seeking regulatory approvals (Levin-
sen, 2010). The ability to use data collected anywhere in the world to
support marketing applications is advanced by the harmonization of
guidelines for clinical practice and research. In addition, the increased
potency of intellectual property protection for drugs and devices in de-
veloping countries has helped in the globalization of clinical trials
(Glickman, 2009).

Despite the advantages above, there are significant technical, regulatory,
and ethical concerns associated with the conduct of international clinical
trials. While the growth of international clinical trials is high, critics have
articulated a number of significant concerns with the use of international
clinical trials by pharmaceutical and medical device companies.

1. Jurisdictions: Sponsors must deal with multiple legal jurisdictions in
the conduct of international clinical trials. In addition to the various na-
tional and provincial legal systems, various international bodies also de-
fine the conduct of clinical trials. For example, ICH-GCP guidelines are
legally enforced in various countries.

2. Ethics: There is considerable concern that pharmaceutical and
medical companies may be imposing inappropriate ethical burdens in
the conduct of international clinical trials (National Bioethics Advisory
Commission, 2001). Ethical considerations in clinical trials include en-
suring proper ethical and scientific vetting, choosing research subjects
fairly, getting proper consents, and ensuring appropriate treatment of re-
search subjects during and after a trial. In order for clinical trials to be
considered ethical, they should comply with the principals in the 1978
Belmont Report, the basis of human subject protection in the United
States. The Belmont Report establishes the following fundamental ethical
principles for the use of human subjects in research:

- **Respect for Persons:** Protecting the autonomy of all people, treating
  them with courtesy and respect, and allowing for informed consent.
  Researchers must be truthful and use no deception.

- **Beneficence:** Following the philosophy of “do no harm” while maxi-
mizing benefits for the research project and minimizing risks to the
research subjects.

- **Justice:** Ensuring reasonable, non-exploitative, and well-considered
  procedures are administered fairly (the fair distribution of costs and
  benefits to potential research participants) and equally.

The appropriate ethical review of a clinical trial by an institutional review
board (IRB) should address the validity of the study, the adequacy of
consent, and the acceptability of risk to the patient. Special attention
should be given to the consent process, particularly the patient’s ability
to understand the consent. However, many clinical trials conducted in
developing countries do not have appropriate ethical committee review,
and the high standards associated with the conduct of clinical trials in
developed countries may be lacking in developing countries, resulting
in clinical studies with significant ethical concerns (Glickman, 2009).
There may be problems in translating the information for the clinical
trial into local languages. In developing countries, differences in social
and economic standing may also undercut the rights of research subjects.
For example, do financial incentives from participation in a clinical trial
unduly influence a research subject’s decision to participate? Do the
research subjects truly understand the nature of the clinical trial?

Such considerations raise questions about whether applying U.S. ethics
rules and regulations to international clinical trials is appropriate, or
whether such rules and regulations overly complicate and detract from
worthy clinical trials. The conduct of an international clinical trial can
reflect differing perspectives. While conducting a clinical trial in a foreign...

clinical trials must be conducted in accordance with good clinical practice,
which includes review and approval by an ethics committee and informed
consent from subjects.

May/June 2016 45
country may be an effort to help solve a particular health problem, it may also reflect the sponsor’s conclusion that the foreign site is less expensive and easier to set up.

3. Transparency: The conduct of ethical and productive clinical trials requires transparency in the acquisition, use, and reporting of results and data. There are international standards for all clinical trials to ensure that such transparency exists. For example, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has developed guidelines entitled “Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals” (ICMJE, 2015). These standards help to ensure that unfettered publication rights of investigators are recognized as essential for integrity and transparency of clinical trials. In addition, ICMJE requires registration of clinical trial results in a public trials registry, such as ClinicalTrials.gov. The goal in clinical trial registration is to ensure that information on the conduct and results of a clinical trial are accessible to all those involved in health care decision-making. It is hoped that this will improve research transparency and will ultimately strengthen the validity and value of the scientific evidence base. The integrity of international clinical trials is enhanced by transparency. Regrettably, there is considerable controversy on timeliness of the reporting of clinical trial results and data (Rockhold, 2006).

Investigators in less developed countries may not have the same level of experience and knowledge as their counterparts in developed countries. Hence, access to the results of clinical trials (through publication, for example) is less likely. It is often the case that clinical investigators in developing countries give sponsors control of their right of publication. This suggests that investigators from developing countries are often less aware of the publication requirements necessary for transparency and integrity of clinical trials.

4. Operations: There are different laws and approvals necessary to set up a clinical trial in a foreign country. What works in one country may be entirely inappropriate in another. There are also concerns about dealing with bureaucracies unused to human subject research, and issues related to taxes, registrations, insurance, and communications. Each country will be unique and setting up a clinical trial will usually result in a variety of logistical, compliance, ethical, and legal issues to be addressed.

Acceptance of International Clinical Trials by the FDA: In weighing some of the pros and cons associated with international clinical trials, we should also consider the acceptance of results by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The acceptance of data and results from international clinical trials is governed by 21 CFR 312.120. In order for such data and results to be to be accepted, clinical trials must be conducted in accordance with good clinical practice, which includes review and approval by an ethics committee and informed consent from subjects. In addition, competent investigators must conduct the clinical studies, and the FDA must be able to validate the data and results.

Sponsors conducting international clinical trials may have domestic sites associated with the clinical trial under an Investigational New Drug (IND) application. FDA regulations require that a new therapeutic agent be the subject of an approved marketing application before it is approved. Alternatively, sponsors may submit data obtained from non-IND covered foreign sites to support clinical investigations and/or marketing approval(s) in the United States. A sponsor may choose, but is not required, to conduct a foreign clinical study under an IND. When the foreign clinical study is not conducted under an IND, the sponsor must ensure that the study complies with the requirements in 21 CFR 312.120 in order to use the study as support for an IND.

The increasing use of international clinical trial sites presents significant regulatory concerns for the FDA due to resource restraints. Accordingly, the FDA has endeavored to focus its efforts more efficiently by working with other international regulatory agencies.

References


Donald T. Deyo, J.D. is the director of corporate contracts and export control licensing in the Office of Sponsored Projects at Yale University. His team manages the negotiation of corporate and other non-government contracts. He also handles compliance efforts in the area of export controls. He can be reached at donald.deyo@yale.edu
I am associate director of sponsored programs at a college in the Southwest US. I looked at my calendar today and see that a meeting is scheduled for next week on a topic that was the subject of a meeting about a year ago. Almost the same individuals attending this year as last year. There have been a couple of meetings on this topic throughout the year, emails floated back and forth, but no decisions made and no actions taken. No resolution. Why does this seem like a waste of time?

I used to keep the following quotation from comedian Steven Wright on my desk: “Right now I’m having amnesia and déjà vu at the same time. I think I’ve forgotten this before.” My mirroring neurons are kicking in and I am finding myself empathizing with you about the phenomenon of endless meetings and non-decision making that sometimes occurs in our institutions and functions.

Many questions come to mind about the origins of the meetings: what is the nature of the topic, who is leading the meetings, what is their role and function, and who are the “stakeholders” for this issue. Is there a written charge for the meeting attendees (are they a committee, task force?) and what is the imperative or urgency to make a recommendation or decision? If I asked everyone individually who attends the meeting to describe what they see as the group’s purpose or mission, what would they say and would it be answered consistently? Sometimes institutions “park” tough issues in committees without any real expectations that a solution will emerge. The formation and meeting of a few people, then, is the action-response and a box is checked. I don’t know if this matter is in that species. Other interpretations are possible: maybe the meeting is intended to monitor an ambiguous policy or operational issues at your campus. The group’s purpose may be one of maintaining general awareness… and that’s it. Overall, I am wondering what would happen if the meeting was cancelled for next week and henceforward: would anyone at your college know or care? I am assuming that you have the same question. What would your answers be to the questions I have raised? Are my questions relevant? What other questions would you raise? Would there be value for you or others to raise questions when you next meet?

