The Art of Anticipation

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“Anticipation…Is makin’ me late…Is keepin’ me waitin’” (Carly Simon)

Raubenolt advises, “Ignore the Siren’s Song of Perfection” and apply iterative and processes, or simply attempting to sharpen your own daily work, Amy Burdens: Letting Go of Continuing Review.”

In our profession, we are always anticipating regulatory changes. A review of the EU General Data Protection Regulation by Ara Tahmossian and Mark Barnes encapsulates this important new compliance area for the university community, and developments in US federal human subjects requirements are discussed by John Heldens and Deborah Barnard in “Reduce Your Burdens: Letting Go of Continuing Review.”

Whether you are in a position to implement changes to office structure and processes, or simply attempting to sharpen your own daily work, Amy Rauenbolt advises, “Ignore the Siren’s Song of Perfection” and apply iterative design methods for process and product improvement.

As NCURA celebrates its diamond anniversary year, what can NCURA members anticipate over the next few years, or decades? How will professional development and education programs change with new aspects of the profession…updated regulations…new technologies? And the big question: will Soul Source and the No Cost Extensions embark on a world tour? I for one can’t wait to see what’s next for NCURA.

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Georgette Sakumoto, NCURA President

As I look at the red glow of the Hawaiian sunset through the volcanic air, I am reminded how unpredictable life can be — one moment you are sitting on a sandy beach and within hours, the sand and the beach are gone, replaced with black molten lava. When I gaze into NCURA’s future I know that we will continue to be successful because we have invested in our members and taken the time to envision a meaningful strategic plan. The past 60 years have seen monumental changes to our profession and the field of research administration. Most notably is the recognition of our profession and the proliferation of research administrators on a global scale. Research has become an integral and critical part of university life. Research administrators have become valuable team partners alongside our researchers.

In February 2015, NCURA leadership created a strategic plan that included critical professional development and training and education for our global network. As your leadership looked to 2025, they imagined the educational areas to support our profession. NCURA’s strategic plan, envisioned by our volunteer leadership and informed by our members, provided a roadmap that anticipates members’ needs and interests and the research landscape — from research development to compliance and oversight. NCURA is committed to supporting its membership through valuable engagements and shared knowledge. We are positioned to meet the challenge of discovering and creating ways to embrace volunteerism in NCURA.

Succession planning and transparent career pipelines are vital in every aspect of life. As we embark on our next 60 years, we need to anticipate communication venues and learning styles of the next generation of NCURA members who come from eight regions spanning many miles and continents. We need to maintain a meaningful connection amongst our emeritus members and tap into their knowledge and experience. Keeping both current and emeritus members as engaged contributors can enhance mentoring of new research administrators while contributing to a broader volunteer base. NCURA is committed to enhancing transparent pipelines for member volunteer opportunities, thereby adding value to your NCURA membership.

As of this writing, the ballots for the changes to NCURA’s Bylaws have been counted. With 74% of the voting members approving the changes and 26% opposed, the changes to the bylaws are approved. For more information on the changes, please see the March/April (pg 11) and May/June (pg 3) issues of NCURA Magazine.

I am confident that NCURA will play an integral role in increasing and supporting global collaborations by bringing countries and people together for the betterment of science, education, health and technology. NCURA has connected with our “sister” European associations and successfully partnered to provide training in their countries. We tapped into the talents of our bilingual members and created a new training program in Spanish, which we will provide in Cuba this year. We are working with the Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan (RMAN-J) and anticipate future collaborations between our associations. We will also be participating in the 2018 120th Anniversary Symposium with Peking University. NCURA understands that communication is the key and by working together we can enhance our partnerships and enrich our networks.

We have been successful in securing initial funds for our Educational Scholarship Fund and have awarded the first two scholarship awards this year. My hope is that our members and corporate partners will continue to grow the Fund, so NCURA can support our profession through advanced education in our field.

As I anticipate the immediate future, I see a golden opportunity to promote the development of an undergraduate program in Research Administration leading to a clear path to a Master’s degree. No longer will we “fall” into Research Administration. I see the next generation choosing this pathway with clear guidance and well-deserved recognition and respect. We always have to remember our past to plan for our future. I am confident that NCURA will continue to guide the pathway for a brighter tomorrow for research administrators.

Georgette Sakumoto is NCURA President and serves as Contracts and Grants Specialist, Office of Research Services, University of Hawaii. She can be reached at gsakumot@hawaii.edu
his type of aspirational goal setting is common among higher education leadership. A detailed plan for how to achieve the goal is critically important to success. As Director of a small research office at a predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI – as defined by NSF), you may be shocked to hear such a bold goal set with limited input from your own unit: the Sponsored Programs Office (SPO). As time goes on, you may notice one college wildly outpacing others in award dollars and reinvesting those dollars in their own departmental research support services. This imbalance in resources may further exacerbate the difference between the colleges, shift staff roles and responsibilities, and breakdown effective communication between central office and departmental start-up offices.

