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ON THE COVER: It’s summer and it’s baseball season! I’ve relished the NCAA College World Series this year, and not just because Oregon State University has enjoyed what can only be called a phenomenal season. Think about all those statistics that sportswriters use. They are metrics and they are magical.

So, it will come as no surprise when I point you to the article entitled “Hitting a Home Run” by Michele Vaughan and Susie Sedwick. It’s a great article, and I cannot take credit for them using the baseball theme. Michele, I love the “scorecard” approach.

I also hope you will take the time to look at the article entitled “Accumulating a Mountain of Metrics During a Leadership Change: One University’s Story” by my good friend (and newlywed) Derek Brown from Washington State University. All of us will face leadership changes, ranging from your organization’s Chief Executive Officer to your own supervisor.

Please don’t ignore my friend Scott Niles’ article on “Cabinet Competency – The Missing Metric for PUI Sponsored Programs” either. I believe the Cabinet Competency issue is not restricted to PUs, and his article brings in the very timely national discussion about F&A costs.

My global colleagues are also represented in this magical issue. We have an article from Hiroshima University in Japan, Leiden University in the Netherlands, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia, and Khalifa University of Science and Technology in the United Arab Emirates. There is also an interview by Jill Mortali that has a lovely mix of “domestic” and “global” staff at Carnegie Mellon’s Qatar branch, staff at University of California San Francisco and University of Wisconsin.

Finally, I am so pleased that this issue will be handed out at our upcoming Annual Meeting. On a personal note, I am so pleased to call Dave Richardson a friend and colleague. If you’re at the meeting and you see Dave, please take a moment to congratulate him. Dave is the recipient NCURA’s 2017 Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration Award.

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

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Barbara Gray, NCURA President

As far back in my non-corporate working life as I can remember, beginning with the “Management by Objective” days of the late 70s and early 80s, there has always been a “measure of the month.” Today’s buzz words are “KPIs” (Key Performance Indicators) and “metrics.” But the quest has remained the same. We have continually sought the best way to assess our efficiency, performance, and the quality of our plans, processes, and outputs to increase organizational success.

The traditional approach of stating a lofty goal and then drilling down through objectives to the measures level to assess goal attainment can work. But far too often, this process does not give management the operational information needed to significantly improve organizational functioning. I recall one institutional exercise to plan and assess support for the research enterprise. Units were mandated to identify two goals (no more, no less), each with two objectives (no more, no less), each with two measures (no more, no less). As you can imagine, most of the effort went into “fitting” this rubric, and the meaningfulness of the goals and objectives got lost in the process.

Metrics and KPIs provide a different starting point and can result in a markedly better outcome if a focus on meaningful targets and measures is maintained. The first step is identifying the important and measurable processes and outputs that contribute to organizational or unit success. Examples of measures are the number of proposals submitted, the amount of time that elapses between award receipt and account setup, and research expenditures. These measures alone, although important, are just numbers. However, when measures are combined and compared, such as the number of proposals submitted by a department over a period of years, or the percentage of proposals submitted that result in awards, a metric is born. The metric then becomes the basis of a KPI, which is a measurable objective or target stated in the context of the organization or industry. Meaningful metrics and KPIs provide a roadmap for organizational improvement and a yardstick against which future performance is measured.

Contributors to this issue of NCURA Magazine have shared their insights regarding metrics for research administration and have highlighted some successful institutional research administration metrics initiatives. The terminology may change, but the quest for organizational improvement will not. In addition to giving institutions better ways to measure performance, the “metrics movement” may eventually give us a common set of research administration KPIs that all of us can employ to assess our office operations. The sharing of ideas and experiences, as evidenced in this magazine issue, is the first step in that direction.

As you peruse this issue, I hope the word “meaningful” will stay in your mind… I have certainly used it enough here! With limited time and resources, none of us can afford to focus on things that don’t matter. Just as we want metrics and KPIs to be meaningful to our universities, we want your association with NCURA to be meaningful, both professionally and personally. Yes, you can limit your involvement to just partaking of NCURA’s many educational offerings, but you will derive much more value by volunteering. So, check out the “Volunteer Central” platform on our website, watch your e-mail for announcements of opportunities, volunteer, and add some NCURA meaning to your life!

Barbara Gray is NCURA President and serves as the Director, Office of Sponsored Programs at East Carolina University. She can be reached at GRAYB@ECU.edu
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www.ncura.edu/InstitutionalPrograms.aspx
Metrics and data: it seems like it’s either feast or famine. You might be swimming in numbers and trendlines, or your day-to-day might be a series of gut-level decisions with no fact-based way of measuring the results. If you’re feasting, how do you filter out the noise to make sense of the information? If you’re starving, how do you develop a targeted approach to getting the metrics you really need, not just what’s readily available?

Organizations need to adapt to changing environments, so even if you do have the perfect metrics built on a pristine dataset, how do you know that they’re still relevant?

What Business Are You Really In?
Many organizations, particularly universities, function more like a conglomeration of loosely-related, smaller organizations than as a consistent, unified large organization. However, institutionally-produced metrics are often standard across the organization and don’t take the differences between the sub-organizations into account. If most (or all) of the metrics you have fall into this category, they may be of limited value in running your particular slice of the overall organization.

What business are you really in? If you had to summarize what your organization does in a page or two, could you do it? If you have a mission statement, that might be a starting point, but it’s probably not specific enough to describe your business. What are your core programs? How does your organizational structure support those programs? Who are the key stakeholders and how do they interact with your core programs? How do you fund those programs, and how do the restrictions (or lack thereof) on that funding affect how you support your programs? How does your funding affect how your organizational structure functions? Then take a look at your specific administrative unit: how do your processes and structure support your business? How are they impacted by your funding sources? Most importantly, how do you know?

Working through these kinds of questions might reveal points of departure between your business and your experience working in your specific unit. Here’s a real-life example: our school’s business office spends much of its time managing sponsored awards. Our grants don’t trend toward the common five-year, automatic carryover, basic research awards; rather, we often have shorter, initiative-specific awards that are disproportionately funded from non-federal sources. As an environmental school, our reach is global, giving an added complexity to all of our administrative work. Periodically, our senior leadership gives a fiscal update to the school at large, which reminds me that most of our school’s funding comes from unrestricted sources. But it didn’t feel that way in our business office, and I wanted to understand why. As it turns out, the majority of our non-labor expenses—which, dollar for dollar, require the most processing and review by our business office staff—were paid from sponsored funds. Although this revelation doesn’t change the difference in perspective between our business office and the rest of the world, and it didn’t lead to any process adjustments it does better inform how we structure our staff, our processes, and our support strategy.

Once you’ve sorted through how your organization works and how your administrative unit supports it, perhaps uncovering places where your administrative priorities might differ from your organization’s priorities (which may or may not require adjustment), think about how well...
you think you’re doing. How do you know? In what ways do your results reflect how you’re doing? Can you identify any trends?

**Metrics as Indicators of Future Results, Not as Measures of Symptoms**

Many common metrics (and more easily observable trends in the absence of formalized metrics) tend to be lagging indicators. Your results might be good or bad, but how you got those good or bad results aren’t shown in the numbers. For example, cost transfers are up; that’s bad. But why are cost transfers up? Was there a new PI who didn’t fully appreciate the requirements of sponsored award management whose awards are now in compliance (or a seasoned PI who temporarily “forgot”)? Were there unforeseen vacancies in the program or administrative staff that are now filled? Or is the real problem more deeply rooted? Maybe your audit findings are down; that’s good. What’s working well? Without knowing, it might be tough to replicate those results next time.

Better, more meaningful metrics will look at the leading indicators. They measure things further back in the chain of events that cause or contribute to certain end results. Even absent leading indicators, analyzing the upstream processes and events that lead to positive or negative metrics and understanding those relationships will help your organization be more proactive and have more consistent results. Get back to the root of the problem and solve it, don’t just react to the symptoms.

**Get Consistent First, then Make Improvements**

Then having found the key inputs that lead to specific results, keep in mind that improvements won’t stick without consistency in processes. That is, consistent results are better than inconsistent results, even if the inconsistent results average out to be a little better than the consistent results. Suppose you’re measuring the cycle time of invoice processing within two business units. Unit A’s average time to process invoices for the last four months measured in days were 34, 44, 28, and 32. Unit B’s average times were 35, 36, 37, and 34. Unit A’s average (34.5 days to process an invoice) might be lower than Unit B’s (35.5 days), but Unit B’s processing is more consistent. Because Unit B has better control over its process, implementing changes to reduce the processing time of invoices will produce results sooner and be more sustainable over the long run.

**Adapt as Times Change**

Even if you have great metrics in place that help you spot issues and correct problems upstream in your processes, the metrics you use today will probably not be the same metrics that you use five years from now. Programs will change, strategies will change, funding sources will change, regulations will change. These changes will force adaptations in processes and in priorities, and some will have a significant impact on how your business is run. That means that your metrics need to adapt as well. For example, if your organization is primarily a teaching organization, but decides to increase its research focus, that might have a profound impact on how your organization is funded. Can your administrative unit support that change? If not, what do you need to do in order to adapt? Most importantly, how do you know?

**Managing with Metrics (Not to Them)**

How you use your metrics might be more important than the metrics themselves. None of us is an island—it takes a team to support a department, a school, a research enterprise, an organization. Your team needs to be engaged in order to deliver the results needed to sustain the organization. This may or may not involve actually sharing the specific metrics—but it does mean being able to manage the team and their processes effectively.

Using your metrics to inform your management is far more effective than managing to your metrics. Suppose you have a key metric that measures your volume of unprocessed transactions. One way to drive that volume down is to try to find out who has the most unprocessed transactions in his or her queue and lean on those individuals to do their work faster. You might achieve some positive results that way, but you’ve set yourself up to achieve those results principally by chasing and hounding—results that will likely reverse the moment you decide that your efforts are better spent elsewhere.

Instead of reacting, a better approach would be to understand how your metric came to be what it is. Is there a lot of variation in the volume? That suggests that processing is inconsistent—or the inputs are inconsistent. Can you tease out the source of the variation and address it? Are there some people who are responsible for providing information or processing the transactions who are better at doing so than others? It might be that the people who are less strong don’t understand how their input drives the process—or how their work supports the programs your organization pursues. Helping those individuals understand how their important work connects the work of the organization might drive long-run gains quite effectively.

“No metrics” is as good as “all metrics” if they don’t matter to your organization. If you don’t have any metrics and need a methodical approach to developing some, or if you have too many and need to decide which ones to focus on, spend some time analyzing what business you’re really in and how you and your staff support it; look for metrics upstream in processes that can tip you off to problems earlier in the process; keep an eye toward whether your existing metrics are still relevant given changes in your operating environment; and make sure you’re managing in light of the metrics, not letting the metrics manage you. Understanding the relationships between your processes and your programs will be key to producing sustainable results.

Jessica Foote, MBA, is an associate director of Finance and Administration at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. She has held central and departmental roles at both Yale and the University of Cincinnati. Jess can be reached at jessica.foote@yale.edu
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Leveraging Systems to Measure and Improve Sponsored Project Processes

By Kimberly Griffin, Reid Wellensiek, and Lynda S. Wolter

The Offices for Sponsored Research (OSR) at Northwestern University managed nearly 3,500 proposals and $649.7 million in awards in FY2016, supporting investigators from campuses in Evanston, IL (primarily arts, sciences and engineering) and Chicago (primarily medicine and law). In the past year, we have implemented metrics to assist in process improvements in both proposal review and award setup.

Like other large research universities, Northwestern has multiple organizations within the university responsible for sponsored research administration. These include PI laboratories and research teams, local departmental administrative offices, the schools and colleges that make up the highest level of academic organization, and the central offices for sponsored research. Each unit has different roles and responsibilities and is essential to the overall process.

The initial business problem we wanted to tackle was related to the proposal submission and review process. A significant number of last-minute proposals were arriving in the central offices with little notification and inconsistencies in both materials submitted and the review process at all levels. In addition, we lacked data on the proposal review and submission process itself. Any data we had was primarily anecdotal and highlighted the one-off problems. Last-minute submissions also affected other business lines such as award setup. We planned to address these problems in part by developing metrics to answer three questions: (1) How long did it take for OSR to review a proposal?; (2) How many times were revisions requested?; and (3) How many last-minute proposals were submitted?

In developing these metrics, we wanted to provide a consistent and predictable experience so that end users would know what data was going to be provided, as well as when and where the data would be made available. We also wanted to improve transparency in the review process by clarifying which materials were required for OSR initial review and which were not, by allowing the PI and department to see where their proposals were in the process and clearly defining hand-off points between departments/schools and OSR.

In order to capture data automatically at handoffs - rather than relying on manual data capture - Northwestern implemented the workflow feature of our electronic sponsored research administration system. Prior to implementing the workflow feature, we brought together a group of stakeholders with various roles in research administration. There was a commitment to getting input and feedback from all viewpoints, so the workgroup included participants across units on both campuses: departments, centers, schools, and central offices. While the electronic research administration team was at the center of the workflow implementation process, there was also an intentional effort to include staff in various roles, from research administrators and grants officers to school and central leadership.

In order to develop the metrics to address our key questions, we first needed to understand the current business practices. We acknowledged that different units had different processes and that the current process might not be the ideal one. To ensure consistency in the metrics, we needed to consider process improvements that would work for everyone. And most importantly, we were careful that the business process drove the system configuration and resulting metrics, rather than having the system dictate our business processes. We first mapped the current process and compiled the requirements that were prioritized by the stakeholder group. We then worked together to map out the future state with process improvements, incorporating decisions based upon the requirements.

As part of the project, we determined what information we could measure and what reports would be needed for each level in the organization. We also configured a workflow map within the ERA system to provide a real-time view of items in each status and developed Tableau visualizations to aggregate data and see trends. The basic ingredients needed to produce these were provided via the system-based workflow. At each state transition, the system records a date/timestamp, the state name, and the person executing the transition. With these data points, we were able to calculate the date/time the record exited the state (by comparing it to the next state it entered), and from there could calculate the answers to our questions.

To measure the length of OSR’s review process, we used a query to calculate workdays in between the start and end times for the initial central office review of each proposal (our goal was 2 workdays). To measure how frequently revisions were requested, we used a query to count the number of times each proposal cycled through the review status in order to calculate the number of send-backs (our goal was maximum 1 per proposal). To measure the volume of last-minute proposals, we used a query to count the number of proposals that arrived less than 2 workdays prior to the deadline.

Metric reports were made available for each department that showed the median time in each review status for proposals. We also made available year-to-date proposal counts with comparison data to the prior fiscal years.
and distributed monthly proposal review times by department that showed the median time for OSR to review the administrative components of the proposals.

To familiarize campuses with the changes related to using electronic workflow, we held multiple brown bag sessions for administrators and presented at faculty meetings. The transition to the electronic workflow was a significant change, so we used multiple forms of communications to ensure the research community was aware.

We have expanded the metric reports within the OSR to show individual workload by Grant or Contract Officer and proposal type (proposal, external subaward/subcontract, clinical trial agreements, MTA and DUA reviews).

In parallel with the workflow project, OSR was also going through Program Review, a process that includes external experts reviewing the office and providing recommendations. The evaluators confirmed that one key area to focus on was the impact of last-minute submissions on the overall business in OSR. As a result, we are implementing a new streamlined review process along with improvements in award processing. The metric data allowed us to demonstrate how clarifying and improving business processes have a direct result in transparency and turnaround times.

The new streamlined OSR proposal review will focus on an expected turnaround time by the office, moving away from an earlier policy that required the department to submit an administrative shell five days before a deadline and a ready-to-submit version two days before the deadline. The standard review will concentrate on proposal components directly related to institutional policies, and a comprehensive review option will be available to PIs who prefer a more thorough review of other components such as current and pending support. When requested by the PI, the comprehensive review is provided as time permits. The metrics will be adjusted to focus on OSR’s turnaround time, rather than compliance with the previous 5-day/2-day submission policy.

We have also used the same process improvement procedures to reduce award set up time from 11 business days to a median of 5 business days. Metrics allowed us to analyze the award portfolio to separate administratively simple awards (e.g., standard federal grants) from more complex awards that require negotiation and acceptance. We also assigned dedicated staff in OSR to focus on award set up processes instead of allowing the last minute proposals to interfere, thus allowing for shorter turnaround times. Like other proposal and award metrics, award turnaround time is posted quarterly on the OSR website by campus for the Northwestern community to see.

When developing metrics for the first time, there is a natural tendency to want to measure every possible data point. However, data points need to be valuable and reflective of the business process. Collection of additional data points may require additional administrative work. This balance needs to be carefully evaluated before any decisions are finalized. It is also important to clarify expectations — what is it actually possible for the system and the administrators to do? The focus is on practicality. Finally, it is important to acknowledge and plan for exceptions.

Investing the time and resources to develop a set of metrics can provide important long-term benefits, moving beyond relying on anecdotal reports of problems into making decisions based on sound, reliable information.