From a leadership coaching perspective, you are my “client” for the remainder of this article, so let’s focus a bit on you and where you find yourself in this situation. What have you learned about your institution, about leadership, about yourself? How might this situation relate to your own future development as a leader? I wonder if you would be willing to experiment a bit and use this experience as a learning exercise. What would you say if I suggest to you that you consider recording your thoughts and feelings and lessons learned about this situation in a journal? Maybe you will enjoy doing this and be willing to keep a journal as you develop in leadership? Let’s take a slight detour and talk about the merits of journaling.

“Want to be an Outstanding Leader? Keep a Journal” is an article written by Nancy Adler in Harvard Business Review - Management Tip, January 13, 2016. The purpose of keeping a journal is to gather insights, self-reflections, to record your own reactions and perceptions, and to learn about what “triggers” you. Adler suggests the following questions to begin a journaling experience:

- How am I feeling right now?
- How am I feeling about my leadership?
- What deserves my highest-quality attention:
  - in my leadership? in my life? in the world?
- What is the most outrageous (or fun or novel) idea I’ve heard in the last 24 hours? What do I love about it?
- What is the most exciting initiative I’ve heard about this week that is happening outside of my industry or in another part of the world?
- What contributed most to my happiness this week (or to the happiness of my people)? How can I have more happiness in my life?

I suggest journaling as a way to capture the learning from this situation and others you will encounter on your leadership path. You could use a journal to record your own impressions and observations and attempt to answer some of the questions raised earlier.

What is intriguing to me is to think of you in a future senior role at your institution or elsewhere, when you have the opportunity to “call the shots,” to make decisions or take actions like those you are experiencing in this situation. Having a journal will be a tool for you then, to recall your past experiences, and help you to ground your leadership values and aspirations.

References

1 A mirror neuron is a neuron that fires both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another. Thus, the neuron “mirrors” the behavior of the other, as though the observer were itself acting. Such neurons have been directly observed in primate species and some researchers believe these neurons are the biological basis for empathy.
An increase in academic publications authored or co-authored by Arab researchers in Institutions of Higher Education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries has been observed recently. This increase has been largely attributed to the surge in cooperation between institutions in the MENA countries and those of the European Union (EU) through many EU research-funding schemes. Table 1 shows the change in academic publications co-authorship in a number of Arab countries between 2000 and 2010. Co-authorship is extremely high for small producers (including the United Arab Emirates, Syria, Qatar, Libya, Yemen, the Sudan and Mauritania) while larger producers fall in the mid-range. Egypt has a rather low figure of co-publications (data from year 2014 indicate a share of 51% of co-published articles). However, the share of co-authorships is expected to grow in Egypt, as in other countries, in order to reach a rate of co-authorship for approximately half of all publications. This high rate indicates a low diversification of the research in these countries as a result of the strong inclusion in international research networks. Since 2010, the growth rate of co-publications has been very rapid, particularly among Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia has more than 73%, Qatar 80%, and Arab Emirates 65%).

The co-authorships patterns differ from one country to another (Figure 1). In 2007 Egypt had a low proportion of co-publications (35%), while smaller countries like Jordan and Lebanon had much higher levels of co-publications with researchers from foreign countries (49% and 52%, respectively). The Maghreb countries with high percentage of co-publications collaborate mainly with French research institutions. The number, however, seems to be slowing down in Tunisia and Algeria as these countries’ national research infrastructure is strengthening. Although the overall pattern of French-speaking Maghreb countries reflects a high percentage of co-publications with France, there is evidence of new partners from outside Europe (USA, Canada mainly) and from inside Europe (Spain, Italy and Germany).

By Rigas Arvanitis and Sari Hanafi
Table 1. Publications and Co-authorship in Arab Countries (2000 and 2010)

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<td>26.1</td>
<td>56.2</td>
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<td>0.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>4,415</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>495</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>1,184</td>
<td>2,277</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>2,062</td>
<td>30.46</td>
<td>41.46</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>2,059</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
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<td>45.7</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
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<td>468</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>15.73</td>
<td>42.48</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Publications and Co-publications of a Selected Number of Arab Countries, With or Without EU partners (2007)

Source: SCI Extended - Thomson Reuters. Computation PL Rossi, IRD

Figure 2: Type of Research in Research Collaborations

These specializations patterns are very important because countries usually tend to reinforce their specialization over time rather than diversify, since research (and technological development) are ‘path-dependent’ activities. The dynamic implemented by the collaborations may not have been so much that of a continuous quest and permanent search for better opportunities but rather that of an initial choice that triggers a long period of exchanges between researchers, and of course securing the necessary resources for that.

Scientific partners of Arab countries

The hierarchy of countries with which partnerships are engaged in is very much related to policy but has been rapidly changing in the last decade. France has been a privileged partner for Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. In general, France is the main scientific funder for international projects in almost all of the Mediterranean region countries, through bilateral programmes. The appearance of Saudi Arabia, Italy, and Spain as frequent co-authors is remarkable. It relates
Table 2: Partner Countries of Three Arab Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Tunisia</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Web of Science. Data created by OST, France (for ESTIME project). Published in UNDP and Al Maktoum Foundation, 2009, p. 199.

Table 3. Geographical distribution of NPRP (2007-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Collaborative Institutions Submitted</th>
<th>Collaborative Institutions Awarded</th>
<th>Proposals Submitted</th>
<th>Proposals Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia &amp; Australia</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1247</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 4. Co-publication between the Gulf countries (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Bahrain</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>Oman</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>GCC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other researchers abroad, notably through contacts formed during PhD and postdoctoral years. However, very few had ever collaborated with researchers in Lebanon not affiliated with AUB. A professor in the faculty of medicine mentioned that “scientists in the Arab region do not communicate with one another - they tend to remain in the same field, whereas scientists abroad communicate and evolve in their research” (Hanafi et al., 2013). This is a quite common, but partly faulty, perception. In fact, the survey done on international collaborations by the MIRA project tends to show that the behavior of Arab scientists is not very different from that of their European, Turkish, or Israeli counterparts. The main difference between Arab researchers and Europeans is the lack of time to do research (Gaillard et al, 2013), due to heavy teaching load, and may reflect the difficulty of obtaining visas to northern countries, impeding many researchers to be trained in Western laboratories.

Bibliography


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Sari Hanafi, Ph.D., is a Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies at the American University of Beirut. Author of many books with his most recent book: Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise, 2016. He can be reached at sh41@aub.edu.lb
After an exciting and fulfilling career at MIT, Steve Dowdy has accepted a position at the University of Maryland as Director of Research Information Systems and Integration. Of course, after being at MIT for 20 years, it is with mixed emotions that he leaves MIT and Region I. Steve looks forward to new challenges and opportunities at Maryland and looks forward to expanding his network of colleagues and friends in Region II.

Brigette Pfister is now the Director of Proposals and Award Management at the University of Virginia.

Winona Ward is now Director of Research Management Services at the University of California-San Francisco.

Do you have a milestone to share? Email schiffman@ncura.edu

NCURA Magazine Seeks Co-Editor

The NCURA Magazine seeks applicants for the position of Co-Editor. The volunteer position is a three year term, beginning January 1, 2017. The Co-Editors work with the Managing Editor, Senior Editor, and Contributing Editors in ensuring the timely release of six issues during the calendar year.

Each Co-Editor works closely with 3-4 Contributing Editors. Applicants should be senior research administrators with strong writing and editing skills and strong connections within NCURA and associated professional associations (such as COGR, FDP, etc.). We expect to have a candidate selected by the early summer so that the new Co-Editor can work with the existing Co-Editors, Managing Editor, and Senior Editor, in ensuring an orderly transition.