As director of a historically centralized SPO, you may begin to think about your institution’s research infrastructure, policies, procedures, and your central office’s unique role in coordinating research activity for the entire campus. What will the eventual switch to a decentralized model mean to you and to the institution as a whole? How can you develop the processes, training, collaborations, and good will needed to reach University leadership’s aspirational goal? Identifying and overcoming these challenges is of utmost importance to your success.

Background
For context, University of North Carolina, Wilmington’s (UNCW) centralized SPO started with just two positions in the 1980s and has added five positions (from 9 to 14) in the last 10 years. During that same time, UNCW has added nearly 15% more faculty since 2008. Two years ago, colleges began discussing the idea of establishing college level SPOs. While the centralized office is growing to keep up with the demand for increased sponsored project activity university wide, the colleges, especially those with resources, are building out their own research administration enterprises, often with limited input from the central office. This presents many challenges to a centralized SPO:

1. Changing Priorities within Senior Leadership: Without a clear and approved transition plan from Senior Leadership, moving to a centralized research administration model is difficult. Ambiguous plans are rarely good plans and they lead to uncomfortable and serious questions. “Why should central office need a budget if colleges will be handling the research administration?” is one question I have heard from our colleges. Including justification for central staff and budget is a critical component for the transition plan. You may find you need an increase in central office staff and budget as training and policy and process development will require more resources.

2. Centralized Control of Policies and Procedures: Being a state governed institution of higher education means compliance with numerous policies and procedures. During the transition, the SPO is responsible for ensuring the colleges develop research-related policies and procedures that are in compliance with the many federal, state and institutional policies and procedures. Creation of appropriate job classifications and job descriptions are a secondary challenge. Should the central SPO be involved in hiring departmental staff in order to create a collaborative work atmosphere between department and central SPOs? Creating a strong working relationship with the departmental offices is critical to meeting the research goals of the university.

Items to think about when going through this process:
- Strategic goals
  - Do you have input and buy-in from the key stakeholders?
  - Has this been communicated clearly?
- Appropriate staffing levels (centrally and departmentally)
  - What should staffing level be for your size organization?
  - What size staff do you need to reach your established goal?
  - What size staff is needed once the goal is reached to sustain the goal?
- Leadership (executives, deans, department leadership)
  - Which group is final approver of the transition plan?
- Training departmental staff
  - Does central SPO provide training to departmental SPOs?
  - Should a university wide training program be established for all research administrators?
- Competing resources
  - How will budget allocations be determined for central vs. departmental offices?
- Roles and responsibilities
  - What pieces of the lifecycle of a sponsored project are the departmental office responsible for and what should the central SPO be responsible for?

“In the next five years we will increase sponsored project funding from $10 million to $30 million!” (cue the scene from Dr. Evil in the film Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery… “1 billion dollars!”)
• Policies
  • Central office policy overrides departmental – how do you manage central and departmental policies and processes to make sure there is good flow?
  • How do avoid duplicate work or creating new inefficiencies
  • What will be the process for approval of departmental policies and procedures? Will central office have final approval?
• Are departmental staff “resources” or “required” approvers?
  • Will faculty/staff submitting sponsored projects/proposals be required to go through departmental staff or will departmental staff be a “resource?”

Once you have answers to these questions and have added any additional questions specific to your situation, gathering key stakeholders is necessary. Key stakeholders can include deans, chairs, school/college associate research deans, associate provosts and select faculty with strong sponsored projects funding.

Items to think about with key stakeholders:
• What are the needs of each stakeholder?
• Some departments may have greater need than others (i.e., Biology may need more staff than the Creative Writing).
• Weigh costs and benefits
  • Cost of additional staff versus benefit/goal.
• Long-term goals for each college
  • Does a change create unnecessary conflict between departmental and university goals?
• Is there budget for a departmental office?
• Does it take resources away from central office?

Conclusion
A transition of this magnitude should not be taken lightly. There are many factors to consider and the transition process itself is rife with conflict and inefficiency. It is easy to lose sight of the broad institutional goal of advancing the research enterprise. However, by evaluating the questions underscored in this article with key stakeholders prior to making broad changes, your institution will be well on its way to a smooth transition to the departmental model.

Panda Powell, M.B.A., CRA, Director of Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance at University of North Carolina at Wilmington in Wilmington is a graduate of UNCW Leadership Institute (LEAD) as well as a Peer Reviewer for NCURA. Panda’s responsibilities at UNCW include policy development and implementation, pre-award and post-award activities. She can be reached at powellp@uncw.edu

Nathan Jones is a Proposal Development Specialist at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) and an active member of NCURA, serving as co-chair of the PUI Collaborate Community. Nathan can be reached at jonesne@uncw.edu
Can and should we transfer an award? PIs and research administrators often assume that an award should be transferred when a PI announces plans to move to a new institution. However, it is not always feasible or prudent to transfer an award. Institutional procedures should encourage staff to answer the following key provident questions at the beginning of the process.