**Proposals**

**IN WORKFLOW**

![Graph showing number of proposals in workflow](image)

**SUBMITTED**

![Graph showing number of proposals submitted](image)

**REVIEW TIME**

![Graph showing median review time](image)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>AS OF JUNE 5, 2017</th>
<th>FY2017 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28</th>
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<td>PROPOSALS IN PROCESS</td>
<td>PROPOSALS SUBMITTED</td>
<td>MEDIAN WORKDAYS TO REVIEW</td>
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Kimberly Griffin, MS, is Director for Electronic Research Administration in the Office for Sponsored Research at Northwestern University. Prior to joining Northwestern in 2014, she worked at The University of Chicago for 15 years, first in pre- and post-award administration then 10 years in business intelligence. She can be reached at kimberly.griffin@northwestern.edu

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Lynda S. Wolter, CRA, is the Executive Director, Office for Sponsored Research-Chicago at Northwestern University, where she is responsible for overseeing all aspects of pre-award and selected post-award services. Lynda has over 25 years of experience in university administration, including extensive experience in research administration systems. She can be reached at lynda.wolter@northwestern.edu

This snapshot is a sample of proposal-related metrics from the website. Metrics relating to proposals, awards and contracts are posted to OSR’s website for campus access; the ‘in workflow’ data is updated nightly, while the completed and turnaround time metrics are updated quarterly, with plans to transition to real-time in the near future now that additional technology is available on campus.
NCURA surveyed those who purchased NCURA's Life Cycle of the Award Online Training Program and seventy three percent of respondents reported that there was no formal research administration training program at their institution. The majority of users utilized the cost-effective series as supplement training to their institution’s on-boarding program for new staff. The series is also being used to complement existing training at an institution, such as building an office back up after restructuring. An additional benefit is the opportunity for each participant to earn CEU credits whenever they view the recording. Participants report that purchasing the entire series was helpful because it covered the major components of the research project life cycle.

There are 21 and a half hours of training available with the full series. Participants said that the amount of material felt right and that each subject received enough time. One institution described the series as a “life saver” for their staff.

Participants said that the series was very helpful and cited the ability to have individuals watch the webinars on their own as a large benefit of the series. Some found an added benefit to offering a formal discussion for individuals who viewed the series on their own. Others reported that viewing the webinars in a group with pauses for discussion was most beneficial.

Companion handouts and resources, along with learning best practices from other institutions ranked among the highlights. The ability to download the MP4 recordings, and post them on their campus’ internal website for use by all of their staff, gives an increased flexibility for institutions and an amazing value added.

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2017 NCURA Election Results

Tony Ventimiglia, Director, Office of Proposal Services and Faculty Support, Auburn University, has been elected to the position of Vice President/President-Elect of NCURA. Since joining NCURA in 2000, Tony has been very active at both the regional and national levels. Tony served on Region III’s membership committee, as volunteer coordinator, and chair. Nationally, Tony has been on multiple program committees, was Co-Chair of the 2015 PRA Conference, and currently serves as NCURA’s Secretary. Tony has served on the Board of Directors, as Fundamentals Traveling Workshop faculty, participated in the Leadership Development Institute and the Executive Leadership Program. On being elected Tony says, “I am honored and humbled to have been elected to the position of Vice President/President-Elect. NCURA has contributed so much to my professional development that I am pleased to have this opportunity to serve. Having a network of friends and colleagues within NCURA with whom we can exchange ideas, share best practices and continue to learn from is a benefit that we should not take lightly. I look forward to working with the NCURA leadership, staff and members as we continue to advance the field of research administration.”

Denise Moody, Senior Director of Research Compliance, Harvard University, has been elected to the position of Secretary. Since becoming an NCURA member in 2002, Denise has served on the Board of Directors, served as Secretary in 2015, participated in the Leadership Development Institute, and in the Executive Leadership Program. Denise has been a member of the Professional Development Committee and has been on numerous national program committees and regional committees. She is currently a Co-Editor for NCURA Magazine. On being elected as Secretary, Denise says, “I am very honored and humbled to be able to serve as NCURA’s Secretary for the next two years. I look forward to building on NCURA’s efforts to promote the research administration career and provide sustainability for our membership by fostering collaboration and knowledge dissemination.”

Anne Albinak, Assistant Director of Finance, Whiting School of Engineering, Johns Hopkins University, has been elected to the position of Treasurer-Elect. Since joining NCURA in 2006, Anne has served on the Board of Directors, served as the Region II Secretary, and has been on several regional and national program committees. She participated in the Executive Leadership Program and is the current Chair of the Education Scholarship Fund Committee. Anne is also a current member of the Professional Development Committee. Anne has made many workshop and session presentations at conferences and has served on numerous regional committees. On being elected as Treasurer-Elect, Anne shares, “I’m so pleased to have been chosen by the members and leaders of NCURA to be the 2018 Treasurer-Elect/2019-2020 Treasurer. I look forward to beginning my responsibilities and am happy to be continuing my work with NCURA in an expanded role, contributing to the growth of such a wonderful organization.”

Glenda Bullock, Director of Research and Business Administration, Divisions of Hematology, Rheumatology, Allergy & Immunology, Washington University in St. Louis, has been elected to the position of At-Large Board Member. Since joining NCURA in 1993, Glenda has been involved at both the regional and national levels. Glenda is currently a Global Research Administration Traveling Workshop faculty member and a Peer Reviewer. Glenda served on the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee, as a Departmental Research Administration Traveling Workshop faculty member, and has also served on several regional committees. She has presented at both regional and national meetings and served as Co-Chair of the 2011 PRA Conference. On being elected to this position, Glenda expresses, “I am honored the membership selected me to be a member of the Board of Directors. Their faith in me is very humbling. I will do my best to express their voice as I serve my term.”

Rosemary Madnick, Executive Director, Office of Grants and Contracts Administration, University of Alaska Fairbanks, has been elected to the position of At-Large Board Member. Rosemary has been an involved NCURA member for nearly 20 years, over which time she has served as the Chair of Region VI, a member of the Professional Development Committee, a member of the Nominating & Leadership Development Committee, Co-Chair of the 2017 PRA Conference, and as a presenter at both regional and national conferences. Rosemary currently serves as a Peer Reviewer, a member of the Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop Faculty, and is on the 59th Annual Meeting Program Committee. On being elected to this position, Rosemary shares, “I am truly honored to be elected to the NCURA’s Board of Directors for At Large Member. As a newly elected Board member I will continue to bring the three attributes during my service. They are my organizational ability, positive attitude and solution oriented ability to problem solve. I am looking forward to meeting this leadership role while meeting the strategic goals of the Board of Directors. I am proud to belong this organization and tend to the business of our membership.”

Both Bullock and Madnick will begin serving January 1, 2018 for a two-year term. Ventimiglia will take office January 1, 2018 for one year after which he will succeed to a one-year term as President of NCURA. Albinak will become Treasurer-Elect on January 1, 2018 and will serve for one year after which she will succeed to a two-year term as Treasurer. Moody will take office on January 1, 2018 and will serve a two-year term.
EXPERIENCE DISCOVERY.

The full research lifecycle

Pre-Award
Post-Award
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It’s 2:15 p.m. and you receive an email from a PI marked “Urgent” with the subject “Need help! Grant due at 5pm today!” Unfortunately, everyone at NCURA can probably relate to this situation. Even though your university has a policy of four business days, you are confronted with a late submission more often than you care to admit.

Metrics can be beneficial tools to evaluate a wide range of topics, including internal processes and practices, allowing comparisons not only your own institution but across disciplines and research administration as a whole. One of the challenges with metrics is ensuring the correct data is being evaluated in relation to the question being posed. As with scientific data, metrics can be manipulated or misinterpreted to fit the situation. In the process of developing and implementing metrics it is important to understand the issue, the data, and the need.

Last year, the NCURA ERA Committee conducted a poll on submission deadline polices and the policy enforcement. The results showed the majority of respondents have a 5-9 business day policy; however 66% of respondents didn’t enforce the policy.
In this article, we’ll talk about how these poll results, reflecting experience from research administration offices across NCURA community, benefit University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in better understanding the last minute proposal review submissions issue.

One of the benefits of metrics is that they can be used to identify and address process improvement opportunities while also measuring the impact of the implemented process. Measuring the impact shows not only the level of success of the new process, but also the level of understanding of the issue itself.

One of the identified process improvement opportunities in UAF’s central research administration office was eliminating the proposal review process bottleneck created by the surge of proposal review requests at certain periods of time. The bottleneck was created by the increasing number of proposals coming into the office in days closer to the sponsor deadline date. The number of proposals for review in this short period time was greater than the office’s capacity to review. This situation was a source of frustration for all parties involved in the process. To address the issue of the swell of proposal review requests, UAF put in place the Proposal Review Policy which stated: Units must provide OSP with a minimum of five (5) business days for proposal review and any necessary revisions before AOR approval is granted.

To measure the impact of this policy, UAF central research administration staff collected data on the number of proposals submitted to the central office by the number of days until the sponsor deadline. Data collected for FY 2016 show that only 22%, and for YTD FY 2017 21% of proposal submissions were in accordance with the Proposal Review Policy, despite the fact that the policy had been in place for many years.

This data leads to the conclusion that the proposal review policy was not successful in resolving the proposal review bottleneck issue.

At the same time, results of this metric might help identify factors that contributed to the policy failure, including the need to broaden the perspective and better understand the issue itself. One of the obvious factors is lack of mechanisms for policy enforcement. Proposals being awarded even though there was little prep-time, reinforce noncompliance of the policy.

Expanding your perspective by taking it to the broader research administration community helps gain better insight of this issue. Results of the NCURA ERA Committee poll showing that 66% of respondents did not enforce the deadline policy indicates that this issue is not a single university issue. Indeed, this is an issue for research administration as a whole. To a certain level, it this is the nature of the research administration business.

While we would all revel in a world free of last minute submissions, the reality is they are part of our research administration world. As with so many aspects of research administration, a gray area will always exist. A policy put in place by management to resolve a process issue will be bent based on the circumstances, especially if the benefits outweigh the measurable cost. Metrics can provide a powerful backup to quantifiable questions, i.e. how many proposals meet the deadline, etc.

Metrics are not as useful when dealing with human factors, such as quantifying the increased stress level on staff when dealing with last minute submissions. By making a correlation between last minute submissions and staff calling in sick, new policies may provide both higher quality proposal submissions and staff provide support and identify compliance issues.

The power of metrics is their ability to enact change. In the business process it provides tools to identify, address, and understand a wide range of issues. It helps guide decision making and determine progress and success rate. However, one should be aware of limitations of metrics rooted in the fact that not all factors are quantifiable, especially those related to human nature. Metrics help to a certain degree but they are certainly not the only tool we should use.

"The power of metrics is their ability to enact change."

Emily Lacy is the Associate Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects at The University of Texas at Dallas. Emily’s responsibilities at UTD include policy development and implementation, research development, pre-award activities, and non-financial post-award activities. She can be reached at emily.lacy@utdallas.edu

Natasa Raskovic is a Grants and Contracts Specialist in the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. With the background in computer science and business administration, she is interested in utilizing information technology to support process streamlining and decision making. She is working on database development and data analysis for both pre and post award process. She can be reached at nraskovic@alaska.edu
At the University of Missouri (MU), we use metrics to tell a story of our sponsored activity to a variety of stakeholders. In the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration (OSPA) at MU, we have an obligation and a responsibility to monitor our volume, identify inefficiencies, and mitigate risks related to managing external funding. One way we do this is through the use of data and metrics. MU OSPA works closely with the vice chancellor of research (VCR), deans, department chairs, investigators, and department research administrators—all of whom need information on sponsored activity for a variety of reasons. The data we provide helps in making critical decisions. The information needed by each group varies, so we must be flexible and have the ability to provide accurate information quickly.

When determining what data to pull and analyze, the first step is to identify your organizational goals, your audience, and major areas of risk. Some questions to ask:

- What do we want to achieve?
- What is important to our organization?
- What are our largest areas of risk?
- What additional training or resources does our staff need?
- Where are our bottlenecks?
- What feedback have we received from stakeholders?

MU OSPA has developed two types of reports that we prepare on a monthly basis. The first is a campus-wide report on total expenditures, total awards, proposals submitted, and F&A recovery. Our campus-wide report is provided to our VCR and is shared with other campus leaders. The second report focuses on post-award portfolio management and is used as a tool to monitor the performance of post-award teams within OSPA.

Our VCR must be aware of the volume of sponsored activity occurring on campus. Total expenditures is a quick indicator of whether or not we are growing our research base. We provide data to our VCR at the campus level, college/division level, and the department level. In addition to expenditure data, we also determine the number of proposals submitted and the awards that are received over a given time period. Measuring proposal activity and award data gives us an indication of whether or not we can expect expenditures to grow. The information we provide the VCR is disseminated to the appropriate administrators at each college. Oftentimes the data we provide is used by our campus stakeholders to determine how to allocate resources and where to increase our efforts to bring in awards. In addition, the data can be used to see if invested resources are paying off with increased activity.

With approximately $200M in annual sponsored activity expenditures at MU, OSPA has a responsibility to invoice sponsors and fulfill reporting requirements. In addition, we must close out projects in a timely manner, monitor receivables, and provide excellent customer service. Our central post-award staff is organized into four teams that each manage a portfolio of 500-600 projects. Teams are aligned to service colleges/divisions and must be familiar with a wide variety of funding. When we reorganized in to teams several years ago, we brainstormed ideas on how to monitor performance, and determined that each month we’d develop a report to share with each team lead and use the report to bring attention to the largest potential areas of risk.

A monthly portfolio management report at the University of Missouri includes data on projects that are open a year past their end date, receivables that are more than a year past due, projects that are overspent by more than $50,000, projects that have been awarded in the system but haven’t been billed, and large unbilled balances. The post-award team leads understand why these measures are important, and come to monthly meetings with the Director and Associate Director ready to discuss these projects in more detail. The team leads, director, and associate director use the monthly reports and meetings to identify issues that may need additional efforts to resolve. We can discuss those issues and determine the appropriate course of action.

“The DATA we provide helps in making CRITICAL DECISIONS”
example, our report included receivables that were more than 90 days past due. Receivables over 90 days past due shouldn’t be ignored, but are also not indicative of a major problem. When we evaluated the effectiveness of our report, we decided to call the most attention to those receivables that are more than 365 days old.

There are some common pitfalls when looking at metrics as a decision making and monitoring tool. The most prevalent are inaccurate data, excessive amounts of data, and data that doesn’t help you to meet your goals. Understand what tools are available to you at your institution. At MU, we utilize PeopleSoft query to gather our data. When using tools outside of your financial system, data validation is critical—your reports should reconcile back to your financial system, otherwise you risk pulling inaccurate data. Your stakeholders must be able to rely on the information provided to them in order to make appropriate decisions. The individual who is responsible for pulling, organizing, and analyzing data must be able to explain the methodology and any anomalies that may skew the data to ensure that audience has a solid understanding of the data contained in the report.

In the world of research administration, our needs and resources are ever-changing, therefore you should periodically reevaluate what we analyze and report on to ensure that the information is still accurate and relevant. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are we getting everything we need from our reports?
- Is there other information that we’re not capturing?

In addition to ensuring that you’re capturing all of the information you need, it’s equally important that you avoid pulling information that you don’t need. Creating clutter in our systems and reports distracts us from the real issues at hand. Additionally, what you choose to measure has an impact on employee behavior.

Overall, metrics must be used to inform, evaluate, and help you to become more efficient at our institution. You must remain flexible and insure that data provided to users is accurate, relevant and usable.
Metrics traces its meaning to the Greek word “metron” which means “measure.” Metrics simply stated is measurement. Research administration offices are the custodians for data that is central to measuring productivity, driving rankings, informing tenure decisions, documenting compliance, and validating the attainment of strategic planning goals. Sometimes they are just plain bragging rights. Research administration data is most often drawn from multiple sources and systems with non-synchronous inputs across a project life cycle: pre-award workflow management, financial, compliance and intellectual property and licensing. Those systems are seldom integrated and contain duplicative inputs for data fields that may span all those systems or may stop short at the pre-award proposal stage. Singly, that fact creates a monumental challenge for data integrity.
For data to have integrity, it must be maintained and stored securely and handled in a way to ensure its accuracy and consistency throughout the lifecycle of its existence. The acronym ALCOA reminds us of the core principles of data integrity: attributable, legible, contemporaneous, original and accurate (Ofni 2017).

ALCOA means data must be:
- Attributable
- Legible
- Contemporaneous
- Original
- Accurate

While these principles are paramount for all our data collection purposes, nowhere is data integrity more critical than those data documenting human subjects and clinical trials. Of the core principles of Good Clinical Practice (GCP) cited in guidance issued by the International Harmonisation of Technical Requirements of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH), two relate specifically to data quality and integrity (Vijayananthan & Nawawi, 2008). This guidance sought to provide practical standards for the principles in the Declaration of Helsinki with goals that included credible clinical trials data.

For data to be attributable, each entry, modification, or deletion must be tracked back to the person who performed that action. Authorizations to enter, modify, or delete data should be made for as few people as possible for each role. Training for those personnel with these authorizations must emphasize the need for confidentiality of logins and passwords, as sharing of those credentials can disqualify data from being attributable. Authorizations must be kept current and terminated when an authorized user no longer needs that access. For data to be legible and contemporaneous, it must be stored in an understandable format and entered in a timely manner. The original data source must be maintained and traceable for quality assurance. And above all, data must be accurately entered. The latter is the Achilles heel in research administration data integrity.

Efficient and effective internal controls and routine actions to monitor for the integrity of data can provide some assurance, having data that is entered accurately, reliably, and timely. Getting it right in the first place saves time and resources in corrective actions so the real question is what motivates those individuals responsible for the data input to comply, especially when those responsible are physicians responsible for clinical trials? One institution has utilized a novel approach to motivating data input throughout the continuum with astounding success. This case studies summarizes that success story.