Individuals interested in the position should contact either Managing Editor Marc Schiffman at schiffman@ncura.edu or Senior Editor Pat Hawk at patricia.hawk@oregonstate.edu
Becoming a research administrator requires extensive training. Not only must one learn the requirements of the profession, we must also be on top of the evolving sponsor requirements and master the software development tools used for supporting research administration. The goal of this article is to provide different perspectives on professional development, plus tips for mastering leadership skills for new and seasoned research administrators.

Advice for the New Research Administrator

Unless you have a background in research at a university, stepping into a position as a research administrator may seem overwhelming. Research administration is an evolving profession, governed by complex and ever-changing rules and regulations. That’s why research administrators find it helpful to have what’s referred to as a “toolbox”. For those new to the profession, a research administrator’s toolbox may simply be a list of links to important websites, used to help manage the many resources required to become proficient. Throughout this article you will find tips for building your toolbox.

The position you have been hired to fill will determine the area of research administration you need to learn first. If your position is on the pre-award side of the grant life cycle, perhaps your training will start with an overview of the many types of sponsors you will be working with, and the unique requirements for each agency. If instead you are working on the post-award side, initial training might include finance and accounting. Wherever you begin your journey, with each step you will gain knowledge and valuable experience.

When you’re first starting out, you can count on your supervisor to provide training materials with sources for government and institutional policies and regulations. Other “tools of the trade” may be included, such as forms, templates and checklists. Categorize these resources and put them in one place. This collection of materials is your basic toolbox. As you progress in your career, you will continue to add resources, based on what you decide is most helpful.

Don’t get discouraged if after a few months you don’t completely understand everything contained in your toolbox. Experienced research administrators will tell you that it may take a year, or more, before you feel comfortable with all of the new knowledge you acquire.

Many institutions offer training opportunities. For example, the Office of Research at my institution recently held an all-day orientation. It included sessions about sponsored projects, research protections, export control, and conflict of interest. If your institution offers similar training, make sure you take it!

Don’t expect to retain all the information that is presented. If you receive handouts, it is a good idea to add them to your toolbox. Review the applicable material prior to your next training session. This is a technique known by educators as “activating prior knowledge.” It is a method that one can use to help make sense of new ideas. Eventually, as you gain experience and attend subsequent training, you will understand more about your chosen career.

One of the research administrator’s most important resources is NCURA, the National Council of University Research Administrators. NCURA tutorials and webinars offer in-depth training. Workshops and seminars, as well as reference materials like the “Uniform Guidance Desk Reference” can be added to your toolbox. Ask your institution about becoming an NCURA member, and visit their website at www.ncura.edu.

There is always something new to learn when it comes to software development tools for research administration, because the electronic process is constantly evolving. Institutions that have an electronic process
in place may upgrade to newer software as it becomes available, while other institutions may decide to switch to a different software solution, in an effort to reduce administrative burden. As a research administrator, you may be asked to perform testing prior to the launch of a software update. Participating in software testing gives you a chance to learn about the new system, and provides you the opportunity to give input that may someday make your job easier.

Sometimes when there is a change from a manual to an electronic process, it requires learning how to use new software, as well as understanding the procedures connected with the process. A good example of this is the transition from paper to electronic forms for financial disclosure that is in progress at University of California, Irvine (UCI). When UCI launches the new software, there will be a substantial process change, and that’s why it will be very important to attend the training.

In an evolving research environment, there is always a lot to learn. The best advice for new research administrators is to take advantage of every training opportunity that comes along.

Advice for the Seasoned Research Administrator

Once you’ve developed a strong foundation in research administration, your skills and interests may lead you to managing a team. This is a fantastic way to validate the body of knowledge you’ve placed in your toolbox, and a great opportunity to share that knowledge with research administrators who are just starting out.

In the seven months I have been a supervisor, I have been using my toolbox of information more than ever. When asked a question by a staff member, I try not to just answer the question. I lead them to the answer.

I ask them the same questions I was asked, such as “Did you review the agreement? What did the agreement state? What is your interpretation of the situation?” Asking these questions helps me grow.

I encourage my staff to practice critical thinking by asking questions they should be asking themselves. When they realize that they know the answer, their confidence grows along with their expertise. That way, I help them build their own toolboxes.

Decide what type of manager/mentor you would like to be. For me there have always been three types of managers.

1. The “hovering” manager gives you something to do and sits on your shoulder while you attempt the assignment.

2. The “hands off” manager gives you the task, expects it to be completed, but doesn’t give you enough information.

3. The “try it” manager gives you the assignment, provides the information, and allows you to give it your best shot. This type of manager is likely to say it’s okay to fail because you learn the most when you get it wrong.

I do not want to be the “hovering” or the “hands off” type of manager. I prefer to allow my staff do their jobs. They can come to me with issues they don’t know how to handle, or let me know when they need a second opinion.

When you transition into a management position, you must learn all of the inner workings of your institution. As you learn, you begin to see how research administration fits into the global vision of your institution. You can use this information to help your staff understand how to negotiate obstacles that come up in their daily work.

For instance, as a supervisor I needed to know about sabbaticals, and how they affect research funding. Sharing this knowledge with my staff makes it easier for them when it comes up in specific awards. This helps us transition from a reactive service center to a proactive service center. My staff have more opportunity for growth in a proactive environment.

When given the opportunity to become a manager, I was more than a little nervous. When I considered the path I wanted to take within the research administration field, I realized that I wanted to mentor, and help new research administrators find their path. This can be a daunting task, and these are the questions I have been asking myself in the past seven months:

1. How do I lead a group of strong-minded adults?

2. Why oh, why did I think I could do this?

3. How does anyone actually become an effective manager?

Although the answers to these questions have come slowly, they are coming. The answer to, “How do I lead a group of strong-minded adults?” becomes clearer to me every day. I try to get everyone to understand the goal we are working towards. If my staff can perceive the benefit of what they are doing and how it fits into the bigger picture, then they can see how their jobs affect the university.

Just as I became more accustomed to using the tools in my toolbox, I want my staff to use the tools they have to get them through difficult interactions. It is my job to show them the skills they possess, and to build up those skills in others who do not yet possess them.

I am still trying to figure out the answers to remaining questions, and I know that if I can help my staff uncover their own expertise and use their body of knowledge, while letting them know I appreciate everything they do, then I count the day as a win.

In summary, you need a robust toolbox, whether you are a new or seasoned research administrator. Hopefully, this will help you as you move forward in your career.

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Samantha Aleshire is the Principle Grant & Contract Management Officer with the Office of Grants & Contracts Administration for the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In her role, she has a strong interest and experience in constructive problem solving and change management. Her experience in research administration includes financial management, negotiation, and reporting. Samantha is actively involved in NCURA. She has served as Regions VI Treasurer and Volunteer and Membership committee and has presented at both National and Regional meetings. Sam can be reached at skgoodwin@alaska.edu.
search for the word profession will yield a variety of definitions, but it is clear that for one to be referred to as a professional one must be proficient in a wide body of knowledge and exhibit unique yet relevant skills. The profession of research administration is no different, but a unique aspect of our profession as research administrators is that much (if not all) of the knowledge and skills are developed through practical experience and peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing. While research administration as a profession continues to evolve, its growth and effectiveness in supporting the research enterprise is shaped and influenced by the rapidly-evolving compliance and regulatory landscape. As problem solvers, we seek to find clarity when much is ambiguous and subject to the interpretation of others around us. Yet we strive to find and use tools that offer some conformity among diverse perspectives and help us garner collaboration and desired outcomes. A peek into the prism of research administration will clearly display an area of our profession that is often contentious and an integral part of research administration: clinical research. This article offers a unique insight into the value of performing a Medicare Coverage Analysis. This tool, when understood and applied well, can cement collaboration and solidify outcomes.

