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ERRATUM

In the March/April issue, “Helping the Community Make Better Research Decisions with Unprecedented Insights into Global Awards” (pgs 34-37), was a sponsor contribution and should have been labeled as sponsored content.
Navigating research administration seems to be more like sailing by starlight as opposed to following the precise directions given by a GPS. We have to constantly evaluate our environment and continually make adjustments to get ourselves and our institutions where we want to go. From time to time we feel lost, make the best decisions we can, and have faith that if we steady the course we will eventually reach our goal. It would be wonderful if we were given clear directions and were told when roadblocks were approached and when we needed to alter our original route.

In this issue of NCURA Magazine, Tony Ventimiglia highlights the Research Administration Initiative (RAI) and the importance and impacts of global collaboration in “Developing Global Collaborations: One Visit at a Time.” In her article “Why Do Institutional Policies Matter?” Erin Woods explains the necessity and significance of institutional policy as well as the directions they provide as we navigate our daily work.

Understanding global forces and institutions is challenging, but we should not forget the complexities introduced by the human element. Marcy DeSantis, Ted Fehskens, and John Evermann discuss how to navigate an environment that contains multiple, varied interests in their article “Understanding the Different ‘Customers’ in Research Administration.” Finally, in “A Fresh Approach to Navigating NCURA and Other Research Administration Opportunities,” Elizabeth Haney and Amanda Tan explore our own professional organization and how to make the most of being a member of NCURA.

Whether it’s the world, our institutions, those we serve, or our own careers, there is a lot for us to navigate every day. The key to being successful in such our complex and ever changing profession is to keep an open mind and always explore the possibilities.
NCURA is in the midst of a very exciting year! Twelve major committees and task forces are working on numerous initiatives. The N&LDC is developing a NCURA Fellows Program and assessing our Executive Leadership Program. The Professional Development Committee is refreshing traveling workshop materials and developing new webinars. The Financial Management Committee is examining regional acceptance of credit card payments and is reassessing membership categories. Our Select Committee on Peer Programs continues to strengthen its services, and the Select Committee on Global Affairs is developing a research administration workshop for Cuban universities as requested by the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education.

Other committees overseeing various NCURA initiatives in 2017 include the Education Scholarship Fund committee (we are just a few dollars shy of our $100,000 goal!), the NCURA Research Program committee, which recently issued a call for proposals for our second round of funding, and the Distinguished Educator Review Committee that will identify recipients of this newest NCURA recognition this year. Two new presidential task forces are looking at external funding opportunities to support our global work and to examine diversity in our membership and leadership team. Finally, two other task forces are at work on strategic ideas that are not yet ready for primetime, but could lead to very exciting new programs.

I do want to call to your attention a major change in our upcoming election. In 2015, the N&LDC and the Board of Directors began review of our officer selection process. This was precipitated by ongoing challenges in recruiting well-qualified candidates to run for office and the recognition that significant leadership ability and knowledge of the organization are important prerequisites for the elected officers. We also received feedback about disincentives to putting one’s name forward, including the rather onerous application process. We also knew that some excellent leaders who lost a national election would not run again if asked. Moreover, even some of the participants in our leadership program, which prepares future NCURA leaders, indicated a reluctance to run for office because of perceived professional damage from public election loss.

A subcommittee of the N&LDC researched election procedures used by other non-profit and professional development organizations and ultimately recommended a change to our process. The amendment to the bylaws made in 2016 allows the N&LDC to place only one name on the ballot for each of the three officer positions (Vice President/President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer-Elect). The nomination/application process was also revised to reduce the paperwork burden for potential candidates. In February, the Board reviewed applicant qualifications, interviewed applicants, and put forward its recommendations for the 2017 slate to the N&LDC. In accordance with the new procedures, only one candidate for each office will appear on the ballot. Members may vote “yes” or “no” for each candidate (note that the new process is only for officer positions; N&LDC will continue to put forward two names for each at-large Director position).

At first blush, this change may feel less fair. But, as NCURA discovered, this is a common practice in many strategically managed organizations because it ensures a highly qualified leadership team who will provide consistency and stability in the quest to reach strategic goals. We have entrusted the N&LDC and the Board of Directors with the difficult task of identifying an excellent candidate for each officer position, and we respect their collective judgment. Our new way of selecting officers ensures that NCURA remains in the hands of our truly exceptional, dedicated, and qualified volunteers and will guard against the disengagement of the same pool of individuals. So, please participate in the election to show your support of the officer candidates selected for the 2017 ballot.

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If you had asked us two years ago to define these terms, we would have said that “lean” was our ideal weight, “waste” was something we throw away, and DMAIC...well, we wouldn’t have had any idea what you were talking about.

What a difference a year makes.

This past year, a small group of managers from Financial Affairs at Boston University (BU) learned not only about these words, but what their corresponding tools were and how they fit into the overall theme of Operational Excellence. We learned that when put together, these terms gave us a new perspective on our work, and we realized that “change” is not a four-letter word.

In its simplest form, a “lean” system focuses on eliminating “waste,” which can be defined as inefficient use of time, people, processing, or even motion. DMAIC (pronounced duh-may-ick) is an acronym for Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control. The DMAIC improvement cycle was developed by W. Edwards Deming in the 1950s and represents the core focus of our training.

When organizations implement something new, it can typically take months simply to schedule a kick-off meeting, let alone get the project off the ground. Here at BU, we were very fortunate that our Chief Financial Officer (CFO) was already promoting a lean operating style. He understood that in order to continue to be competitive in our current environment, we had
to change our way of thinking. Support from the top was an invaluable part of integrating this new system quickly and smoothly. So with the support of our CFO and the promise of reduced fire drills, our journey began!

The process kicked off with an initiative led by an outside consultant hired to train a group of managers from Financial Affairs for two hours, one day a week over an eight-week period. Not only were we learning the “why” of “lean,” “waste,” and DMAIC; we were also learning the “how” of applying it to individual, actual projects. While the eight weeks were intense, learning the tools helped us complete our projects in a better, more thoughtful way.

Some of the projects were around subrecipient monitoring, automating deposits of checks, travel card compliance, and foreign bank reconciliation. As project participants, we looked at each of these processes and asked how we could do it better while still maintaining our high degree of oversight.

During our journey to becoming “lean” leaders, we discovered that most articles and discussions of the “lean” and DMAIC topic focused on the manufacturing industry. The tasks and challenges in our industry differ from those in manufacturing. So while some elements of the program cannot directly be applied to the work we are doing, they can be applied indirectly.

I’m sure everyone reading this article has worked on a project that failed due to poor planning or lack of interest. Perhaps you were trying to resolve a problem without knowing what the real problem actually was. “Lean,” “waste,” and DMAIC are parts of a thought process that not only helps you ask the right questions, but also walks you through the five steps needed to ensure a targeted resolution.

Define. First, ask yourself, “What is my problem and what am I trying to resolve?” Without defining an objective, you have the very real possibility of losing sight of what you were trying to resolve in the first place. It isn’t unusual to assume that you know the problem, but sometimes after initial work begins, you realize that the cause of the problem isn’t what you originally thought.

Measure. Now that you’ve identified your problem, how are you going to know if and when you have resolved it? Peter Drucker would say “What gets measured, gets improved.” In a perfect world, that is absolutely true. In order for us truly to know whether we made progress, we have to mark our starting point. Unfortunately, not all problems, issues, or projects have supporting metrics. As long as you know where you started, you will be able to compare your current state to the new state.

Analyze. In those instances where it’s a struggle to determine what is really going on, the “5 Whys” tool, developed by Sakichi Toyoda in the 1930s, may help you find the answer. Keep asking yourself “why” until you get to the real root of the issue. Another helpful tool is the “Fishbone Analysis” developed by Kaoru Ishikawa in 1968, which helps the end user visualize all of the key categories and possible means of determining the real origin of the problem. Don’t let your analysis bog down in trying to resolve all of the departmental issues. Be sure you are only analyzing the problem you initially defined. Don’t try to boil the ocean!

Improve. You have isolated the problem, identified how to measure progress, and analyzed the root cause. Now you need to consider next steps to eliminate the problem. It is important to evaluate and consider different alternatives. Including the correct stakeholders in the decision is also critical to ensuring that there is “buy in” for the solution. The correct stakeholders aren’t just the individuals doing the work and their managers. If your problem involves people outside your department, it is especially important to include them in the discussion. Folks who question every decision you make are great ones to help consider every potential outcome. Without involving the right individuals in decision making, you may take inappropriate or ineffective steps to resolve the problem.

Control. How are you going to ensure that within three months or three years, you do not revert back to old ways? A monitoring plan must be developed to ensure this doesn’t happen. This step is essential not only to ensure that you don’t regress but also to check if the improvement plan put in place is still effective.

For projects affecting Sponsored Research, we implemented one additional step that entities in other industries may not: running our new and improved process by our external auditors. When it came time for our Uniform Guidance audit, we didn’t want to miss any obvious internal control that would result in a finding or material weakness.

Completing this training was not without challenges. In order to ensure success, we had to make our “DMAIC” project a priority. We had to make sure that time, our most valuable resource, was dedicated to it every week. Without senior management support, this would have been impossible. And, of course, there was the anxiety of culture change. Formerly, when someone asked why something was done a certain way, the response was usually “that’s how we have always done it.” Making time for innovation needs to become part of our daily thinking and planning.

In order for “lean” to work, people must have a readiness to change, so that this process will become part of everyone’s everyday thinking. It will empower people to look for change and ways to improve. As Thomas Jefferson said, “if you want something you’ve never had, you must be willing to do something you have never done.”

In order to integrate “lean” into our culture, we have started the next wave of projects within the department, using the “train-the-trainer” model. Those of us in the first wave of “lean” training are now training others within our respective areas. Over time, this deliberate commitment to professional development and rethinking our procedures will allow our Financial Affairs function to achieve a new level of Operational Excellence.

References

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“If you want something you’ve never had, you must be willing to do something you have never done.”

– Thomas Jefferson
EXPERIENCE DISCOVERY.

The full research lifecycle

Pre-Award
Post-Award
COI
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The dread starts when the phone rings. The contract is taking forever. The negotiator feels pummeled. The investigator is unhappy and just wants to start working. The department needs an account so they can prepare for the research. The conference call is looming. No one is happy. It’s a contract negotiation. But what went wrong?

Research Administration customer service is a topic with breadth and depth, and The Johns Hopkins University (JHU) offers a unique lens to consider best practices. Founded in 1876 as the first university in the Western Hemisphere based on the European research model, JHU has pursued research for more than 140 years, covering nine academic divisions, an Applied Physics Laboratory, and 11 campuses. JHU has led the U.S. in federal research and development funding for 36 consecutive years, and in FY2014 received over $1.9 billion in research dollars. The scale of JHU research and the large customer community demands careful contemplation to help ensure clear communications, efficient policies, intelligent office structure, and diligent compliance procedures. However, we struggle each day to best serve our broad customer base.

As Research Administrators (RAs), how can we provide optimal support to our institutions while maintaining an acceptable level of customer service? For a research project to function, it can pass through several offices and be tracked by multiple identifiers, so even a quick answer on the status of an agreement can be a customer service challenge. Through our daily interactions with faculty, staff, contract officers, compliance offices, other institutions, and public and private agencies, we continually face different expectations and varied concerns, ranging from IRB oversight and account setup to legal concerns and budget nuances. How can we best serve the advancement of knowledge while also efficiently shepherding these projects? Through a clear understanding of who our customers are, we can more precisely offer our expertise and best practices.

Who are the customers that we serve? The Oxford English Dictionary lists seven distinct definitions for the term *customer*. Two of these definitions stand out in terms of research administration. External project funders, including higher tier funders, may be the most obvious customer under the common *purchaser of goods or services* definition. Many universities are also structured so that the departments of faculty researchers *purchase*, or invest in research administration services, as a portion of a department’s budget supports central administrative functions. In these more centralized university settings, where general revenue supports the research administration enterprise, the customer label may be applied broadly to include trustees, administrators, academic departments, students, affiliates, community members, and others. Application of the equally common definition, *user or recipient of goods or services; client*, not only yields many of those customer groups listed above, but also broadens the customer profile to include beneficiaries of research projects, academia, industry, and even the general public.

The expressed interests of these identified customers vary. However, the essential oversight and coordination activities of the research administration enterprise necessarily require consideration of an ever-evolving compliance landscape. This landscape includes federal and state law, animal use, and human subjects, to name just a few, as well as the institutional reputation and adherence to its mission. Given this context wherein a single transaction necessarily involves numerous stakeholders, one point becomes clear: University research administration enterprises are hard-pressed to identify a single customer to serve.
A trending phrase coined by aspiring professionals and professional growth resources is “work smarter, not harder”, but why separate them and treat them as mutually exclusive? The top percent of successful people work smart and they work exceptionally hard. They set high standards for achievement, revisit and prioritize their goals, define the act of persistence, and push the envelope to learn new ways to be efficient. Those who work both smart and hard look to be exceptional, and they avoid being hung up on the “exceptions” that keep them from being productive.

Three exceptional steps:

1. Define your goals, know your objectives, and create a work plan. You have to know where you are going to be efficient in what you do, and you want your hard work and efficiency to meet you at the finish line.

2. Know your vision. Your goals and objectives help you to identify your direction, and then by adding your vision, you build your drive and persistence to bring bigger impact and achievement.

3. Learn from others and ask for help. Do not silo yourself while working toward your vision. Influence others to feel as passionate about your vision as you do, and working together will help you go further than by attempting to do it alone. It is also important to learn new ways of accomplishment and methods of efficiency from others. Be open-minded, listen, and embrace your community.

Those who choose the exceptional track are influential. They are the leaders in their field and they influence others to join their trail of passion to make big impact. Time is a limited resource, so leave it better than you found it by filling it with both a manner of efficacy and a hard work ethic.

Based on the diversity of our customer base, it would seem nearly impossible to adhere to the adage, the customer is always right. To the contrary, integration of this general precept as part of a comprehensive customer service strategy that balances adherence to central policies with timeliness and transparency can be key to customer satisfaction. Customer service strategies must value and incorporate feedback from customers, but to successfully transition principle to practice, these strategies must also integrate the interests of the stakeholders responsible for implementing the strategy, namely research administration staff. More specifically, effective customer service strategies in this context must guide oversight and coordination of administration activities through clear and consistent prioritization of inherently conflicting needs, values, priorities, and interests expressed by stakeholders. Though this is no easy task, the following framework illustrates one approach to do so.

As a result of our varied customer makeup, RAs have a complex calculus for finding our sweet spot when it comes to providing excellent customer service; where agreements and interactions with RAs are performed or finalized within university policy, in a timely manner, creating few unsatisfied stakeholders. We can all negotiate well and have an amazing agreement that adheres to every University policy and possible risk calculation, but that would take so long and the complaints would be very high. See Box A below in the Sweet Spot Graph. This is not practical. We could alternatively have an agreement that we complete in record time, with no escalated issues or complaints (maybe even some praise), but that agreement would not have a chance of adhering to University policy and would end up putting the University at great risk. See Box B. Somewhere between A and B is the Sweet Spot. You can navigate this calculus with great customer service.

Sweet Spot Graph

We see four criteria to great customer service in research administration that will guide you toward the Sweet Spot. Along with Adherence and Timeliness as clarified below, great customer service is provided when it is built upon a foundation of Openness and Transparency, importantly allowing for trust in the system to build:

1. Adherence
2. Timeliness
3. Openness
4. Transparency
1. Adherence: You negotiate agreements in order to protect your faculty and staff, and the institution as a whole, while allowing the great work to be done. The better you know your policies and guidelines, the better you are able to navigate and communicate the reasons why each have to be followed closely.

2. Timeliness: As mentioned above, practically everyone from whom you receive an email or phone call could be considered your customer. Respond in a timely manner. If you don’t know an answer, let them know you are looking into it and will follow up, then be sure to actually follow up. Customers will better appreciate a quick “I’ll look into it” over a delayed response a week later providing the answer. Strive to do both. Don’t let those hard questions sit; find an answer or someone who knows the answer. Your knowledge base will continue to expand and you will quickly become a great resource.

3. Openness: Be proactive about letting these customers know what is going on with their agreement and what the next steps may entail. Manage their expectations to help limit their frustration. If you think a negotiation may take a long time, let them know and tell them why. Our faculty and staff are some of the brightest people in the world in their given areas of expertise; help them understand why something seemingly straightforward is taking a long time. We know the necessity of the process, but do they?