Will the award terms and conditions permit the transfer? Generally, when a PI with an active federally funded grant moves to a new institution, the Federal sponsor expects the award to transfer. However, not all award terms and conditions will allow an award to be transferred. The PI’s change of institution may result in a change of eligibility status. For example, an NSF CAREER award recipient moving to a foreign institution loses his or her eligibility, and thus the award must be terminated.

Is the original institution willing to relinquish the award? Since the award is issued to the institution instead of the PI directly, the award cannot be transferred without institutional agreement. If an award is institution-specific, such as a capacity building project, or has benefited from a significant amount of institutional resources, the original institution may be unwilling to relinquish the award.

What effect will transferring the award have on other project personnel? Not all project personnel may transfer to the new institution with the PI. Care should be given to research staff and especially students supported by the award to ensure appropriate plans are made for their continued support. When the departure is amicable it is much easier to work through these issues using the suggestions in this article. When the departure is not amicable, these issues may become much harder to resolve.

How much time remains on the award? While proactive institutional policies and procedures can reduce the length of time an award transfer requires, the process is inherently intricate. Depending upon the anticipated complexity of the transfer and the amount of time remaining on the award, it may be best to retain the award at the original institution.

What other options may be appropriate? Consider other options before finalizing a decision to proceed with an award transfer. Would the project be best served by the original institution retaining the award, assigning a new PI, and issuing a subaward to the new institution? Or, is allowing the transferring PI to continue the research with a temporary appointment at the original institution an option?

Develop a customized plan for each transfer To successfully facilitate a timely and positive transfer, a collaborative and forward-looking mindset is essential. Be wary of a mindset that relies on an insular or formulaic approach to all transfers. Instead, analyze the award and develop a preemptive plan that fits each award’s unique set of circumstances and in consultation.
with the departing PI and the PI’s department chair or dean, especially if the departure is not amicable. The following are some common issues that may arise in a transfer, and often complicate and delay the process.

Compliance Issues: Required compliance with regulations surrounding financial conflict of interests, use of human subjects, animal use (especially if the animals are to be transferred), and hazardous materials should be reviewed closely, as these issues can take a significant amount of time to establish at a new institution.

F&A Rate Differences: Differences in negotiated F&A rates between institutions can affect the project’s direct costs once transferred to the new institution, as many sponsors will not provide additional funds to cover any increases in F&A. Considerations should be made at the new institution to minimize the impact on direct costs.

Cost Share: When cost share commitments are included in the original award, the new institution will likely be required to commit institutional funds to meet the remaining commitment. If the new institution is required to provide the cost sharing balance, what resources will be used to meet the cost share requirement?

Subawards: Because PI transfers affect subrecipients, it is important to be transparent with them about an anticipated award transfer. It can take a significant amount of work and time to terminate existing subawards at the original institution and establish new subawards at the new institution to continue the work.

Equipment and other Tangible Materials: The PI may need to transfer equipment and other tangible materials to the new institution. Federal sponsors expect that equipment purchased under an active award will be transferred to the receiving institution and any exception would require prior sponsor approval. Engage the sponsor and appropriate offices early on to determine how these transfers can be completed efficiently and what additional agreements may need to be put in place.

Intellectual Property (IP): When IP is owned by the relinquishing institution and is needed for the performance of the project, both institutions should come to an agreement to ensure the continuation of the PI’s research. In cases where the PI holds concurrent positions at the original and new institutions, agreements should be made regarding IP ownership developed during this time.

Institutional Policy Differences: Policy differences between the original and new institutions may necessitate re-negotiation of the transferred agreement with the sponsor. Consider differences between institutions — educational institutions vs. hospitals, institutions that only accept fundamental research vs. research institutions that will accept export controlled work — to help anticipate possible roadblocks.

**Be wary of a mindset that relies on an insular or formulaic approach to all transfers.**

**Best practices**

Institutional policies and procedures should encourage initiative, anticipation, flexibility, and collaboration within and across institutions.

When a PI is departing:
- Inform the sponsor. No matter what arrangement is ultimately made for the transferring PI and the awards, a PI’s move to another institution is a reportable event.
- Assemble the transfer team and share information regarding a PI’s departure in a timely manner.
- Close out transferring awards promptly. Stop all purchasing and close accounts, terminate and close subawards, and file all required reports.
- Engage across institutions. Identify your counterparts, and share updates and information. Sharing a copy of the PI’s Current and Pending or other award lists with the new institution can help the new institution anticipate the needs of the new PI.