In July 2000, when the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) agreed to cover the costs of the routine care of items and services associated with a clinical research study, organizations needed a tool to separate covered services from non-covered services. The Medicare Coverage Analysis (MCA) became that tool and is widely used by organizations involved in conducting clinical research. It is a guide to distinguish routine items and services from items and services deemed as research; that is, it provides guidance about billable and reimbursable items and services versus those that are not billable and reimbursable. It distinguishes covered and non-covered items and services and is sometimes called a Medicare Coverage Determination document.

MCA utilizes Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved study documents for its creation and is largely guided by CMS billing guidelines, which are driven by the disease category that is the focus of the clinical research study. It is also guided by the timing and frequency at which these items or services are performed in the approved study. Some organizations rely on other nationally recognized disease-specific guidelines to guide the coverage determination.
CMS is utilized to create the MCA because their billing and reimbursement guidelines are widely accepted and mirror many of the major insurance carriers. These are called National Coverage Determinations (NCD). While there are variations among other insurance billing and reimbursement guidelines, these variations are mainly driven by the negotiated managed care contract of each organization. CMS guidelines are not negotiated; therefore, this standardization leads many organizations to choose CMS guidelines to create MCAs for their clinical research studies. Some organizations defer to the major managed care contracts to supplement the MCA creation.

CMS is a federal agency and is governed by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). CMS is divided into regions, with each region directed and governed by a local administrative contractor or MAC. The MAC for each region utilizes overall CMS guidelines to determine coverage and reimbursements; however, CMS allows each MAC to create more restrictive guidelines, known as Local Coverage Determinations (LCD). Depending on the region of the country where the clinical research study is being conducted, the MCA may have slight variations relating to covered versus non-covered items and services. It is important for each organization to know its MAC and the LCD which governs their region.

MCA is used to guide several financial decisions relating to a clinical research study. It is not a tool to guide the medical conduct of the study. Many physicians and study team members confuse the MCA with medical practice. The medical staff (attending physician, mid-level provider, clinic nursing staff, etc.) must utilize normal medical guidelines and decisions to medically care for the research participants in the clinical research study. The billing associated with the routine care of the research participant is guided by signs and symptoms that the research participants presents at the time of the clinic visit or office procedure, the medical dictation, and other circumstances associated with the research participant’s appointment. The MCA has no bearing on the diagnosis or other treatment that is required to medically care for the research participant. It does not consider a research participant’s medical history and/or items and services that occurred prior to their consent to participate on a clinical research study. Hence, it is truly a financial guide that is created from the IRB-approved clinical research study.

The MCA can be used to influence financial decisions, including the feasibility assessment, the budget development and negotiations, the creation of the informed consent, the financial consultation of the potential research participant, the foundation of accurate clinical research billing, and the amendment or budget renegotiation. Each of these processes benefits from and is guided by the MCA.

The MCA is one of many tools utilized by an organization that is considering the feasibility of performing a clinical research study. It drives the patient care and related supplies aspects of the budget development.

In summary, the MCA is a tool to guide many financial aspects of an organization’s clinical research operations. Its creation and usage is a benefit to all departments involved in the daily operations of a health care organization.

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**The MCA is one of many tools utilized by an organization that is considering the feasibility of performing a clinical research study. It drives the patient care and related supplies aspects of the budget development.**

---

Mary Veazie, MBA, CPA, CHC, CHRC, Executive Director, Clinical Research Finance at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. She directs the financial aspects of clinical trials: the development of coverage analysis, financial review of clinical agreements, and management of clinical research billing. She can be reached at mveazie@mdanderson.org
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The leading research regulatory burden that both research administrators and faculty would love to see eliminated is effort reporting. Although effort reporting as terminology has been eliminated from the Uniform Guidance, the requirement for after-the-fact review of payroll charges remains. Universities which have invested heavily in electronic effort reporting systems, whether home-grown or commercial, may be reluctant to abandon traditional ways of fulfilling those obligations but should still explore less burdensome and more straightforward methodology to satisfy the compensation requirements.

A group of major research universities has received one of the inaugural grants from the NCURA research awards program to do just that. The first step in their journey has been to describe alternatives to effort reporting, highlighting successful examples of alternatives that reduce burden and their related audits, and to introduce an initiative to establish a national cohort of universities to develop a model policy on alternatives to effort reporting.

The Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) survey of principal investigators (PIs) has documented that federally-funded researchers spend, on average, 42 percent of their research time on administrative tasks associated with their federally funded projects. This administrative workload is negatively affecting the conduct of science and is disproportionate to the accountability and transparency necessary to manage federal funding.

The National Science Board, in its 2014 report (Reducing Investigators’ Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research), confirmed that “a culture of overregulation has emerged around Federal research which further increases the administrative workload.” The report recognized that universities may balk at changes due to “institutional concerns about liability.” In its preliminary report (Optimizing the Nation’s Investment in Academic Research: A New Regulatory Framework for the 21st Century, Part 1), the National Academies of Science found the overregulation of federal research dollars, where “resources that should be going to education and research … are diverted to less productive activities.” This report concluded that “some of this duplication results from a lack of clear compliance standards” and pointed to effort reporting as an example.

The Uniform Guidance was developed, in part, to streamline federal policies and agency requirements to reduce the administrative burden placed on faculty conducting research at institutions of higher education. There is now a focus on overall internal controls regarding payroll, which can eliminate or mitigate the need for duplicative reporting and certification. Compared to OMB Circular A-21, the Uniform Guidance allows for additional flexibility in how entities implement processes to meet the accounting standards for compensation. The Uniform Guidance specifically omitted examples of appropriate methodologies that supported effort reporting such as prescribed effort certification/reporting time periods, specification on who must certify/document compensation costs, and certain concepts of independent evaluation. Although there is added emphasis on having a system of internal controls that reasonably reflects work performed, the concept of effort reporting is now just one of many methods for validating salaries charged to and cost shared on federally-funded projects.

While these changes have effectively removed the confusing concept of faculty reporting and certifying their “effort” and set pathways for alternative methods for charging salaries to the federal government, many universities remain reluctant to transition away from typical effort reporting systems and policies in fear of an untested audit environment to those alternative methods.

Given the national dialogue on faculty burden and the changes considered and made by OMB in response to university complaints to this issue, universities may be missing an opportunity to reduce administrative burdens on researchers by being overly cautious and risk averse. The proposed cohort is challenging that notion and universities’ risk aversion.

Advantages of the Alternatives to Effort Certification/Reporting

As an example of an alternative method to effort reporting, the Uniform Guidance allows for review of payroll documentation by project versus effort certification by an individual as piloted by four institutions who participated in the FDP’s Project Certification Demonstration. The FDP pilot demonstration at four institutions, The University of California-Irvine, The University of California-Riverside, George Mason University, and Michigan Technological University, preceded the release of the Uniform Guidance.

Experiences at those four universities found that shifting certification from each individual’s entire effort paid across all sponsored projects to a review of payroll aligned with a federal award’s funding year greatly reduced the number of certifications, administrative burden, and audit risk for an institution employing this alternative method to effort reporting. Most importantly, a project-based payroll review was found by faculty to be more sensible as it allows visibility over a time interval aligned with the work conducted on the project. This
understanding enhances compliance to the intent of the Uniform Guidance. Table 1 generalizes the typical differences between effort certification project/payroll confirmation.

The reduction in the number of reporting actions was staggering with an average reduction across the four institutions of 86 percent. Table 2 illustrates how these policy and procedural changes created a significant reduction in burden for researchers and their institutions realized through project confirmation.