4. Transparency: Our office has systematized workflow of agreements and modifications which provides view access to the relevant PI and department staff to monitor the status of any given agreement. Create tools for your customers that allow them to peek behind the curtain of research administration. Don’t hide the fact that volume is high or an agreement is taking long; allow them to look for answers and understand the volume and issues involved. Help them see and understand that they are involved and a part of a larger university process. For example, Departments of Motor Vehicles across the country have made huge strides in customer service simply by showing customers their spot in line and approximately when they will be served. Our agreement review system soon will have a ticker, visible to anyone with access to the system, to show aggregated information for all new agreements and modifications or amendments, including:

- Number of agreements in process
- Average turnaround time (from date ‘in’ to full execution)
- Total completed for the fiscal year to date

Equally important is determining not only the sweet spot for your office, but also for each individual negotiator. Providing appropriately complex work to your staff based on their level of experience should not be overlooked. This is a key component of providing excellent customer service: Helping your staff succeed by giving them work for which they are knowledgeable and allowing them to find the sweet spot of any given agreement. Agreement review based on a tiered level of complexity sets your staff up for success and confidence, allowing them to provide great customer service.

When you’ve found your sweet spot, you’ll feel a big smile when the phone rings. The contract is just about wrapped up. The negotiator feels chuffed. The investigator is happy and just about to start working. The department is preparing for the research. The conference call is beatific. Everyone is happy. It’s just a contract that went just right.

Research administrators have the difficult task of serving a wide and complex customer base. If your office works on these four criteria, you will quickly find all of your negotiators providing excellent service that optimizes their own level of experience to the vast array of customers we find ourselves serving.

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I think I need some coaching about “micromanaging” because my staff recently completed a 360 review of my performance as a leader of our research office and this comment was made by several people. Do you have any ideas?

This is a frequent challenge for many in leadership roles: How to maintain transactional accuracy and a sense of accountability with team members while providing team members with the trust, opportunity, and empowerment to do their functions well. You might ask yourself a few questions: What is your perspective on this feedback…does it, or does it not, ring true for you? If you believe that it has some validity, do you feel the need to intercede for all transactions or situations in the research office? For all staff members or for some? How satisfied are you with the performance of your team overall? What would happen if you exerted a bit less control? What is the worst thing that could happen? If your answer is along the lines that the office and individual staff members would fail and the operation would suffer reputation loss and that mistakes would readily and irreversibly happen, and that each mistake would irrevocably impact the success of the research office and your own leadership performance, and that you could lose your job, family, and home…then the feedback you received is probably on target.

I would ask you how you approach situations when team members bring a problem or challenge to your office door. Let’s presume for purposes of this column that your first reaction is a variation on the theme of telling them what to do and how to do it. Instead, try to draw out from your team members their best thinking on the problem. First, take two deep breaths to change your focus from telling to asking. Then, ask questions like:

- What have you considered as options to solve this problem?
- What is most important for us to discuss about this problem?
- What most concerns you?
- Who is impacted by the problem and your proposed solutions?
- How would you plan to communicate or persuade them regarding this possible solution?
- Would you like to brainstorm on possible solutions (Asking permission to brainstorm keeps the problem with the team member rather than moving it to your own shoulders)?
- What would you recommend that we do?
- How can I support you?
- When should we get back together to review progress on solving this problem?

By asking questions to help draw out solutions, you are not owning the problem and taking it away from your team member. Of course, for new and inexperienced team members, you will need to be more directive and in teaching mode, but even in these situations, it is helpful to clearly train new staff early on that they are responsible for solving business problems.

Listen to the responses that you hear and frame your follow up questions accordingly, not via script. Truly listen. Don’t just hear what your team member says with your own solution painted, framed, and hung in your mind. Be open. Have a conversation with your team member. Be willing to acknowledge to yourself and your team member that you do not have the answer. Saying “I don’t know” or “I don’t know what the best answer is” and being a bit vulnerable as a leader is a very important quality in building trust and engagement with team members. Share the responsibility for problem solving. This is not to abdicate your role and function as a leader of an operation, but to empower your teammates to do their best thinking and work. Solving business problems through the work of a self-reliant team only enhances your standing and success as a leader. Focus your need to “control” on achieving this keystone leadership objective.

Train yourself that your first reaction to problems or requests brought to your office door will be to ask, not tell.

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

Garry Sanders is an executive coach and graduate of Georgetown University’s Certificate Program in Leadership Coaching. Garry is a long-time research administrator and recipient of NCURA’s Distinguished Service Award. He can be reached at gsanders@assistleadership.com and (518) 588-0992.
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Preaward research administrators have the distinct privilege of witnessing the unfolding of new discoveries through basic and fundamental research. As researchers seek funding to support graduate students, build and utilize laboratories, and conduct cutting-edge research, the federal government strives to stay ahead in science, technology, and medicine. Driven by the creation and dissemination of information, research universities provide the foundational data on which innovative ideas can launch into tangible products and services. On the other side of the fence, industry leaders seek to solve problems as well as generate profits for their businesses. Still noble in their pursuit of knowledge and information, industry researchers bring a different perspective and experience to the research enterprise. Each side of the fence plays an integral role in improving and saving lives through the advancement of science and technology; imagine the potential when these two establishments work together, leveraging one another’s resources! Even so, finding a common ground on which to have good, sustainable partnerships can seem daunting.

The University-Industry Demonstration Partnership (UIDP) put together the Researcher Guidebook: A Guide for Successful Institutional-Industrial Collaboration. It serves to “promote greater understanding of the issues that face both parties in order to facilitate more effective collaborations for mutual benefit” (UIDP, 2010, p. 6), along with a Quick Guide excerpt that summarizes key elements. This resource helps researchers from both sides of the fence understand one another’s perspectives and is therefore useful to preaward research administrators, especially those who play a role in facilitating collaborations between university and industry. The UIDP Quick Guide discusses ten key issues that are “critical to generating fruitful alliances” between university and industry partners (p. 6). Each of these elements of the guidebook, if read and applied appropriately, can contribute to strong and productive university-industry partnerships. Three of the ten chapters get directly to the core of the differences in perspectives and procedures of the two entities: 1) Some compliance issues, 2) Confidential/Proprietary Information and Intellectual Property Concerns, and 3) Creating Long-Term Relationships.

Preaward research administrators who play a role in supporting university and industry collaborations may be called upon to help bridge gaps in researchers’ understanding of compliance matters. The university investigator would not readily be familiar with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) or Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) standards in the same way as the industry researcher in the medical or pharmaceutical arena. On the other hand, the university researcher must alert industry partners to the “process and possible delays” (UIDP, 2010, p. 26) as it relates to research involving human and animal subjects. For example, some universities’ Institutional Review Boards only meet once a month. The industry partner may not anticipate the intricacies of administering and monitoring compliance on the university level. Export controls is another compliance matter that manifests very differently when universities and industries come together. Generally, universities conduct basic research whose results are exempt from export controls through the Fundamental Research Exclusion. Understanding that partnering with industry collaborators can change the need for export controls is a valuable reminder for the university researcher that may have become accustomed to previous exclusions.

Perhaps even more important elements of the quick guide are the sections dealing with confidential/proprietary information and the other on intellectual property. Unless a university researcher has had prior experience working in industry, he or she may not think about protecting information the same way as an industry researcher. The two partners have very different perspectives on information. “Institutions see dissemination of information as a primary responsibility. Industry will see protection of proprietary information as critical to its economic success” (UIDP, 2010, p. 28). A significant portion of the agreement will deal with
proprietary information and intellectual property. Through contract negotiations, both parties must ensure that their information is adequately protected without compromising their agenda for the partnership. Intellectual property must be discussed during the contract negotiation as well, which makes this section of the guide critical. These issues may be resolved easily with the agreement that intellectual property ownership follows inventorship; however this may not always be the case, and neither side of the partnership wants to endure a legal battle to resolve a misunderstanding on the backend.

Ultimately, preserving the relationship between the university and the industry is of paramount importance. There is no room for short-sightedness when it comes to university-industry partnerships. Embarking on the cumbersome task of contract negotiations and establishing relationships takes significant effort from both sides. Though a specific idea or opportunity may spark the collaboration, such partnerships often “go beyond initial expectations, resulting in new initiatives, programs, and perhaps even spin-off companies” (UIDP, 2010, p. 34). Starting with the end in mind, both university and industry researchers must choose their partners wisely, establish effective communication, and be stewards of the trust and potential bestowed upon them. The guide cautions against rushing through negotiations to make sure that the long-term relationship is safeguarded by appropriate measures on the front end. Good institutional and industrial collaborations are more than just temporary partnerships; they are relationships that continually work together to make the world a better place.

The *UIDP Researcher Guidebook* and the handy *Quick Guide* excerpt take a very in-depth look at the differences between university and industry research and provides a thorough list of issues that arise when these entities work together. Although they generally operate on different sides of the fence, the UIDP presents information in such a way that fosters the creation of these collaborations. By examining compliance matters from both perspectives, preaward research administrators can become aware of additional considerations that prevent each party from experiencing unexpected consequences. Taking time to negotiate contracts that protect information, outline rights to intellectual property, and secure lasting relationships between the parties helps to lay the groundwork for long-term partnerships that can change the world.

**References**


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**Tanya Blackwell** works in the Office of Sponsored Programs as a Contracting Officer at Georgia Tech, where she received her bachelor’s degree in Aerospace Engineering in 2006. She has worked in the field of research administration for 11 years. She’s currently pursuing her Masters in Research Administration from Johns Hopkins University. She can be reached at Tanya.Blackwell@osp.gatech.edu

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**NCURA Magazine Seeks Co-Editor**

*The NCURA Magazine* seeks applicants for the position of Co-Editor. The volunteer position is a three year term, beginning January 1, 2018. The Co-Editors work with the Managing Editor, Senior Editor, and Contributing Editors in ensuring the timely release of six issues during the calendar year.

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

Individuals interested in the position should contact either Managing Editor Marc Schiffman at schiffman@ncura.edu or Senior Editor Pat Hawk at patricia.hawk@oregonstate.edu
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Research administration at academic medical centers should help clinical investigators navigate the complex research environment and operationalize research ideas. To effectively do this, the research culture must evolve from a model where individual faculty employ and trust only their own people to one of collaboration and trust of a much larger group of staff to help achieve scientific excellence. This means that staff and research support must deliver a high level of customer service and have a grounded conviction for what brings them to work every day.

The History
Five years ago, support for clinical research at Duke University School of Medicine was broken and narrowly scoped. Several years earlier, the School of Medicine clinical research support office was born out of a billing crisis and operational mandates that dictated to faculty, staff, schools, departments, centers, and institutes. The clinical research world prior to this was very “mom and pop,” as it is at many academic medical centers (AMCs). Our environment was fragmented with “do-it-yourself” (DIY) research work everywhere. Successful research staff did grow out of the DIY environment, but only for those who were lucky. I consider myself one of the “lucky” ones, but let’s break that down to see if others can relate.

Lucky
From 2000-2007, I managed several behavioral intervention studies funded by NIH for one investigator. This was a fortunate scenario for me in several ways: 1) I worked with an incredible, cross-disciplined team of experts so I learned daily; 2) We continued to be successful in NIH funding (R01s, R21s, etc); 3) I became known across campus as an expert in tumor registry data management and enrollment in these trials; 4) As the “expert” on the team in our study methods and implementation, I ran the projects soup to nuts and I loved it; 5) I’m an outgoing person so having relationships with people holding varying roles (faculty, other research coordinators, clinical experts, and senior staff in support offices, such as IRB) was easy. So, while all of this was lucky in setting myself up for a career at Duke, it is not reasonable for most staff. The principal investigator (PI) and I could not retain steady research assistance because there was limited opportunity for career development of those staff. While I wanted to grow the team of support for our research projects (and train the staff to know what I knew about operationalizing the studies), it was a lot of pressure for one investigator to be responsible for all of our funding. Thus, I continued to work long hours (alongside my PI, who wrote proposals and Duke received millions in funding). I kept asking myself, “why doesn’t our institution support the NIH investigator better? How is it that we have an office completely dedicated to clinical trials billing, but that barely acknowledges I exist? And we bring in all this funding?” I continued to express my ideas and the need for a new model. At this point, I was just a coordinator in the School of Nursing.
In 2007, an unexpected event occurred that spurred a dramatic change on our research team. A co-investigator passed away after a terminal diagnosis and the PI that I worked with decided to leave Duke. I’d built my career at Duke so I wasn’t ready to move my family and life across the country to continue being a project manager. Faculty approached me from across Duke to ask me to work for them. I waited. I still had this idea that research support for all faculty could be better.

Changing the Mindset
I started with relationships. I started helping all the faculty in the School of Nursing, and eventually agreed to take on an administrative position as a research practice manager (RPM). Serving as RPM allowed me new exposure to other areas of Duke. This is where I first became part of the larger clinical research oversight and support. My peers at the table were mostly very senior research coordinators who had run industry-sponsored clinical trials. We were from different worlds, but I could see commonalities. At this same time, a P20 grant at the School was ending and several research staff were losing their “soft-money funded” positions. I agreed to hire them to do the work on the numerous funded studies I was supporting. In turn, I would see if I could make a go of my idea to bring better research support to Duke. The nursing faculty trusted me because I helped them get their work done. Some started “purchasing” effort from members of my team for designated periods – thus began a shared effort model entitled, “Research Management Team (RMT)” (Snyder, 2012). This expanded to a service available to investigative teams across all of Duke. I sought and received funding for this from the Duke Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) that led us to implement REDCap (Harris, 2009) for Duke.

In 2012, the vice dean for clinical research in the School of Medicine approached me to expand RMT’s service model even further for Duke and take on an existing research support office. While this opportunity was exciting to me, I knew it meant taking on a broken research support office. It was my only chance to continue moving my vision of research support forward. In July 2012, the Duke Office of Clinical Research (DOCR) was born: a rebranded, refreshed, yet-to-be-determined model of customer service support for the entire research community (Snyder, 2016). Building out the new office and DOCR model required acquiring additional senior staff who were in agreement that Duke could improve research support. In the next two years, I brought key leaders to our team that comprised expertise in information technology, nursing, Medicare coverage analysis, grant writing, industry-sponsored contract budgeting and reconciliation, legal, data management, study coordination, and staff management.

Moving the Vision Forward
For AMCs, research is a collaboration, not a service. There is a desire and drive to change patient care and health outcomes. When first taking on the office, this became our mission. First, change the culture of the central team, putting customer service first. Second, inspire staff by emphasizing that we’ve all chosen to work in AMCs because changing patient care and health outcomes is bigger than each of us. Together, the staff in clinical research must collaborate to be catalysts for change amongst the entire Duke research community. We must build partnerships based in trust with our faculty, patients, and local community. If staff only think about “me”, it will divert attention away from the true mission. To begin this journey for staff, we needed a complete overhaul of our job classifications. After
several stakeholder discussions in 2014 that encompassed human resources, School of Medicine leadership, departments, centers, and institutes, we agreed to embark on a large-scale revision of job classifications for the Schools of Medicine and Nursing. Our timing could not have been better. The Core Competency Framework had just been published by the Joint Task Force for Clinical Trial Competency (Sonstein, 2014). We acknowledged that job responsibilities and roles had grown in need and scope, yet the job descriptions and classifications held by our staff had not—and this is true across AMCs (Stevens, 2015). Furthermore, training requirements and demands for professional development have climbed (Speicher, 2012). As of March 1, 2017, we have mapped nearly 700 staff into ten competency-based job classifications (Brouwer, 2017).

Clinical research matters. If we do not continue supporting our bright clinician-scientists to implement their best ideas, we will not continue to move remarkable, often life-saving, treatments and community health forward. Duke understands the need to retain the best and brightest staff. We cannot move the trust needle with the faculty if we don’t employ the most extraordinary, dedicated staff in clinical research. And this is only the beginning.

Acknowledgments

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Developing Global Collaborations: One Visit at a Time

By Tony Ventimiglia

The Research Administration Initiative (RAI) is a joint initiative between the Eurasia Foundation (EF) and the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) with the goal of strengthening the potential for sustainable, long-term research collaboration between Russian and U.S. institutions of higher education in the area of university research administration. One of the initial goals of this initiative was the assignment of Russian fellows in several institutions across the United States following the NCURA annual meeting in August 2016.