When a PI is joining your institution:
- Establish internal procedures and checklists to inform all responsible offices of an incoming PI. This allows the staff to work proactively and collaboratively with the PI and the relinquishing institution to get the process started and minimize delays.
- Establish contact with the new PI early. Meet or communicate with the PI before their departure from their current institution to introduce the new institution’s services and to establish a realistic timeline given possible roadblocks.
- Set up advance spending accounts when the transfer is reasonably assured to happen, such as once the award has been relinquished by the original awardee institution. Transfer awards are rarely received prior to when the funds are needed by the PI. Advance spending accounts can enable the transferring PI to continue their research, help alleviate anxiety about the funding, and avoid cost transfers from unrestricted funds to sponsored funds at a later stage.
- Be sensitive to the PI as they make the transition to your institution. A complicated or lengthy award transfer process causes additional stress for the PI during an already stressful time of transition. Be empathetic to the PI’s needs and concerns, and serve as a knowledgeable and reassuring resource.

Institutional policies and procedures that foster an anticipatory approach to transfers and cultivate a positive, forward-thinking, and cooperative environment are essential to the timely completion of transfers. By cultivating this institutional mindset, institutions leave a lasting positive impression on both departing and incoming PIs, thus enhancing the PI experience and their productivity in furtherance of research. After all, our primary role is to facilitate research.
Research Administrators need to be familiar with a myriad of regulations...

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No ERA? You’re Not Alone: Utilizing a Collaborative Purchase to Conquer the Price Point Woes

By Sylvia Ann Bradshaw

Yeah, I want an electronic research administration (ERA) system. My anticipation is not unique. I direct a small sponsored programs office in a PUI. We (1-3 FTE) wear all the hats—no luxury of specialization is found in this environment. Research administrators in PUIs don’t get a break in adherence to all the rules and regulations just because our portfolio is smaller and our institutional missions focus more on teaching than research. We are held to the same expectations of compliance, oversight, reporting, and overall project management. We are the pre award office, the post award office, the compliance office, the contract negotiators, the tech transfer office, and the grant accountant, while often managing a complete cultural shift among faculty to meet administrative requests to double grant dollars. You bet I want (and need) an ERA system to route approvals, manage our processes, and provide compelling reports to advocate for more resources! Yet all too often, the price point of such a system is simply out of reach.

Now, don’t get me wrong. I love the PUI environment. It provides a refreshingly fluid atmosphere where efforts are rewarded with perceivable impact. Relationships seem a bit more linear and personable. Most notably, collaboration is certainly an identifiable force, creating a perfect scenario for leveraging strengths and resources. We all know collaboration is definitely the most used tool in a research administrator’s toolbox. Therefore, it only makes sense to apply that collaborative spirit and rally our anticipation towards procurement of an ERA system.

In today’s research environment, it is crucial for research administrators to “seek out innovative electronic research administrative (eRA) systems to ensure compliance with the ever-increasing regulatory burdens placed on researchers” (McMillen & Taylor, 2017, p. 22). Therefore, as part of my thesis to complete the requirements for a Masters in Research Administration (MRA) with Johns Hopkins University, I surveyed research administrators to find out more about the overall usage of ERA systems.

The survey revealed that 48% of institutions do not utilize any sort of ERA system (including institutional built systems). Forty-eight percent! I had improperly presumed it was just us ‘little operations’ that were working commando with our excel spreadsheets and Microsoft Access databases. Additionally, the survey brought to light that 75% of respondents who do not currently utilize an ERA system are interested in exploring a collaborative purchase. I was definitely not alone.

A Trifecta Solution

While attending a conference with colleagues, a discussion commenced with fellow sponsored programs directors throughout Utah. On several occasions, we had previously met together to view several ERA vendor options. The vendors appreciated leveraging their time in order to talk with several institutions simultaneously. Realizing that our collaborative efforts had benefited the vendor, we decided it was time to leverage our position as well. We began asking vendors to consider a collaborative purchase between the various schools in attendance. Admittedly, we were a bit surprised when the requests were met with favorable responses. All future vendor demonstrations were presented with this arrangement at the forefront.

During the summer of 2017, Directors from Dixie State University, Southern Utah University, and Utah Valley University met to discuss institutional needs and whether those needs truly aligned well enough to establish an official procurement collaboration. As Directors from institutions within the same region in Utah we felt that our policies, processes, and procedures did in fact validate furthering our efforts. All three institutions shared a draft RFP with campus stakeholders and gave feedback for consideration of the group. The final draft was completed and sent out during fall of 2017. The consortium rated vendors and engaged finalists who provided demonstrations via the internet to allow stakeholder access from all participating institutions. We announced the winner, signed a formal MOU between the three universities, and began the official implementation process kick off in the summer of 2018.