**Home Run Scorecard**

An audit-ready culture for clinical research as illustrated in Figure 1 requires processes that educate staff and provide real time review of data for integrity with an emphasis on solution-driven workflows that support compliance. But no one says that compliance cannot be fun. The *Home Run Scorecard* was initiated in response to poor audit findings in key areas of Good Clinical Practice. Hitting a home run guided the staff to run the bases by not repeating key performance errors in the prior audit findings.

The objective of the *Home Run Scorecard* was to create an audit-ready culture that supports effective and efficient internal controls for Good Clinical Practice (GCP) conduct in clinical research studies through physician and research staff accountability at every research study visit.

Every baseball season starts with Spring Training! We started our season with our Spring Training Educational Series to prepare the physicians to hit a home run each time they stepped up to bat (each research visit). Spring Training reviewed the prior poor audit findings, and set the new expectations for all research compliance. Physicians were held accountable for completing the Collaborative Institution Training Initiative (CITI) Good Clinical Practice (GCP) and Common Terminology Criteria Adverse Events (CTCAE), which are available via mobile applications for easy access. The GCP guidelines define what has to be accomplished at each base to advance to the next base. The expectation of 100% compliance and accountability was established and once the team had been given the information they needed to run the bases of compliance with the Good Clinical Practice knowledge, it was time to Play Ball!

*Home Run Scorecard* metrics were put in place to improve compliance in the areas identified in the audit findings. Figure 1 lists the steps at each base that must be completed to advance. Stepping up to bat at home plate represents every research visit and each base represents audit ready action items to be completed before the advancing to the next base. Each research visit source documentation and compliance was audited by an internal quality team and provided the data for computing batting averages for each physician and the team.
First base was the start of the research process. The consent process had to be completed with the correct source documentation to advance to the second base. Second base was defined as Inclusion-Exclusion criteria which helped the staff ensure the patient was eligible for the research study and all of the necessary source documentation was in place prior to enrolling in the study. Third base was the base that supported the Good Clinical Practice and ICH goals for data integrity and protocol compliance. To get off third base, all adverse events had to be documented in the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) with appropriate grades, disease staging, and medication adherence data documented. If the research visit wasn’t for a new enrollment, the physicians walk to third base.

Batting averages for each physician were calculated by dividing the number of runs by the total number of research visits. When a physician received an “out” at any base, an educational email was sent to the physician to update their “Spring Training Education Series.” This reinforced the education for all of the bases on how to drive a home run.

All research visits were initially reviewed by the clinical research team made up of research nurses and clinical research coordinators within 24 hours of the visit. Checklists were created to help staff define the hard stops which helped prevent errors or “outs.” The clinical research team had five days to ask the physicians to update anything that was missing. No new staff were added to complete this function, so it became the work of the existing staff to review each morning when they arrived their research visits from the day prior. As compliance improved, this review became routine and minimally burdensome. The full audit by the internal quality coordinator which helped prevent errors or “outs.”

Implementation of this audit-ready culture that focused on solutions rather than deviations provided improvement in all of the key metric areas. Key drivers to success included the educational series “Spring Training”, emphasis how to hit a home run, and weekly feedback to the physician’s performance in the form of the scorecard. Physicians could see how hitting a home run saved time and resources. More importantly, assuring data integrity and compliance actually became fun. The research staff can now spend time making sure the data integrity is correct instead of writing deviations or corrective action plans. This monumental challenge for data integrity can be achieved by stepping up to bat, giving the players the resources they needed to run each base in full compliance, so that hitting a home run can be celebrated by the entire team! Batter up!

## References


Michele Vaughan, BS, CCRP, is the director of clinical research operations in the Hem/Onc/BMT division of Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus, Ohio and the creator of the Home Run Scorecard. She can be reached at michele.vaughan@nationwidechildrens.org

Susan Wyatt Sedwick, PhD, CRA, CSM, is a senior consultant with Attain LLC. She can be reached at ssedwick@attain.com

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Up to Bat</th>
<th>Outs at Each Base</th>
<th>Home Runs</th>
<th>Batting Average</th>
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<td>3rd Base</td>
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<td>Pre-Spring Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Spring Training</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

# Up to Bat: Every research visit that was audited

# Outs at Each Base: Every research visit that didn’t complete the metrics at the designated base

# Home Runs: All research visits that completed all metrics at each base

# Batting Average: # Home Runs/# At Bat

Pre-Spring Training: Research charts audited by large consortium, totaled #136 research visits in all of the chart audited

Post-Spring Training: Every Research visit that occurred to a “on study” patient after spring training for a period 8 months.
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When a healthcare organization engages in clinical research, its ultimate goal is to accumulate knowledge, and by doing so, advance the field of medicine. Clinical trials, a critical part of clinical research, look at new ways to prevent, detect, or treat diseases and aid with defining the safety and efficacy of new drugs, devices, and/or techniques. Besides tracking patient outcomes, organizations engaged in clinical research track metrics (data points) to obtain insight into the operational performance of the clinical research portfolio. These metrics drive decision making, aid with improving processes, and strengthen sponsor relationships. The effective use of metrics, particularly as key performance indicators (KPIs), allows for an objective measurement of an organization’s research-related operations and finances.
Defining Metrics
Defining meaningful metrics for a clinical research portfolio depends on the role of the recipient or users of the metrics. According to data experts, meaningful metrics should include:

Metric Considerations
• Both surprise and confirm
• Lead to other, perhaps better, metrics
• Take into account measurement variance
• Lead to testable hypotheses & predictions
• Can lead to a new level of analytics
• Are within the right window of opportunity
• Lead to needed changes

Among the numerous metrics available, organizations and departments engaging in clinical research should consider tracking the following:

Types of Clinical Research Metrics
• Site Metrics
  • Number of trials conducted
    • By disease group
    • By type
  • Study activation / start up
    • Study submission to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval
    • Study submission to contract execution
    • Study submission to treatment plan build in electronic health record (EHR)
  • Study accrual rates
    • Days to first patient on study
    • Number of patients per day/month/quarter/year
  • Study close out
    • Studies closed per month
    • Studies with publications in industry journals
    • Studies with first authorship
• Revenue Cycle Metrics
  • Coverage analysis (billing determinations)
  • Patient access management
  • Claims management
  • Denial management

Utilizing Metrics to Make Process Improvements
For clinical researchers and administrators, metrics are important factors that drive decisions to: (a) conduct studies at the site and (b) know when to diversify the portfolio. Overall, most metrics can be used to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the organization or a specific department. This is known as the SWOT analysis. When used effectively, this analysis can create efficiencies, enhance collaborations, increase transparencies, and ensure sustainability.

When an organization or department understands what it does well (strengths), shared learning of best practices with others can be achieved. This encourages collaboration, innovation, and motivation of the study teams. Some organizations fail to confront weaknesses and threats. Once the decision to face the challenges and threats is made, an organization or department can create efficiencies and identify opportunities to make progress towards established goals. When strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities are utilized proactively and objectively, threats to the success and performance of the clinical research portfolio can be eliminated.

When tracking site metrics, decision makers can reduce study start up times by focusing on best practices and opportunities for improving the process. Reducing study start up times provides patients with novel compounds and ultimately results in improvements to treatments and a decrease in mortality rates. A reduction in study start up time also minimizes the costs for the organization and enhances clinical revenue. Closing a study is an equally important part of the clinical trial life cycle. When a study remains open and treatment is no longer occurring, the financial cost to the department and organization increases and could negate revenue generated from the sponsor.

During the conduct phase of the study, revenue cycle metrics that relate to clinical research studies enrich the overall financial health of the organization. These metrics are an integral part of clinical operations and hospital/provider billing. Like standard revenue cycle metrics, the key to effectively measuring the clinical research revenue cycle metrics lies with developing KPIs. These metrics consist of quantifiable measures that an organization can use to evaluate and compare performance of business objectives. Within each aspect of the revenue cycle management, metrics like sponsor accounts receivable, insurance accounts receivable (related to the study), sponsor invoice submission rate, clean claim submission rate, and denials management are beneficial to measuring the financial performance of the clinical research portfolio. Denials management metrics are important to enhancing the development of future coverage analysis. Adjustments, due to frequent denials, will aid with minimizing the financial burden of patients participating in clinical trials and provide the sponsor with a heightened awareness of research versus routine care.

Identifying key metrics should serve as vital indications of the overall health of the clinical research portfolio, drive process improvements and enhance collaborations. When optimally utilized, metrics increase the organization’s market presence with sponsors of clinical research thus increasing their competitive advantage over other sites. The specific metrics monitored by the organization and department leaders will vary and each group should strive to ensure complimentary and comprehensive enhancements. By tracking these metrics, the organization and department can enhance the quality of the overall clinical research portfolio and data analysis. These metrics have a direct impact on publications, availability of improved treatment plans and outcomes for patients, and increases the financial health of the organization. All of these metrics result in positive impacts to the healthcare industry.

When optimally utilized, metrics increase the organization’s market presence with sponsors of clinical research thus increasing their competitive advantage over other sites.”

References

Mary Veyzie, MBA, CPA, Executive Director, Clinical Research Finance at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. She directs the coverage analysis (insurance determinations), financial review of clinical agreements, and clinical research billing. She can be reached at mveyzie@mdanderson.org
On March 14, 2017 the federal government published updated Research Terms and Conditions, which are an Overlay to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) found in 2 CFR §200. These replace the previous Federal-Wide Research Terms and Conditions that served as a model implementation of OMB Circular A-110. Nine federal granting agencies, led by representatives from NSF and NIH, worked collaboratively to develop terms and conditions consistent with the Uniform Guidance that are specific to research and consistent with government-wide research policies.

So what does one need to know?

1. The Uniform Guidance is incorporated by reference with clarifications specific to research.

2. The FAQs in effect at the time the award is made are also incorporated by reference. That could be the most salient point given the dynamic nature of the FAQs.


4. To date, only NSF, NIH and DoE have implemented these. It is anticipated that USDA/NIFA will adopt in June 2017 and the remaining agencies (Department of Commerce, DOT/FAA, NASA, DHS and EPA) are expected to follow suit in October 2017.

5. The Department of Defense (DOD) did not participate in this effort and will instead rely on its DOD-wide Research and Development Terms and Conditions for implementation of Uniform Guidance by its offices.

6. These terms and conditions apply to an award only when incorporated in the award by reference.

7. The Appendix A - Prior Approval Matrix is a quick look-up for waivers by implementing agencies where such flexibility is allowed and additional agency restrictions.

8. The Appendix B - Subaward Requirements are arranged by types of awardees for clarity.

9. The Appendix C - National Policy Requirements provides a listing of the statutory/regulatory and executive requirements but may not reflect all requirements that would be incorporated in an award that incorporates the Research Terms and Conditions.

10. The website has not changed and these terms and conditions along with the terms and conditions applicable to older awards, subject to A-110, are still posted on the NSF website at www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp

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Michelle Vazin, Vanderbilt University, shared

I have had the privilege of working with Dave for many years in NCURA, and I am still in awe and have the greatest admiration for the energy, dedication and professionalism he brings to the table for every single endeavor he takes on for NCURA and the broader research administration community…I just cannot say enough about how outstandingly and consistently Dave has served the NCURA organization and the broader community for research administration. I feel so honored that I have been able to work with Dave and learn from his leadership and direction.

Dan Nordquist, Washington State University, says

Dave's colleague Peter Schiffer, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, adds

Having observed his leadership in sponsored programs administration, policy development, training and outreach, I can say with confidence that Dave is truly a leader in the field of research administration. Dave exemplifies the most important characteristics of the highly valued research administrators on our campus. He displays dedication to the institution, a willingness to serve the campus community, careful attention to staffing, and excellent communication skills. In his time at Illinois, Dave has developed a reputation as a critical resource for both faculty and staff, and his impact is only growing.

Patricia Hawk of Oregon State University, contributed

I specifically chose Dave as one of my Presidential appointments because of his demonstrated leadership and service in the regional, national and global arenas. In my mind, I saw Dave as one of our leaders who had the vision to start us thinking about the “globalization” of research administration. I saw Dave not only as my personal role model that enabled NCURA’s adoption of a global strategic plan, but also as a pre-eminent ambassador for NCURA’s work.

Tony Venti of Auburn University, says

On receiving the award, Dave states, “I am honored to be recognized as the recipient of the NCURA 2017 Award for Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration. My research administrative career would have been impossible without the support and guidance I received from the professional relationships I developed as a member of NCURA.”

David Richardson will receive the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration on Monday, August 7, 2017, at the 59th Annual Meeting Keynote Address.
2017 NCURA Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Awardees

This year, the NCURA Nominating and Leadership Development Committee selected four veteran NCURA members to receive the Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award. This award recognizes members who have made sustained and distinctive contributions to the organization.

Each recipient has contributed to NCURA’s success in numerous ways and for many years. The following summaries provide a snapshot of their service and contributions in addition to the many presentations they have made at regional and national meetings and conferences over the years.

THE AWARD RECIPIENTS ARE:

**Jilda Garton**, Vice President for Research and General Manager of Georgia Tech Research Corporation and Georgia Tech Applied Research Corporation, Georgia Institute of Technology. Jilda has been an active NCURA member for 25 years. She has served as a member of the Traveling Workshop Faculty for Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration as well as Level II: Sponsored Project Administration. Jilda also served as an NCURATV faculty member for several productions. Jilda has served on numerous national conference program committees, has been a presenter/facilitator at conferences, and has been a YouTube Tuesday video contributor. As a recipient of this award, Jilda states, “This award is an honor and a delight. NCURA has been an important part of my career since I first began in research administration. It is one of those organizations that does so much for its members that serving, in whatever small way, is a pleasure. I am grateful just to be a member of NCURA and to have such wonderful colleagues.”

**Agatha Keller**, Co-Director EU GrantsAccess, ETH Zurich | University of Zurich. Agatha has served as the Chair of Region VIII, as Program Chair of Region VIII’s first regional meeting, and as a member of the Global Sponsored Projects Workshop Faculty. Agatha is currently on the national Board of Directors and is the Vice Chair of the Select Committee on Global Affairs, which she will chair in 2018. Agatha was awarded Region VIII’s first Distinguished Service Award in 2015. Since becoming an NCURA member in 2011, Agatha has served on an FRA Conference Program Committee and has made many presentations at both national and regional meetings. Agatha shares, “What an unexpected surprise - thank you so much for this wonderful honor. Being part of NCURA helped me to bring my passion for research administration to both the researchers, my home institutions as well as to my colleagues and fellow NCURA members all over the world!”

**Vicki Krell**, Assistant Director, Research Advancement, Arizona State University. During her 20 years of NCURA membership, Vicki has been on several Annual Meeting and Pre-Award Research Administration Conference program committees, on the Board of Directors, and served as the Chair of Region VII. Vicki has also been a member of the Nominating & Leadership Development Committee, an NCURA Magazine Contributing Editor, and has made countless presentations at both regional and national conferences. Vicki will be a Co-Chair of the upcoming 2018 Pre-Award Research Administration Conference. As a recipient of this award, Vicki adds, “NCURA has played such a vital role in my growth and development as a research administrator over the last 20+ years. I’ve had so many wonderful opportunities to play a variety of roles within NCURA, and I’ve enjoyed every moment of them all. I greatly treasure the friends I’ve made, everything I’ve learned, and the chances to give back to this amazing organization. Thank you so very much for this tremendous honor.”

**Rosemary Madnick**, Associate Director, Research Administration, Georgia Tech. Rosemary has served as a member of the NCURATV Faculty for several productions. Rosemary has served on numerous national conference program committees, has been a presenter/facilitator at conferences, and has been a YouTube Tuesday video contributor. As a recipient of this award, Rosemary states, “What an honor and a delight to receive this award. NCURA has been a vital part of my career since I first began in research administration. It is one of those organizations that does so much for its members that serving, in whatever small way, is a pleasure. I am grateful just to be a member of NCURA and to have such wonderful colleagues.”
Rosemary Madnick, Executive Director, Office of Grants and Contracts Administration, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Rosemary has been an involved NCURA member for nearly 20 years, over which time she has served as the Chair of Region VI, a member of the Professional Development Committee, a member of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee, Co-Chair of the 2017 PRA Conference, and as a presenter at both regional and national conferences. Rosemary currently serves as a Peer Reviewer, a member of the Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop Faculty, and is on the 59th Annual Meeting Program Committee. In reaction to the award, Rosemary says, “As a recipient of the Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award it signifies the importance of a collective effort of research administrators to drive change, strive for better outcomes and to support the decisions and be an inspiration to our colleagues and we are in this field because it is worth it!”

The Distinguished Service Award recipients will be recognized at the 59th Annual Meeting before the Keynote Address on Monday, August 7, 2017. Please join us in thanking them for their service and their contributions!
The Joseph F. Carrabino Award, established in 2003 by the NCURA Board of Directors, is named after the late Joe Carrabino, NSF Grants Officer. This award recognizes a current or former federal partner who has made a significant contribution to research administration, either by a single project, activity, or innovation, or by a lifetime of service. The NCURA Nominating and Leadership Development Committee selected Michelle Bulls as the recipient of the 2017 Joseph F. Carrabino Award.

Michelle Bulls is the Director of the Office of Policy for Extramural Research Administration (OPERA) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In the past five years, she has led efforts at NIH to minimize the administrative burdens associated with the remarkable number of federal regulatory changes. As Director of OPERA, Michelle provides trans-NIH direction regarding grants policy and compliance monitoring for the grants management offices of the 24 NIH institutes and centers that support extramural research.