From August 11-15, 2016, Auburn University hosted Dr. Irina Karapetyants, Vice-Rector for International Educational Programs and Director of the Institute for International Transport Communications (IITC) at the Moscow State University of Railway Engineering (MIIT). Founded in 1896, MIIT is the oldest institution of higher technical education in Russia. Today, MIIT is the largest scientific and academic complex in Russia and is a leader in the field of training and retraining of specialists and scientific personnel for transport and transport construction.

During her visit, Dr. Karapetyants met with key stakeholders within the Auburn research enterprise: the Vice President for Research and Economic Development; Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Research; Assistant Vice President for Research; Directors of Sponsored Programs, Research Compliance, Innovation Advancement and Commercialization, and Contracts and Grants Accounting; and Associate Deans for Research from two colleges (Business and Engineering) for which there is a potential for future collaboration. Dr. Karapetyants was also afforded the opportunity to share information about IITC and MIIT at a brown bag luncheon. Of course, no visit to the South would be complete without an introduction to Southern barbecue (and Waffle House)!

Following Dr. Karapetyants’ visit, we agreed to work toward future collaboration and communication, but we did not expect that a reciprocal visit would follow so soon. In late September 2016, I was invited to participate in a delegation to Moscow, Russia slated for the second week of November which enabled me to visit Dr. Karapetyants’ institution.

On my first day, I was provided a tour of IITC. The tour included a number of facilities for outreach, research, and instruction. Following the tour, I provided a presentation about Auburn University and its research capabilities and also led an open discussion on the possibilities of future collaborations. Speaker engagements, intellectual exchange, and research collaborations were among ideas discussed to bring together Auburn University and MIIT/IITC faculty and students. Three students of IITC volunteered to take me on a tour of the City of Moscow. The tour, which lasted almost four hours, covered a large area of Moscow and included a number of landmarks. I was truly impressed with both the historical knowledge and exuberance expressed by the students in sharing information about their city.

Following a busy day, my host (Dr. Karapetyants) and her husband Valery treated me to a Georgian dinner at Café Tchaikovsky, followed by a concert at the Moscow Philharmonic. Interestingly enough, the concert was a jazz quintet from New York (Нью-Йорк).

My second day started with a tour of the MIIT campus, including their historical museum. This was followed by a working lunch in which I met with Dr. Alexey Davydov, MIIT’s Vice-Rector for Research and Innovation to discuss Auburn University’s research administration structure. The day concluded with a presentation to MIIT researchers and administrators on Research Administration – what it is and how it is managed at a U.S. organization.

Following my two days spent at MIIT, I met up with representatives from the NCURA National Office (Kathleen Larmett, Jesse Szeto); a number of colleagues from U.S. universities (Bob Andresen, Tricia Callahan, Panda Powell, Robin Riglin, Shandra White); new colleagues from Russian universities; and representatives of the Eurasia Foundation to take part in an RAI workshop, held at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, and a roundtable discussion (held at MIIT). On our final day in Russia, we were hosted at the New Economic School for a roundtable discussion on the American and Russian Experience of University Research Administration.

Both the experience of hosting a fellow and traveling abroad has increased my understanding of the importance of global collaborations and the impacts they can have on our institutions. I am also very pleased to be able to share that, following these visits, Auburn and MIIT are working toward execution of a Memorandum of Understanding to “develop cooperation relations on the basis of established contacts and mutual understandings, especially to develop academic and cultural interchange through mutual assistance in the areas of education and research.”

Tony Ventimiglia is the Director of the Office of Proposal Services and Faculty Support where his responsibilities include assisting faculty and staff in the broad aspects of proposal development for their research, scholarly, and creative programs. He is a graduate of the 2005 NCURA Leadership Development Institute (LDI), the 2015 Executive Leadership Program and currently serves as NCURA National Secretary. He can be reached at venti@auburn.edu
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The first day official day of the conference kicked off with our inspirational keynote speaker, Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro. Dr. Munro is a Professor at Royal Roads University in British Columbia, an Adjunct Professor at Central Michigan University, and a visiting professor at Mount Meru University in Tanzania, Africa. Her interactive talk focused on how we could strengthen our individual capacity to build and sustain long-term connections and explored how we can exercise our leadership to enhance engagement and inclusivity in the workplace. Dr. Munro helped us understand and hopefully avoid the 5 Connection Killers: (1) Failure to value everyone; (2) Letting ego seize center stage; (3) Making assumptions; (4) Not paying attention to the 10 second message you might be sending in the first 10 seconds of a meeting; and (5) Judging. The talk then focused on the 3 C's of Connectivity in order to get everyone into the spirit of the conference theme Together Towards Tomorrow: (1) Curiosity to look with genuine interest at the world around us in a state of inquiry; (2) Courageousness to show up as our authentic self; and (3) Cultivating leadership to take the initiative to engage with someone.

A total of 13 pre-conference workshops, 56 concurrent sessions, 32 discussion groups, and 20 spark sessions were offered by our fantastic and dedicated program committee, all facilitated by volunteers from across the world. Every session provided a comprehensive and vast range of information for which everyone in any role or at any level was able to return to their respective institutions and immediately use.

We want to express our deep gratitude to NCURA’s President, Barbara Gray, for allowing us this wonderful opportunity to serve as this year’s PRA co-chairs. Without the nine months of support, guidance, and patience from the NCURA National Office staff—especially Susan McKenna and Kati Barber—this meeting would not have been possible. Also, no meeting is successful without willing volunteers such as our dedicated workshop faculty, discussion group leaders, concurrent and spark session facilitators, evaluators, breakfast table leaders, or registration desk volunteers.

It truly does take a village, and NCURA depends on everyone’s willingness to volunteer.

We hope everyone is armed and ready to embark on the 2017 spring season rejuvenated and reenergized with new knowledge and collaborations!

Yours…Together Towards Tomorrow,
Rosemary Madnick and Denise Moody
L-R: Rosemary Madnick, Co-Chair; Kathleen Larmett, NCURA Executive Director; Carolin Rekar Munro; Barbara Gray, NCURA President; Denise Moody, Co-Chair
Prior to the final publication of the Universal Biological Material Transfer Agreement (UBMTA) in 1995, the sharing of proprietary materials for use in research projects was often significantly delayed, or in some cases obstructed entirely, by lengthy negotiation of complex issues, such as intellectual property rights and publication terms. The main goal achieved by the UBMTA effort was to facilitate the sharing of proprietary materials for use in research by reducing the administrative burdens placed on researchers and their institutions by the contracting process. The sharing of research data between researchers at separate institutions now suffers from some of the same struggles that led to the development of the UBMTA. Members of the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) recognized the need for something similar to the UBMTA for data sharing and are taking steps to fulfill it.

The sharing of data between individual investigators at different institutions is often delayed by unnecessarily extensive negotiations of individual agreements to govern the transfer and use of the data. These lengthy negotiations can lead to unnecessary delays in gaining access to critical data and, potentially, the progress of the overall project. With developments such as the publication of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) memo “Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research” in February 2013, efforts to maximize the sharing of research data generated in the course of federally-funded research have increased. This exacerbates the issue as institutions have experienced a correspondingly steady increase in the volume of data sharing agreements required to enable research projects.

In September 2015, the FDP Data Stewardship and Contracts subcommittees moved forward with the creation of a data sharing agreement template with the goals of reducing the administrative burdens and creating a more efficient process. One of the working group’s first tasks was to determine what this template would be called; the group settled on Data Transfer and Use Agreement (DTUA). The use of the term “data use agreement” was avoided because under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), this term refers specifically to the agreement used to transfer a limited data set whereas the DTUA will have broader applicability. The DTUA label was chosen to ap-
appropriately reflect the working group’s goal for the template package to be usable with a wide variety of data types.

The working group also quickly identified that supplemental materials, such as a glossary and documentation to provide guidance on the use of the templates, would be necessary to ensure success. To expedite the development process, a subsection of the group has been working with Jill Frankenfield, University of Maryland, to craft these supplemental materials while the other half of the group has been working with Melissa Korf, Harvard Medical School, to develop the template.

In developing the format for the DTUA template, the working group determined that the best model would be the format of the FDP’s Research Subaward Agreement, which consists of a face page with core terms common to every subaward and various attachments used to incorporate sponsor- and project-specific information and terms. The attachments follow the below structure:

- **Attachment 1** includes information related to the project specifics, such as a description of the data being transferred, a description of the project for which use of the data is being authorized, information regarding the method(s) for transfer of the data, whether the data provider is to be reimbursed for any costs associated with the transfer, and any special disposition requirements at the end of the project.
- **Attachment 2** includes terms required based on the specific type of data being transferred. For example, this attachment will include any specific additional terms required for the transfer of a limited data set or an obligation not to attempt to re-identify subjects in the case of de-identified human data.
- **Attachment 3** identifies permitted collaborators if the parties have agreed to include any.

Prior to beginning any drafting, the working group first reviewed 12 sample agreement templates provided by FDP member institutions to develop a list of core terms that must be included in the DTUA. In drafting the text to incorporate those core terms in the template, the working group focused on utilizing language from other widely accepted templates wherever possible. For example, the working group chose to adapt the liability language from the UBMTA for use in the DTUA template as many institutions have already accepted that language for a similar scenario.

Final publication of the components needed to issue a DTUA for De-identified Data about Human Subjects or a Limited Data Set is anticipated in Spring 2017. Upon publication, the template will be available via the FDP website (http://thefdp.org), and an announcement will be distributed via the FDP listserv.

If you have questions about the templates or would like to learn more about the working group, contact Melissa Korf at Melissa_Korf@hms.harvard.edu. Also, if you’re travelling down to the NCURA Annual Meeting in August, Jill Frankenfield and Melissa Korf will be presenting a session on the FDP DTUA Template and would love to see you there!

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Melissa Korf, is Associate Director, Grants & Contracts in the Sponsored Programs Administration office at Harvard Medical School. She serves as Co-Chair of the Data Stewardship Subcommittee for the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) and Co-Chair, along with Jill Frankenfield, University of Maryland, of the FDP Data Transfer and Use Agreement Template Working Group. She can be reached at Melissa_Korf@hms.harvard.edu

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Introduction

While the term “innovation” is one of the most popular buzzwords working professionals hear today, it is also one that is greatly misunderstood. Numerous organizations use it as a comprehensive phrase to describe revolutionary discoveries, such as new, state-of-the-art applications, products, and services. However, if you were to look in the dictionary, you may be surprised at what you would find. Innovation is simply defined as “the introduction of something new.”

We all know that the institutions and individual researchers we support are an important source of innovation for society. However, our institutional administrative practices continue to be plagued by inefficiencies that have the potential to hinder the ability of our researchers to conduct research that can lead to new and exciting innovations. The increasing “bureaucratization” of research administration is a legitimate problem facing all research enterprises who receive Federal grant funding.

As a mid-level manager, I’ve often wondered “what can I do to increase efficiency and reduce burden on faculty and administrative staff?” In seeking an answer to this question, I stumbled across the concept of “Innovation in Research Administration.” While our senior leaders work with government agencies to devise regulations to reduce burden, research administration staff can, and should, look internally and utilize the fundamental concepts of innovation to spur new ways to conduct research administration operations that ensure functions are carried out efficiently with minimal burden to researchers.

Evidence of Bureaucratization of Research Administration

Regardless of how long you have been working in research administration, you are probably aware that over the last 15 years there has been a substantial expansion in the administrative obligations that come with Federal grant funding. A 2012 report by the National Research Council’s Committee on Research Universities found that “the problem of excessive regulatory burdens ... puts a drag on the efficiency of all university research.” The report also noted such burdens could lead to costs of “billions of dollars over the next decade.” Additionally, in 2006, the Federal Demonstration Partnership found that research faculty spend an “average of 42 percent of their time for federally sponsored research projects on administrative tasks.” Additional studies of university research bureaucratization, including a 2014 report from the National Science Board, have reached similar conclusions. The burdens are real and it is imperative they are addressed so that researchers can refocus their efforts on scientific discovery.

How Innovation Management Can Help

To combat this unsettling trend of increased administrative burden, many research universities have come together to lobby the Federal government, the primary source of research funding, to revise the burdensome regulatory requirements that accompany Federal research grants. However, we can also accomplish a great deal to reduce administrative burden by looking internally and utilizing some simple innovation management methodologies.

Culture of Innovation

No matter your institution’s size or research volume, a culture of innovation may be necessary to succeed in today’s constantly changing research administration environment. The need for innovation can be witnessed on an almost daily basis. Federal regulations and institutional policy disruptions continue to change the environment in which we work. As the old adage goes, “the only constant is change.” There are many approaches that an institution can take to strengthen their own innovation cultures. Based on their in-depth research, the best practice insight and technology company CEB recently identified three primary elements that derive a culture of innovation:

1. Environment: Allow for the challenge of assumptions; foster an environment that welcomes new thinking; and give freedom to experiment, fail, and learn. Encourage creativity and collaboration.

2. Talent: Encourage diversity within functional and project teams. Don’t be afraid to hire individuals who are willing to think outside the box.

3. Process: Consider a program/process to facilitate the generation of new ideas. Be equitable in assessing ideas; and have a program/process to incubate innovative concepts.
As a mid-level manager, I’ve often wondered “what can I do to increase efficiency and reduce burden on faculty and administrative staff?”

Achieving balance in all three of these elements is a challenge in the dynamic research administration environment. However, it’s still a worthwhile endeavor. Institutions can systematize improvement initiatives, but still fail to provide the appropriate environment to foster the creativity to allow such initiatives to be successful. Failure to support innovation most often stems from an institution’s culture rather than the lack of operational resources. It’s also worth noting that this doesn’t have to be an institution-wide initiative. I manage a team of six research administrators in the central research administration office at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (UW Madison). Even as a mid-level manager, I’ve been able to foster a culture of innovation just within my team, and it’s been successful. Within our team of six we’ve been able to develop new and innovative solutions to some of the most pressing and burdensome issues facing our faculty and research administration staff.

**Process Innovation**

“Process innovation” is simply a special term for improving your institution’s processes. Instead of focusing on external problems, focus on improving your core processes to make your institution more efficient and adaptable to changing sponsor requirements. Most innovation literature speaks of process innovation in manufacturing or large technology companies, where small efficiency boosts save millions. Similar benefits can be seen in research administration. When you stop and think about it, almost everything we do in research administration is rooted in a process of some kind. Submitting an invoice, applying payments, reviewing cost transfers—it’s all a process. Sure, some of the processes we follow are more formalized than others, but they can all reap the benefits of process innovation. Personally, I have had success in utilizing innovation author Ben Mulholland’s concept of “visual process innovation.” It is simple in theory, and easy to follow in practice. Five steps can be put into action:

1. **Current state**: Visually map your current process
2. **Future state**: Develop and visually map the improved process
3. **Validate**: Test the process
4. **Activate**: Implement the process
5. **Monitor**: Check the success of the process and improve if needed

Process innovation is how you improve the way you do things in your institution. That’s it. No “lean six sigma,” “business process re-engineering,” or “business process management,” but simple and straightforward increased efficiency and accuracy.

**Incremental Innovation**

Too often project teams and working groups try to “hit a home run” when it comes to developing solutions to pressing issues. However, don’t forget about the small changes that can lead to large impacts. Focusing on incremental innovations can be just as important as major radical innovations. At UW Madison, our award set-up services have benefited from incremental improvements. This function involves various compliance checks that have expanded in scope over the past few years. However, with each new requirement that’s imposed, we look to identify areas that we can improve to keep the total award set-up cycle time as low as possible. This doesn’t entail a total dismantling of the function, but rather small tweaks here and there. These incremental improvements have been the key to maintaining a successful and efficient award set-up operation.

**Conclusion**

The traditional approach to reduce administrative burden has been to lobby lawmakers to revise regulation to ease these burdens. However, research institutions need to be open to searching for new innovative ways to reduce burden on investigators, but also meet regulatory requirements.

Utilizing the innovation management concepts presented above, institutions can look internally to make meaningful and sustainable changes, which lead to reduced burden for everyone—research faculty and administrative staff. Innovation is not a concept reserved for high-tech companies that develop new products and services. As research administrators, we too can benefit from cultivating innovation in research administration to spur new ways to conduct business that ultimately ensure operations are conducted efficiently with minimal burden to researchers.

Remember, innovation does not need to be overly complex. It is simply “the introduction of something new.”