The combining of resources (both monetary and human capital) allowed for an achievable price point among our institutions, while still being desirable for the vendor. So far, the process has worked. Stay tuned for future updates on our journey. As NCURA so often advocates, Collaborate and support research… Together.

References


Sylvia Ann Bradshaw, MRA, is the Director of Sponsored Programs at Dixie State University in St. George, Utah. She is a recent graduate of Johns Hopkins University’s MRA program and also a recipient of the inaugural 2018 NCURA Educational Scholarship award. Sylvia can be reached at bradshaw@dixie.edu

By Sylvia Ann Bradshaw
Another NCURA annual meeting has come and gone, and what an annual meeting it was! NCURA celebrated its 60th annual meeting in style and we hope you were included in the almost 2,000 members worldwide that joined us at the Washington Hilton August 4th through 8th. The meeting started with an incredible slate of workshops targeting all areas of research administration. Our Sunday night at the museum provided the NCURA family with an opportunity to network, wander the halls of the National Museum of Natural History and share a meal. Hopefully everyone got to try the diamond cookies while checking out the Hope Diamond!

Our keynote speaker, Kevin Carroll, shared inspiring stories of his work with the Hangar Clinic and the amazing people (and dolphin) he has had the honor of working with. Mr. Carroll’s heart-warming presentation tied well into the theme of Demonstrating Resilience. The rest of the theme (…and Advancing the Profession) was addressed just as well through two and a half days of concurrent sessions, discussion groups, breakfast round tables, ignite sessions and the sharing of best practices among colleagues. Our special Monday luncheon guest (Reggie Brown, a very authentic Barack Obama impersonator) had many people laughing, cheering, and engaged in his story of very limited beginnings to where he is now.

The 60th Anniversary Meeting was also a reunion. Many of our Past Presidents and Officers were in attendance to celebrate with us as well as to share their memories, experiences and knowledge through various concurrent sessions and discussion groups.

Of course, what better way to celebrate a special anniversary than to dance the night away with almost 2,000 of your closest friends and colleagues? AM60’s Denim and Diamonds party was made all the more special because we were able to once again enjoy the musical stylings of NCURAs own band Soul Source and the No-Cost Extensions. All the original band members were there and, as always, they ROCKED the house! We even had it under good authority that the Blues Brothers and Soul Sisters made an encore appearance… .

Many thanks go to the presenters, the many volunteers, the fabulous NCURA staff, our emeritus colleagues for being a part of the meeting whether by presenting or playing in the band, and last but not least, everyone in attendance. AM60 would not have been the same without each of you being there. Thank you!

Happy Anniversary NCURA!
1. AM 60 Program Committee
Seated: Joyce Ferland, Suzanne Rivera, Rosemary Madnick, Kay Gillstrap, Robyn Remotigue, Pam Whitlock, Mo Valentine.
Standing: Judy Fredenberg, Gai Doran, Bruce Morgan, Janet Simons, Kallie Firestone, David Mayo, Samantha Westcoat, Tony Ventimiglia, Laura Letherer, Hollie Schreiber, Heather Offhaus, Martin Williams.

2. 2018 Executive Committee
Seated: Denise Moody, Secretary (Harvard University); Georgette Sakumoto, President (University of Hawaii); Barbara Gray, Immediate Past President (East Carolina University).
Standing: Shannon Sutton, Treasurer (Western Illinois University); Kathleen Larmett, NCURA Executive Director; Tony Ventimiglia, Vice President (Auburn University).

3. 2018 Board of Directors
Seated: Denise Wallen, University of New Mexico; Rosemary Madnick, University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Denise Moody, Harvard University; Georgette Sakumoto, University of Hawaii; Barbara Gray, East Carolina University; Sue Kelch, University of Michigan; Katherine Kissmann, Texas A&M University.
Standing: Mary Louise Healy, Johns Hopkins University; Toni Shoebie, Oklahoma State University; Julie Guggino, Central Washington University; Annika Glauner, ETH Zurich; Shannon Sutton, Western Illinois University; Kathleen Larmett, NCURA; David Mayo, Caltech; Tony Ventimiglia, Auburn University; Laura Lethereter, Georgia State University; Mario Medina, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio; Stacy Eisenman, College of the Holy Cross.
Not pictured: Ralph Brown, Colorado School of Mines; Glenda Bullock, Washington University in St Louis; Lisa Mosely, Yale University.

4. Past NCURA Presidents
Seated: Barbara Gray, David Mayo, Denise Clark, Dick Seligman, Ardis Savory, Pat Hatch, Michelle Vazin, Pam Whitlock.
Standing: Dave Richardson, Jerry Fife, Jane Youngers, Kim Moreland, Fred Bentley, Bob Andresen, Virian Holmes, Mary Hassemoller, Judy Fredenberg, Dan Nordquist.