In her own words, Michelle states, “I am beyond honored to be a part of the NIH enterprise where I can make a very small difference in the work NIH does to manage administrative burden that may impact our research institutions. I cannot imagine being rewarded for performing collaborative duties that create a divine partnership which ultimately protects the scientific and administrative interests of both the Federal government as well as our extramural partners. The NIH mission is extremely rich and to be able to add my little crumb to the grand scheme of the entire pie is more than amazing and extremely rewarding.”

As recipient of the 2017 Joseph F. Carrabino Award, Michelle will be recognized at the 59th Annual Meeting before the Keynote Address on Monday, August 7, 2017.
Saying that leadership changes are complex might rank high on the “understatement of the year” list. New leaders bring fresh ideas, demands, and influences to their organizations. They have new goals and objectives, and with them plans to measure and evaluate progress toward those goals. Here at Washington State University (WSU), the energy and enthusiasm of new leadership has brought with it a bloom of metrics to track and compare. I’d like to share our current “metrics story” with you, one still unfolding as our leadership continues to evolve and make its mark, with the hope that you can relate to our journey.

The current WSU Strategic Plan covers the 2014-2019 timeframe and is the primary guiding document in most everything we do. The Strategic Plan includes the establishment of an implementation committee to ensure initiatives are developed and executed to realize the Plan’s goals. Additionally, metrics were identified for each goal to be measured and evaluated on an annual basis. In all, there are 57 metrics spread over four themes, with 15 metrics specifically designated as research related. These 57 metrics include everything from standard expenditure figures to information on student experiences, outreach and engagement, and even diversity. Specific examples include total and federal R&D expenditures reported to NSF, graduate degrees awarded, and freshman retention rates.

Midway through the period covered by the Strategic Plan, WSU hired a new university President and a new Vice President for Research (VPR), each bringing their own vision and additional metrics to the table. First was the hire of our VPR, Dr. Christopher Keane, who came to WSU from a national laboratory as opposed to another institute of higher education. Dr. Keane brought with him an impressive vision, foundationally based on his lab experience and completely different from what we were used to. Immediately, WSU began a “120 Day Study” of our research enterprise, a task included in the WSU Strategic Plan. The main goals of the Study were to identify areas of research excellence and emerging areas requiring additional investment to achieve national and international prominence.

The WSU Office of Research quickly learned that such timed studies are common in the national labs, but this pace was new to us. How could we possibly measure and understand the breadth of our research activities in only 120 days? Four separate subcommittees were created, each addressing a specific aspect of research at WSU: themes, infrastructure, faculty and student recruitment and engagement, and outreach and economic development. These subcommittees provided a new set of metrics - more than 70 of them - for monitoring research progress. Most of which were different from the 57 WSU Strategic Plan metrics! The study’s metrics focus primarily on research activity and include items like the number of faculty participating in international activities, grant expenditures on high performance computing projects, square footage allocated to R&D, and the number of hires from outside of WSU in elevated level positions. While the workload and advanced timeline were daunting, the study was completed on time and many recommendations for strengthening research support and creative activity were made. Thus, the mountain of metrics at WSU grew larger.
As organizations seek to adopt strategies to adapt to a dynamic funding environment, it is important to track, evaluate, and understand metrics that influence decisions in order to enhance overall organizational performance (Reh, 2017). For instance, if an organization has been successful in receiving awards in a specific area which could be substantiated by metrics over a period of time, that recognized success could be factored into a longer term strategy.

Although metrics can be used to support the strategic direction an organization may pursue, PIs and research administrators may also analyze measures to guide decisions that are made on a more granular level. For example, if a PI was seeking to determine the impact of their research based number of citations, they could determine this information by using an abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature like Scopus. Additionally, if a PI needed to demonstrate the number of awards received and the funding amount of each within a specific timeframe to qualify for institutional incentives, they could obtain the data from their institution’s award management system. As a result, using data gleaned from an external database or an institutional system would aid in assessing the significance of their research institutionally and within the external environment.

Similar to metrics a PI may use to evaluate the effect of their research, research administration offices may use metrics to evaluate workload performance or turnaround times as benchmarked against other institutions. To illustrate, a pre-award office may capture metrics for number of proposals submitted in a month while also measuring the turnaround time from proposal receipt to submission. Similarly, a post-award office may track of the number of closeouts reviewed allowing one to evaluate strengths compared to areas of opportunity within the research enterprise.

Metrics can be beneficial for a multitude of reasons. Aside from allowing one to evaluate strengths compared to areas of opportunity for improvement, metrics allow for effective planning given that patterns and trends can be recognized over time.

References

Derek Brown is currently a Research Operations Administrator for Washington State University’s Office of Research Support and Operations. He began as an Office Assistant, advanced to Grant and Contract Specialist where he helped implement WSU’s electronic proposal routing and approval process, served as a Sub-Award and Reporting Administrator, and is now in his new Operations Administrator role. Derek has been at WSU since 2005 and is a past Treasurer of NCURA Region VI. He can be reached at derekbrown@wsu.edu

Timothy Schailey, MS, is the Director of Research Administration at Thomas Jefferson University. He is an active member of NCURA, a member of the Program Committee for Region II, faculty for Region II’s Professional Development Committee, served as past Treasurer and is currently Chair of the region. Timothy can be reached at timothy.schai-ley@jefferson.edu

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2014-2019 WSU Strategic Plan: https://strategicplan.wsu.edu
WSU Drive to 25: https://wsu.edu/drive-to-25
The Center for Measuring University Performance: https://cmup.asu.edu
The Association of American Universities: www.aau.edu

In the spring of 2016, President Dr. Kirk Schulz was hired to lead WSU. Unlike VPR Keane, President Schulz came to WSU with a broad higher education background. He also came with his own vision for the university, which led to our new university-level goal dubbed the “Drive to 25.” The principal objective of the Drive to 25 is to be recognized as “one of the nation’s top 25 public research universities, preeminent in research and discovery, teaching, and engagement by 2030,” and we believe we can get there. Of course progress toward this goal needs to be measured and evaluated, which leads us to yet another set of metrics!

For the Drive to 25, we have focused in on (only!) 11 metrics to guide our path forward. These metrics come primarily from the Center for Measuring University Performance (CMUP) out of Arizona State University. Most of these metrics are covered in either the WSU Strategic Plan or 120 Day Study, concentrating on indicators like research expenditures, median SAT scores, post-doc appointees, and faculty/staff/student diversity. Even though these 11 metrics are new to the mix of numbers used to focus the direction of WSU, initial cross-walking of these across the WSU Strategic Plan and the 120 Day Study has already provided us perspective on unit-level and institutional priorities.

The scores of 120 Day Study metrics continue to drive much of our research strategy, but it is too early to tell if globally WSU will rely more on the 11 Drive to 25 metrics, or the expanded 57 from the Strategic Plan in the years to come. Gaining entry to the Association of American Universities (AAU) is another large goal of ours, and the AAU has its own eight indicators for number of awards received and the funding amount of each within a specific timeframe to qualify for institutional incentives, they could obtain the data from their institution’s award management system. As a result, using data gleaned from an external database or an institutional system would aid in assessing the significance of their research institutionally and within the external environment.

The Association of American Universities: www.aau.edu

If your institution has a similar story, I would love to hear it – especially the ability to focus and not get “bogged down” in time-consuming minutia. Of course progress toward this goal needs to be measured and evaluated, which leads us to yet another set of metrics!
International Efforts of University Research at Hiroshima

What does going international mean to research administrators? For some years the University Research Administrators (URAs) at Hiroshima University in Japan have put significant effort into diversifying initiatives for internationalization of the university’s research activities. This approach has been shaped by goals indicated in the university’s successful proposal for the Program for Promoting the Enhancement of Research Universities (RU Project), funded for a ten-year period since 2013 by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). In this article, I summarize what my colleagues and I have done and discuss what I envision for the future. The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily represent those of Hiroshima University.

Summer heralds major mid-term review for Japan’s URAs

As summer 2017 approaches, URAs at many research-intensive Japanese universities, including Hiroshima University, are busier than usual. This is particularly so for 22 universities and research institutions selected under the RU Project. Focusing attention on the institution-wide function of academic research, the RU Project aims to augment the research capability of each institution and contribute to the strengthening of a core group of Japanese universities engaged in world-class research activities. These 22 institutions are now preparing for the June 30 deadline of MEXT’s mid-term review report on the RU Project. It includes three parts: self-reflection on objective metrics, including indices concerning Japanese national grant-in-aid and papers publicized in international academic journals; comments on the progress of plans spelled out in original proposal; and future concept for the second half of the 10-year RU Project.
RU Project at Hiroshima University

Hiroshima University is one of the largest comprehensive research universities in Japan, with about 15,000 students, 1,700 faculty members, and 1,600 staff members (see www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en). In August 2013, Hiroshima University was selected as one of 22 institutions under the RU Project. Upon selection, Hiroshima University decided on four strategies for the enhancement of its research capability:

- Improving research support; e.g., assigning URAs
- Continuing to create its own world-class Centers of Excellence in research
- Establishing a competitive environment to secure and foster excellent researchers
- Promoting international research activities

This funding from MEXT enabled Hiroshima University to create a system of URAs, housed in the university’s Research Planning Office. Under these four strengthening policies, about a dozen URAs, including myself, with PhDs or other proficiency in a variety of disciplines and specialties were hired and began working on various aspects of the university’s efforts under the RU Project.

In terms of international aspects concerning research, some important metrics were indicated in Hiroshima University’s RU Project proposal: papers publicized in internationally recognized academic journals (e.g., number, citation, international co-authorship); international faculty members (e.g., ratio in the entire faculty population); and international students (e.g., number of enrollment). Importantly (perhaps rather controversially to some critics against the world university rankings), Hiroshima University’s proposal also referenced a goal of aspiring to become one of the top 100 universities in those university rankings.

Hiroshima University URA initiatives for internationalization

As far as the RU Project is concerned, the university’s fourth policy, regarding internationalization, is based on the understanding that the amount of international collaborative research and international dissemination of our achievements has, in the past, been insufficient. In order to overcome this, the university’s URAs, with administrative strengths in international affairs, have attempted promotion of the following three areas of internationalization-oriented activities.

The first is the administrative operation of the University Writing Center, in terms of support for researchers interested in publishing papers in English and preparing themselves for international academic conferences. While our URA team is not involved in the provision of advice or editing for faculty members, it has developed and managed a financial subsidy program for partially covering the costs of English editing services. The team also organizes seminars/workshops/retreats/writing groups for researchers to improve their academic writing skills in English. Satisfyingly, the metrics for papers publicized by the university in international academic journals (e.g., number, citation, and international co-authorship) have somehow improved since the RU Project started.

The second is support for organizing international academic conferences. Our belief is that conferences held by Hiroshima University’s faculty members will increase future opportunities for international research collaboration, and enhance our reputation as an academic institution. Therefore, my URA team started subsidizing international conferences managed principally by university faculty members. Also, the URA team played a leading role in the university concluding a tripartite partnership agreement with Hiroshima City and the Hiroshima Convention & Visitors Bureau to promote MICE (meetings, incentives, conferencing, exhibitions). Hiroshima City, selected as a Global MICE Strategic City by Japan National Tourism Organization, is proactively seeking to attract international conferences, and improve their international reputation as a MICE city by building this strategic partnership.

The third is science communication. Until a few years ago, no institutional effort for international dissemination of research outcome information from Hiroshima University existed. This situation prompted our URA team to begin uploading research outcome English press releases to international science communication websites, EurekAlert!, and AlphaGalileo in November 2014. This pilot initiative started with URAs making the most use of their academic backgrounds by writing releases in English. While this initiative was featured in Science (Lin, 2015), we...
quickly found it critical to improve quality from a science communication perspective. In February 2016, therefore, by borrowing the model established at Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology, one of the most internationalized universities in Japan, the Research Planning Office started employing a Science Communication Fellow with a master’s degree in science communication and/or journalism from an English-speaking country. So far, one fellow from the US, and another from the UK have joined our international science communication team to write quality releases and run an increasingly popular Facebook page.

Recent development and beyond
In the meantime, Hiroshima University’s URAs have recently made their international commitment more visible with involvement in the domestic and international network of research managers and administrators. Last year, Hiroshima University became one of the institutional members of the Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan (RMAN-J), the only nationwide research management society in Japan since its inception in March 2015. As of January 31, 2017, RMAN-J has 23 institutional members and approximately 400 individual members from over 90 institutions in Japan. On top of this domestic expansion, RMAN-J joined INORMS, in which NCURA is an established member. Following involvement in this accession process, I have been honored to become the Leader of the Working Group for RMAN-J since January 2017.

More recently, URAs from four of RMAN-J’s member universities (Hiroshima, Kobe, Kyoto, and Osaka) in conjunction with University of Amsterdam’s research manager held a successful session on “Collaboration with Japan” during the EARMA annual conference in Malta. This will be followed by an EARMA representative being part of my organizing session for exploring EU–Japan research collaboration possibilities during RMAN-J’s annual conference this coming August. Also, Hiroshima University is particularly happy to see RMAN-J’s successful bid for the INORMS 2020 Congress, to be held in Hiroshima, and is eager to play a key role in welcoming research managers and administrators from around the world.

Further thoughts
Given the generally agreed argument that Japanese universities’ research capabilities have been declining in the international academic arena, Hiroshima University will continue to promote internationalization of its research activities in every possible way. Taking into account existing and emerging duties related internationalization, our URA team will seek greater intra-unit collaborations with other administrative units such as the International Exchange Group, Public Relations Group, and Office of Industry-Academia-Government and Community Collaboration. I believe that our URA team with its innovative and agile approach is in a good position to lead such administrative collaborations on campus.

At the same time, it is also crucial to further enhance Hiroshima University URAs’ own capability to work on the global stage. This can be promoted through our active attempts to get involved in international collaboration in networks through each of the individual research management societies in the world, including NCURA.

References

Norifumi Miyokawa, PhD, a Senior Research Administrator at the Research Planning Office, Hiroshima University, Japan, is in charge of institutional efforts to internationalize the university’s research activities. He pursued graduate studies in the UK and Singapore, and obtained a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration at Penn State University. He can be reached at miyokawa@hiroshima-u.ac.jp
NCURA recently presented Mike Varney, Assistant Director of Information Systems at Health Research Incorporated (HRI), with a commemorative plaque to honor his many years of ongoing service to the research administration community through his attentive oversight of the ever-useful Research Administration Listserv (RESADM-L). NCURA Treasurer Shannon Sutton and NCURA's Tara Bishop were on hand at the HRI offices in Menands, New York, on May 8th to make the presentation, attended by many of Mike’s colleagues who joined in the celebration.

RESADM-L is of course the e-mail list used by many research administrators nationally (and sometimes internationally) to pose questions, compare notes, post position announcements, and generally to provide an easy-access forum for research administrators to share information and insights.

The list was first established on November 22, 1993, by Liz Mazzella, then Assistant Director of Technology Transfer and Sponsored Programs at HRI. The list began with just under twenty members. (The original e-mail posted to the list, as well as every other e-mail sent during the past twenty-four years, is still accessible in the list’s public archives.) Mike became caretaker of the list and its associated hardware and software beginning in 1997. Since then, RESADM-L has grown to roughly 5,277 subscribers and averages between 15 to 20 e-mails a day (although Mike notes that this is an overall average—for instance mileage tends to vary on days that GRANTS.GOV is having issues!).

In addition to his oversight of RESADM-L and his other duties as assistant director, Mike also serves as a database administrator, report writer, and server administrator. Since Mike provides his support of the list from an IT perspective and not from one of the other research administration content areas, he only occasionally posts to the list himself on IT-related topics or on the rare occasion when he needs to step in to take care of a runaway conversation, address out-of-office replies inadvertently posted to the entire list, or otherwise do what is necessary to keep the list running smoothly. Mike does note that it is a testament to the list membership that he does not have to moderate the list; by and large the research administration community has behaved responsibly and collaboratively to use the resource effectively without the need for constant oversight of the content of postings.

Mike appreciates that HRI recognizes the value of supporting the list from a technical and managerial perspective and its administrators often find answers in the list postings just like everyone else. HRI covers the annual software licensing fees, equipment maintenance costs, and of course Mike’s time and salary. RESADM-L is currently run off of an “antiquated” (in computer years) Sun server (pictured at right) in the HRI corporate offices in Menands, but there are plans to implement a major software and hardware upgrade in the near future.

Instructions for subscribing to RESADM-L and other information about the list can be found at: http://lists.healthresearch.org/instructions-resadm-l.html

Congratulations Mike, and thanks from NCURA for keeping this resource going.

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Bill Sharp is retired from the University of Kansas. He is the past recipient of a Fulbright fellowship and is co-author of The Dashing Kansan: Lewis Lindsay Dyche. He can be reached at wilsharp@gmail.com
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As I've explained this assignment to you, what questions do you have? What do you do and how can I support you? Does the assignment make sense to you? In other words, do you understand it is related to your question about giving assignments and getting back results.

At the outset, I would ask you if you believe you are making assignment requests clearly and if you are asking questions of those you give instructions to be sure you are understood. You might ask yourself three questions:

1. Am I making requests clearly and am I giving people an opportunity to ask questions about my requests and am I listening to their questions?
2. Am I asking them to repeat back what they thought they heard for the sake of clarity?
3. Am I doing 1 and 2 in a calm and kind manner? (The last question is posed to you solely for your self-awareness on any emotions or preoccupations that may get in your way. I ask myself this question all of the time…and I try to be honest with my answer!)

Past columns have addressed matters of communication in leadership, so I will focus on another aspect of clarity, which is accountability. I am presuming that after you give assignments, you are not necessarily getting back results that you believe you requested. Some of this challenge may be related to how you hold others and yourself accountable for tasks to be completed. It also relates to the roles and responsibilities that you and your team member play in handling assignments.