**References**


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**Kurt McMillen** is a managing officer in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He currently serves as the manager of the Awards Team overseeing the award acceptance and set-up operations. He can be reached at Kurt.McMillen@wisc.edu
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Research T&Cs: They are now posted. Check them out. [www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp)

Trump can’t cut off Berkeley's funds by himself. His threat still raised alarms: Trump threatened to cut off federal funding to the University of California at Berkeley after violent protests there prompted campus leaders to call out a talk by a far-right provocateur. [www.chronicle.com/article/Trump-Can-t-Cut-Off/239100/?cid=wcontentgrid_6_Slist_6](http://www.chronicle.com/article/Trump-Can-t-Cut-Off/239100/?cid=wcontentgrid_6_Slist_6)

The end of biomedical research on U.S. chimps may imperil their wild brethren: It has been over a year since the National Institute of Health ended its chimpanzee biomedical research program, which experimented on chimpanzees in efforts to advance human medicine. [http://scienceline.org/2017/02/end-biomedical-research-u-s-chimps-may-imperil-wild-brethren/](http://scienceline.org/2017/02/end-biomedical-research-u-s-chimps-may-imperil-wild-brethren/)


INTERNATIONAL/GLOBAL:

We must urgently clarify data-sharing rules: Scientists have worked hard to ensure that Europe’s new data laws do not harm science, but one last push is needed. [www.nature.com/news/we-must-urgently-clarify-data-sharing-rules-1.21350](http://www.nature.com/news/we-must-urgently-clarify-data-sharing-rules-1.21350)

Joining Forces: Global Science Collaborations Rocket. [www.chemistryworld.com/news/global-science-collaborations-rocket/2500435.article#.WK2UkUK5y8g.linkedin](http://www.chemistryworld.com/news/global-science-collaborations-rocket/2500435.article#.WK2UkUK5y8g.linkedin)

AGENCY NEWS:

New Peer Review Videos for Applicants and Reviewers: [https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2017/02/03/new-peer-review-videos-for-applicants-and-reviewers/](https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2017/02/03/new-peer-review-videos-for-applicants-and-reviewers/)

Double take: Resubmissions Revisited - Funded resubmission applications and their initial peer review scores. [https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2017/02/17/resubmissions-revisited-funded-resubmission-applications-and-their-initial-peer-review-scores/](https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2017/02/17/resubmissions-revisited-funded-resubmission-applications-and-their-initial-peer-review-scores/)


New Features in eRA Commons for Requesting No Cost Extensions, and Change of PI/PD: New features have been added to eRA Commons to allow designated institutional officials to submit requests for No Cost Extensions (NCEs), or to initiate the request for a Change of Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI). Both features can be found under the “Prior Approval” tab. [https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2017/03/06/new-features-in-era-commons/?utm_source=nexus&utm_medium=email&utm_content=nihupdate&utm_campaign=feb17](https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2017/03/06/new-features-in-era-commons/?utm_source=nexus&utm_medium=email&utm_content=nihupdate&utm_campaign=feb17)


FUNDING NEWS:


GoFundMe Releases Data on College Crowdfunding: Faculty members, students and parents have launched over 130,000 fund-raising campaigns, collected donations from over 850,000 people and raised more than $60 million on the crowdfunding site GoFundMe since 2014. [www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2017/02/16/gofundme-releases-data-college-crowdfunding/utm_source=InsideHigherEdEdd&utm_campaign=6aad1c4093-DNU20170216&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_16fcb04421-6aad1c4093-197420681&mc_cid=6aad1c4093&mc_eid=0442e99b21](http://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2017/02/16/gofundme-releases-data-college-crowdfunding/utm_source=InsideHigherEdEdd&utm_campaign=6aad1c4093-DNU20170216&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_16fcb04421-6aad1c4093-197420681&mc_cid=6aad1c4093&mc_eid=0442e99b21)


TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER:

I

n my experience, being a research administrator requires a great deal of mindfulness. You must be mindful about institutional policy, Uniform Guidance, terms and conditions. You must be attentive to changing priorities, juggling and shifting gears to meet the demands of internal and external due dates. You must be conscious of how quickly and clearly you address inquiries, observing how effectively you—in turn—listen to the needs of scientists, fellow department administrators, and central offices. Distractions are tempting. It seems there aren’t enough hours in a day and the work rarely quiets down. If you mindlessly go about reading and responding to low priority but simple emails or carelessly submit reports and approve expenses, it would only lead to more work for yourself and others. Research administration is a high stress occupation, particularly in an action-packed place like New York City.

Checking email on the train and working overtime is an attempt at a solution but, for me, it only made matters worse in the long run. I was barely getting sleep, running on empty, and unproductive. When I stumbled upon the Research Administration Stress Perceptions Surveys (RASPerS), it really hit me—I’m one of many research administrators who find themselves chronically stressed. And the one thing I wasn’t being mindful about was me.

RASPerS were web-based surveys conducted in 2007, 2010, and 2015 by a team of researchers from the University of Central Florida. Respondents self-reported based on a series of questions using the five-point Likert scale, with choices of never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often and very often. The investigations showed statistically significant associations between levels of extremely high perceived workplace stress and self-neglect and work-life balance (Shambrook, 2012). Many of our own experiences echo these findings. We review expenses following the prudent person test every time. Over time, the workloads build to an unmanageable scale, with choices of internal and external due dates. You must be conscious of how much you are rewarded by our culture (with promotions, bonuses, praise, and so on) and therefore considered a good thing despite its long-term negative impact on well-being (Seppala, 2016). Long hours and presentee-ism (working while sick) are the norm for both scientists and administrators. Dr. Emma Seppala is the author of The Happiness Track: How to Apply the Science of Happiness to Accelerate Your Success. The book presents many science-backed techniques to manage stress and the one that most resonates with me is the chapter “Get More Done by Doing More of Nothing.”

Doing nothing may sound counterintuitive, yet research shows that embracing ancient spiritual practices such as meditation to cope with the modern world builds resilience (Williams, Penman, 2011). Resilience “involves an ongoing process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or other significant sources of stress. Not only is it a process, but building resilience is further complicated by the importance of personalizing the process. Each individual needs to develop a strategy for building resilience that works for him or her (Newman, 2003).” Dr. Stephen Southwick and Dr. Dennis Charney have conducted studies on post-traumatic stress disorder and resilience for decades, and in their book Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life’s Greatest Challenges, they identify ten resilience factors. Mindfulness falls under two of the ten resilience factors—drawing on faith and brain fitness (Southwick, Charney, 2015).

Meditation is one of many ways to practice mindfulness. One would sit in a comfortable position, feet on the floor, focusing on the breath, gently returning attention to the breath for a set amount of time. Taking a moment for pause can sound like a magic bullet. Change doesn’t happen instantly. But in my experience it is a practice that one can turn to in times of stress and it helps to reset.

Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one’s awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one’s feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. Reb and colleagues (2015) “found positive associations between a leader’s trait-level mindfulness and greater employee job satisfaction, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior; and wellbeing.” Whether we are managers or not, when we are not stressed, we are able to see matters with clarity. We are better at reading...
the emotions of others and responding appropriately. And we tap into the all important self-awareness that is the very foundation of emotional intelligence. “Emotional Intelligence is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships” (Bradberry, Greaves, 2009).

While half of the RASPers respondents were chronically stressed, the other half seemed to portray traits of resiliency. Stress impacts their work and lives but it does not necessarily lead to chronic stress. Still it begs the question, if my mind is already full, how can I possibly be more mindful? Here are a few ways you can bring mindfulness into your day:

- Meditate. Meditation requires a great deal of practice, so don’t be frustrated if thoughts are running at the usual mile a minute speed. With patience and time, you’ll build a practice that becomes less daunting.
- Take a breather between projects. Stand up, stretch, refill your water bottle. My email is set up so that I must manually refresh the inbox. That way I’m not distracted into answering every email the instant it arrives.
- Go for a walk to chat with a coworker upstairs or pick a restaurant or park a little farther from the office than usual. It’s only five or ten minutes and it helps to clear your head.
- Eat mindfully. Tuck your phone or tablet away for a few minutes and enjoy every bite of your meal. Try to eat somewhere other than your desk, like a park bench or the cafeteria.
- Revisit your to-do list and check in to see that you are using your time wisely, handling the higher priority items first. Flag other deadlines but don’t turn your attention to them until you really need to and can give it the proper amount of attention it needs.
- Consider other simple tasks throughout the day—such as brushing your teeth or drinking a glass of water—where you can take a moment to mon task.

References


The AM59 Program Committee has been busy developing our annual program “Exploring the Possibilities ... Navigating into the Future.” We are planning a dynamic program for the upcoming meeting scheduled for August 6-9, 2017 at the Washington Hilton. NCURA has always been our work family—“ohana” in Hawaiian—and we are confident that this program will provide you the opportunity to reconnect with your colleagues, expand your network and increase your knowledge as we move into the future. We know that there will be a plethora of sessions to enhance your work effectiveness, expand potential career options and increase your professional network.

With any new federal administration, we know that there will be changes; as Research Administrators, it is up to us to continue to find effective and innovative ways to better perform our duties and responsibilities. NCURA’s 59th Annual Meeting will offer a myriad of concurrent sessions, discussion groups, and workshops that provide a venue for the sharing of critical information, best practices, and strategies for success with subject matter experts from around the country and the globe. There will be new offerings, including tracks on Research Evaluation and Data, Technology Support for the Research Administrator, an enhanced Global Track with sessions targeted to both U.S. and non-U.S. participants, high-energy Ignite sessions, a Genius Bar where you can meet with experts one-on-one, and Poster Sessions that will showcase cutting-edge research on research administration and management. Topical area certificate programs are available and sessions will be identified for varying levels of expertise. As always, there will be experts from federal agencies represented at the program to provide us with the most up-to-date information to navigate into our future; in fact, more than 10 agencies representatives are planning to participate in sessions.

Register by June 9 to receive special discounts on the conference and workshops! We are also expanding the workshop days you will be able to attend. To further expand your learning options, we are adding workshops on Saturday and an NSF afternoon workshop on Wednesday with Jean Feldman, Head, Policy Office, Division of Institution and Award Support, within NSF’s Office of Budget, Finance, and Award Management.

We are changing our Sunday evening event to give you the opportunity to start the meeting by expanding your horizons and exploring new cultures with our Ohana Night, where you can enjoy delicious fare and exciting Polynesian entertainment while building and enhancing your network with your NCURA professional family.

Over 300 educational offerings spanning the profession at all levels.
On Monday, we continue to explore the past to discover how it has influenced our future with our Keynote speaker, Mae Jemison, the first woman of color to go into space, serving as a NASA Astronaut. Currently, she is leading 100 Year Starship (100YSS), an initiative seed funded by DOD’s Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), to assure the capability for human interstellar space travel to another star is possible within the next 100 years.

We will continue to imagine into the future with the return of Kelly O’Donnell, Capitol Hill Correspondent for NBC News, who will join us for lunch, and some political analysis. A veteran of presidential politics, Ms. O’Donnell contributes regularly to the *NBC Nightly News, TODAY*, and MSNBC and appears as a panelist on *Meet the Press* and *Hardball with Chris Matthews*.

Our exploration will head to the National Air and Space Museum on Tuesday night to see many of the nation’s treasures as we enjoy a *Night at the Smithsonian*. After the museum, we will return to the Hilton to remember our past and revitalize our souls with some old time Rock and Roll!

We are very excited about our expanded programming and we send our sincere thanks to the Program Committee and the NCURA staff for supporting our vision. There will be over 300 educational offerings spanning our profession at all levels with certificate programs available for your continuing education credits and we hope that you have made your plans to join us as we EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES...Navigating into the Future.

We look forward to seeing you in Washington, DC in August!!

Chair and NCURA Vice President

Georgette Sakamoto

Co-Chairs

Twila Reighley

Denise Wallen

University of Hawaii

Michigan State University

University of New Mexico
In early 2017, gazing into the crystal ball and trying to discern what the future might bring is more difficult than ever. However, one thing is inevitable, and that is change. Recent political development has introduced new elements of uncertainty, affecting research and research administration in ways that are impossible to predict with any certainty. The introduction of alternative facts in US politics is pretty much the antithesis of scientific research, and the future of EU research funding and collaboration is also unpredictable at the time of this writing, with Brexit looming, and before the elections in The Netherlands, France, and Germany. National research funding in many countries is under pressure. In Denmark, where I live, direct funding (block grants) for research to universities is reduced by 2 percent per year until at least 2020, causing massive layoffs in 2016. Copenhagen University laid off over 500 people last spring. The two major public funding agencies, The Danish Council for Independent Research and the Innovation Fund Denmark had their budgets reduced by 30 and 40 percent respectively this year. Similar crises have hit other countries that are normally associated with a high R&I profile, such as Finland.

The increased pressure on research as a system inevitably puts pressure on research managers and administrators, too. Whenever financial cuts are made to universities, it is almost a gut reflex to target administration first, even if it might not always make sense (certainly not from research administrators’ point of view). Researchers tend to dislike administration as a concept, while at the same time often having great trust in individual administrators they work with. This apparent self-contradiction is deeply human, and often has its roots in an overwhelming sense that administration is growing at the expense of core activities, in this case research.

At DARMA’s (the Danish Association of Research Managers and Administrators) Annual Conference 2016 in Nyborg, Denmark, one keynote was delivered by Anders Forssell of Uppsala University in Sweden, on the topic The Administration Society, which is also the title of a book co-authored with Anders Ivarsson Westerberg in 2015 (Administrationssamhället). In the authors’ own words, the administration society “is a society where a seemingly endless stream of policies generates massive administrative work, and where this work intrudes into and adds to the daily workload of most professional and other occupational groups.” I think many, if not most, people recognize this description.

This begs the question: What is administration? According to a new definition by Forssell and Westerberg (2015), administration is:

1. All production, collecting, processing, compilation, putting together, and reporting of information;
2. To interested parties of different kinds (principals, owners, executive groups and officers, managers, staff and personnel, interest groups, authorities, customers, suppliers, media, etc.);
3. In order to maintain, coordinate, manage and control an organized system of any sort (an operation, an organization, a project, a network, etc.);
4. Over time and space.

The key is that administration is necessary to maintain, coordinate and control any organized system. Thus, administration is also necessary to maintain research; the next key question is ‘who does it?’

According to Forssell, Sweden has seen a dramatic decrease in ‘low-skilled administrative work;’ the number of ‘secretary’ positions decreased from 256,000 in 1990 to 31,000 in 2008, whereas the number of ‘manager’ position doubled in the same period. Another trend is that more and more administrative tasks are performed by professional staff (e.g. professors, doctors or teachers). Some university researchers in Sweden use as much as half of their time performing administrative tasks. Similar trends can be seen in other countries, including the US.

This explains the pervasive idea of growing administration, even if the number of administrators is shrinking. It is thus not so much that administration grows, but rather that it is done by the wrong people (employees who are employed to perform other tasks). Forssell ended his keynote at DARMA with a call for a smarter way to see administration, and to look not so much at the number of staff with the ‘admin’ label, but rather to map which tasks that need to be done, and balance the staff accordingly. It is crucial that organizations are properly staffed to ensure the right people do the right tasks. Scientists performing administrative tasks is expensive and inefficient. Still, is it not quite common?

This message resonates deeply with me, and I think that this kind of mapping of tasks with the purpose to balance the work force would be one of the most valuable preparations for the uncertain future that we could do.
The increased pressure on research as a system inevitably puts pressure on research managers and administrators, too.

In times of shrinking funds from public sources, diversifying income streams becomes more interesting for institutions, and may even become necessary, forced by external pressure. Receiving funding from other sources normally means having to adjust to new rule sets. Any research administrator having worked with transatlantic research funding knows exactly what I mean, regardless of which side of the Atlantic they are on. At the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Southern Denmark (where I work), we probably have one of the most diversified funding mixes, at least in Denmark, with well over two thirds of the income for research coming from either private foundations and charities, or foreign sources. In my opinion, this challenge makes the job more interesting, but it does have some important consequences: One of them being that benchmarking the activities of research support becomes both more important, and much more challenging.