5. Past NCURA Secretaries
Seated: Barbara Gray, Denise Clark, Dick Seligman, Pamela Webb, Mary Hassemoller, Jan Anderson.
Standing: Gunta Liders, Josie Jimenez, Georgette Sakumoto, Cindy White, Chris Hansen, Tommy Coggins.


8. Co-Chairs: Robyn Remotigue (University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth), Tony Ventimiglia (Auburn University), Kay Gilstrap (Georgia State University).


10. 2018 Awardees: Mario Medina, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio; Bruce Morgan, University of California Irvine; Twila Fisher Reighley, Michigan State University; Robyn Remotigue, University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth; Suzanne Rivera, Case Western Reserve University; Cynthia Dwyer, NIH.
In 2016, the Department of Neuroscience at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS) was faced with a conundrum. Three seasoned fund admins departed in the course of 12 months, all moving to another school in New York City. The winds had changed, with NIH basic research projects (R01s) growing ever more competitive and our researchers applying for more foundation funds. In evaluating how to find replacements, we examined whether we should replace one of the fund admins—a position that is responsible for grants cradle to grave, pre- to post— or take the dive and create a new position devoted entirely to pre-award services.

It was a tough call. For our first step, we delved deep into a list of all roles and responsibilities in the department: Principal Investigators, Fund Administrators (FAs), Laboratory Staff, HR Processes, and Graduate Students. For example, though our FAs shepherd the pre-award process, the PI is ultimately responsible for timely submission of fully assembled grant applications.

Next, we looked at the overall submission, review and approval process. We wanted to examine where the bottlenecks occurred and why. Would this restructure be a meaningful change for overextended PIs and FAs? If a Grants & Contracts Specialist (GCS) handled all InfoEd set up, data entry, troubleshooting, biosketches and submission, could this give PIs more time to focus on the science of an application? Would this save the FAs who were drowning in post-award and myriad miscellaneous duties?

Next, we surveyed the funding pool. 85% percent of Neuroscience grant funding comes from federal sources. Neuroscience at ISMMS has been in the top 5 in NIH funding to US Medical Schools across the country since 2010 (Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research, 2018). In 2010, we had $14,658,754 direct plus indirect costs but excluding R & D contracts and ARRA awards. In 2017, we had $21,313,966. Having stated this, it’s important to note that of the 139 applications submitted between January 2018 and June 2018, 64% were to federal sources and 36% were to non-federal sources.

Finally, we needed buy-in from existing staff in order to effectively chart the course as we embarked on this new endeavor. Some of the FAs were very skeptical. They thought there wouldn’t be enough for the GCS to do because they’d only be busy during major deadlines. Others were optimistic. They had firsthand experience working in a successful separate pre-award and post-award model. Further, the chair was encouraging labs to submit grants of all kinds, whether it was a graduate student NIH fellowship or a new R01. He was willing to accept grants without full overhead. Therefore, he found the GCS role critical to this change in funding climate.

The vast majority of departments in ISMMS have FAs who handle both pre- and post-award. Out of 57 departments, only seven have a dedicated GCS. Would we be rowing against the current or steering the ship in the right direction? We decided to take the plunge and restructure the office. Instead of five FAs, we’d have four FAs plus one GCS. The GCS would handle pre-award as well as visas and the fund management of 2 training grants. The following is a brief excerpt from the job posting:

The Grants & Contracts Specialist II is a key resource in the Department of Neuroscience.
S/he works as part of the Administrative team to support the research endeavor in the Department of Neuroscience and may work on special projects as assigned by the Department Administrator.

- Highly organized with a focus on teamwork and creating usable accessible administrative tools.
- Serves as Department’s trainer and trouble-shooter for grants management software (InfoEd) as well as external interfaces (eRA Commons, Proposal Central, etc.).
- Reviews and approves all grant submissions before going to Grants & Contracts Office (GCO).
- Shepherds pre-award process, ensuring internal deadlines are met and assisting PIs with submission components, setups and subawardee or subaward prime SOI, SOW, and budget justification.
- Responds to Just-in-Time requests.

Our final candidate had over 17 years of grants management experience, the last few of which were spent handling the ins and outs of post-award at a nearby university. This well-rounded background gave her the ability to iron out issues from a post-award, proactive standpoint and quickly gain our PIs trust. In the first few weeks, training was two-fold. First, the GCS dove headfirst into ISMMS policy and procedure by taking formal classroom-based training courses with our GCO and reviewing the material on GCO’s website. The trainer taught the GCS how to set up proposals and budgets in a test environment. Second, the GCS shadowed the three FAs in Neuroscience as well as the GCS in Psychiatry. Since we work autonomously, we had different tactics for handling our workloads. In my case, I manage the portfolios of 14 PIs. I showed her how I organized my deadlines, visas, fund management, and proposals. For the next few months, she was taking on more of her workload, handling items more independently, with the goal that by the fifth month on the job she would take over everything pre-award except budgeting and cost share forms from the FAs.