The challenge of accountability is one that runs deep in most organizations and within the souls of many leaders. It is a requirement of leadership that people learn how to speak and write directly (as Stafford wrote above) so that people know what is expected of them, and that we express to others what we expect of yourself. Many people see the matter of accountability as laden with conflict, and would rather not take the chance of making someone else unhappy by being direct and candid upfront, and instead remain loose and undemanding in providing feedback and expectations.

A high need to please others is a potential pitfall for effective leaders because their focus moves from accomplishing organizational goals to making “other people happy.” (Note: Idea for future column.)

I sense from your question that you know intuitively that this challenge you identify may be related to how you are giving assignments and how you define (with the other person) what your roles and responsibilities are with the assignments. You might consider the following list of “accountability” questions as a beginning guide to work through assignments with your team members. Ask your team member these (or similar) questions as you scope out work together, so that they develop a sense of ownership in the challenge that the work represents, as well as its resolution:

• As I’ve explained this assignment to you, what questions do you have about it?
• Does the assignment make sense to you? In other words, do you understand what we are trying to get to here?
• Do you have thoughts on how you might take on the assignment? Do you have the resources you need?
• What do you think an ideal solution and approach would look like?
• What might you do first?
• When do you do it?
• What do you do and how can I support you?
• What’s going to try to get in your/our way? How do we deal with potential obstacles or problems?
• How will we know if the assignment was completed well? What does a finished assignment “look like”? (Be specific: length, who communicates with whom, by when, who sees drafts, etc.)
• When should we touch base about how this assignment went?

Perhaps by developing an easy back and forth flow of communication with your team members, being explicit about expectations and by including them in the design and desired outcomes of assignments, you stand a better chance at increasing clarity and your own satisfaction with your abilities to craft assignments. All of this effort will likely raise the organizational “happiness” meter for you and your team, as people will have a better idea of where they stand and what they need to do.

Clarity, it seems, is a key to happiness.

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

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

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Metrics-Driven Funding Programs:

What Does the Data Show?

By April Heyward
“What does the data show?” My former Project Officer asked this question each time we proposed to implement or expand funding programs and services in South Carolina. Does the data support the new or expanded funding programs and services? I keep my former Project Officer’s question in mind today as I develop, implement, and manage multiple STEM funding programs and services. As the Program Manager for EP-SCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research), my focus is to increase research capacity, research competitiveness, and the STEM workforce pipeline in South Carolina. EP-SCoR is a science-driven, state-based National Science Foundation (NSF) program. South Carolina has been an EP-SCoR state since 1980, as we receive less than 0.75% of NSF funding averaged over three years. The NSF EP-SCoR designation is accepted by EP-SCoR-like programs of NIH, NASA, DOE, and USDA. There are numerous stakeholder types that play a role in achieving the goals of EP-SCoR to include the K-12 Sector, Technical and Community Colleges, Predominately Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Comprehensive Research Universities (CRUs), Research Institutes, Industries, and Small Businesses. Each of the aforementioned stakeholder types receives and benefits from EP-SCoR funding programs.

The aim of EP-SCoR funding is to engage and expose K-12 students to STEM so they become STEM majors. As STEM majors, research experiences are provided to gain research experience and communicate results via publications and presentations. Student researchers apply their research experience and pursue STEM academic careers or industry careers. EP-SCoR funding fosters faculty development to aid in the pursuit of tenure and promotion (the rigorous process of moving from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor to Full Professor). Scientific research leads to discovery (new scientific knowledge), innovation (new products, services, processes, ideas), and economic development (business and job creation). The cycle starts over with training the next generation STEM workforce (See Figure 1: STEM Workforce Pyramid and Figure 2: STEM Impact Cycle. Heyward, 2017). Metrics are indicators or measurements that provide guidance in decision-making, strategy development, and future direction. Metrics serve as benchmarks in evaluating the broader impact and success of scientific research. How many early career faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students were engaged in research? How many journal articles, book chapters, books, thesis/dissertations were the result of research? Are there student authors and presenters publishing and presenting research results? How many startups, licenses issued, jobs created, inventions disclosed, patent applications filed, and patents issued? The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how funders use metrics in decision-making and strategy development of funding programs.

**What Does the Data Show?**

To be effective in developing and implementing funding programs, we need to define the need of the funding program, engage and listen to stakeholders, define benchmarks to evaluate the broader impact and success, determine how data will be collected and analyzed, incorporate stakeholder feedback and benchmarks in the framework, and be flexible with updating the funding program. I always feel like I just walked into the middle of a movie each time I assume a new role in an organization. What is the plot of the movie? What happened at the beginning of the movie? Why where the actors cast in the movie? To begin answering these questions, I launched a listening tour of South Carolina colleges and universities. For several months, I engaged and met with Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Full Professors, Department Chairs, Provosts, and Vice Presidents for Research. The listening tour allowed me to witness first-hand the impressive research being conducted in the state, build relationships, and offer researchers the opportunity to feel they are genuinely being heard.

I collected data through site visits, meetings, and interviews to identify perceptions of previous

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**Figure 1:** STEM Workforce Pyramid. Source: The Value Proposition of the Research Administrator: Preparing Tomorrow’s Candidate (Heyward, 2017)

**Figure 2:** STEM Impact Cycle. Source: The Importance of STEM Workforce Development: The Role You Play (Heyward, 2017)
funding programs and services, barriers, technical assistance needs, and new funding programs and services needed. Content analysis was utilized and reoccurring themes identified areas of improvement and new funding programs and services. The reoccurring themes included the following:

- Undergraduate research opportunities
- Proposal development services and workshops
- Statewide research collaborations
- Research expertise database to facilitate collaboration
- Research project team evaluation technical assistance
- Funding for proposal development
- Funding for faculty travel support
- Materials and supplies for undergraduate research
- Public repository of funding opportunity announcements
- Proposal development services and workshops
- Research project team evaluation technical assistance
- Funding for housing of students engaged in summer research
- Faculty release time

Being a listening ear allowed assessment of needs and barriers to achieve the goals of increasing research capacity, research competitiveness, and the STEM workforce pipeline. PUIs primary mission is teaching and it is challenging to achieve high research productivity as compared to a CRU when a faculty member has a teaching load of 27 credit hours, administrative appointment, and institutional service commitments. It is also challenging for some PUIs to provide faculty release time to focus on research and scholarly activities and to hire an adjunct faculty to cover classes and other duties with competitive compensation. How can I meet PUI faculty where they are? If they are not able to be research productive during the academic year, then I need to develop a funding program to build research capacity and productivity during the summer when there is more time. I am developing the framework for a 2018 PUI Research Capacity Building funding program to increase faculty research engagement, student research engagement, publications, and position faculty to pursue research funding.

I developed a Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) funding program to increase undergraduate student’s research participation in ongoing research during the academic year and/or the summer in the areas of life science, physical science, engineering, and mathematics. Measuring the success of the REU program include the number of students engaged in research, female students recruited, underrepresented minority students recruited, student presentations, student publications, and STEM graduate school and career plans. I incorporated data from the listening tour into the funding solicitation and prescribed funding to be utilized to support student stipends, materials and supplies, and travel support for students. I was alerted to student housing needs from multiple institutions in less than 24 hours of the funding solicitation release. It is challenging for some institutions to open the dorms and cover housing costs for students who are not enrolled in summer school. I was flexible and allowed student housing costs for 2017 REU grantees as this was a need. Student housing will officially be included in the 2018 REU funding solicitation.

Metrics can signal alert to when something is wrong and the lack of metrics will lead to something going wrong. There was an existing funding program for which I could not ascertain broader impact and success. The funding program was popular with grantees and historically had a high funding rate but I could not find data to support release of the next funding cycle. The funding solicitation was eventually released. I administratively reviewed proposals and assigned proposals to reviewers to evaluate scientific merit. I encountered a number of challenges and the review process lasted longer than projected. The first challenge was reviewers were not agreeing on which proposals to fund. I had to reassign proposals to additional reviewers to arrive at final funding decisions. Final funding decisions were coming in but high volumes of funding decisions were to “Administratively Decline” and “Do Not Fund.” The reviewer score sheets raised concerns for me regarding the quality of proposals received and proposal readiness. There was a pattern of not adhering to the funding solicitation guidelines. I am developing proposal readiness workshops, webinars, and FAQs before the next funding cycle to increase proposal readiness and proposal quality.

Conclusion

Metrics are indicators or measurements that provide guidance in decision-making, strategy development, and future direction. They serve as benchmarks in evaluating broader impact and success and can effectively save time, resources, and frustration. Funding programs should be need driven and metrics driven. Establish benchmarks and an evaluation plan prior to implementation of the funding program. Be an active listener with stakeholders and pay attention to what the data is showing. Be flexible with updating the funding program framework as needs and data will change.

References


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Research Metrics in Context

By Paul Wouters, Ed Noyons and Mark Neijssel

Universities pay close attention to their position in the various global rankings. Individual assessment interviews in many biomedical fields, for example, are focused on the impact factor of the journals in which the researcher has published. Research groups need to account for both their quality and societal impact in post-publication reviews and national research assessment exercises. Review committees that need to judge large numbers of applications for grants or positions are searching for summary statistics and metrics that help to filter out those texts that they do not need to read. Citation statistics play a larger role than ever in the assessment of the quality and scientific relevance of the output of researchers. Only in a rapidly decreasing number of fields in the arts and humanities does the scale still permit the classical close reading. Indeed, reading scientific articles seems to play a decreasing role in institutional evaluation, while proxy metrics are more important than ever.

This development has increased the responsibility of both users and producers of research metrics. As some prominent scientometricians have argued, the era of “innocent scientometrics” has passed, and we now need to create and diffuse “responsible metrics” practices and protocols. In the UK report The Metric Tide, we have formulated five dimensions which shape responsible metrics:

- **Robustness**: basing metrics on the best possible data in terms of accuracy and scope;
- **Humility**: recognizing that quantitative evaluation should complement—but not supplant—qualitative, expert assessment;
- **Transparency**: keeping data collection and analytical processes open and transparent, so that those being evaluated can test and verify the results;
- **Diversity**: accounting for variation by field, using a variety of indicators to reflect and support a plurality of research and researcher career paths;
- **Reflexivity**: recognizing the potential and systemic effects of indicators and updating them in response.

We have published ten principles to serve as practical guides for the use of research metrics in the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics (which has been translated in 15 languages). Various universities and funding organizations are reviewing their assessment protocols with respect to these principles. Recently, we added 10 principles for responsible use of global university rankings. Although the principles seem quite straightforward, putting them into practice is not always easy, since the global competition tends to favor a simplistic number-oriented approach obsessed with high scores and rankings.

A shortsighted focus on short term output indicators is detrimental for the management of scientific research because science and scholarship are oriented towards the generation of fundamentally new knowledge. This is by definition partly an “unknown unknown.” Performance indicators are retrospective, whereas institutions aim to look forward. In addition, these indicators do not capture the full range of relevant dimensions of quality or impact and are at best partial proxies. Last but not least, the existing citation databases do not capture the full range of relevant scientific output and have a bias towards international English language publications.

Research institutes basically provide the ecology for research to blossom and this holds true for institutes aiming for internationally groundbreaking research, for those that aim to mainly translate knowledge into practicable insights and expertise, as well as for institutes with a mainly educational mission. The mission of the institute must therefore be leading in determining the type of assessment, indicators, and data needed. Also, the disciplinary context of research must be taken into account. Usually, too much emphasis is put on output indicators, whereas indicators of the research environment and the process conditions are undervalued. This is paradoxical because the conditions under which researchers have to work are crucial and these are mainly determined by the research institutes and their administrators.

The future of performance indicators lies therefore not in the type of indicators such as the H-index (a measurement of both the productivity and citation impact of a scholar’s publications) but more in the visualization of the environment. For example, the body of scientific literature can be visualized and this enables institutes to have novel insights into their position in these international networks. The AIDA project at the Delft University of Technology is an example of the visualization of the “brain of the university” based on bibliometric mapping. This can provide a much needed compliment (or correction) to the one-dimensional listings of university rankings because it is able to include many dimensions of research performance and is scalable at different levels of the university and the networks it is involved in.

Research is multidimensional and so should research evaluation be.

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**FUN, CHUCKLES, AND COOL RESEARCH INFO:**


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 eXtra@ncura.edu.
The National Science Foundation’s (“NSF”) Higher Education Research and Development (“HERD”) survey provides a defining and reliable set of metrics for research administrators in institutions of higher education of all types. When we look carefully at these metrics, however, for the stories that we can discern and tell to our supervisors, PIs, and other interested constituents, we may find gaps and areas of possible concern. This article examines HERD data from fiscal years 2010 through 2015 to identify emerging challenges to the academic research enterprise, as well as some limitations of current data sources.

Four Years of Federal Decline
After reaching an all-time historic peak of more than $40.7 billion in 2011, the Federal portion of higher education research expenditures has been declining each year. The year-over-year declines have been gradual but have accumulated into something substantial. In FY 2015, the reported total fell short of $37.9 billion, a 7.1% decline from the 2011 peak. The 2015 figure still exceeds the FY 2010 figure of approximately $37.5 billion, but we must remember that these are not inflation-adjusted figures. If we use the Consumer Price Index as a measure of inflation, the 2015 amount has 7.3% less purchasing power than the Federal expenditures of 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics). The National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) Biomedical Research and Development Price Index (“BRDPI”) for this period generates similar results (National Institutes of Health).

Translating from numbers to narrative, we can say that the Federal contribution to the research enterprise, after having reached a peak in 2011—thanks, in part, to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)—has been declining ever since. In retrospect, and for the first time since the emergence of the modern system of research funding after World War II, it is unrealistic for universities to set expectations based on an assumption of year-over-year increases in Federal funding.

Yet there are more numbers to study and more stories to be told.

Who Is Filling the Gap?
As Figure 1 shows, despite the decline in the Federal share, the overall expenditures of the higher education research enterprise have increased, from $65.27 billion to $68.67 billion from 2011 to 2015, a 5.2% increase. With the BRDPI having increased 5.4% in that period, the overall state of higher education research and development has remained essentially level-funded. Where did...
the funds come from to cover the gap left by Federal decreases?

The data allow us to quickly rule out several hypotheses. The aggregate direct contribution of state and local governments to higher education research funding—leaving aside the role of state funding in the operating budgets of public institutions—has declined slightly, from $3.823 billion in 2011 to $3.812 billion in 2015. Nor has private industry stepped into the breach; while the contribution of for-profit businesses to university research in that time period has increased substantially in relative terms, by approximately 25%, the increase in absolute dollar terms falls far short of the Federal decline—about $822 million, as compared to a Federal shortfall of about $2.8 billion.

There may be some hopeful signs in the realm of private philanthropy. This analysis combines NSF's reported totals of funding from “not-for-profit” sources and reported totals of “all other” sources, which includes gifts from individual donors. After attaining $4.9 billion in 2011, this combined total dipped to $4 billion in FY 2012. However, by FY 2015, it had increased to an all-time high of $6.266 billion. Overall, foundations and individual donors have helped colleges and universities maintain their research enterprises more than for-profit corporations, but all together, these sources are not sufficient to account for the continued inflation-linked growth we have seen.

What has increased quite substantially is the contribution of institutional funds to research, from $12.6 billion in 2011 to $16.7 billion in 2015. These figures should prompt immediate concern for anyone interested in the sustainability of the higher education research enterprise, the pressures of tuition costs on students, the returns on endowment dollars (for private institutions), or the case to be made for state support (at public institutions).

**Directions for Future Research**

We should be cautious about ringing alarm bells or declaring that the sky is falling. For closer examination, this is where the limitations of the available data begin to become clear.

The reliability of HERD data makes it attractive to research administrators at all types of institutions. Award data fluctuate from year to year—at smaller or less research-intensive institutions, sometimes wildly—depending on the mix of principal investigators, disciplines, awarding agencies, etc., in one’s portfolio. Expenditure data help to smooth out the differences between, say, an NIH award that is subject to yearly non-competitive continuations, and a multi-year NSF award that is obligated all at once. And we trust that our colleagues at other institutions are reporting their Federal data (and, we hope, the state and local government, business, and awards from not-for-profits) more or less accurately, since we know that all this is subject to audit.

This makes HERD data attractive for benchmarking one’s accomplishments not just against national aggregates, but also against comparable institutions. For example, when the author of this article found that his institution’s Federally funded research expenditures had increased 106% from 2010 to 2015, and that out of a set of forty three (43) comparable colleges, only one had exceeded this increase in either percentage or dollar terms, he could not resist sharing this news with his supervisor.

Yet the reliability of these data appears to falter when we examine expenditure of institutional funds. While NSF’s instructions for this portion of the survey are quite comprehensive, the inter-institutional variations appear to be greater than can be explained simply by reference to different institutional budgets, resources, and policies. As a case in point, the aforementioned comparison group of liberal arts colleges included two “Seven Sisters” colleges, both with under-graduate enrollments of fewer than 2500, low faculty-student ratios, and reputations for strong support of research. One reported expenditures of institutional funds on research of more than $8.5 million in FY 2015, accounting for 73% of their total reported research expenditures in that year. The other reported none at all.