At a conference in Reykjavik in December 2016, Nordic university administrators started a process to define a set of common, general benchmarks for research and innovation support. This is, not unexpectedly, a tall order considering the sprawling diversity of funders in five countries, with the added flavor of EU and US funding sprinkled on top of it. This Nordic benchmarking exercise is a work in progress, but some common themes emerged: Key Performance Indicators can be defined for work focusing on specific funders or rule sets, such as the European Union or the NIH, and it is easier for post-performance Indicators can be defined for work focusing on specific funders or rule sets, such as the European Union or the NIH, and it is easier for post-

award than pre-award. However, pre-award services with a general purpose are more challenging to measure quantitatively, for reasons similar to the challenges with The Administration Society. What is it that should be measured?

A phrase that seems to be popping up with increasing frequency at research management conferences and events worldwide is values proposition. For research administrators, it is fundamental to analyze, understand, and precisely define which values their services are bringing to stakeholders, who mainly consist of researchers and management; and their interests do not always converge.

To conclude, many challenges and unknowns lay ahead for research administrators. My suggestion for meeting those challenges is for the research administration community to get to know itself even better. Take the outsider’s perspective. Two of the most important factors are mapping tasks and balancing the work force. This would probably lead to more jobs for skilled research administrators, and allow you to become as sharp as humanly possible on which values your services contribute to your stakeholders.

Then change will not menace stability.

References


Olaf M. Svenningsen, Ph.D., Head of Southern Denmark Research Support at Health Sciences, University of Southern Denmark (SDU). Olaf’s primary responsibilities at SDU are pre-award services, including academic capacity building. Olaf is chair of DARMA, the Danish Association for Research Managers and Administrators. He can be reached at osvenningsen@health.sdu.dk
Reminder!

Mandatory Transition to Workspace for Grants.gov Applications

Beginning December 31, 2017, PDF single-file application packages will no longer be available for download from Grants.gov. Packages downloaded prior to that cut-off date will need to be submitted before March 31, 2018. Here are a few tips from Grants.gov regarding the impact to applicants:

- The change will impact all applications that previously used the PDF file submission process.
- If your campus supports System-to-System (S2S) there is no direct impact; however for the few applications that cannot be submitted S2S, you will need to support the Workspace process.
- For applicants who have yet to use Workspace, there is a setup process that may require a significant planning and training effort; the Workspace must first be set up for each application, then all those participating in the submission process must be identified and granted access with specific roles.

A recent Grants.gov blog provides the following 7 tips for the transition:

1. Form re-use is the single most beneficial feature in Workspace; subsequent submissions using the same form-set are able to modify and re-submit previously filled in forms.
2. Familiarize your team with the general sequential Workspace workflow:
   - Log in to Grants.gov
   - Search for a funding opportunity
   - Create a Workspace
   - Add participants
   - Re-assign Workspace ownership as needed
   - Download and fill in forms
   - Complete application and notify the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)
   - Submit the application
3. Register other team members with Grants.gov accounts; a single applicant with the AOR role can fill in and submit an application, however you may want all of the collaborators to have a Grants.gov account and participate in the application process.
4. Keep in mind that all participants in the Workspace will be able to read completed forms; should any information be sensitive, you may not want to grant access to everyone.
5. You can still send individual forms to others by attaching a form to email, asking another individual to complete and return, then upload the completed form to Workspace (this step avoids the requirement to grant Workspace access to an individual).
6. The more you use Workspace, the more valuable the re-use feature will be.
7. Workspace form validations help minimize last-minute errors; forms are validated individually as they are uploaded, and in addition there is a “Check Application” button that performs an additional set of validations.

Grants.gov provides a number of resources to help in the transition. Here are a few:

- YouTube training videos: Open YouTube.com in browser and search for “Grants.gov Workspace”
- Grants.gov Workspace Overview: Open grants.gov in browser, then navigate to “Applicants > Workspace Overview” (see image above)
Automation Strategies for Reducing Your Research Administrative Burden

Recent studies have shown that researchers are spending only about half their time conducting research—the remaining hours are spent searching for funding and navigating federally mandated compliance reviews, among other things.

To increase productivity dramatically across the research enterprise, we must develop strategies to reduce research burden.

Visit our website to learn more about:

- The current state of the research enterprise,
- how some of your peers are creating a world-class research,
- how the Huron Click Research Suite 8.0 can measurably improve research processes, relieve administrative burden and free up time for what matters most—your research mission.

For additional content, webinars, and information on this topic, visit:

Huronconsultinggroup.com/researchsoftware
There is nothing quite as inspiring as spending an extended period of time learning from colleagues at institutions outside our own. It can teach us to think differently, explore alternative approaches to common issues and inspire us to implement new ideas. Yet, accessing such opportunities can seem challenging.

This article looks at how planning can help make the most of these collaborative opportunities, from both the visitor and host perspectives. The authors draw upon their experiences visiting institutions in North America and the UK and from hosting visitors to Australia. Both roles provide rewarding opportunities for collaboration. To ensure visits are successful, planning is key!

**PLANNING**

**Visitor Perspective**

**Questions to ask yourself:** What is it you hope to achieve? Which institutions can best help you achieve it? What kind of support is available to you (financial, professional) and how can you secure it? Planning is essential, and laying the groundwork will help you get there.

**How do you define your project?** Write down and develop some key questions you hope to answer. You may have a specific project you want to undertake, or you may be more interested in broadly exploring new ideas. Either way, you will need to be able to articulate what you want to achieve either in an external application for financial support, to garner support from your institution, or both. Discuss your ideas with your supervisor and ensure you have their support. Think about the benefits your project will bring to your institution and how you will share what you learn with colleagues in your workplace and in the wider research administration profession.

**What will your host need to know about you?** Your host may or may not be aware that you will be contacting them. Regardless, they will not know very much about you, or why you have chosen to visit them. Preparing and sending a two to three page CV, including a photo and a summary of what you hope to get out of your visit will assist them to understand what meetings will help you get the best out of your visit and recognise you when you arrive.

**How can you promote your institution and exchange information?** It is a good idea to think about what your hosts might like to know about you and your institution. You will get a lot out of the visit, so be prepared to reciprocate and answer questions they may have. Consider meeting with colleagues who work in areas you are not so familiar with before you leave. Put together a presentation on your institution and the broader national research environment, including challenges.

**Say thank you.** Before you go, you might like to purchase some small gifts to give your hosts, particularly to those who have coordinated your visit. It is likely they have spent a significant amount of time trying to ensure that you will get the best out of your stay. A small gift from home goes a long way.

**Host Perspective**

**Does your institution have a policy on external visitors?** Remember to check if there are institutional protocols that you need to be mindful of.

**Does your institution have an International Office?** Seek their guidance on preparing for a visitor. Do they have information packs?

**Has your visitor provided a profile on who they are and why they are visiting your institution?** A profile is helpful when preparing an itinerary and making introductions on behalf of your visitor.
When is the best time for the visitor to visit? Give thought to the project your visitor is undertaking, and the availability of the people that they are meeting.

What information can you provide to help the visitor with planning? Information on living/working in your city can be incredibly helpful. Include information like institutional strategy and structure, accommodation suggestions (any institutional rates), visa requirements, currency, transport options and useful websites. Consider including recommendations for weekend exploration.

Where should your visitor be based? Will you have a desk for them in your office? Should they spend time in a single College? Could they spend time in each?

Will you create an itinerary for your visitor? We recommend offering to help prepare a meeting itinerary for your visitor and to make e-introductions. It can be difficult for a visitor to know who to contact.

What to include in an itinerary? Allow time for orientation of the university and local area, workstation setup and access. Desk time each day is important. Remember that visitors from another time zone will need time to adjust to their surroundings, including the culture and the accents. Try to hold meetings where the person is located at the institution to provide the visitor with an in-situ experience. Avoid information overload!

MAKING THE MOST OF THE VISIT
Visitor Perspective
Being in a new place can be overwhelming. It is a bit like starting a new job in which you meet all your new colleagues and try to understand everything that each of them does in a series of continuous meetings. People are generous with their time and prepared to share and exchange experiences, but it can be challenging and intense.

Your hosts will likely have allowed you some time between meetings to gather your thoughts. This is important, as you will be learning a lot, and will need to document it while it is still fresh in your mind. You may also have one eye on work at home. Be kind to yourself. Take time out in each day and appreciate the opportunity to look around your host city.

THE EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE A SHARED LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR BOTH THE VISITOR AND THE HOST INSTITUTION.

Host Perspective
The first day should be welcoming and focus on orientating your visitor to their temporary home. Talk through the itinerary, giving a brief overview of who they are meeting. Check in on how the itinerary is going every few days. Be prepared to help refine the itinerary as your visitor begins to understand your institution and how it relates to the scope and aims of their visit.

Remember, we all use local jargon. Be aware that your visitor may not be familiar with the terms you use commonly every day (if possible provide them with a glossary of terms).

The experience should be a shared learning experience for both the visitor and the host institution. In the itinerary, allow for time to hear from them, what they are working on, as well as the strategy and structure of their institution. It is a great way for colleagues at your institution to develop a global relationship without the travel.

SHARING OUTCOMES
Visitor Perspective
If you are lucky enough to receive funding to undertake your exchange, you may be asked to write a report to your sponsors, to write for professional publications (like this one!), and to share your experiences more widely with colleagues at your institution and in your home city or state.

Host Perspective
As a host institution, it can be useful to ask for feedback from the visitor about the experience.

If the visitor prepares a report on their visit, encourage them to share it. They may also share useful documents about their institution. Maximising the experience involves ongoing sharing of information.

Why not look at whether your workplace supports visits to other institutions?  ■
Sunny San Diego? Well, let’s just say that a little fog certainly did not stop FRA from smooth sailing. To everyone who was able to join us: it was great to see you! And to those who weren’t able to make it: you were missed and we hope to catch up with you very soon!

This year’s FRA program opened with hundreds of attendees participating in pre-conference workshops covering a variety of topics that highlighted our FRA theme, Charting Your Course in Research Administration. Participants engaged in full and half-day sessions, exploring various areas of post-award management, including how better to incorporate electronic tools into our work and various areas of compliance, and how they intersect with the financial research administration community. Day one rounded itself out beautifully with a lovely welcome reception at sunset overlooking the pacific.

Our FRA program started with an amazing keynote speech by Shari Harley. 8:15am “spring forward” Sunday morning is a rough curtain time, but we never would have known it. Shari’s speech focused on how to manage your career by asking the tough questions and being able to deliver some challenging messages. For those of us in a continually changing, and these days, a little unsure, environment, the discussion was timely, on point, constructive, and, perhaps best of all, fun. Even if we were assigned homework.

Following our keynote, attendees got right down to business—spending the next two days choosing between discussion groups, concurrent sessions, and spark sessions, as well as various networking opportunities. Sessions covered topics at all levels of research administration, promoting growth, information exchanges, and the hope that everyone was able to leave San Diego with a “tangible” takeaway—a new colleague, a tool, a plan, or an idea. For FRA this year, we also pioneered a new session format: the Learning Lab, where attendees were students in a lab-type environment, rather than a lecture-style, to work through a topic.

San Diego had so much to offer attendees, from the marina right outside our hotel, to fabulous restaurants and amazing weather; we couldn’t have asked for more. As we close out 2017 FRA, we are so humbled to have been your co-chairs for this year’s meeting. We would have never gotten there without the dedicated support of the NCURA staff, our partners in all of this; the PRA co-chairs, who were with us on this amazing journey; and our program committee, without whom none of this would have ever been possible. THANK YOU!

And, lastly, thank you to everyone who supported, participated, and/or attended FRA 2017. We look forward to seeing you in San Juan, Puerto Rico, March 1-3, 2018 for the 19th Annual Financial Research Administration meeting.
While recent political events in the United States and the United Kingdom have seemed to signal a paradigm shift away from the orthodoxy of globalization and towards a more insular nationalism, higher education is a notable exception to the inward trend of the global economy, where the driving force continues to be an ideal of achieving a global exchange of information and borderless collaboration. The majority of growth in transnational higher education since the turn of the century has been, and continues to be, the establishment of international branch campuses (Wilkins and Huisman, 2012). According to a database maintained by the Cross-Border Education Research Team and hosted at the State University of New York at Albany and Pennsylvania State University, as of the writing of this article there were a total of 247 international branch campuses in operation with an additional 22 international branch campuses planning to open (C-BERT, 2017).

While previous scholarship in institutional theory has focused on the myriad benefits and risks informing the move towards international branch campuses from a broader management perspective, the goal of this article is to draw upon my own experiences working with international branch campuses at New York University (NYU) and to focus more narrowly on the advantages and disadvantages of this trend from the perspective of research administration.

In 2007, NYU announced its plans to enter into an agreement with the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to open NYU Abu Dhabi as the first of its portal campuses as part of its broader vision to brand itself as the Global Network University. In 2010, NYU Abu Dhabi welcomed its inaugural class of students and became the first comprehensive liberal arts and science campus in the Middle East to be operated abroad by a major American research university. Similarly, in 2013 NYU partnered with East China Normal University to establish NYU Shanghai as the first Sino-U.S. joint venture to be approved by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China with independent legal status. The establishment of these three degree-granting portal campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi and Shanghai—along with 14 other smaller academic centers spread across the globe—became the backbone for the Global Network University, with the idea that faculty and students would be able to circulate seamlessly throughout the network without leaving the university’s intellectual community and resources. Research at each of the network’s sites is connected to and enhanced by the whole. Many of the faculty at NYU maintain appointments and research facilities at more than one of the portal campuses, and students at all of the campuses are encouraged to spend two or more semesters during their four years at NYU studying and participating in research abroad at any of the sites in the network.

In order to facilitate a seamless connectivity in support of sponsored research throughout the Global Network, NYU coordinated efforts internally with senior administration at each of the campuses and externally with representatives of U.S. federal agencies to make sure a satisfactory plan was in place to ensure consistent compliance with federal regulatory requirements. An agreement was reached that in order to be eligible to receive U.S. federal funds, all sponsored research would need to be centralized through the NYU New York campus. Signature Authority for all proposals and awards submitted or received on behalf of the portal campuses would remain with NYU New York and would follow the same review and submission process as any of the schools or departments in New York. All accounting and financial reporting would continue to be centralized through the New York campus and meet the same audit requirements. All research would be required to comply with U.S. federal laws applicable to sponsored research, including the Bayh-Dole Act and export control regulations under OFAC, ITAR and EAR. While each of the portal campuses have their own local IRB and IACUC to review human subjects and animal subjects research, the NYUNY has oversight of all of their procedures, protocols and decisions.

As of 2012, NYU Abu Dhabi was the first portal campus to come under compliance with U.S. federal regulations related to sponsored research, and NYU Shanghai continues the process of centralizing its research infrastructure.

In addition to centralizing the research administration and compliance functions for each of the portal campuses, NYU has also established the Advisors on Foreign Activities and Research (AFAR) as a working group to increase the level of support provided to NYU faculty and students in the conduct of research and other sponsored programs abroad. The AFAR working group is a partnership comprised of representatives of the administrative support offices, such as the Office of Sponsored Programs, the Office of General Counsel, and the Office of Compliance and Risk Management, and is tasked with conducting a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, assessing risks and
The majority of growth in transnational higher education since the turn of the century has been, and continues to be, the establishment of international branch campuses.

Foundation, the Qatar National Research Foundation, the Abu Dhabi Education Council, and the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. The UAE is a hub for research in the Middle East, and the NYU Abu Dhabi portal campus has established collaborative research partnerships with some of the top research universities in the region, including Khalifa University of Science and Technology, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Qatar University, and the American University in Dubai.

Negotiating agreements with UAE-based sponsors and establishing research partnerships with UAE-based institutions often necessitates an advanced understanding of the local regulatory environment as well as the expectations of local funding agencies. For example, in the UAE the turnaround time from the issuance of a Request for Proposals to the submission deadline can be notoriously short, and the expected turnaround time for an executed contract can be shorter still. NYU Abu Dhabi has the advantage of being supported by a team of research administrators who have a high level of experience operating locally and a degree of autonomy to be able to negotiate directly with UAE-based sponsors and partners when appropriate. Both the portal campuses in both Abu Dhabi and Shanghai have the autonomy to submit and negotiate their own proposals and awards when the sponsor is the government of their host countries. The respect for the local context for research creates the possibility of long-term collaboration and continued sponsorship within the UAE. The strength of NYU’s portal campuses in establishing relationships in the host country creates the opportunity for extending that network of partnerships outside of the region as well, and in the last fiscal year NYU Abu Dhabi has entered into agreements with a wide range of U.S. institutions such as the University of California at Berkeley and Carnegie Mellon University, and has submitted proposals with international partners outside of the region including the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford and Stockholm University.