Audit Precedent
To date, the National Science Foundation’s Office of Inspector General (NSF OIG) concluded audits at Michigan Technological University and George Mason University. In both NSF OIG audit reports, auditors did not issue findings related to this alternative method of confirming payroll charged to federal awards. In Michigan Tech’s OIG audit of their project confirmation policy, the auditors wrote, “Overall, we found that Michigan Tech’s system generally provided accountability over federal funds.”

Since the implementation of the Uniform Guidance, the FDP has continued the project confirmation pilot initiatives, and representatives from the federal agencies have endorsed the FDP pilot approach.

National Model Policy Cohort Established
In January of 2016, NCURA funded a research project to establish a cohort of universities to develop an effective model policy for alternatives to effort reporting in compliance with 2 CFR §200.430(1). The purpose of this project is to establish a nationally recognized cohort of universities to develop efficient and effective model policies, procedures, and practices designed to reduce administrative burdens for both faculty and the institutions, minimize audit risk, and most importantly, facilitate research within an ethical and appropriate compliance framework.

This project is led by Lisa Mosley, Arizona State University, who serves as the principal investigator, and her Co-PIs, Jeremy Forsberg, The University of Texas at Arlington, and David Ngo, The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

The university cohort will collaborate to:
1. Develop a national model policy with flexibility for alternatives to effort reporting with options that can be tailored to individual institutions including a list of alternative methods to effort reporting;
2. Develop risk assessment guidance to establish minimum compliance requirements;
3. Conduct analyses of audits and opinions of institutions utilizing alternatives to effort reporting;
4. Develop a best practices guide for internal controls and related procedures;
5. Survey institutions and provide analyses of survey responses to aggregate institutional cost savings and metrics that effectively reduce administrative burdens for faculty and administrative units at institutions utilizing alternatives to effort reporting; and
6. Provide coordination with professional organizations and federal agencies

Universities are challenged to take full advantage of the opportunity afforded in the Uniform Guidance by transitioning to alternatives to effort including the project certification methodology piloted by the FDP. Any transition to an alternative to effort reporting should be cognizant of related audits, incorporate the best practices of this nationwide initiative, and, most importantly, best serve faculty, staff, and the overall research enterprise.

### Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Effort Certification (A-21)</th>
<th>Uniform Guidance Project Confirmation Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification/Review basis</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Grant/Contract (award)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification/Review cycle</td>
<td>Academic semester or semi/annual fiscal periods</td>
<td>End of each award budget year (every 12 mos.) and at end of award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approver</td>
<td>Individual (rarely PI)</td>
<td>PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification/Review focus</td>
<td>Individual’s percentage of effort is reasonable based on overall effort</td>
<td>All salaries/wages directly charged to the award are reasonable based on work performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of funds</td>
<td>All sponsored funds</td>
<td>Federal funds (some State)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Annual Individual Effort Report</th>
<th>Annual Payroll Confirmation by Individual Projects</th>
<th>Percentage of Burden Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Mason</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan Tech</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC - Irvine</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC - Riverside</td>
<td>5,058</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Lisa Mosley, CRA, Assistant Vice President of Research Operations at Arizona State University. She directs the Office for Research and Sponsored Projects Administration, the Office of Research & Industry Collaboration, Fiscal Oversight, Research Advancement Services and the Office of Research, Integrity & Assurance. She also works with the university’s various Colleges and Schools to build an enterprise-wide infrastructure designed to support their unique research needs, as well as serves as a liaison and advocate for departmental administrators campus wide. She can be reached at lisa.mosley@asu.edu

Jeremy Forsberg, Assistant Vice President for Research at the University of Texas at Arlington, is a graduate of NCURA’s Executive Leadership Program. Jeremy’s responsibilities include the development of new research initiatives and programs, institutional policies and procedures, and oversight of research compliance and sponsored projects. He can be reached at j.forsberg@uta.edu

David Ngo, MBA, Assistant Vice President for Sponsored Programs Administration at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, is a graduate of NCURA’s Leadership Development Institute and Executive Leadership Program. His responsibilities at UT Southwestern include providing leadership in the development of institutional policies, procedures, and training that support the conduct of pre- and post-award sponsored programs, research compliance, and information technology supporting research administration. He can be reached at david.ngo@utsouthwestern.edu or follow him on Twitter @DavidNgo26
We’re currently trying to identify the right way of dealing with the December 2015 version of DFARS 252.204-7012. The good news is that the clause gives us until December 2017 to implement all of the data security requirements associated with NIST 800-171. The bad news is that it will take quite a bit of effort to achieve this standard of data security on any given project.

This new version of the clause is starting to show up in our DoD contracts, including contracts scoped as fundamental research. The clause only requires that we provide “adequate security” on projects involving “covered defense information.” The term “covered defense information,” includes “controlled technical information,” “critical information (operations security),” “export control,” and “any other information . . . requiring safeguarding or dissemination controls.” Unfortunately, there are multiple ways of parsing the meanings of these terms. If our data is ultimately publishable, it wouldn’t make a lot of sense to have to impose onerous data security.

NCURA members have significant impact on the ‘National Scene’ – their thoughts on national issues in research administration.

This issue we asked “What is your most pressing issue in federal compliance right now?”

John Hanold  
Associate Vice President for Research and Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, Pennsylvania State University

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Dan Nordquist  
Associate Vice President and Director, Office of Research Operations and Support, Washington State University

My new favorite compliance topic in research administration is conflict of interest. What is the first thing you do when taking over administration of a Conflict of Interest Committee? Being a very tech. oriented guy, I immediately moved everything into a database so I can track applications/disclosures, management plans, trainings, annual reports, and all the correspondence that goes along with each applicant. Very, very close behind that is to verify which cases are active and what is due, e.g., annual report, updated information, is everyone trained appropriately, etc. Then we continued with changing the website, creating a new email address, updating our bylaws, and adding more detail into our management plans. Projects under construction include adjustments to the Presidential Committee website, retaining committee membership, and finally making sure we know all of our voting actions. COI is AWESOME! Send any great tips my way.

Dave Richardson  
Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Recently, I’ve spent a considerable amount of time concerned with ensuring our faculty are compliant with the responsible conduct of research. As many can attest, a single case of misconduct can have long lasting consequences impacting both your institutional reputation and finances. With research misconduct, it is not if it will happen at your institution but when it will happen. When misconduct surfaces, it is critical to remain objective, to contact the affected sponsors, and to protect the institution from the actions of an individual. As with many cases of misconduct, hindsight always seems to be twenty-twenty but the best schools learn from their misconduct cases and work diligently to ensure that each investigator is aware of the need to remain compliant. While it is impossible to legislate ethical behavior, it is possible to build programs to deter the opportunity for illegal or imprudent conduct.

NCURA’s online scholarly journal is concerned with the broad range of issues affecting the administration of research and the changing research environment. The RMR provides a forum for the dissemination of knowledge about the study and practice of the research administration profession.

Co-Editors Jo Ann Smith, Marianne Woods and Tom Wilson invite manuscripts to be submitted by August 15, 2016. For more information visit www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore/ResearchManagementReview.aspx

In Finland we are experiencing the most challenging year in the research and education sector in a long time. Fortunately over the past years, the collaborative activities between institutes and between research administrators in different countries have increased greatly. As a big university and small country research administrator, I trust in networking while welcoming the future!

NCURA’s motto “supporting research … together” gave me the initial idea of fostering research by “global research administration services.” In reality the global virtual office is not far away.

Research funding organizations from all over the world have been sitting around the same tables for many years. Wonderful examples about strengthened cooperation can be found. For instance, the Global Research Council (www.globalresearchcouncil.org) serves as a worldwide umbrella over research funding bodies. Its objective in “fostering multilateral research and collaboration across continents to benefit both developing and developed nations” is highly valuable.