Given the apparent variations in reporting practices, what are we to make of the growth in the aggregate reported share of institutional funding in the research enterprise? Two hypotheses present themselves: (1) Any variations between actual and reported institutional expenditures are sufficiently random that changes in the NSF statistic accurately reflect the overall state of this indicator, and that institutional expenditures on research are, in fact, increasing. (2) Institutions are getting better at identifying, capturing, and reporting their institutional expenditures, perhaps to an extent that the reported increase is an artefact of these improvements. Testing these hypotheses requires a well-designed empirical study.

Such a study would not have to survey all 640 participants in the NSF HERD survey. Just as the top 57 Federally-funded institutions account for more than 50% of all Federal higher education research expenditures, the corresponding number for institutional funding of research is 44. A small number of institutions and their reporting practices drive the overall trend. To provide strategic guidance to our institutions on how to address a challenging environment for the funding of research, we research administrators need to be prepared to turn the lens of research on ourselves.

**References**


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The difficulty of explaining our jobs to other people is a common inside joke among research administrators. While it provides some much-needed comic relief, there is truth in the notion that our roles are complicated; moreover, the entire US research enterprise is complex and sometimes difficult to comprehend. For example, in a recent article about proposed reductions to federal biomedical research funding, Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price indicated that the government could save money by cutting the indirect costs on funded research to universities (Pear, 2017). In response, researchers characterized this idea as a “fundamental misunderstanding of the way biomedical research is conducted” (para. 11).

While one might not expect our governmental representatives to have a firm grasp of how research and sponsored programs work, surely the academic leaders at our respective institutions would understand the realities of sponsored research, right? Surprisingly, this is not always the case. In fact, a prevailing theme from a case study of three predominantly undergraduate institutions (PUIs) was “an administrative disconnect with respect to the realities of conducting sponsored programs” among cabinet-level administrators, including chairs, deans, vice presidents, and university presidents (Niles, 2016, p. 143-144).

This revelation illustrates the importance of qualitative metrics. While it is easy for us as research administration professionals to concentrate on the litany of numbers, figures and other traditional quantitative metrics that help measure success, a qualitative approach to metrics can help us explore, describe, and explain the patterns and relationships humans construct in the organizations they operate (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam, 1998). In this specific case, they may help us to understand why some research administrators feel their cabinet-level leaders neither comprehend nor adequately support the research enterprise, how this perception manifests itself within sponsored programs offices, and what we can do to help build competency for our decision-making administrators and leaders.

Administrative Disconnect: Research findings
To fully grasp how a lack of understanding about sponsored programs and the research enterprise among cabinet-level administrators can hinder PUIs, it may first help to have some context. Historically, larger, more research-intensive institutions have received the vast majority of federal research funding. Of the 905 colleges and universities reporting federal research and development expenditures to the 2014 National Science Foundation (NSF) Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD), which serves as a census of colleges and universities with $150,000 or more in annual research expenditures, the top 3% received more than 40% of all federal support (NSF, 2015). Consequently, PUIs are at a significant disadvantage in competing for sponsored funding. Factoring in “a lack of physical infrastructure, a perception of lower credibility, greater susceptibility to declining financial support, and fewer research administration personnel,” (Niles, 2016, p. 5) it becomes apparent that numerous forces already hamper PUIs and other smaller institutions seeking to become more research oriented.

With the increased pressure for faculty at PUIs to “procure external funds and engage in consulting activities to generate additional revenue” (Niles, 2016, p. 3), it is critically important for these institutions to enhance their capacity to secure and manage sponsored projects. However, when institutional decision-makers do not have a firm understanding of the sponsored program offices’ roles in the research enterprise, there can be far-reaching ramifications that impede progress. In the highlighted case study (Niles, 2016), research administration professionals at three PUIs explain how they perceived this lack of cabinet competency.

Regulatory framework. Respondents from one PUI spoke about weak regulatory protections that were hindrances to their research enterprise. For example, when speaking about the history of support structures for post award, the sponsored programs director stated a previous grant accounting director “wasn’t worried about . . . what we were doing right [or] if we would get in trouble . . . if we had an audit” (Niles, 2016, p. 89). The associate director in the same office confirmed this, adding, “Leadership wasn’t really interested in the compliance side. A lot of focus went on the fact that we have all this money,
goals for increasing external grants each year, A chief research officer at another institution be numbers up... crank out more grant proposals stated that leaders would ask him to “get the ally control that completely” (Niles, 2016, p. 96). Respondents at another PUI echoed similar thoughts about its research foundation, stating, “It’s a bank that just funnels money through. And I think there’s potentially a lot you can do with it if you’re at a [research intensive university]. But at a comprehensive, it doesn’t make a lot of sense” (p.101).

Limitations of the sponsored programs office. Sponsored programs office staff at each PUI spoke extensively about how the cabinet-level lack of understanding about sponsored programs affects their respective units. One director stated that leaders would ask him to “get the numbers up... crank out more grant proposals’ without understanding that our office doesn’t really control that completely” (Niles, 2016, p. 96). A chief research officer at another institution bemoaned the administration’s tendency to set goals for increasing external grants each year, noting that “growing your external base... take[s] a village. It takes a good sponsored programs office, but it also takes good faculty. It takes good academic leadership... making this part of a strategic plan” (p. 90).

What can we do to build competency? One illuminating comment about building competency came from a sponsored programs employee describing the grant seeking experience of a former provost. As this [now] faculty member navigated the process of preparing and submitting a proposal, “she was astounded at what went into it, what roles we played” (Niles, 2016, p. 95). In fact, the former provost remarked that had she known about the intricacies of the process, she “would’ve approached course release and different things pertaining to faculty being able to submit grants very differently” (p. 95). This example highlights the importance of improving cabinet competency regarding sponsored programs. While it is unreasonable to expect them to be experts, chief research officers at PUs should “work with administrative leaders... to develop a realistic understanding about the institution’s research enterprise” (p. 157).

So, as one chief research officer put it, “I think we have to do a better job educating our higher administration folks in terms of what sponsored programs can and cannot do” (Niles, 2016, p. 90). In times where many states are still struggling to recover from the Great Recession (Oliff, Mai, & Palacios, 2012), PUI leaders would be wise to listen to their chief research officers and realize the potential contribution sponsored programs can make to “enhancing the institutions’ ability to acquire scarce resources” (Niles, 2016, p. 157). In fact, an economic study on the impact of federal life science funding on institutions’ overall R&D expenditures found that “the effect of federal funding [is] stronger for non-research universities” (Blume-Kohout, Kumar, and Sood, 2008, p. 4) due to a signaling effect; succinctly, the public believes such funding means an institution has “passed rigorous screening to obtain federal funding” (p. 4). As we well know, money is a great motivator, and such an argument may hold sway with institutional leaders. As this example has shown, a close examination of qualitative metrics, such as an institution’s cabinet competency of sponsored programs, can reveal an array of potential weaknesses to address, as well as opportunities to seize in the name of moving our research enterprises forward in a strategic and unified direction. In our data-informed world, let us not forget about the qualitative metrics that can provide us the insight, depth and richness absent in the numbers we crunch every day in our quest to move the needle.

In fact, it could very well be the metric your office is missing.

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References


HOW TO MANAGE A FINANCIALLY FOCUSED UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AUDIT EFFECTIVELY

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A PRIMER ON EXPORT CONTROLS

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Download a copy today at NCURA’s Online Learning Center https://onlinelearning.ncura.edu/
The Middle East has long been seen as an epicenter of turmoil and political unrest. In fact, the region has become synonymous with endless wars and political instability. But there is another side to the Middle East that is starting to flourish (again!). Today, there are many universities and research institutes in the Middle East that are striving and yearning to showcase the region as a hub of intellectualism. In fact, great faith is placed upon these universities, both newly established and old, to return the Middle East back to the times of Bayt-Al Hikma (translated from Arabic as the ‘House of Wisdom’), where the region was the center of a great intellectual movement during the Islamic Golden Age. Universities and research institutes in the Middle East have started to realize the importance of reviving this intellectual movement for the benefit of society. With universities around the world making great strides towards innovation, it is becoming increasingly evident that universities in the Middle East want to make their mark in the world of research and development. In recent years, interest in the region has focused on how universities can contribute towards developing the economy, increase job creation and expand opportunities.

Yet, there are still challenges that institutions in the Middle East are facing in terms of paving a clear path through which lucrative research findings and technologies can make their way to the regional market and ultimately the global market. These challenges can be divided into internal and external factors. Internal factors are those related to the current operations of a research institution and its engagement with academic and industrial partners. The external factors are related to regulatory and governmental agencies for which the institution often has little to no influence on and has to develop internal strategies to overcome these challenges.

To maximize the outputs of an institution’s research discoveries and create its own innovation ecosystem, a key area that an institution within the Middle East can improve on is developing a strong understanding of its research development activities and create an even stronger link between its sponsored research and technology transfer offices. Industry sponsored research projects in the Middle East are severely scarce, not only because of the lack of R&D mechanisms and resources, but also due to limited expert knowledge in the full cycle of sponsored research activities and technology transfer principles. Such principles include technology development to increase TRL (Technology Readiness Levels) or legal methodologies by which rights such as protection of intellectual property and licensing deals are facilitated. Therefore, it is increasingly imperative to recognize the need in instituting concrete operational models and policies whereby sponsored research and technology transfer offices are working closely together to encourage regional companies, especially medium-sized entities to benefit from engaging more with universities.
Hence, we dare to make the case for strategic investment in structured sponsored research and technology transfer practices to those institutions who do not have robust offices in this area. These institutions should make a concerted effort to reach out to other institutions in the region to help develop their skills in grant and technology management. Not only is it a perfect opportunity for these institutions to gain some of the skills needed to create a strong innovation ecosystem, but it will also build stronger ties between universities in the Middle East. With many of them focusing on common research themes, it is an opportunity to pool some of this knowledge and perhaps create a consortium in various, but regionally important research fields.

In addressing the external challenges with governmental and regulatory entities, Middle Eastern universities should work together to develop a research and innovation policy by which all universities strive to follow to gain the maximum benefit when receiving funding from such agencies. This may allow universities in the Middle East to change the current framework set by governmental and regulatory agencies in terms of empowering institutions to do more with their technology portfolios and set standards in terms of regulation. The same strategy applies to many companies within the Middle East that tend to view universities as contract research organizations. Such models may also allow the opportunity to educate companies in the region on how to work with universities to maximize industry-academic collaborations that will result in a winning situation for all in terms of economic growth.

Therefore, while it is always important to obtain funding for projects with the ultimate goal of developing something novel and thus generating licensing income, the operating model of a Middle Eastern university should first place importance not in the financials, but in asking how the project serves the needs of the university and the society, and what sort of regionally accessible resources can be tapped for technology development. A big component in addressing that question should include universities seeking open collaborations with companies not just in their home country but other companies within the Middle East. Interestingly (and due to the lack of technical research and development not truly inherent in the Middle East for reasons outside the scope of this article), this can provide an opportunity for Middle Eastern universities to have more control in determining a technology’s different pathways to the regional and global markets. Putting all this into perspective, this could start a new model of university engagement to assist with both research funding and technology transfer in what is supposed to be an otherwise seamless operation.

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**Dr. Sani Bashir** is Director, Technology Management & Innovation, at Khalifa University of Science & Technology in Abu Dhabi, UAE. He previously held the position of Associate Director of the Technology Transfer Office at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, KSA. He can be reached at smbashir@masdar.ac.ae

**Ms. Aeisha Salem** is Awards & Contracts Specialist, Research Services, Office of Sponsored Research at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia. She previously held the position as Material Transfer Administrator at the University of Rochester, USA. She can be reached at aeisha.salem@kaust.edu.sa

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n 2012, the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) conducted a survey to examine the amount of time that federally-funded faculty spent on administrative rather than scientific duties. The results of the 2012 FDP Faculty Workload Survey (http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga_087667.pdf) showed that federally-funded researchers report spending an average of 42% of their research time on administrative tasks. One of the most time-consuming activities was completing procedures required for assuring the protection of human subjects. Although all agree that protecting human subjects is essential, there is also broad agreement that the process could be made more efficient.

One of the most promising targets for potentially reducing unnecessary administrative burden is the large subset of research projects that involve minimal or no risk to participants. Many of these qualify for exempt status based on the categories described in the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) regulations, which allows for an abbreviated review process. The regulations state the criteria for exempt status but do not require that the review of these criteria be conducted by an IRB administrator or board member. Provided a record of the review is kept, the review could potentially be conducted through an automated self-review. The goal of the FDP Wizard Pilot was to provide a proof of concept showing that an electronic smart form, or “wizard,” could allow investigators to accurately self-determine exempt status through an automated process.

The wizard was created based on OHRP guidelines, adhering closely to decision flowcharts that the OHRP makes available on its website. Special considerations included the adoption of language throughout that would be acceptable to regulatory agencies, availability of all answers about each project in a database for IRBs to track, and a researcher-friendly interface. There was also recognition that a built-in mechanism would be needed to identify projects that would be difficult to assess within the wizard and to refer these instead to the IRB for review (for example, when vulnerable participant populations are involved).

Once developed, initial testing showed that researchers could evaluate their project in less than 15 minutes. If successful, this suggested an enormous potential benefit to researchers, giving them an almost immediate determination if the study were indeed exempt. It also suggested a large potential savings in IRB staff time for all those exempt projects that could be resolved by the wizard without further review. To determine how well the wizard would function, we enlisted the help of 10 volunteer universities. They asked investigators whose studies had already been reviewed by the IRB to also complete a review by the wizard. These investigators independently completed the wizard process, answering its questions until a determination was made.

The pilot concluded with complete data from 542 studies. In order to be considered complete, the study had to be fully reviewed independently via the wizard and by the university’s IRB. Personnel from the university’s IRB had to record their determination (without knowledge of the wizard outcome) and forward it to us for comparison. Although our evaluation of findings is still in its initial phases, results thus far are quite promising.

One quarter of the studies were successfully processed through the wizard as exempt and were also deemed exempt by the IRB. This suggests that at least 25% of the review workload for projects submitted for exempt consideration could be relegated to the wizard, saving staff time and providing the investigator with an immediate approval. In principle, this could provide substantial time savings.

The wizard and IRB reviews also agreed that about 15% of the projects were ineligible for exempt status (for example, requiring expedited review). This provides evidence that when researchers are unclear if their project meets exempt criteria, the wizard can correctly indicate the need for additional IRB review.

These agreements would be especially encouraging if there were not also a large number of cases in which the wizard and IRB determinations differed. The discrepancy rate is a primary consideration with the most problematic cases being those in which the wizard deemed a study to be
exempt but the IRB judged the study to require expedited (or even full) review. We realized that even two different IRBs could disagree on a study’s status so we anticipated that there would be some disagreements. Nevertheless, it was imperative that the wizard not allow higher risk studies to wrongly be deemed exempt. In fact, only 27 of the 542 studies (5%) yielded a disagreement that might represent this kind of error. We are now following up to see which of the following three reasons can best account for each case: (a) a problem with the wizard, (b) institutional IRB standards more stringent than what OHRP mandates, or (c) inconsistent answers by the investigator when preparing the IRB and wizard applications.

The other possible disagreement would involve a wizard decision that a study was not eligible for exemption, with an IRB decision that the study could be exempted. If this represented an error by the wizard, it would have fewer negative repercussions given that the protocol would be referred to the IRB for additional review, but to avoid unnecessary burden, it was important to avoid inasmuch as possible. Only 23 of the 542 studies (4%) fell into this group. We are also following up here to find out the most likely reason for each of these disagreements.

The mechanism to identify studies that could not easily be assessed by the wizard worked effectively but also suggested that there is likely room to fine-tune the wizard. Roughly half of the studies could not be satisfactorily resolved by the wizard. About 30% of these were referred to the IRB for further review, typically because the investigator reported some type of relationship with the study participants (e.g., instructor–student, healthcare provider–patient, staff–client) or the participants included potentially vulnerable populations. For these cases, we hope to explore ways that the wizard might handle some or all of the exempt studies within these groups. Another 20% needed follow-up because the researcher indicated that the study was outside of the OHRP definitions for human subjects or for research. Only one of these cases was deemed to be outside these definitions by the IRB. Because this suggests that these OHRP definitions can be hard to interpret, we hope to examine whether tools can be provided within the wizard to help clarify when these definitions do and do not apply. For cases in which the wizard will not be sufficient for determination, we are hoping to avoid unnecessary time spent in the wizard by alerting investigators almost immediately that they will need to seek IRB review.

As a proof of concept, our early results suggest that the wizard pilot is a success. The pilot demonstrates the promise of a self-determined, automated system for allowing investigators to determine exempt status, at least for a large subset of projects. The wizard also shows promise for identifying studies that require additional oversight, either because they cannot be exempted, or because the judgment requires sophistication not yet incorporated into the wizard. The wizard also has potential to be a quick and user-friendly method for researchers to use. With the help of the IRB community, we hope to continue to refine the wizard to create a useful tool for gaining efficiency in the review of low risk human subjects studies.

Kris Monahan, Ph.D., is a member of the Select Committee on Peer Review. She has participated in peer reviews and has more than 15 years of research administration experience, spanning pre-award, post-award, and research compliance at small institutions. She is the Director of Sponsored Research & Programs at Providence College.

Whether you work at a research institution or a predominantly undergraduate institution, the importance of providing quality services to your faculty in support of their research and scholarship is undeniable. NCURA offers a number of programs to assist your research administration operations and to ensure a high-quality infrastructure that supports your faculty and protects the institution.