From a broad institutional perspective, there are obvious academic and financial benefits to establishing global partnerships; the global expansion of international branch campuses facilitates greater legitimacy on the global stage, and the increased visibility of the university as a recognized global brand increases access to some of the most accomplished and promising students from around the globe. In terms of research administration, working with international branch campuses in some circumstances can present risks associated with institutional distance, decentralized communication, and unfamiliar regulatory requirements and cultural norms surrounding research. However, with careful planning and oversight these risks can be easily mitigated and the benefits to sponsored research include a diversified funding portfolio, streamlined management of international collaborations, and a wide-open field for supporting the kind of border-transcending research that is needed for the world’s most pressing problems.

References


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In the words of my favorite attorney in the Office of General Counsel: “What does our policy say?” This seems to be the chosen response to a multitude of questions posed. Institutional policies have a variety of functions; policies define the framework, values, goals and purposes of the institution, and should also provide a roadmap to compliance with laws and regulations. When dealing with human resource issues, purchasing concerns, or grants and contracts regulations, institutional policies will help guide decision-making and actions.

To understand the importance of, the need for and the role of institutional policies, one must be able to differentiate between a policy and a standard operating procedure. Policies are the institutional implementation and application of the interpretation of the laws and regulations governing the issues being addressed. Policies are typically developed by the head(s) of a given unit or employee(s) responsible for the area, and reviewed by a team of other individuals to ensure all aspects are covered. Institutional policies should provide more overall guidance rather than step-by-step instructions. Michael Rasmussen states, “policies set the standard for acceptable and unacceptable conduct by defining boundaries for the behavior of individuals, the operation of business processes, and the establishment of relationships” (Rasmussen, 2012, para. 3).

Procedures are instructions—or recipes if you will—for performing a specific activity or task, and should be developed from the guiding institutional policies. Procedures will provide written directions and step-by-step instructions on who will complete the task and how it is to be done. Procedures are documents that can be revised and adapted based on efficiency, structure and best practices. According to Laura Lindley, “a well-written SOP helps us perform our tasks as efficiently as possible while following our policies” (Lindley, 2014, p. 12).

It is important for institutions to develop strong and effective policies, as they will provide the internal controls necessary to adhere to legal requirements, and provide a defense against legal and regulatory actions. Policies will also articulate and ensure operational consistency across the different components within the institution. Published policies will provide the guidance necessary for employees to make decisions that are in line with the overall institutional mission and culture, rather than what they think is best.

A crucial element to effective policies starts with the individuals involved in developing them and the knowledge those individuals bring to the table. The individuals tasked with developing policies must be familiar with the risk culture of the institution, and the overall function of the unit responsible for the development and enforcement of the policy. An employee in human resources shouldn’t be writing and enforcing a policy for the purchase of equipment on a federal grant, because the expertise for those rules and regulations aren’t typically in the human resources realm.

The wheel doesn’t have to be reinvented when developing policies. Researching other institution’s policies and adapting those to fit the needs of your own institution is acceptable. Be cautious with this though, because a delay in the implementation may cause legal repercussions if policies are not established on time. There are also a number of templates available to use for a wide variety of policies. Utilizing outside resources can help the development of policies be more effective and less time consuming.

Another important factor to consider when discussing both policies and procedures is communication. Faculty and staff must know about these policies and procedures in order to adhere to and implement them. A strong communication chain will also assist in development of effective policies by drawing the attention of the appropriate people to the issues at hand.

Without policies, an institution’s culture may be easily lost or altered into something unexpected and unwanted. Policies are meant to be tools to be used to adhere to laws and regulations as well as to guide employees on a path to acceptable practices. A strong set of policies is essential for the success of all institutions.

References


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or those of us working in research administration, we know that we are members of a profession, not just doing a job. We support researchers to help them do the best research. Ironically, there is little research done on research administration. So who better to do it than research administrators? With this in mind, two research administrators applied to the newly developed NCURA Research Program (n.d.) with some very important research questions: “What skills are necessary in research administration to move into leadership positions across the world?” and, “How on earth did we get here?”

Having recently finished a doctorate, I (Simon Kerridge from the University of Kent, not too far from London in the UK, currently in Europe) thought that this would be a piece of cake. So an NCURA colleague Stephanie Scott, from Columbia University in New York, and I together applied for the NCURA Research Program to conduct some actual research.

The proposal application instructions were fairly straightforward, but going through the proposal submission process was not so easy, as we are research administrators, not faculty! We learned a lot of lessons serving as PIs at our respective institutions, as it is always instructive to walk in someone else’s shoes for a while. Maybe the complaints we often hear about “administrative burden” are not so crazy after all.

To answer the above research questions, we outlined a plan to develop a questionnaire and survey the experts (yes, dear readers, we mean you). To answer the above research questions, we outlined a plan to develop a questionnaire and survey the experts (yes, dear readers, we mean you). This would be distributed by various research administration associations around the world to their members. We already had the UK Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA), and of course NCURA covered between the two of us and intended to bring other associations in, should our proposal be successful.

So we waited on tenterhooks—and WOW—we were funded! Yay! But then it sunk in. We actually needed to do the work! Also, our reviewers had a strong “suggestion” that we should involve the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA). We had, of course, intended to, but now it was a must.

The first few weeks involved lots of e-mails to other associations around the world. Would they be willing to ask their members to do the survey, and might they also be willing to put someone forward for an advisory group? A kick-off meeting had been envisaged to make sure everyone was on the same page, and London was decided upon as being more convenient for the Europeans than New York.

Amazingly, we built up an advisory group (Research Administration As A Profession, 2016), which included representatives from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS), the Canadian Association of Research Administrators (CARA), EARMA, and the Society of Research Administrators International (SRAI). Notably, four of the six members were past, current, or president elects of their respective associations, and all had been nominated by their boards. We had three of the advisory groups attend in person, two participated via videoconference, and one apology (but to be fair it was 2:30 am in Australia). One issue with a global project is getting everyone together at the same time, even virtually, although we did manage it once, even though the time zones were: GMT-8, GMT-5, GMT, GMT+1 and GMT+11. The advisory group was crucial; not only did they provide a direct route into their associations for distributing the questionnaire, but they also enabled us to recruit other associations much more easily.

After the kick-off meeting, we firmed up the project plan and shared it with the advisory group for feedback and a sanity check. We developed the questionnaire and went through over 20 iterations and numerous teleconferences before being tested by the advisory group. The questionnaire development was one area where having an advisory group from around the world really helped. With UK and US Co-PIs, we knew about differences in meanings and structures between the two countries, but this advisory group really helped us test out whether our questions had the appropriate meanings and structures between the two countries, and even then some things just did not translate. For example, there is a national research assessment in the UK, where universities submit their best research for assessment every six years, resulting in funding for the following six years, but this doesn’t occur in the US.

The final questionnaire contained three components. First, there were questions related to the respondent’s role in research administration, including questions on how and why the respondent entered the field. The second component contained an extensive series of Likert-scale questions related to the hard skills of research administration and the general soft skills used in the respondent’s current role. The last component collected basic demographic information to aid analysis.

Before launching the survey, however, the PIs had to obtain the necessary compliance approvals at their respective institutions. As research administrators, we were used to having to process, coordinate, and monitor all
aspects of research compliance. Having to actually go through the process of obtaining the appropriate approvals was a whole new world that we were not used to. This included areas such as export controls, data security, data management, data sharing, ethics/human subjects’ protection approvals, and conflict of interest. The PIs also had to set up an international subaward agreement from the University of Kent to Columbia University. There was a lot of work involved with even what may seem like a simple survey questionnaire that does not collect any direct human subject identifiers. However, add in the study’s international focus, along with the fact that sponsored projects administration offices don’t normally receive grants, and you have a whole new level of complexity. We were thrilled when the survey was finally launched only four months into the start date of the grant.

When we closed the questionnaire—after numerous reminders to the various associations—we had amassed 2,691 responses, which is a huge number, and plenty enough for some really robust analyses. However, it did also mean that we had a huge job of checking and cleansing all that data, and it would be fair to say that this took us longer than initially planned.

At the time of this writing, the data analysis is just getting underway. This is the really interesting bit and has made the hard slog of all that data cleansing worthwhile. Join us at the NCURA conference this August to hear all about it. Or, if you can’t make it to the conference, look out for the next thrilling instalment of our research journey in a few issues’ time. And if you really can’t wait, check out the RAAAP Worldwide website (https://raaapworldwide.wordpress.com) over the coming months.

So what have we learned during the project so far?

Doing research is great! It’s great fun, but a whole lot of work, and this is compounded by it being done on top of our day jobs. If you think you know your collaborators before you start, well, you’ll know them a whole lot better by the time you finish. Our top tip: work with people that you get on well with. There are plenty of people out there with the required skills and expertise for any particular piece of research, so pick the team that you want to work with and you know will deliver the goods.

The NCURA Research Program is a wonderful opportunity. It was great being able to experience being a PI, giving us a whole new understanding of the research administration process from the researcher’s perspective. Most importantly, we feel that we are contributing to a new understanding of our profession, and hope that as a result, future studies will take place to expand on our initial research.

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IRONICALLY, THERE IS LITTLE RESEARCH DONE ON RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION.
Remembering Why Oversight and Compliance Matter:

A Review of Luke Dittrich’s “Patient H.M.” and Other Suggestions for Summer Reading

By Andre Walker

As research administrators, we face a continuous challenge to stay current in our field. Not only do agency regulations, sponsor guidelines, and institutional policies change annually, but our interpretations and understanding of them also evolve. To keep up, there are many options for professional development, including workshops, webinars, and regional and national society meetings. However, tightening budgets may place some of these choices out of reach. Fortunately, there is a low-cost alternative that is as close as your nearest library or Amazon delivery point.

Books are an obvious source of knowledge, but, setting aside textbooks and manuals, much can be gained from works that are not explicitly about research administration. For instance, some of the best lessons on “people issues” reveal themselves in fiction (Perlmutter, 2017). Similarly, new insight into the origins of regulations and sponsor policy can be uncovered in the historical context and key events detailed in non-fiction. Human subjects protections are a case in point.

The rules governing human subjects research constitute a broad and dynamic body of knowledge, and regular study is necessary to stay abreast of the current requirements. Not only are the rules themselves evolving over time, but our comprehension of them also expands as we apply them in the real world. While it is straightforward to review new regulations as they are published, understanding is gained only by contemplating their application in different situations. Thus, case studies are a staple of any human subjects curriculum. Reading non-fiction with an eye toward such “cases” offers an opportunity to engage the material on a deeper level, imagining yourself as the administrator looking over the characters' shoulders.

Patient H.M. is a great place to start.

Who is Patient H.M.?

Patient H.M. – A Story of Memory, Madness, and Family Secrets is the first book from journalist Luke Dittrich. The book takes its title from the moniker given to the amnesiac patient at heart of most current theories on memory and brain function. Readers are introduced to Henry Molaison, H.M., as a young man with severe epilepsy. Henry and his parents are offered hope of a cure through medial temporal lobotomy, or “psychosurgery” as its practitioners call it. However, following the surgery, his epilepsy is largely undiminished, but his ability to form memories has been destroyed. From this personal tragedy is born a “pure” individual who will become the most widely used human subject in scientific history.

Though a journalist, Dittrich is far from a disinterested third party in tracing Henry’s story. He has a very personal stake in the history being recounted, because his grandfather is the surgeon responsible for popularizing “psychosurgery” and for performing the operation that creates H.M. This fact generates and maintains a tension that propels the reader along in anticipation of a final showdown (and resolution) where the author comes to terms with his family legacy.

Why does H.M.’s story matter?

The strength of Patient H.M. is that it paints a vivid picture of the cultural and social forces at work in the decades leading up to Henry’s surgery. Readers are introduced to the nineteenth century system that warehouses social outcasts and the mentally ill. These inmates are subject to myriad “treatments” and “therapies” meant to “cure” them. In reality, the procedures are merely means to render them docile and tractable. Later, the discovery of lobotomy ushers in a golden age where targeted brain damage is envisioned as an effective intervention for an ever-growing array of ills. By the time of Henry’s operation in the mid-1950s, lobotomy has emerged as a cure-all. It is applied with equal vigor to asylum patients, epileptics, depressed housewives, prison inmates, and outcasts of all stripes. Although cures prove elusive, the psychosurgeons tend to regard each failed procedure as an anomaly to the particular patient, rather than a sign of general ineffectiveness. In any event, a docile patient following surgery is a success, and any accidental disability is simply collateral damage.

As the use of lobotomy finally begins to wane, the story shifts to follow Henry’s journey as a human subject. He is the focus of countless psychological tests and experiments that continue until his death in 2008. Henry is undoubtedly a boon to scientists studying the brain, but his own well-being is an afterthought at best. He literally becomes a human guinea pig, endlessly poked, prodded, and questioned to elicit responses. The lack of
short-term memory that makes him so interesting to researchers also guarantees that he will be a tireless and ever-pleasant subject, as he will have no memory of any prior testing, even that occurring only hours or minutes before. His inability to advocate for himself and the lack of a champion to defend his best interest ensure that he will always be readily available for the next battery of tests.

The common thread through Patient H.M. is abuse of the powerless. While lobotomy becomes a popular tool to address a range of medical conditions, it is increasingly apparent that any therapeutic benefits are secondary. The real aim is to control socially-unacceptable behavior, and its application is broad. Whether an eccentric individual committed to aberrant descriptions of lobotomies.

When approaching any new book, imagining yourself in the character’s situation is a great way to explore how you might react. Asking questions as you go, such as “What are the ethical issues involved?”, “Are there power differentials in place, and are they used to exploit the vulnerable?”, “Did the established system fail, and if so, how?”, can help you take a seat alongside the protagonist to watch the story unfold. You can then consider where current-day policies and regulations might have avoided or resolved a particular situation. You can also ponder where organizational breakdowns occur and institutional controls fail to apply or enforce existing regulations effectively.

Stepping into Patient H.M. in this way is particularly fruitful. In the course of the story, the reader comes to appreciate the origins of the rules governing human subjects research today. It is a compelling illustration of the consequences that can result when vulnerable populations are not protected. Short of losing one’s life, being robbed of your intellect or personality is a uniquely frightening prospect. Contemplating that possibility removes the everyday abstraction of human subjects protections and leaves a visceral understanding of why such protections are necessary. In addition to human subjects, a variety of other compliance and ethical topics are also touched over the course of the story, including non-human primate studies, resource sharing, and research integrity. Few of these are bright-line, and they evolve into more subtle gray areas near the end of the book, giving the reader much to consider. Without giving any spoilers, it is safe to say that the story ends in a way that is every bit as troubling as the earlier descriptions of lobotomies.

The only caveat for Patient H.M. is that, while an engaging and enjoyable read, it does contain some difficult passages. In particular, the descriptions of asylum “treatment” practices in the late nineteenth century and “psychosurgeries” in the mid twentieth century can be unsettling at best, if not downright chilling. However, it rewards the persistent reader. Overall, Patient H.M. is well-written and tells a compelling story. For research administrators, its thought-provoking subject matter can shed new light on compliance and oversight.

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Suggested Further Reading

**FICTION**

*Intuition* by Allegra Goodman

*The Constant Gardner* by John Le Carre

**NON-FICTION**

*Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck* by Adam Cohen

*Permanent Present Tense: The Unforgettable Life of the Amnesic Patient, H. M.* by Suzanne Corkin

*Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, New and Expanded Edition* by James H. Jones

*The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* by Siddhartha Mukherjee

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

*Justice at Nuremberg: Leo Alexander and the Nazi Doctors’ Trial* by Ulf Schmidt


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www.ncura.edu/InstitutionalPrograms.aspx
With a vision to strengthen and elevate the American University of Beirut’s (AUB) stature as a dynamic, 21st century, research institution, the Center for Research and Innovation (CRInn) was launched in February 2015 under the oversight of the Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC).

CRInn aims at fostering a community of innovative startups in Lebanon and the region with a mission to present AUB and Lebanon as a culture of research, innovation and entrepreneurship that spans and engages faculty, students and staff while forming a connection between industry and academia. The center guides members of AUB throughout their journey of transforming their innovative business ideas into scalable businesses, through organizing events and partnering with national and international mentoring, training organizations and experts. CRInn’s vision to establish a supportive environment for new startups is achieved through systematic and collaborative efforts that integrate startups into Lebanon’s budding startup environment and economical system.