It wasn’t all smooth sailing. The waters were choppy to be sure, particularly since we were short-staffed for about two years. In my portfolio alone, we submitted 70 applications from July 2017 to June 2018, more than half to federal sources. This included new grants, resubmissions, noncompetitive progress reports, etc. Since the GCS role was new, we had 3 admin team meetings and a faculty meeting to assess the transition, give feedback and see whether or not we needed to change course.

In hindsight, the plunge was well worth the risk. We weathered the storm that was the February 5 NIH deadline. With a dedicated and seasoned GCS, we were more organized and more proactive. We submitted proposals to GCO earlier, with better quality, requiring minimal switch outs and revisions. The chart below offers a before and after view of how pre-award duties changed hands.

Grant submissions can be “sink or swim.” I believe that in order for us to survive, we must throw out rafts every now and then, and take turns rowing. Whether you’re planning to create a new position, replace a position or just evaluate roles, responsibilities & workload in a dynamic office, I’ve provided some tips below, utilizing criteria in our mandatory annual performance reviews:

- **Strategically seek the input of others that may be affected by plans & actions.** Invite 360-degree feedback at the faculty meetings and provide meaningful, supportive feedback to motivate administrative team members. Meet regularly during this transition and make this important topic a priority in the agenda.

- **Be agile.** Embrace change and remain focused on the expected outcome while remaining open to all possibilities regarding how to get there.

- **Reduce Conflict.** Establish change agents, gain buy in and take initial steps. Be sensitive to and respectful of the motivations, concerns, needs and emotions of others. Be mindful of interactions that have the potential to become a source of anxiety and hinder job productivity.

- **Clearly Outline Expectations and Set Goals.** This means evaluating and reevaluating the roles and responsibilities of each key player in the proposal process and create an atmosphere that is action-oriented and results driven. Update and clarify expectations to achieve peak performance and enhance team effectiveness.

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**Before**

| FAs reached out to PIs monthly to find out proposal plans and due dates. | This did not change. |
| FAs handled budget and data entry of budget into InfoEd. | FAs prepares only an excel file budget. GCS enters budget in InfoEd. |
| FAs or PIs created and completed InfoEd proposals depending on PIs comfort level with the program. | GCS creates and completes all InfoEd entries. |
| Internal deadlines varied depending on the type of application (brand new, renewal, noncompeting continuation, etc.) and weren’t reinforced. | Internal deadlines are set and reinforced as follows: brand new proposals submitted to GCO 10 days prior to Sponsor deadline, renewals and noncompeting continuations submitted to GCO 5 days prior to Sponsor deadline. |
| There were no centralized physical files. If an FA was out, it was difficult to pick up where they left off. | Folders were created, color coordinated and organized at the GCS desk. This helps FAs pick up where the GCS left off and vice versa. |
| There were no centralized electronic files. FAs saved files to their desktops. | Shared drive was developed and organized by Year, Month, and Sponsor Type - Federal, Private, and Subcontracts. Each proposal is labeled with PI last name-Sponsor-PD # |
| FAs were inconsistent in reviewing and preparing biosketches and other support, leaving it mainly up to PI and GCO. | Biosketches and other support pages are saved to shared drive so that duplicative efforts are not made once new requests - particularly for JIT or RPPRs - came in. |

**After**

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**References**


Andrea Marie Nievera, MA, CRA is a Senior Financial Analyst at Icahn School of Medicine Mount Sinai, has a graduate degree in Human Behavior and 16+ years of grants experience at universities and non-profits in San Diego and NYC. She can be reached at andreamarie.nievera@msm.edu
Once upon a May so cheery, we met with NCURA; some were leery
Over three days with tomes of weight; the CFR was our date
And we nodded, nearly napping, it was after all, mentally zapping
When suddenly, the leaders spoke, words of fright, we thought we’d croak
Is it us, could it be, would they be coming for our university?

What is it you ask, that evokes such dread, is it the zombie apocalypse,
the coming of the dead?
No, we say, it may be worse, it’s happened to others, for some, a curse
It arrives on wings of black, we flinch, but there’s no turning back
It hovers, it lands, in search of haven; its eyes are bleak; it is the Raven.