In research administration there are global initiatives also available for administrators. We are living in an age where new technologies easily enable us to expand our networks out of our neighborhoods. The choice of networking is up to the individual and can be tailored according to personal preferences and career stage. In the beginning of my career in research administration I preferred to follow the crowd – listening to senior colleagues and learning from presenters. Without international colleagues who invited me to give joint presentations overseas I might still be missing the opportunities to give international talks. It is exciting to take the floor when you are back at your own institute after such an experience!

The Global Collaborate community conducted a poll asking respondents whether their institutes have interests towards global collaboration, and was proven to be a useful tool in capturing the future prospects. Vital work has been already done by NCURA’s Global Community, which is open to both NCURA members and to non-members. Answers to questions related to US federal funding or European Horizon 2020 funding can easily be obtained via the Collaborate networking platform.

As a Finnish research administrator, there are several professional networks to join – each giving training to support your professional development, ready to help us in acquiring new skills and abilities.

**National level:** FINN-ARMA (www.finn-arma.fi), the Finnish Association of Research Managers and Advisors, founded in 2011.

**Nordic level:** NUAS (www.nuas.org), Nordic Association of University Administrators.

**European level:** EARMA (www.earma.org), European Association of Research Managers and Administrators.

**Global level:** NCURA (www.ncura.edu), I have been a member of NCURA since 2008, and part of the International Region (Region VIII) since 2011 when it was established for non-US members of NCURA. The first regional meeting I attended was in Chicago 2015, serving as a program committee member for Region IV and Region VIII joint spring meeting.

**INORMS** (www.inorms2016.org/About_INORMS.html), the International Network of Research Management Societies.

Through NCURA I have gained experience from international public speaking, learned about the logistics for planning joint regional meetings, experienced the power of mooing, and not forgetting to mention making new friends! This is an amazing change from the time when the focus of attending these meetings was to learn a world behind acronyms like FCOI, JTI, FFATA, ECA, and PMS. When we continuously challenge ourselves to take steps towards unfamiliar territories we can find a brand new research administrator in ourselves.

**Tiina Berg** is Senior Research Funding Advisor at the University of Helsinki, responsibilities include covering national and international research funding in the medical field. Tiina was an EARMA International Fellow in 2012, and currently serves on the Collaborate Global Subcommittee. She can be reached at tiina.berg@helsinki.fi
Greetings Region II! Region I is in busy season!

The Region I Spring meeting Research Administration: Leading Through a Sea of Change was held in Falmouth, MA at the Seacrest Beach Hotel May 1st-4th. There were two keynotes: Julie Norris Memorial Lecture on Leadership and Gil Tran, Office of Management and Budget. Additionally, an abundance of networking and learning took place in seven tracks: Compliance, Pre-Award, Post Award/Financial, Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions, Professional Development, Department Administration, and Special Topics. Many thanks to the 2016 program committee and the co-chairs Jill Mortali and Louise Griffin for their work in putting this terrific meeting together.

In addition to the Spring Meeting, several committees are at work organizing other professional development, networking, and events across the region. The Curriculum Committee, chaired by Minessa Konecky, has laid out the Research Administrator Discussion Groups for the year:

March 23, 2016 | Holiday Inn Brookline
The Golden Rule & Other Subaward Negotiation Considerations
Speakers: Amanda Humphrey, Assistant Director of Research Compliance, Office of Academic and Research Integrity, Harvard Medical School; Melissa Korf, Associate Director, Grants and Contracts, Sponsored Programs Administration, Harvard Medical School

May 19, 2016 | Westin Portland Harborview
Building a Culture of Research
Speakers: Liz Haney, Middlebury College; Cara Martin-Tetreault, Bowdoin College; Joseph Tomaras, Bates College

May 25, 2016 | Wellesley College Wall Room
Training in Research Administration
Speaker: Anastacia Feldman, BIDMC

September 23, 2016 | TBD-Boston Area
Case Studies: Learning from Audits
Speaker: Hernan Santana

NCURA Region I is looking for continued ways to engage membership in volunteerism and leadership. This year a Chair’s Special Committee on Emerging Leaders and New Professionals led by Stacy Rismian of the College of the Holy Cross was established to study and create opportunities to engage new professionals and emerging leaders in NCURA. The Governance Committee, chaired by Denise Moody, is on the lookout for members who may be interested in running for office. A call for nominations will be open shortly. Whether as an elected position or a volunteer at registration desk, Region I is looking to engage more members.

Last year, Region I hosted a networking event at Emmanuel College. The Professional Development Committee chaired by Heather Dominey of Brown University already has set sights on a free event to occur in October in Rhode Island. We continue to look for ways to expand and enhance Region I events to new locations within the region.

There is just so much planned for this year. Plenty more than what can fit in this brief column. To stay involved with NCURA Region I, watch for the e-mail blasts and like our Facebook page.

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

One of the great joys of being Chair of Region II is I have the opportunity to interact with members within the Region. Whether it be through email, a conversation at the Spring Meeting, or dialogue at a conference, I am provided with information on what changes members would like to see within the region, what they would like to remain the same, and how they can become more involved. These conversations provide countless new ideas that we, as a region, can utilize to further support the mission of NCURA and build upon our foundation.

One of the ways you as a member can become more involved and continue to build upon the foundation of Region II is by volunteering. Why should I volunteer, you ask? Here are some reasons:

• Volunteering reduces stress and makes you healthier. Although there has not been a clinical study to prove this statement it does sound appealing!
• By volunteering you learn from your colleagues. If you ask anyone who has volunteered for a committee they will always tell you they gained professional experience by volunteering and drawing from the professional experiences of Region II colleagues.
• Volunteering allows you to meet new people. What a great way to get introduced to individuals within the Region!
• Volunteering strengthens the Region. The various volunteer committees allow the Region to offer more to its membership.
• By volunteering you will learn a lot! You will learn how a spring meeting is organized, how the administrative bylaws are reviewed and written, and how decisions are made that affect the quality of regional activities.
• By volunteering you get to give back to the Region!!

If you are interested in volunteering, running for office, or looking for a way to give back to the region, please email Tim Schailey Timothy.Schailey@jefferson.edu

Let’s use 2016 as the year Region II explores new possibilities, discovery, and fresh ideas.

If you’d like to learn more about maximizing the benefits of your Region II membership, exploring ideas for enhancing professional development and programming, or volunteering at regional and national activities, feel free to contact me directly or through our website: http://ncuraregionii.org/contact/

Remember to follow us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/groups/ncuraregionii/ and Twitter: @NCURAREGIONII

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 cebd@buffalo.edu
One of the reasons why the flamingo serves as the perfect mascot for Region III is because flamingos are social creatures that thrive best when working together. The 2016 Region III Spring meeting theme “Building Teams, Breaking Down Barriers!” truly embodied this characteristic of our mascot. The meeting focused on how we can work collaboratively to enhance efficiency and accomplish goals.

Thanks to the work of the Region III Program Committee there was something for everyone, from novice to expert, at this meeting. We extend thanks to Kay Gilstrep (and team Steve Koogler, Brigette Pfister, David Schultz, Erika Cottingham, Justo Torres, Pam Whitlock, James Denney, Cheryl Walter, Tony Ventimiglia, Candice Ferguson, Leerin Shields, and Danielle McElwain) for working diligently on the educational and fun program. With over 60 workshops, concurrent sessions, and discussion groups, this was truly an informative, comprehensive, and diverse program.

After long days of discussing and learning, attendees were able to relax and enjoy carefree networking thanks to our Hospitality Committee Natasha Stark (and team Adam Lawler). With a template for excellence, our Sponsorship Coordinator, Steven Koogler (and team Tracy Louder and Noelle Schneider) recruited sponsors who helped make this meeting possible and provided attendees with giveaways to take back with their newfound knowledge and contacts.