Please contact NCURA Peer Programs:
NCURA Peer Advisory Services and NCURA Peer Review Program at peerreview@ncura.edu

Sandra L. Schneider, Ph.D., is Professor in the Cognition, Neuroscience, and Social Psychology at the University of South Florida, Vice Chair of the Federal Demonstration Partnership, and former Division Director of the Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences at the National Science Foundation. In addition to being the principal investigator on the 2012 FDP Faculty Workload Survey, Dr. Schneider conducts research in the area of motivational and cognitive processes in judgment and decision making. She can be reached at sandra@usf.edu

Jane A. McCutcheon, D.D.S., Ph.D, is an Associate Professor and the Faculty Liaison for Compliance at New York University. She can be reached at jam2@nyu.edu
Managing international research projects present a range of financial challenges and complexities beyond programs managed on campus. Risks and challenges are further increased by inexperience or lack of information concerning laws, financial practices or customs. The institutions managing these projects range from large institutions with significant infrastructure to smaller institutions with distributed, less established processes. Employing a “virtual panel” discussion, we asked colleagues from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison), the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) about their experiences, best practices, and learning lessons from engaging in international projects and measuring their success.

**Can you tell our NCURA readers a little bit about your institution’s international programs and how you provide support?**

**Robert Andresen:** UW-Madison doesn’t have an office that focuses exclusively on international research. Projects are handled by central Sponsored Programs and campus departments. While international projects make up a small percentage of our overall portfolio, their complexity and visibility means that we spend a greater proportion of our time managing them versus many domestic projects.

**Meg Patterson Rogers:** CMU’s branch campus in Doha, Qatar was established in 2004 at the invitation of the Qatar Foundation (QF) and is one of six U.S. universities in Qatar’s Education City. CMU-Q is funded entirely by QF. To accept grant funding from the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), CMU-Q was required to set up an authorized Research Office.

**Mary Catherine “MC” Gaisbauer:** I have been at UCSF for 3 years but within research university controller offices for over 15 years. One role has been assessing and mitigating the risks of international operations. Resources dedicated to risk management and compliant processes is limited and required ingenuity and dedication. UCSF has a large and complex portfolio of projects in over 100 countries. We have established foreign organizations in six countries.

**If you are a specialist in supporting international projects, how did you “arrive” in your role? Did you already have lots of experience? Was it trial by fire?**

**Andresen:** I wouldn’t consider myself an expert by any means, but my experience definitely was trial by fire. Each international project has had its unique challenges, but over time, there are certain common recurring themes particularly in managing funds and making expenditures. I’ve learned that it takes teamwork within your university to devote extra time to be flexible and compliant at the same time.

**Rogers:** I’ve been the CMU-Q Research Office Director for 4 years. I had little experience working with international projects but found my previous position as Assistant Director of an interdisciplinary research institute gave me a solid foundation. However, it still took time to learn how “Qatar does it.”

**MC:** I have met very few in this role for which, like me, it was not more the latter. You are first presented with one opportunity to resolve, and when you do, more seem to follow. Further, given my role has been from within the Controller’s Office, there was some growth that led from the institutional desire to assess its risk in this area.
What are some of the most common differences in the administration of projects around the globe?

Andresen: One of the noticeable differences for me is the expectations from global sponsors who insist on close oversight of spending including complicated reporting, invoicing, and audit requirements. Spending money, transferring funds to international collaborators, and receiving payment from international sponsors are our biggest challenges.

Rogers: I agree with Bob’s observations. All CMU-Q grants are from Qatar; we must follow Qatar and U.S. laws and regulations (including the Uniform Guidance), sponsor requirements, and university policies—which can be challenging to mesh.

Do international programs require more administrative resources?

Andresen: Absolutely, managing international projects takes more time and resources. When you are dealing with different global regions, it can be difficult to get on the same page due to our differences in handling legal and financial matters. We try to work with our PIs and researchers right from the beginning to tackle issues proactively. We include administrative staff in budgets. Some PIs have been reluctant to do so, but those that did have found that their projects ran much more smoothly.

Rogers: International projects require different, sometimes specialized expertise to support people and projects working with or in other countries. They may require collaboration across organizational silos to find solutions.

MC: I wouldn’t say that international projects require more support than other complex projects. However, they require a different type of support than our institution usually provides. We have systems designed to comply with US laws and regulations, and such systems are supported by experts in various US-compliant functions. Building expertise is difficult if your organization is as global as UCSF, because each country’s laws vary.

Does your institution assess the effectiveness of your support model?

Andresen: We are looking at our support model now to identify areas of strength and areas where we need improvement. I think it’s become a greater area of focus because of the implementation of the Uniform Guidance which emphasizes the importance of good internal controls. As we tighten up our policies and procedures, we are also finding that what works well for most projects doesn’t always fit our global projects. We are still working on finding the right balance.

Have you been asked to implement quantitative measures? What did you observe?

Andresen: Because our colleges and schools play such a large role in managing sponsored projects, there hasn’t been a concentrated development of metrics. As a result, ours are standard: number of awards and proposals, total dollars, number of countries, etc.

Rogers: We also do standard tracking of CMU-Q awards, proposals, and funding. Due to lower oil and gas prices, research funding has decreased in Qatar, and QNRF is trying to measure project impacts and outcomes. So we are starting to explore ways to capture such data.

Do senior leaders use any metrics to set strategy about which international programs are to be implemented? “Phased out”?

Andresen: Occasionally, we have used data to determine the viability of sustaining a global initiative. In one case, we looked at the line of research being performed, the countries interested in that work, and the trend lines for the dollars and number of awards to determine that because of changes in the state of the world’s political structures, it wasn’t going to be a viable program any longer. Those are difficult decisions, but the world changes and we need to change with it.

Do you track any metrics related to international/foreign subrecipients? Do you simply classify all foreign subrecipients as “high risk” or are you able to track other measures such as past performance?

Andresen: Pay close attention to our sub-recipients. The Uniform Guidance made us look at our risk assessment tools. We’re still fine-tuning it. I’ve seen other institutions automatically categorize global sub-recipients as “high-risk”; we’re trying to avoid that. Our experience has been that there are international collaborators, particularly universities with long-standing relationships that can manage sponsored projects just as well as domestic sub-recipients.

Rogers: Our subawards are signed by our home campus and managed by CMU-Q Research Office. We work closely with our US and non-US subawardees to reduce possible problems. Faculty are important partners. They help us understand the partner institution and culture of the country.

MC: We have redesigned our risk assessment to assess and not just designate all foreign recipients as high risk. Factors we include are past performance with UCSF, annual or other audit results, experience with sponsor funding, size of the sub compared to the total project, type of deliverables and/or cost sharing on the subaward, experience of our department.

Have you identified any resources that you recommend to our readers to help them obtain information on particular countries for foreign institutions?

Andresen: I’m always looking at other universities’ websites to see what information is out there. Especially, universities that have set up branch campuses or maintain a physical presence in another country. I think they have experienced a lot of challenges, and we’ve learned from them.

MC: Some of my favorite resources include summaries of tax laws, summaries of employment laws in by country, and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) for general resources.

Have you ever had the experience of hearing a complaint or issue that turned out to be a bottleneck in some process?

Andresen: Yes, certainly. One of our current process improvements is providing better guidance and support for payments to individuals.

“Managing international projects takes more time and more resources.”
who live and work in other countries. Do we consider them employees or independent consultants? There’s no easy answer and involves expertise in units across campus. We uncovered a variety of approaches that was leading to confusion and differing interpretations. We have established a team, across several units, to develop a better process.

Rogers: Resolving bottlenecks is a daily activity and requires time, patience, and lots of listening. Things get stuck when systems, policies and processes do not mesh. Communication takes more time when working across time zones, work week, holiday, and language/terminology differences. I’ve found my training in mediation and intercultural communications helpful.

MC: Yes, frequently. This is one benefit of UCSF’s dedicated committee. We can ask them to investigate the issue and underlying process to recommend changes.

Is the satisfaction of the research team a metric that is measured?

Andresen: The satisfaction of the PI and the international collaborators is critical. While we currently don’t have a specific data set to measure it, we do try to stay in close contact with everyone to keep the project running as smooth as possible.

MC: Satisfaction is a difficult measure of success when working internationally. International research involves a significant amount of change management— replacing historical practices with compliant and fiscally strong controls. Throughout every change management initiative, affected individuals will move along different scales of acceptance. Therefore, you need to learn how to ask, listen and assess the information.

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In 2008, the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—the largest public funder of medical research in the world—became the first federal agency to require by law that findings from its funded research be made available free of charge to the public. The law is implemented through NIH’s Public Access Policy and is applicable to recipients of NIH awards regardless of funding mechanism, whether it be grant awards, cooperative agreements or contracts (NIH, 2008). To comply with the policy, published journal articles must be deposited into the National Library of Medicine’s PubMed Central digital repository of biomedical and life sciences journal literature, where the articles become available for public viewing within 12 months of publication. Prior to implementation of the policy, much of the NIH-funded research was accessible only through paid journal subscriptions, which limited access to non-subscribing researchers, clinicians, patients, and the public.

Compliance was not enforced for several years after the policy was implemented, and it is little surprise that compliance with the mandate in those early years was unimpressive (75% in 2012) (Van Noorden, 2014). In 2013, NIH began cracking down by withholding funding for noncompliant continuation grant awards to investigators who had not complied with the policy (NIH, 2012), and by 2014 the compliance rate had risen to 82% (Van Noorden, 2014). It is quite possible that today the compliance rate is even higher; however, given that NIH funding is the bread and butter of many universities and biomedical research organizations, even a single instance of noncompliance that results in a delay in funding can negatively impact the investigator and the organization. Federal awards are made directly to the research organization rather than to the investigator; thus, it is the organization that incurs the obligation to comply with the Public Access Policy when it accepts a NIH research award (Association of American Universities, 2015).

Research organizations can take steps to ensure their investigators maintain compliance with NIH’s policy. NIH introduced a web-based system in 2013, the Public Access Compliance Monitor, to allow grantee organizations to track compliance of publications that the grantee is responsible for (NIH, 2013). The system may be accessed by individuals designated by the institution’s official who holds the authority to assign roles in the eRA Commons grants administration system. Many organizations have delegated the responsibility of compliance tracking to their libraries, while others have delegated the responsibility to individuals within their offices of research and sponsored programs. The frequency in which the organization generates a report of noncompliant investigators, the mechanism that the organization establishes to disseminate findings of noncompliance to the investigators, and the level of support the organization provides to the investigators to achieve compliance is at the discretion of the organization.

Investigators cite numerous reasons for not complying with the policy, ranging from lack of awareness or misunderstanding of the policy to lack of time available to decipher complicated instructions for achieving compliance (Charbonneau and McGlone, 2013). NIH encourages organizations to put plans in place that can withstand miscommunication among authors or between publishers and authors or authors’ forgetfulness with regard to the policy (Funk, Thakur, & Travick, 2016).

In 2013, the White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) issued a memorandum directing leadership of executive departments and agencies with over $100 million in annual research and development budgets to follow NIH’s lead and establish mechanisms by which the publication of funded research results would be made available free of charge to the public within one year of publication (Holdren, 2013). To date, a total of 23 federal agencies have released implementation plans, and if they are not already doing so, they will soon require that research award recipients deposit published results into public digital repositories (Commerce, Energy, NASA, Defense Information Managers Group, 2016).

Research organizations should pay close attention to changes on the horizon related to federal public access mandates. Each federal agency will have a unique set of procedures that funded investigators will need to follow to achieve compliance, and research organizations should make plans now to support investigators in navigating these new procedures. Just as NIH eventually took measures to enforce its Public Access Policy, so too will the cadre of federal research funding agencies just now enacting plans for public access.

References


Phaedra Yount is the Director of Research Communications for the Arkansas Children’s Research Institute. She currently is a graduate student in the University of Central Florida’s Master of Research Administration Program. She may be reached younpta@archilrens.org

Phaedra Yount
Lisa Mosley is now the Executive Director of Sponsored Projects at Yale University.

Do you have a milestone to share? Email schiffman@ncura.edu
NCURA Research Program Approves New Projects

The NCURA Research Program Review Committee has recently approved funding for four (4) new research proposals for the following projects that will benefit NCURA and its membership:

- Karen Fletcher, Appalachian State University, “PREPARE: A Mentoring Program to Develop Research Advocates;” $9,003
- Mary Catherine “MC” Gaisbauer, University of California, San Francisco, “Global Mentoring Program for Research Administrators;” $10,000
- Katy Hendry, University of West Florida, “Increasing the Odds of the Return on Investment;” $9,999
- Jennifer Ponting, Harvard University, “The Problem with Contracts;” $8,190

The performance period will be June 1, 2017 – May 31, 2018.

For more information see www.ncura.edu/MembershipVolunteering/Programs/NCURAREsearchProgram.aspx
Dear Region I Colleagues:

I hope that you are enjoying the beautiful New England summer and getting some down time from your hectic jobs. The busy grant deadlines will be upon us before you know it.

Region I hospitality suite AM2017: The Advisory Committee voted to try something new with the hospitality suite this year. Last year, a couple of regions held hospitality suites in co-located rooms near the general meeting space for the conference. The location offered several advantages including more space, no cost for use of the room, avoiding having noise near guests and the opportunity to increase mingling with colleagues from other regions. We are very excited to try out our new venue which will provide a space dedicated to Region I members while being located close to other regions. Please stop by and see us.


Special congratulations to 2017 merit award winners. Louise Griffin, University of New Hampshire, is the first recipient of the Julie T. Norris Distinguished Service Award. Louise’s NCURA participation spans over twenty years in countless capacities. Louise has co-chaired five regional meetings, presented at regional and national conferences and workshops, served in variety of officer roles.

Congratulations to Donna Smith recipient of the 2017 Region I Merit Award. Donna is the Senior Manager of Department of Molecular Biology, MGH Research Institute and one of Region I’s most dedicated members.

Elizabeth Haney of Middlebury College is the recipient of the Outstanding Volunteer award. Liz also served in the elected office of Region I Secretary. Sadly for us (but great for her new region), Liz has left Middlebury and Region I for a new position in Region II. We are grateful that Alice Ingham of the Broad Institute who was elected Secretary for 2018 has agreed to step into the role early.

Reminder that if you are looking for presentation slides for the 2017 Spring Meeting, they can be downloaded using the Guidebook app. Please watch the eblasts for upcoming Region programs including workshops and R&DG sessions.

Do you have suggestions for Region I future sessions or meeting locations? Please let me know. Our site committee is scoping out sites for future Spring meetings.

Jill Mortali is the Chair of Region I and serves as the Director, Office of Sponsored Projects at Dartmouth College. She can be reached at Jill.M.Mortali@dartmouth.edu

Greetings, Region II!

In speaking with colleagues, one of the things we value most about working within the our profession is the opportunity to collaborate and learn from each other while sharing in the passion to aid in the advancement of scientific discoveries within our respective organizations. At our recent Spring Meeting held in Saratoga Springs, NY, we had an opportunity to recognize two of our members who have made significant contributions to our profession and NCURA by presenting each with Region II’s Distinguished Service Award.

This year our award recipients were Dr. Gregory (Greg) Slack, Director of Research and Technology Transfer within Clarkson University and Janet Simons, Director of Research Policy within the University of Maryland’s Office of Research Development. Both individuals have extensive experience within the profession and have also served as long-time members of NCURA. Aside from presenting extensively at national and regional meetings, Greg and Janet have also occupied various leadership roles within the region and served on committees. Congratulations to you both and thank you for all you have done and continue to do for NCURA and our profession.

Additionally, I would like to again commend our graduates of the 2017 Cheryl-Lee Howard Mentor-Me program for sharing your time and talents at the Spring Meeting and for your distinct contributions to the program.

Bryan Cacciotti, University at Buffalo, and mentor, Brenda Kavanagh, University of Rochester

Anthony Maranto, The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and mentor, Magui Cardona, University of Baltimore

Heidi Moldenhauer, Fredonia State University of New York, and mentor, Jennifer Harman, Nazareth College

Laura Salvati, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and mentor, Mary Louise Healy, The Johns Hopkins University

Michal Woodbridge, Barnard College – Columbia University, and mentor, Jared Littman, St. John’s University

I would also like to extend a special thanks to your mentors for their volunteerism and their dedicated commitment to you, our graduates and the program’s continued success.

Last, I would also like to congratulate the 2017 recipients of the Spring Meeting Travel Awards: Christopher Juliani, Syracuse University; and Karina Havrilla, University of Maryland, College Park. If you would like to learn more about our regional awards and how to apply, please visit the following URL: http://ncuraregionii.org/awards

If you’d like to learn more about maximizing the benefits of your membership, exploring ideas for enhancing professional development and programming, or volunteering at regional and national activities, please contact me directly or through our website: http://ncuraregionii.org/contact. You can also follow us on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ncurareregionii and Twitter: @NCURAREGIONII.

Timothy Schailey, MS, serves as the Chair of Region II and is the Director of Research Administration at Thomas Jefferson University. He can be reached at Timothy.Schailey@jefferson.edu
In Appreciation to Outgoing Leadership

It is a privilege to have worked with outgoing Chair, Kay Gilstrap. I would like to thank her for guidance and evening drive conversations over the past year and look forward to working with her as Immediate Past-Chair. Thank you also to Danielle McElwain for her service as Immediate-Past Chair and her continued guidance. We would like to thank the following Standing Committee Coordinators for their terms of service: Sandy Barber (Volunteer), Emily Devreux (Website), Jeanne Hermann (Surveys and Evaluations), Andrea Moshier (Attendee Experience), and Leigh Stephens (New Member Coordinator).

Region III 2017 Spring Meeting Highlights

The meetings provided members with the opportunity to invest in training and develop leadership to manage that talent in a way that encourages new recruits to stay in a profession that is deadline driven, highly complex and challenging, and can be downright stressful at times.