Among its many activities, CRInn runs regular business competition to choose the best innovative ideas that can be transformed into scalable businesses. One of the major competitions held during this academic year was the Hult Prize competition. The Hult Prize has been running internationally for the past 7 years, and in line with AUB’s and the CRInn’s missions and vision, was brought for the first year to AUB and Lebanon. The Prize is a crowdsourcing platform for social good, named one of the top five ideas changing the world by President Bill Clinton and TIME Magazine. The innovative crowdsourcing platform identifies and launches disruptive and catalytic social ventures that aim to solve the planet’s most pressing challenges. Committed to the year’s challenge of “Refugees - Reawakening Human Potential,” the CRInn through its PR & Communication Officer and the Hult Prize Campus Director, Ms. Diala J. Daoud, succeeded in recruiting 66 teams, all formed from AUB current students and alumni, to compete on the “AUB goes Hult” competition level. The challenge focused on restoring the rights and dignity of people and societies who are displaced due to social injustice, politics, economic pressures, climate change, or war.

The 66 teams comprising more than 230 AUB students went through rigorous training including ideation sessions, business development and financial planning. In addition, the teams were provided the chance to visit refugee shelters in the Bekaa valley. The trips were held in collaboration with the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS) at AUB. Through these trips, the teams tried to vet their proposed ideas through validating them directly with their end users. The teams were also matched by technical or business, mentors from the entrepreneurship ecosystem at AUB and in Lebanon and by agencies and non-governmental organizations working closely with the refugees in Lebanon. “AUB goes Hult” final competition was held on January 23, 2017 at AUB. In the first round of judging, the teams pitched their ideas in front of experienced judges, who are either engaged in startups support or in the relief efforts for the refugees or both. As a result 10 semifinalists were selected. In the second round, the 10 semifinalists pitched their ideas again in front of a new panel of judges including: Technology and Media Entrepreneur and AUB Board of Trustees member Mr. Abdulsalam Haykal; World Food Program Country Director and Representative in Lebanon Mr. Dominik Heinrich; Innovation Specialist at UNICEF, Lebanon, Mr. James Cranwell-Ward; UNDP Country Director Mr. Luca Renda, Director and Founder of Kayany Foundation, Mrs. Noura Jumblatt; Associate Provost at AUB Dr. Hala Muhtassib; and Director of the Centre for Civic Engagement and Community Service at AUB Mr. Rabih Shibli. One winner and two runner up startups were selected.
The winning team members from AUB include Anwar Al Shami, AbdulRahman al Hamali, and Moustafa Houmani. Their solution is a device that provides “clean drinking water using active dew collection in a decentralized, highly mobile and resource-independent manner.” “Refill” will be eligible to compete in the semi-final regional and final international Hult competition. The second place winner was the project “Taysir” which aims at integrating refugees into working community through creating a vocational center for training refugees in suitable and in-demand skills. It also aims to serve as an intermediary between local NGOs, relief agencies, reconstruction companies and refugees themselves. The third place went to “R4R: Refugees for Refugees”, a startup that aims to serve as a platform to match and connect donors for education, universities or schools and refugees.

Starting from the belief that social entrepreneurship provides a path to transform Lebanon’s challenges into opportunities for development and economic growth, CRInn and OGC are confident that AUB teams are the next wave of budding social entrepreneurs who will give back to their communities by elevating the lives of others and reawakening human potential towards the good of the refugees.

The Centre for Research and Innovation at AUB functions under the Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC). The Technology transfer Unit also functions under OGC. OGC and its units serve the startups in attracting and managing their research and development funding and in protecting their intellectual property. CRInn will continue to provide the competing teams/startups with its array of services including training programs, mentoring and coaching sessions, specialized workshops and events, bootcamps, media exposure and networking and pitching events with industry and investors to help these startups turn their ideas into successful businesses.

Dr. Fadia Homeidan Director, Office of Grants and Contracts, Technology Transfer Unit and Centre for Research and Innovation at the American University of Beirut. Her team is responsible for managing all sponsored programs, research management and research exploitation and entrepreneurship activities at her institution. She can be reached at fh01@aub.edu.lb

Diala J. Daoud is the PR and Communication Officer of the Center for Research and Innovation at the American University of Beirut. Ms. Daoud served as the Hult Prize AUB Campus Director. She is currently a graduate student in the field of Media Studies. She can be reached at dd30@aub.edu.lb

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AUTHORS:
ASHLEY DEIHR, CPA, CIA, CFE, Senior Manager, Baker Tilly
KIMBERLY GINN, CIA, Partner, Baker Tilly
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A PRIMER ON EXPORT CONTROLS

AUTHORS:
JESSICA B. BUCHANAN, Ph.D., Associate Director of Export Compliance, University of Pennsylvania
ELIZABETH D. PELOSO, M.S.E., M.B.A., Associate Vice Provost and Associate Vice President for Research Services, University of Pennsylvania

This new publication provides a thorough introduction to the complex topic of export control laws and regulations. It’s written in a straightforward manner. Topics include key definitions and concepts, which federal agencies oversee regulations, violations and penalties, fundamental research, licensing (and exceptions), international travel, and additional resources. (30 pages, PDF).

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Terry: This is FRESH AIR, I’m Terry Gross. My guests today, Liz Haney and Amanda Tan, are members of NCURA, the National Council of University Research Administrators. NCURA provides educational and professional development programs and opportunities to research administrators, fostering a nationwide community of professionals, both online and in-person. Liz, Amanda, welcome to FRESH AIR. Liz, how did you find out about NCURA?

Liz: I discovered NCURA when I got my first job as a research administrator. My boss suggested I attend a regional meeting, so I went to my first Region I spring meeting in Newport, RI. The experience really motivated me to get more involved.

Terry: That’s great, Liz! I understand that NCURA offers a variety of networking and development programs. You and Amanda first met through NCURA. Amanda, what motivated you to get involved?

Amanda: Like Liz, I learned about NCURA during my first research administration job. I wanted to find out more about the community and ways to develop myself professionally. Research administration can be both very broad and very specialized, so it’s extremely beneficial to have access to the resources and community of NCURA.

Terry: Given the political climate and the increasing uncertainty of federal funds for sponsored research, many research administrators believe that it’s more important than ever to be engaged and united as advocates for their institutions, their careers, and the future of research administration. How do you navigate NCURA opportunities?

Liz: I simply started with volunteering. At the first meeting I attended, I signed up for any and every volunteer opportunity there was—registration desk, room monitor, you name it. These were great ways to serve NCURA as well as great ways to meet other people who were knowledgeable, experienced, and active. One of the folks I volunteered with at the registration desk turned out to be a long-time NCURA member who regularly taught in workshops; I learned so much from her in our brief conversations between signing people in. She and I later served together on the advisory board for Region I.

Amanda: I agree—getting involved means being proactive and welcoming new opportunities. When I first became a member, I started by reading the NCURA Magazine and subscribing to emails. Then, I found the NCURA Region I website (http://ncuraregioni.org/) and completed a Volunteer Online Form. The volunteer coordinator gave me a warm welcome and told me about upcoming opportunities in my region, including research administration discussion groups (RADGs), workshops, and a mentorship program. I became more active by volunteering at a RADG and applying for the mentorship program.

Terry: That’s fantastic! Do you have other recommendations for how one can get involved in NCURA?

Amanda: Absolutely! Get active on the discussion boards in NCURA’s Collaborate Communities (http://collaborate.ncura.edu/home), become a committee member, present at conferences and meetings, participate in peer reviews, become a mentor or mentee, and write or edit articles and newsletters.

Terry: What are other professional opportunities that our listeners might want to explore outside NCURA?

Liz: The first thing that comes to mind is continuing education. There are currently four institutions that offer research administration master’s programs, John’s Hopkins University, the University of Maryland Baltimore, the University of Central Florida, and Emmanuel College. There are also certification programs, such as Certified Research Administrator and Grants Management Certificate programs. I can say without hesitation that the cohort I completed my master’s degree with has been an invaluable resource professionally; we all reach out to one another for support and to share career opportunities.

Amanda: Aside from formal programs, self-study is a great way to increase your research administration knowledge; it can help you become an expert resource to your team and PIs. You can read through your institution’s policies, brush up on Uniform Guidance and the Federal Acquisition Regulations, check out the plethora of resources in NCURA’s online store, use the internet to explore topics that you want to
learn more about (e.g., animal care, human subjects compliance, and contracts), or explore electronic systems and data tools to find out how you can help improve the processes and systems at your institution.

**Liz:** I agree. One of the things I have done is teach myself about the software tools available at my institution, with an eye to improving processes and systems. For example, using survey software at Middlebury, I developed an online tool for the required training in conflicts of interest for PHS-funded investigators. This new tool makes it so much easier to work with those investigators to ensure that Middlebury achieves 100% compliance with the requirement.

**Terry:** These sound like great ideas for junior and mid-career research administrators. How might senior-level administrators in leadership roles promote new opportunities for staff?

**Liz:** As senior-level administrators, we can provide context about the history of research administration to newer colleagues. Consider giving your staff a presentation on the history of research and research administration. Much has changed since OMB issued the first version of Circular A-21 in 1958! We can also can help our staff build relationships with PIs. Encourage staff to attend institutional grant writing workshops to see what types of training their PIs receive in relation to grants and sponsored research. You can also encourage staff to learn about the research that PIs are engaged in by attending research presentations at your institution. It can be motivating for research administrators to see the broader context of their sometimes specialized work, and this approach helps build great relationships with PIs, which are key for working together, especially on tight deadlines! Senior-level administrators can also provide mentorship opportunities and guide newer colleagues in the development of their individual 2-, 5-, and 10-year career plans. This guidance can be informal or formalized as part of an institution’s annual review process.

**Terry:** Liz and Amanda, you both talk about the importance of professional development and having a supportive community. What challenges do you think the community should anticipate?

**Amanda:** Research administration is a high-stress environment, and the skillset needed can be very broad as well as extremely specialized. I think a big challenge is figuring out how to attract qualified and passionate individuals into a constantly changing field.

**Liz:** On top of that, scientists are researching and developing cutting-edge technology every day. It’s important for research administrators to also utilize top-of-the-line technology, such as software for proposals or financial management so we can better handle the innovations we’re trying to support.

**Amanda:** I also think it’s important to make sure federal and state policies support research objectives and minimize administrative burdens. People can get involved in this capacity by talking to their institution’s research administration leadership about government relations and by joining committees and advisory councils at the regional and national levels.

**Terry:** I think you both highlighted great ways that new and seasoned administrators can face these challenges and utilize NCURA and other resources. In line with the themes of this month, any last words on how you and others can navigate and explore the possibilities in this field?

**Liz:** I think the big question comes down to this: “What can I, as a research administrator, do to create and explore opportunities in this field that positively affect my career and community?”

**Terry:** Great words. Liz, Amanda, thank you again for joining us. This has been a really illuminating conversation about research administration. I’m Terry Gross, and this is FRESH AIR.

**Liz and Amanda:** Thank you, Terry! It’s been a pleasure.

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Hello Region I colleagues. Here’s wishing you a “wicked good” summer. I hope that you are able to tear away from your busy jobs and enjoy the spectacular New England summer.

Can you say “Lobstah?” Make sure to visit Region I friends in the hospitality suite at the Hilton New England Convention Center. Make sure to shop on location for some of the local items from the Arts District. Additional information can be found at http://researchintegritysymposium.com/index.php/about-the-symposium.

Whether you are a “newbie” or experienced, check out our upcoming educational programs. As of the date of this post, Denise Moody, Pat Fitzgerald and Barbara Richard are slated to deliver a workshop that will explore emerging and timely challenges in research administration. If you have not seen the announcement for this session, check the Region I website. You won’t want to miss hearing from and interacting with these highly knowledgeable and terrific speakers.

Are you brand new to research administration? Just a couple of years under your belt? You will be pleased to hear that there is an upcoming workshop for administrators at any stage of their careers. The “Essentials” are really an essential for any new administrator. Stay tuned for future announcements of the date for this session along with other programs including a special workshop on Clinical Trials, and RADGs to be held in September and December, slated on national registration required. The Marriott Portland is close to restaurants, shopping and the heart of the vibrant Arts District. Additional information can be found at http://researchintegritysymposium.com/index.php/about-the-symposium.

Greetings, Region II

It is hard to believe our regional meeting has come and gone so quickly; however, it was another fantastic event. Given the many demands that are always placed against our time as research administrators, the ambience of the Gideon Putnam Resort offered a great way to take advantage of the beautiful landscape and the historic beauty of the hotel. The meeting and tranquil setting certainly supported the theme of the conference which was “Keep Calm and Research On”. Aside from coming home feeling relaxed, energized, and a beneficiary of newly acquired knowledge received from our esteemed colleagues, it was evident how the volunteerism of so many contributed to the success of this meeting. I want to extend a special thank you to Region II Program Chair, Katie McKeon, Co-Chair, Charnel Bohn and all of the other members of the program committee for the countless hours you have all contributed over the past eight months.

As Chair of the Region, I value opportunities where I am able to interact with our colleagues within the region whether they are face-to-face at regional/national meetings or via an exchange of e-mails. In addition to members sharing valuable feedback as to how the region can continue to capitalize on its excellence, our colleagues with whom I speak seem to share a common theme: how can I give back to an organization that has given me so much?

Fortunately, NCURA offers a plethora of volunteer opportunities at both national and regional levels. Volunteering not only allows an individual to make distinct difference but also offers an opportunity to be a further part of a community where you can meet different people and make lifelong friends with others who share in our passion as individuals within our profession.

Our region will continue to grow and flourish due to unwavering efforts and contributions of our members. As a result, if you are looking to become further involved, learn about the various volunteer opportunities that exist, or possibly even running for a position as a regional officer, please e-mail Dennis Paffrath (dpaffrath@umaryland.edu).

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

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

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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

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

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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

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

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Greetings from (hopefully) warm and sunny Region IV! This winter snow and ice was rather harsh for much of the region, but Midwesterners are resilient and bad weather does not stop us from moving forward. We have a great team to help do this, including newly elected board members — see http://www.ncuraregioniv.com/index.html for the election results.

As the new Region IV chair, one of the most pleasant things I have discovered is the willingness of Region IV members to step up and pitch in. I truly have an overwhelming amount of gratitude for my colleagues. Even though it was mentioned in the last issue of the NCURA magazine, Region IV’s new volunteer recognition program is worth mentioning again. Recognizing Awesome Volunteerism & Engagement (RAVE IV) is the Region’s newest way to say thank you and better recognize committee members, mentors and mentees, workshop presenters, article contributors, session presenters, volunteers at the Spring Meeting… the list goes on! All of these efforts contribute to the strong, successful Region we have today.

For more information on this program and to find out how you can get your bronze, silver or gold star, please see our website. Again, thank you!!

Continuing with the concept of the Region coming together, I hope many of you were able to attend the Spring Meeting that was held April 23-26 in beautiful Madison, Wisconsin! The theme was “The Sport of Research Administration.” There are a surprising number of parallels between grant administration and sports — know the rules; work as a team; develop a strategy; perform under pressure; and most of all enjoy the game! Attendees enjoyed 60 concurrent sessions, eight instructional workshops, a Concepts Expo poster session, and breakfast discussion groups. There were also informal opportunities for networking, including dinner groups at fantastic Madison restaurants, a yummy dessert reception, a newcomer reception, and a Wisconsin-style tailgate party at the Madison Children’s Museum! And, special thanks to co-chairs Rebecca Hackett and Charlie Giese, without whom this meeting would not have been possible.

It’s never too early to think about attending or volunteering at the next Spring Meeting — mark your calendar for April 15-18, 2018 when we will be in Des Moines, Iowa. Hope to see you there!

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

In Appreciation to Outgoing Leadership
We would like to thank Kay Gilstrap for her guidance over the past year. It has been a privilege to work with her over the past two years, and we look forward to her continued involvement as Immediate Past-Chair. Thank you also to Danielle McElwain for her service as Immediate Past-Chair; her contributions to the Region during her term have improved operations for the Region significantly. We would like to thank the Standing Committee Coordinators for their terms of service. We look forward to working with them in future positions.