We all know that the Spring Meeting is impossible without our amazing volunteers! We want to thank everyone that played a role in our successful meeting and give a special thanks to our Volunteer Coordinator Sandy Barber (and team Lois Fussell, Anita McKinney, and Bruxanne Hein). They worked long before the meeting to ensure that critical areas were adequately staffed with helping hands and we greatly appreciate their efforts.

Our outstanding Honors and Awards Committee Ragagob Hagan Walker (and team Stephanie Harrison, Claire Stam, Rebecca Taylor, and Pamela Whitlock) reviewed all of the Travel Award nominations. These nominations reflected a stellar group of NCURA members and selecting from among them was no easy task. Region III is glad to provide travel assistance to Kelly Millsaps and Monica Vandenberg; congratulations to you both! Additionally, new this year to the Region III Spring Meeting, the Honors and Awards Committee recognized two phenomenal members for their contributions to NCURA. Congratulations to our Pam Whitlock Rising Star Award, Steven Koogler, and our Senior Service Awardee, Laurianne Torres. You exemplify the dedication and excellence for which our region is renowned.

We plan to carry the excitement and enthusiasm with us to DC and hope to see Region III well represented at the 58th Annual Meeting in August. In the meantime, keep up all the great work and team-building.

Danielle McElwain is Chair of Region III and serves as Senior Sponsored Programs Administrator at the University of South Carolina. She can be reached at dmcelwai@mailbox.sc.edu

Welcome to Spring 2016, and welcome to the Region IV Regional Corner. I would like to introduce myself, my name is Diane Hillebrand, and the current Chair put in place at the Regional meeting in Kansas City, in early May. What an honor it is to serve Region IV! You are the best. By the time the magazine comes out the results of the election will be known. Please check the website http://www.ncuraregioniv.com/index.html for results on your favorite nominees. Congratulations to the elected officers. It is a great pleasure to give back to a group that has given me so much throughout my Research Administration career. What an awesome group, always willing to give tips and helpful information to make us a success!

I hope you had the opportunity to attend the Regional Meeting held early May in Kansas City. It was a fun filled conference, bursting with a packed agenda, beautiful fountains, BBQ, and JAZZ. The theme was “Exchanging Talents through Guidance.” This theme brought out the thankfulness to those that volunteer, mentor, and give back to the region in so many ways. Thank you!!! I want to take this opportunity to thank my two co-chairs of the meeting and the whole program committee. It takes an army to plan a meeting with 100% volunteer time. Michelle Ginavan Hayes and Shannon Sutton were absolutely fabulous and deserve credit for the success of the Regional Meeting. I could not have done any of it without those two. Many thanks to two great icons of Region IV!!

Looking forward to seeing you at the National meeting in Washington, DC August 7-10, 2016. Save the Date and get involved. We have a variety of activities planned.

The Mentoring Our Own (MOO) Program is getting ready to start its fourth year. If you have not checked into this valuable program, please go to the regional website as there is lots of information on our site.

If you have any ideas, suggestions, or comments for change, please contact me; Diane.Hillebrand@med.UND.edu 701-777-2808. My door is ALWAYS open!

Please like/follow us on Facebook and also like/follow us on Twitter. Go to the Region IV website’s main page to learn how to check us out on Facebook and Twitter.
Policy/Regulation/Compliance News:
ASAS Public Policy: Revised animal well-being policy statement available. More... http://takingstock.asas.org/?p=18652


Agency News:
NIH Career Development Applications: What kind of information should I include in my application’s resource authentication plan? More... http://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2016/02/29/what-kind-of-information-should-i-include-in-my-applications-resource-authentication-plan/

Funding News:
AFRI: Full funding of agriculture and food research initiative essential. More... http://www.emporiazagette.com/opinion/article_cd6bc7a4-da70-50e3-9a82-7feb14b80a1.html#.VtcMrcix3h5.mailto


Technology Transfer:


Fun and Chuckles:
Animals Reading Humans: Animals can spot a happy face or an angry one. More... http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/02/horses-understand-human-facial-expressions

Marketing on the Fly: Flying drone billboards are the future we deserve. More... http://gizmodo.com/flying-drone-billboards-are-the-future-we-deserve-1765626310

Zika News: The Zika mosquito ‘goes where the people are,’ says researcher. More... https://news.wsu.edu/2016/02/04/zika-mosquito-goes-where-the-people-are-says-wsu-researcher/

Publishing Research: Scientists are becoming increasingly frustrated by the time it takes to publish a paper. Something has to change, they say. More... http://www.nature.com/news/does-it-take-too-long-to-publish-research-1.19320

From TheHill.com: Agencies are playing catch-up from years of being underfunded, but there’s reason for optimism. More... http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/technology/267944-government-rd-can-be-a-catalyst-for-technological-progress

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 Kellie Klein at kellie.klein@wsu.edu
A year ago when I drafted my first Regional Corner article, I was nervous and excited! I had many ideas, plans, and goals for the year ahead serving as chair of Region V. The greatest of these were to build a better communication roadmap for our membership and to support the involvement of the members through volunteer opportunities, personal recognition, and requests for direct member input through surveys and polls. We have made great strides in these areas, but there is still much work to be done. I am confident that my successor, Shelly Berry-Hebb, who holds the same vision for our organization, will carry the splendid torch towards these goals. I have invited Shelly, as incoming chair, to include a few words of introduction:

Looking forward, I anticipate great things in 2016. We will focus on assisting our members with both personal and professional growth. During the regional meeting planning, members indicated that professional development was something they wished to see more of in the future, and I aim to please. In order to accomplish this we will be forming various committees in the upcoming months to work on professional development ideas and ways to deliver those to our membership. To make this a successful program, we will need volunteers. As always, you can contact me directly (sberry@tamu.edu) or contact our volunteer coordinator, Beth Milam (bmlam@tamu.edu), to inquire about opportunities we have available.

Speaking of membership, please don’t forget to renew yours. Even if you may not be attending a meeting this year, the NCURA membership is a valuable tool for both you and your organization. You gain access to a wealth of information on the NCURA website, you will receive the NCURA magazine, and you can network with Collaborate.

I am looking forward to serving as chair of Region V. The best is yet to come!

As I pass the torch to Shelly, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the members for your interest, involvement, and support. I would like to extend special thanks to Debbie Newton of the University of Tulsa; Matt Berry of the University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus; Kathleen Harris of Texas Tech University; Govind Narisimhan of the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center; Susan Sedwick of Attain; Scott Erwin of Texas State University; Scott Davis of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center; and Hollie Schreiber of Oklahoma State University for giving me the opportunity to become involved, and for their encouragement and support. They are pillars of our region and I will be forever grateful to them for providing me the opportunity to carry the torch.

Katherine V. Kismann, CRA now serves as the immediate past chair of Region V and is director of Contracts and Grants at Texas A&M University.

Aloha!

Registration and the room block are currently open for RMHawaii2016. The program committee has designed program content that will be well worth the travel across the Pacific to the beautiful Grand Wailea Hotel and Resort on the Hawaiian island of Maui. We are looking forward to our collaboration with Region VII and Region VIII. I’m excited to share the creation of the new administrators track designed for those new to the industry. This is truly a conference where there will be content designed with you in mind to train you in the profession.

I also encourage all new and returning members to sign up for our FREE NCURA 101 workshop. It is designed to give you an overview of all the benefits of your NCURA membership. As the saying goes, membership has its privileges. We will help you navigate through NCURA tools to help you maximize the experience while giving you the who’s who of NCURA. We are so fortunate to have Bob Andreason, president of NCURA, to help facilitate. We have offered this workshop for the last two conferences with great success. If you have any questions regarding the workshop, feel free to reach out to me directly at derickjones@labiomed.org.

We are also enhancing our contracting and industry track to bring you some of the most innovative programming in the country related to this topic. There are many dynamic sessions to choose from, in addition to a full-day workshop on October 1, 2016. We will also be partnering with ICON (Industry Contract Officers Network) to enhance our content offering. Kudos to Kevin Stewart and Nancy Lewis for their hard work.