In addition to the usual offerings, the meeting this year featured the addition of an organizational management track, which was well attended. The Hospitality Suite events were very well attended and included darts, bingo, spades, and karaoke; and proceeds supported the NCURA Scholarship Fund and Big Brothers Big Sisters Heart of Georgia. Thank you to Laneika Musalini for her creativity and dedication to Region III’s philanthropy efforts. At lunch on Monday, we heard from Dianna Glymph, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters Heart of Georgia. She encouraged us to volunteer and shared with us all the positive outcomes of children mentored through Big Brothers Big Sisters’ many programs.

In conjunction with the wonderful activities hosted by Region III, attendees also had the opportunity to enjoy Savannah’s historic district. From historic homes and cobblestone streets to ghost tours and carriage rides, the historic district contains more than twenty city squares filled with museums, churches, mansions, monuments, and of course, a wonderful host of restaurants and shopping from which to choose.

We would be remiss not to thank everyone without whom this meeting would be possible—our host institution, Georgia Southern University, the Keynote Speakers, the Workshop and Concurrent Session presenters, the Discussion Group facilitators, the Program Committee, the volunteers, the sponsors, the Planning Committee, and each of you who came to attend sessions and network. We look forward to seeing all of you next year in Williamsburg, VA, for our 2018 meeting!

Steve Koogler, MBA, is the Chair of Region III and serves as Assistant Director at the University of Central Florida. He can be reached at Steven.Koogler@ucf.edu

On behalf of Region IV, I would like to congratulate two Region IV Award Recipients:

Shannon Sutton of Western Illinois University received the 2017 Distinguished Service Award. This award is for a Region IV member who has shown continuing and long-term contributions to NCURA, the region, and to the profession of research administration. Shannon has presented numerous sessions and workshops at both the regional and national levels. She has served as the Region IV Treasurer and on the Financial Management Committee. Currently Shannon serves on the Education Scholarship Committee and as the Treasurer and a member of the National NCURA Board of Directors.

Stephanie McGee from Washington University received the 2017 Region IV National Travel Award. This award will support travel to the National Annual Meeting in Washington DC.

Congratulations, Shannon and Stephanie!

Region IV is all about the outstanding people who step up to make the region function. The following are Region IV members in key leadership positions. A big THANK YOU goes out to them along with the other numerous members who serve on the committees and volunteer for the Region in other ways.

2017 Election Results

Chair-Elect: Bonniejean Zitske, University of Wisconsin – Madison
Regional Representative to the National Board (effective 1/1/18): Sue Kelch, University of Michigan
At-Large Board Members: Andrea Marshall, University of Minnesota, Jim Maus, Washington University, Matt Richter, Medical College of Wisconsin

Other Board Members

Chair: Katherine Durben, Marquette University
Past Chair: Diane Hillebrand, University of North Dakota
Treasurer: Gayn Claesemann-Ryan, Indiana University
Secretary: Katie Schortgen, Eastern Michigan University
At-Large Board Members: Sue Grimes, Purdue University, Nicole Nichols, Washington University

Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs

Awards Committee: Julia Olivero, Katie Schortgen
Communications Committee: Matt Richter
Membership Committee: Rebecca Hutchinson, Andrea Marshall
Nomination Committee: Diane Hillebrand
Professional Development Committee: Sue Grimes, Kaslina Love Mosley
Site Selection Committee: Teri Gulledge

I am also looking forward to seeing you or meeting you at the Annual Meeting (AM 59) in August! Remember to sign up for the free Region IV DC at Dusk bus tour if you are in town on Saturday, August 6. Join us on Sunday for a newcomer’s reception. The Region IV dinner group on Monday provides a great and fun way to connect with others in the Region. We will also be hosting the Region IV hospitality suite nightly from 9:00-11:30 pm in suite 4101.

Katherine Durben is the Chair of Region IV and serves the Executive Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at Marquette University. She can be reached at Katherine.durben@marquette.edu

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Staring my term as Region V Chair, I offer sincere thanks to Immediate Past Chair Shelly Berry Hebb and our Past Chair, Katherine Kissmann. You’re both wonderful mentors.

Thanks to you all our members who made the meeting in Tulsa so great. We had over 50 volunteers at the meeting and we really offer heartfelt gratitude to them for their invaluable help. Based on feedback, the meeting was a success. We have some pictures to prove it!

In this first Regional Corner for me, I get to share some exciting news for our region.

For those of you who were unable to attend the meeting, we have a few announcements. The results of our regional elections are in and the following people were selected by the membership to serve Region V:

Chair Elect: Michael Castilleja, University of the Incarnate Word
Treasurer Elect: Roxanne Smith Parks, Lamar University
At Large Board Member: Becky Castillo, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
At Large Board Member: Michelle (Mickey) Stevenson, University of Texas San Antonio
Region V Member to the National Board: Katherine Kissmann, Texas A&M University

We also announced the dates and location of the Region V 2018 meeting: May 6-9, 2018 at the Embassy Suites Spa and Conference Center in San Marcos, Texas.

Thank you to all of you who ordered our first batch of Region V T-Shirts. By the time you are reading this, they should have arrived. We are looking at other options including a polo, so watch for future order options. For questions, contact Roxanne Parks at rparks1@lamar.edu

Additionally, let’s take a moment to support our Region V member, Mario Medina. Mario has been an NCURA member for almost 20 years, serving in a number of roles, both nationally and regionally. Mario is working on his PhD in Business-Leadership Studies. In his dissertation, he is looking to capture the leadership perceptions of the members of Region V. If you are interested in taking a survey to help with his data collection, please reach out to him at MEDINAMR@uthscsa.edu.

NCURA relies and thrives on members who take the opportunity to volunteer. Thank you for all you do and we will see you at National!

Thomas B. Spencer, PhD, MBA, is the Chair of Region V and is the Director of Operations at UT Southwestern Medical School at Dallas and teaches in the Research Administration Masters Degree at Johns Hopkins. He can be reached at Thomas.Spencer@UTSouthwestern.edu

Visit Portland November 5-8, 2017 and attend the Region VI & VII Meeting!
Region VI & VII have been busy planning a strong and meaningful program and overall fantastic meeting. Program track offerings include:

- Compliance
- Contract Negotiation/Subcontracts/Industry Contracts
- Departmental Research Administration
- Federal & Agency
- Human Capital & Professional Development
- Post Award
- Pre-Award
- Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUI)
- Systems, Management, & Operations

Consider attending one of the workshops, offering a balanced selection of topics great for anyone wanting to dive deeper into an area or get exposed to a new area of research administration.

Other reasons to visit Portland?
- Eat great, locally sourced cuisine. Check out the various food carts and farmers markets around town.
- Access to nature! The Waterfront/Willamette River is right outside the hotel door. There is access to Forest Park, one of the countries largest urban forest reserves stretching over 8 miles on the hillside overlooking the city with over 70 miles of trails.
- Access to amazing beverages, including several independent coffee shops as well as an abundance of beer, wine and specialty cocktails.
- Visit Powell’s City of Books – the largest independent used and new bookstore in the world and over a full city block in size. About a mile from the hotel – take a 20-minute walk or a quick Uber or Lyft ride.
- Enjoy the local sweets such as Voodoo Doughnuts, Blue Star Donuts, Ruby Jewel, and Salt & Straw Ice-Cream, etc.
- See firsthand why people say “Keep Portland Weird” and enjoy the unique character that is Portland.

Check out the beautifully renovated conference hotel, the Marriott Downtown Waterfront and a little more of what Portland has to offer at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaNr0njTkSU&sns=em

Afraid of the rain? Don’t be! We will provide the umbrellas! November can be a beautiful time of the year to visit Portland. Take advantage of the visit and extend your stay.

Hope to see you in Portland!

Sinnammon Tierney, MPA, CRA, is Region VI Chair and serves as Associate Director of Departmental Research Administration, Sponsored Projects Administration at Portland State University. She can be reached at tierney@pdx.edu
Hello Region VII!

The Awards Nomination and Election Committee, chaired by Member-at-Large, Ashley Stahle, has selected two travel awardees for the Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. I would like to congratulate, Annette Foster and Samantha Mayhew, from Colorado State University. We had several submissions and we are excited to be able to offer them this opportunity to experience NCURA at the National level. The committee is continuing to collect and review applicants for travel awards to the Regional Meeting in Portland. If you or someone you know is interested in attending and meets the criteria, please send applications in by July 28th. More info can be found on our website at: https://ncuraregionvii.asu.edu/travel-awards. The Awards Nomination and Election Committee will begin the process to oversee our officer elections from July through October. Ashley cannot do this alone, so please consider sitting on this committee and contact her at Ashley.stahle@colostate.edu.

I am also excited that we have two Region VII members that have been selected as Catherine Core Minority Travel Awardees this year as well!! Please join me in congratulating Consuelo Jorge from Colorado State University and Griselda Martinez from University of Arizona! I am excited to meet all of the Travel Awardees and wish them all the best at their first NCURA Annual Meeting.

Regional Meeting News: The Portland Program Committee has been hard at work developing outstanding sessions and workshops for our Regional Meeting. We are still on track to open online meeting registration and hotel reservations by the end of June (if not earlier). Stay tuned to our website and Facebook page for the latest updates.

As I mentioned earlier, we will begin our election process for new officers very soon. Positions available in 2018 will be Chair-Elect, Secretary/Treasurer, and Member-at-Large. These positions are integral in the leadership of our region and we would love to see more of our membership getting involved. There are many tasks that need to be tackled each year and having a Regional Executive Committee of dedicated members is crucial to our continued success. If you have ever considered running for one of these positions, please feel free to reach out to any current or previous officer for more information. You can also read about the position and duties on our website: https://ncuraregionvii.asu.edu/duties-and-responsibilities

Keep an eye out for e-Blasts regarding the nomination and application process in the next few weeks.

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.” — Elizabeth Andrew

Sandra Logue is Region VII Chair and is the Administrator for the Center for Neuroscience on the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She can be reached at sandra.logue@ucdenver.edu

May is known as the wedding month. True or not, it was this May, when Region VIII had all reasons to celebrate a most remarkable liaison. It took less than a year and a handful of dedicated, enthusiastic and globally engaged research administrators and managers plus the excellent NCURA national office staff resulting in Region VIII’s first MoU.

But let’s start from the beginning: On Monday, 8 August 2016 at the Regional Business Meeting when the regional board proposed to scale back our annual meeting programme to the off-INORMS years – a biannually implemented international must event for research managers & administrators – due to the increasing travel costs those years. Instead other formats for regional events, from webinars to study tours, would be on offer in the respective INORMS years. Two days later the regional board received some “food for thoughts” by John Donovan, President of our sister organisation EARMA: What about organising a Region VIII event in association with the EARMA conference?

“Great idea,” all European board members immediately agreed. This is an event we (namely the Europeans) will attend anyway. A mutual event would not only be a great platform for knowledge transfer but would also be an opportunity for the region to promote its unique character: non-US problem solving of US grants challenges.

So the brainstorming started and in early 2017 the mutual undertaking was roughly drafted: the Region VIII contribution to EARMA 2018 would be an integral part of the EARMA Conference. A fixed amount of sessions within the EARMA Conference track on US grants would be developed under the topic “US Grants Problem Solving made in Europe.”

Why only “made in Europe”? Because if Region VIII collaborates with a European association it deliberately turns to Region VIII members from Europe. However, if Region VIII works with a different organisation and/or Region in the near or far future, this title can be easily adapted – thus branding Region VIII.

Four months later and EARMA and Region VIII had happily agreed to the concept as well as to a mutually drafted MoU. This MoU was about to be signed at a small event prior the EARMA Conference in Malta in May 2017. The circumstances for signing the agreement were very like a typical research manager’s headline nightmare: In the very last minute the printer refused its services. But in the end the conference attendees witnessed the birth of our collaboration live at the opening ceremony of the 23rd EARMA Conference.

Thanks to all NCURA and EARMA members involved!

Annika Glauner is Chair, Region VIII, Senior Policy and Research Development Officer, ETH Zurich/University of Zurich. She can be reached at annika.glauner@sl.ethz.ch

Eva Björndal is Immediate Past Chair, Region VIII, Team Leader, Post-Contract Office, Grants Office, Department of Research Support, Karolinska Institute. She can be reached at eva.björndal@ki.se
A blue pigment discovered at Oregon State University (OSU) is the inspiration for Crayola’s new crayon color.

The Easton, Pennsylvania-based company announced that a recently retired yellow crayon known as Dandelion would be replaced by a color inspired by the YInMn pigment developed in the laboratory of OSU chemistry professor Mas Subramanian.

YInMn refers to the elements yttrium, indium and manganese, which along with oxygen comprise the vibrant pigment.

Crayola made the announcement at The Colorful World of Pigments, an OSU-hosted celebration of YInMn blue and its impact on art, culture and industry.

Subramanian, noting that people love the color blue for a wide variety of reasons, called it “truly an honor” that his discovery has led to a new crayon color.

“Blue is associated with open spaces, freedom, intuition, imagination, expansiveness, inspiration and sensitivity,” said Subramanian, the Milton Harris Chair of Materials Science. “Blue also represents meanings of depth, trust, loyalty, sincerity, wisdom, confidence, stability, faith, heaven and intelligence. We could not imagine a better partner than Crayola, a brand synonymous with color and creativity, to help us share this discovery with the world.”

Crayola invited the public to help name the color of its new blue with a contest that kicks off at Crayola.com/NewColor and ran through June 2. Those who submit name ideas will be entered for a chance to win one of four weekly prizes.

Crayola will unveil the new name and announce six grand prize winners in early September, and the new blue crayon will begin appearing in Crayola products in late 2017.

“We are a company all about kids, creativity and color, so we strive to keep our color palette innovative and on trend, which is why we’re excited to introduce a new blue crayon color inspired by the YInMn pigment,” said Smith Holland, CEO and president of Crayola. “The new blue crayon color will help Crayola to continue to inspire kids and kids at heart, to create everything imaginable.”

YInMn blue was discovered by accident in 2009 when Subramanian and his team were experimenting with new materials that could be used in electronics applications.

The researchers mixed manganese oxide — which is black in color — with other chemicals and heated them in a furnace to nearly 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. One of their samples turned out to be a vivid blue. Oregon State graduate student Andrew Smith initially made these samples to study their electrical properties.

“This was a serendipitous discovery, a happy accident,” Subramanian said. “But in fact, many breakthrough discoveries in science happen when one is not looking for it. As Louis Pasteur famously said, ‘In the fields of observation, chance favors only the prepared mind.’

“Most pigments are discovered by chance,” Subramanian added. “The reason is because the origin of the color of a material depends not only on the chemical composition, but also on the intricate arrangement of atoms in the crystal structure. So someone has to make the material first, then study its crystal structure thoroughly to explain the color.”

YInMn blue features a unique structure that allows the manganese ions to absorb red and green wavelengths of light while only reflecting blue. The vibrant blue is so durable, and its compounds are so stable — even in oil and water — that the color does not fade.

These characteristics, as well as its non-toxicity, make the new pigment versatile for a variety of commercial products. Used in paints, for example, they can help keep buildings cool by reflecting infrared light.

“What is amazing is that through much of human history, civilizations around the world have sought inorganic compounds that could be used to paint things blue but often had limited success,” Subramanian said. “Most had environmental and/or durability issues. The YInMn blue pigment is very stable/durable. There is no change in the color when exposed to high temperatures, water, and mildly acidic and alkali conditions.”

Do you have Your Copy of our Uniform Guidance desk reference?

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Preamble to the Uniform Guidance (Published in Federal Register/ Vol. 78, No. 248/Thursday, December 26, 2013, 78590-78608)
Additional Resources
Frequently Asked Questions

Order your copies today!
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NATIONAL TRAVELING WORKSHOPS

Departmental Research Administration Workshop  
October 11-13, 2017 .........................................................West Palm Beach, FL

Financial Research Administration Workshop  
October 11-13, 2017 .........................................................West Palm Beach, FL

LEVEL I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project  
Administration Workshop  
October 11-13, 2017 .........................................................West Palm Beach, FL

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Region VIII – International  
August 10, 2017 ...............................................................Bethesda, MD  
(NIH campus study visit)

Region VI/VII – Western/Rocky Mountain  
November 5-8, 2017 ............................................................Portland, OR

NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Financial Research Administration Conference  
March 1-3, 2018 ...............................................................San Juan, Puerto Rico

Pre-Award Research Administration Conference  
March 3-5, 2018 ...............................................................San Juan, Puerto Rico

ONLINE TUTORIALS – 10 week programs

A Primer on Clinical Trials
A Primer on Federal Contracting
A Primer on Intellectual Property in Research Agreements
A Primer on Subawards

WEBINARS

• An Overview of the New Research Terms and Conditions – On Demand
• Outside the Box of Effort Reporting - Past, Present and Future – On Demand
• CUI, FISMA & NIST: Regulated Research Data – On Demand
• The New World of Single IRBs – On Demand
• The Revised Common Rule: New Opportunities and Challenges – On Demand
• Understanding the Administratively Complex and High-risk Business Objective of Cost Sharing – On Demand
• Developing Policies and Procedures – September 26, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
• Data Transfer and Use Agreements 101 – October 10, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
• Managing Sponsored Research Risk in an International Environment – October 26, 2:00-3:30 pm ET

DEADLINES FOR OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2017

Submission of Articles to Contributing Editors .........................August 18, 2017
Submission of Advertisements....................................................August 23, 2017

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