Successful Spring Meeting
Thanks to the work of the Region III Program Committee, more than 70 workshops, concurrent sessions and discussion groups offered an array of information for attendees to add to their research administrator’s toolkit. We appreciate Program Chair Steve Koogler as well as the other members of the committee including Candice Ferguson, Celeste Rivera-Nunez, Jaime Petrasek, Pam Whitlock, Emily Devereux, Laneika Musalini, Tracy Arwood, Marc Haon, Tanya Blackwell, and Laurianne Torres.

Volunteers are integral to the success of the Regional Spring Meeting, and we thank all the members who contributed their time and talent to the meeting this year. Special thanks to Volunteer Coordinator Sandy Barber and team for organizing and recruiting a great team of volunteers.

Region III’s National Contributions
One of the remarkable traits about Region III is that our membership comprises professionals who are committed to the success of our profession and NCURA. This is evidenced not only by the number of volunteers that serve at the Regional level but also by Region III’s contributions at the National level. At this time, we proudly recognize the following members who hold National positions:

President – Barbara Gray
Secretary – Tony Ventimiglia
Board of Directors – Julie Cole, Laura Letbetter
Nominating and Leadership Development Committee –
  Kerry Peluso (Chair), Michelle Vazin (Vice Chair), Pamela Napier
Professional Development Committee – Stephanie L. Gray,
  Danielle McElwain, David Smelser, Laurianne Torres
Financial Management Committee – Alex Atkinson, Linda Bucy
2017 Education Scholarship Fund – Laura Letbetter, David Smelser
2017 Annual Meeting Program Committee – JoAnn Smith
2017 PRA/PRA Program Committee – David Smelser, Riddick Smiley
NCURA Magazine Co-Editor – David Smelser
NCURA Magazine Copy Editor – Jennifer Webster, Scott Niles
NCURA Magazine Contributing Editor – Laura Letbetter

Keep up with the latest Regional News by connecting with your region (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and our website) and every third Thursday for your Region III e-blast!

Steve Koogler is Chair of Region III and serves as Assistant Director, Research Administration at University of Central Florida. He can be reached at Steven.Koogler@ucf.edu
By the time you read this, I hope that you have thoroughly enjoyed the 2017 Regional meeting held in Tulsa, OK. I want to thank Thomas Spencer and his team for getting that all together and making sure everyone had a great time.

I remember my first meeting and those members who took me under their wing to teach me the ropes. I have not only built professional relationships, but personal ones that are sure to last a lifetime. For those of you wondering “what comes next?” just wait, it only gets better. On those days when you struggle to understand why you seem to be more worried about that grant submission than the PI who has everything riding on it, remember you’re not alone. You have colleagues sitting at their desks wondering the same exact thing.

As I write my final article, I’m reflecting on what has happened over the past year and the role NCURA has played in my professional development. When I joined the organization in 2001, I could have never dreamed I’d be where I am today. I was a twenty-something year old girl still trying to understand research administration.

I have learned that this career has endless possibilities. I have seen my coworkers move into positions across campus and across the United States. Those who once sat beside me are now leading teams and molding our next generation of research administrators.

I want to thank my Region V mentors who may not realize they were mentors. I am excited about the future of our regional mentor program. The committee is up and running and we have big plans for our members. I envision our junior administrators stepping up and taking on leadership roles vacated by the senior members.

At this time, I don’t know who our new officers will be, but I know they will be terrific. As I look back on the past year, I am thankful for the support of my executive committee and all of the ideas we have shared and hope to implement in the future.

We are currently working on selecting the site for the 2018 Spring Meeting. I don’t know where it will be, but I am sure it will be fabulous!

I encourage people not only in Region V, but all regions to participate in activities, volunteer for opportunities and continue to be the very best person you can be. NCURA is a wonderful organization with endless opportunities, I challenge you all to seek those opportunities and make your mark on the world.

This article is focused on our Region VI Awards and the importance of recognizing our colleagues and their contributions to the field of research administration.

Congratulations to our 2016 Award recipients who were recognized for their contributions and accomplishments at our regional meeting in Hawaii.

Linda W. Patton Emeritus Award went to Christina “Chris” Hansen. Chris has been a member of NCURA since 1979 and she started her career in research administration at UCLA as a Contracts & Grants Officer. From 1988-2009 she served as the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research at UC Irvine. Chris continued to serve as the Regional Volunteer Assistance Coordinator for NCURA until 2015. Over the past 4 decades, Chis has presented countless sessions and workshops, served on numerous committees and held many appointments in the field of research administration. She has been engaged in several professional organizations and activities geared to advancing our profession.

Helen Carrier Distinguished Service Award went to Michiko “Mich” Pane, Stanford University. Currently, she serves as the Office of Sponsored Research’s Director of Pre-Award Operations where she is a recognized leader and innovator. Her dedication to regional NCURA activities has been remarkable. She has served on the Regional Advisory Committee, program committees, and various capacities since 2007. Mich has presented at numerous sessions and workshops at both the regional and national levels. At Stanford, she has been actively involved in steering the institution’s electronic research administration, policy guidance, and pre-award initiatives. Mich is an experienced, knowledgeable, and well-rounded research administrator and teacher. She’s a thoughtful leader who listens attentively to colleagues and synthesizes input to provide insightful feedback and direction. Her leadership is critical for driving success in Region VI.

Thanks for all you have done for our region and profession – you are both truly inspirational!

Region VI Awards criteria and application information can be found at: https://orso.or.wsu.edu/r6ncura/awardapp.aspx

Helen Carrier Distinguished Service Award – in recognition of contributions to research administration, and specifically to NCURA.

Meritorious Contribution Award – nominee(s) for this award shall have made a meritorious contribution to the Region VI. Individuals and groups are eligible.

Barry Dorfman Outstanding Region VI Member Award – this award is intended to honor individuals who quickly became active and valued members of Region VI.

Linda W. Patton Emeritus Award - in recognition to those who have contributed to the success, growth, and visibility of NCURA through committee work, programming, outreach, and governance.

Our Region VI Awards Committee, chaired by Billy Gellepis, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center will send out nomination announcements by early summer. Please consider nominating an outstanding research administrator.

Sinnamon 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

Shelly Berry Hebb is Assistant Director, Proposal Services, Sponsored Research Services at Texas A&M University. She is the past chair of Region V. She can be reached at sberry@tamu.edu
Hello Region VII!

In this issue, I would like to touch on three outstanding volunteer opportunities in our regional programming.

The Awards Nomination and Election Committee will be chaired by Member-at-Large, Ashley Stahle. This committee will work on activities throughout the year including overseeing the Travel Award process for the National and Regional meetings. This committee would also discuss potential regional recognition awards and bring those to the Regional Executive Committee for review and discussion. The committee would also oversee our election nomination process from July through October. Ashley cannot do this alone, so please consider sitting on this committee and contact her at Ashley.stahle@colostate.edu.

Natalie Buys and Bethany Ginzburg, from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, will be our Volunteer Coordinators for Region VII! Among their duties: working with planning committee to identify meeting activities to be supported by volunteers, specifically the registration desk schedule at National and Regional meetings; planning the New Member Reception/Brunch; organizing fundraising activities such as raffles for various regional needs and/or the National Educational Scholarship campaign; and working on ideas for membership outreach. Their roles will also include engaging members in non-regional meeting volunteer opportunities e.g., mentor programs, periodic regional conference calls or web conferences for topical discussions, regional publications, etc. Those looking for a good place to start, to get your volunteer feet wet, should contact either Natalie or Bethany at Natalie.buys@ucdenver.edu or Bethany.ginzburg@ucdenver.edu.

Finally, we are in the early stages of a new committee called the Education & Professional Development Committee, currently chaired by Member-at-Large, Tolise Dailey. This committee was established to explore the opportunities for regional activities relating to workshops and other educational programs and tapping into the vast experience and talent we have here in Region VII and among all our institutions. For 2017, this may be more of an information gathering committee to define the scope and get feedback from membership on what activities can/should be included. In addition, this team will assist Region VI with the LEAD Me program, recruiting Region VII members for Mentor and Mentee positions each year. Tolise welcomes those interested in pursuing these aims to contact her at tolise.dailey@colorado.edu.

Please consider giving of your time and expertise to our regional committees!

Sandra Logue serves as Regional 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

This year’s first get-together of Region VIII was during PRA followed by a second one only days later at FRA. And what a gathering it was! We all were impressed about the cultural diversity the International Region currently holds – 16 out of 38 countries were represented – and with them the enthusiasm and engagement of our members. San Diego was just the ideal back drop for uncountable vivid discussions and exchanges of best practices inside and outside the conference venue. For seven days we were surrounded by colliding and astonishingly creative ideas when it comes to overcoming hurdles regarding US grants at foreign institutions. These conferences were a source of inspiration we would not want to miss and fortunately no one needs to as there is more to come this year.

In the last edition of the NCURA Magazine we informed you about this year’s NIH Study Tour specifically designed for the International Region. In this edition it is our great pleasure to announce the global workshop “Fundamentals of US Sponsored Project Administration” in Vienna, Austria in September. The 2 day workshop will cover the essential topics of a) U.S. research funding opportunities for Non U.S. organizations b) Applying for and managing U.S. federal research funds and c) Sharing best practices in global research management and administration. The workshop presenters will be distinguished experts from the NCURA Global Faculty and the BILAT USA 4.0 EU initiative. An absolute must for international research managers and administrators (pre- and post award) with a basic or intermediate level of experiences with U.S. grants who want to achieve the next level of excellence. The venue TU Wien is located in the centre of Vienna, Austria a cosmopolitan city of great cultural diversity. Save the date now: September 18/19, 2017.

Annika Glauner is Chair of Region VIII and Senior Research Development Manager at ETH Zurich & the University of Zurich. She can be reached at annika.glauner@sl.ethz.ch

Siegfried Huemer is Treasurer of Region VIII and Head of the EU Research Support Unit at TU Wien. He can be reached at siegfried.huemer@tuwien.ac.at
The Quest for a True AIDS Cure — in a Coral Reef

By Kara Gavin

In the search for a way to eliminate the AIDS virus from every cell in the body, scientists are pursuing promising compounds from under the sea.

It was the height of the AIDS crisis, in the mid-1980s. As a young medical student in Baltimore, Kathleen Collins, M.D., Ph.D., witnessed the front lines of the battle against a frightening new epidemic, in a city that was especially hard-hit.

She saw babies born to mothers who had the disease — coming into the world carrying a deadly virus no one understood, no vaccine could prevent and no drugs could treat.

The helplessness of that time inspired Collins to join the fight against HIV, to figure out its mysteries at the deepest levels.

Thirty years later, as both an AIDS doctor and a scientist at the University of Michigan Medical School, she’s still on that quest.

AIDS still has no cure, and despite many advances in treatment, 35 million people worldwide still live with HIV lurking deep in their bodies and can still spread it. Those with access to treatment must take handfuls of expensive, sometimes toxic medications every day, without fail, for the rest of their lives.

Meanwhile, 2 million people worldwide are infected annually.

“Healthy young people continue to be sickened by the virus and require lifelong care,” Collins says. “Even though therapies have turned HIV into a chronic disease, it’s still contagious. Vaccines have been 30 percent effective, at most, because the virus mutates so quickly. This is the only virus where 100 percent of people who become infected are infected for life. Moving toward a true cure would be transformative.”

Collins studies the virus’s ability to fool the body’s immune system and to hide out in remote corners of an infected person’s body like a fugitive from justice.

Even in people treated daily for years with the most advanced combinations of AIDS drugs, HIV manages to evade the immune system’s watchdogs. Collins and others have shown that it retreats to long-lived cells and keeps them from revealing its presence.

In recent years, the search for a solution to flush HIV out of hiding has led Collins and her team to a strange but promising place: the ocean’s coral reefs.

A ‘promising’ approach

Working with U-M colleague David Sherman, Ph.D., and his team, they’re zeroing in on promising drugs made from bacteria that live side by side with coral. Called marine actinomycetes, they have proved to be a potent source of other antimicrobial drug candidates. In the case of HIV, it’s the metabolites made by the bacteria during their life span — in essence, their waste products — that turn out to be good drug candidates.

The potential new drugs target a protein made by HIV, called Nef. Once thought to be unimportant, Nef is a key player in HIV’s ability to stay hidden. It keeps the body’s “killer” T cells — the storm troopers of the immune system — from discovering where HIV still lurks.

Over the past decade, Collins and her team have shown how HIV uses Nef to avoid blowing its cover and bring the immune system’s swift justice down on its hiding places. Nef attaches to the cell’s own invader-fighting infrastructure, forcing cells to drag these important cellular components into their inner garbage-disposal systems. That means the cells can’t raise the red flag to bring in the killer T cells.

The coral bacteria, it turns out, make substances that can interfere with Nef and stop it from working. The U-M team discovered this after checking a huge library of potential drugs for their ability to stop Nef — finding none. The U-M Center for Chemical Genomics, based at the Life Sciences Institute, helped the team zero in on the compounds coral-dwelling bacteria make.

After starting with 10 promising compounds, the scientists have whittled the possibilities down to three that seem to hold the most potential to inhibit Nef.

Now, they’re starting to test the drugs’ ability to function in living cells and tissues. The first results have been extremely promising — the most potent inhibition of Nef ever seen.

“We’re still at the early stages of testing these candidates, but they’re very promising,” Collins says. “No one has ever developed a Nef inhibitor with this level of activity. If this approach works, we could essentially harness a person’s own natural immune response to wipe HIV out of the body.”

One of the biggest challenges, she notes, is getting the bacteria to produce enough of the compounds to carry out their work. The scientists are also working to figure out the molecular structure of the compounds, in hopes they could build them from scratch one day and cut the bacteria out of the process.

If their continued tests succeed, further research in animals would be needed before any human could try the drugs. If they succeed in inhibiting Nef and making HIV-infected cells reveal the virus’s presence, their work could translate into other fields, such as efforts to find a cancer vaccine that can flush cancer cells out of their hiding places.

U-M’s A. Alfred Taubman Medical Research Institute and the National Institutes of Health are funding the work at this time. But Collins says it will take far more money to perform the experiments that could truly test the three most promising drug candidates she and Sherman have identified.

“Taking something from bacteria and making it into a drug requires a tremendous investment,” she says. Eventually, the goal would be to partner with industry to do clinical testing in patients if her team can show enough anti-HIV activity in preclinical testing.

But as Collins has learned in the 30 years she’s been involved in the fight against AIDS, nothing happens quickly when you’re up against such a formidable foe.

“AIDS won’t go away until we have a true vaccine or cure,” she says. “The fight may not seem to have as much urgency as it did 30 years ago, but it’s still an urgent issue.”

Originally published 12/1/16 at http://labblog.uofmhealth.org/lab-report/quest-for-a-true-aids-cure-a-coral-reef
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www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore.aspx
### NATIONAL TRAVELING WORKSHOPS

**Financial Research Administration Workshop**
May 22-24, 2017 .................................................................Baltimore, MD

**LEVEL I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop**
May 22-24, 2017 .................................................................Baltimore, MD

**LEVEL II: Sponsored Project Administration Workshop**
May 22-24, 2017 .................................................................Baltimore, MD

### REGIONAL MEETINGS

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

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

### NATIONAL CONFERENCES

**59th Annual Meeting** ..........................................................August 6-9, 2017
Washington, DC

**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

Visit our website for enrollment periods.

- A Primer on Clinical Trials – 8 week program
- A Primer on Federal Contracting – 8 week program
- A Primer on Intellectual Property in Research Agreements – 8 week program
- A Primer on Subawards – 8 week program

### UPCOMING WEBINARS

- An Overview of the New Research Terms and Conditions – May 23, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Effort Reporting – June 1, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- CUI, FISMA & NIST: Regulated Research Data – June 15, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Single IRB Under the NIH Policy and Revised Common Rule – July 10, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- The Revised Common Rule: New Opportunities and Challenges – July 12, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Cost Sharing – July 20, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Developing Policies and Procedures – Sept 26, 2:00-3:30 pm ET

### DEADLINES FOR AUGUST 2017

- Submission of Articles to Contributing Editors ..................June 2, 2017
- Submission of Advertisements ........................................June 7, 2017

Additional information for authors can be found at: [www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore/NCURAMagazine/Submissions.aspx](http://www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore/NCURAMagazine/Submissions.aspx)

For further details and updates visit our events calendar at [www.ncura.edu](http://www.ncura.edu)