We also have a new workshop designed for our seasoned administrators. This year, we are rolling out a senior leadership full-day workshop to be held on October 1, 2016 as well. I am pleased to announce the instructors are Marianne Woods, Denise Clark, Pam Whitlock, and Dennis Pafrath. This is guaranteed to be an insightful workshop filled with great information to help leaders take their careers to the next level.

**Topics for the Senior Leadership Workshop**

1. Leadership vs. Management
2. What Every Leader Should Know about the Changing Workplace (understanding generational, cultural, and gender-related challenges)
3. Succession and Strategic Planning for the Future
4. Leadership Bootcamp

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.
“Unforeseen surprises are the rule in science, not the exception. Remember: Stuff happens.” – Leonard Susskind

We have been feverishly busy planning our upcoming meeting in Maui. Our Program Committee has been outstanding, putting together a solid and informational program. I cannot thank them enough for all of the work they have done, and we are on our way to having an awesome meeting. The program will be out soon so everyone will have ample time to review the topics. Our goal is to have a very interactive, fun, and engaging meeting. Speaking of our meeting, save the date! Come join us and say “Aloha” to beautiful Maui on October 2-5, 2016. This will be a meeting to remember!

We are pleased to announce that we will offer a full-day industry contracting workshop on Saturday in partnership with the Industry Contracts Officers Network (ICON). The focus will be newer research administrators or anyone interested in learning more about contracting with industry. In case you are unable to attend on Saturday, never fear, we are offering two half-day NCURA workshops which will also touch on contracting.

The theme for our upcoming meeting is “Connecting the World through Research Administration.” What better way to embrace this theme than at the beach, with beautiful scenery, an amazing location, and members from Regions VI, VII, and VII. It will truly be an experience to remember! My favorite part of our site visit was watching the beautiful Maui sunsets.

To help reduce costs, we have partnered with Hawaiian Airlines for discounted flights. We are also working with local companies for discounted transportation rates, and we have secured discounted rates offered by the hotel. Our goal is to make this meeting as affordable as possible. We will also feature some nightly fun activities for families. Pack your bags and meet us in Hawaii.

By now you should have all had the opportunity to vote on our mascot! More information to come on this topic. I am very excited to introduce him soon.

Don’t forget to like us on Facebook! Join us! As you know, social media is the quickest way to interact and receive information.

Please make sure you visit our webpage often for upcoming announcements. Soon we will send out a call for travel award applications for the annual meeting in Washington, D.C., as well as for our regional meeting. I hope to see you in D.C. in August and Hawaii in October.

From Down Under we are happy to announce the 2016 ARMS-NCURA Fellows for 2016. Jill Frankenfield from the University of Maryland will be hosted at the University of New South Wales and Marianne Wood from Johns Hopkins University will be hosted at the University of Melbourne. From the Australasian region, David Huang from the National Institute of Education (Singapore) will be visiting Harvard University, Jonathan O’Donnell from RMIT University (Australia) is going to Northwestern University, and Barbara Slattery from the University of Melbourne (Australia) is being hosted at the University of California, San Francisco.

This is an exciting program that encourages the collaboration of research administrators between the U.S. and the Australasian region. The aim of this fellowship is to “create a pool of individuals who are able to interpret a multitude of various sponsor requirements and assist their institutes with administrative compliance.” This opportunity to engage in knowledge exchange and learning best practices in another country is conducive to reducing the barriers to global research collaboration (as well as finding the great local eateries in that city). Marianne, I know the best pizza place near Melbourne University!

The next round will open in late 2016, so keep checking the website, www.ncura.edu/Global/ARMS-NCURAFellowshipProgram.aspx for your opportunity to come to our side of the world.

Bella Blaher is Region VIII secretary and serves as senior international grants officer in International Research, Innovation, and Commercialisation at the University of Melbourne. She can be reached at bblaher@unimelb.edu.au

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
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Future of Undersea Exploration

By Jack Costello

Siphonophores, they’re called: marine animals that navigate the deep space of the world’s oceans as clusters of individuals that, like a perfect team, perform their individual roles with precision coordination. Many siphonophores are long, thin, transparent floaters. At 130 to 160 feet long, one species is among the longest animals in the world. Based on their high maneuverability and often long travel distances, siphonophores often appear to be single organisms; however, they’re actually colonies composed of many individual animals. Like crew members aboard a ship, each individual within the colony has role in guiding the ‘ship.’ Recent research has documented which members do what to guide swimming motions.

Biologist Jack Costello of Providence College and colleagues recently published results of a study of one siphonophore’s locomotion methods, a common species known as Nanomia bijuga, in the journal Nature Communications. Co-authors of the paper are Sean Colin of Roger Williams University, Brad Gemmell of the University of South Florida, John Dabiri of Stanford University, and Kelly Sutherland of the University of Oregon. The researchers found that Nanomia uses a sophisticated, multi-jet propulsion system that’s based on a division of labor between younger and older members of the colony. “This siphonophore is a highly efficient system in which no developmental stage is wasted,” says Costello. The young members at the front of the colony use their smaller jets for turning and steering. The older, larger members farther back provide more powerful thrust as the colony moves from place to place.

Nanomia bijuga belongs to a group of colonial animals called physonect siphonophores that are related to jellyfish, anemones, and corals. Voracious plankton-feeders, siphonophores migrate to the ocean’s surface at night to find prey, then return to darker depths by day to avoid predators such as fish. The jet-propulsion members of a siphonophore colony, called nectophores, are genetically identical clones arranged in what’s known as a nectosome. The nectosome is only a few inches long, but it tows much longer groups of reproductive and feeding units across distances of up to 650 feet or more each day. It’s the equivalent of an adult human running a marathon every day, while towing the equivalent of its own body mass behind it. To analyze Nanomia’s swimming abilities, Costello and colleagues measured particle flows around the siphonophore as it moved. The results revealed the size and thrust of individual nectophore jets.

The youngest ones, the researchers found, pushed the least amounts of water. However, because they’re located at the tip of the nectosome, far from where it connects with the rest of the siphonophore’s body, a directed force by these young members has an outsized effect on rotating the whole colony. “Just because the young ones are small, doesn’t mean they aren’t important,” says Costello. “These younger members have a long lever arm,” he says, “They’re like handles on doors. If you push a door near its hinges, the door is hard to open. But if you push on a door’s handle, the door opens easily. A little force with a big lever arm has a big effect on turning, and so it is with this siphonophore.”

The young colony members allow Nanomia to rapidly alter course - and to completely reverse its swimming direction. As new nectophores bud at the tip of the nectosome, older ones move farther back where their larger contractions are important for thrust. “This set-up allows all members of the colony to help with the maneuvering that’s critical for siphonophores as they find their way through the ocean,” says Costello.

Future of undersea exploration: in a siphonophore

The pattern offers insights into the biomechanical success of siphonophores, and provides “a basic understanding of a natural solution to multi-engine organization that may contribute to the expanding field of underwater-distributed propulsion vehicle design,” write the scientists in their paper.

Costello imagines an undersea exploration vehicle that, like Nanomia, twirls through inner space on elegantly placed thrusters that extend from front to back. “We can perhaps peer into our own future in the sea,” he says, “by studying how this seemingly simple animal jets from one part of the ocean to another relying on its youngest crew members.”

Jack Costello, Ph.D. is a Professor of Biology at Providence College in Providence, RI. With a Ph.D. in Marine Biology from the University of Southern California, he has a long history of funding success with the National Science Foundation and the Office of Naval Research, among others. The referenced project has been funded from several collaborative National Science Foundation programs. The work has been conducted at the Marine Biological Institute in Woods Hole, MA, as well as Providence College. Costello team is comprised of many undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral fellows.
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