Oh Raven, why have you come? Through these federal rules we have swum
We do our best to always comply, be gone now, you must fly
With contracts and invoices, the Raven settled in, and in a voice smooth
and dark as sin
Said “it’s your turn now, I’ve brought it, don’t look now, this is an audit”

Oh horror of horrors! What shall we do? Where can we run,
who shall we turn to?
But then we remembered those days in May
When with calmness they said, there is always a way
To find the path through the forest of rules,
Look to the CFR for treasures and jewels

Cost transfers are a thing of mystery, when a PI doesn’t know the history
Of how and when he spent and where the money went
You’ll need to transfer a cost, but wait! You don’t want it to get tossed
To make sure you get positive mention, please try to pay attention
And make sure you detail the reason, if you want to survive audit season

To budget we ask for detail, we chase costs over hill and dale
But after headaches we’ve earned, at our class we just learned
Into finance systems just totals can go, is our LOBDA the seed that will grow?
If this works for you, and you’ve already got it,
Just remember, the stories always ended with “and then we had an audit”

The lessons to learn on cost principles
show that in order to be invincible
You must remember these four, so the auditor won’t get past the door
Is it allowable, consistent, and reasonable? Ask if a parka in summer
is seasonable

And allocable is the last, know that costs can’t be passed
When one project has bucks, but the other is in flux
If the answer to these four is yes, then you’ll know which way is best
To send the Raven on his way, to visit another day

You should always keep an eye on
the costs your subs try to pass on
If in supplies a pickup is listed,
That awardee will need to be assisted
To see that even if they already bought it,
they still need to dread the audit

Have you heard the debates, regarding on-campus, off-campus rates
’Tis better to charge consistently, even if the PI is insistently
Trying to lower the cost, for sometimes the line will be crossed
Then a risk has been taken; and amends you’ll be makin’
When application is inconsistent
And an audit is suddenly existent

This is horrible you exclaim, it seems like audits are nothing but pain
Yes, it’s true, they’re no fun, but after NCURA was done
We learned not to be scared, as long as we are prepared
And if you still feel fear, just keep this thought near
Our teacher’s every story started with ‘the auditor just arrived’
And yet somehow they really survived

If you want to see how other Universities have done
You can visit Oversight.gov for a little fun.
You see it in workshops, conferences, and webinars. It runs rampant in our emails, a ding ding ding! as the listserv lights a fire in our inboxes. In lamenting, venting phone calls to your colleague across the country. “It depends” – the motto of a research administrator. We may smile and laugh, or, more likely, roll our eyes as we repeat the phrase. It would be nice if it didn’t depend, right? It would make everything so simple if the cards we were dealt offered a true view of the future.

Every agency, campus, department, project, and principal investigator adds a new and ever-changing dimension to research administration. So how do we prepare for what an answer will depend on next? Specifically, how can pre-award administrators as the first line of defense find ways to transition with the growth of their institution?

Past
What is your institution’s heritage? Heritage plays an essential role in student traditions and campus-wide identity, and though it may not seem obvious, heritage is also ingrained in office processes. The way your pre-award team approaches their role in the grant lifecycle depends on a number of factors, from the size and growth rate of the institution (i.e., degree of hand-holding) to the level of involvement of the upper administration in day-to-day activities (who reviews what?). A small university in a rural community will have a different atmosphere than a non-residential college in the suburbs, and separate units within the institution will work together in different ways. One institution may have a background of deeply collaborative units, where, for instance, the grants office drafts its routing form in tandem with the business office so the latter can use it to set up an award. Another institution may have free reign to implement processes as they see fit, and a routing form may not leave the office once the necessary approvals are gained. In both cases, change may be necessary as the institution grows and the number and type of awards evolves.

Other factors affecting proposal submission that might seem far-removed can involve the general atmosphere of your university:
- What level of departmental oversight is there from upper administration, and how involved have they been in everyday processes?
- Have there been any major changes in the makeup of the university, like a consolidation or a period of high turnover?
- Is the faculty vocal or fearful? Diverse or homogenous? Friendly or guarded? Helpful or stingy?
- What is the historic mission and focus of your university?

At first glance, none of these community-defining questions may seem relevant to filling out an SF424 form, but your institution’s history will come into sharp focus when you start writing a new policy for the proposal routing process. As a research community starts to emerge, the answers to these questions play a crucial role in shaping how you get things done, so it is best to be aware of them.

Present
The research administration community is remarkable in its willingness to share trade secrets and various documents.

There are, of course, also important questions to ask about the history of your sponsored projects office (SPO):
- Have post-award and accounting processes been handled in a separate office from pre-award?
- Is there one person operating a stealth SPO out of the engagement or development office?
- Who are the links in the routing chain?
- Who has served as the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)?
- Who sets up your institution’s electronic registrations and signatures, and who controls the passwords?
- Has the transition to a paperless or less-paper office been made?

All of these factors, as well as many more, are the all-important edge pieces of your pre-award puzzle. If you can get the frame in place, you’ll have a better reference for where the odd-shaped pieces go.

The research administration community is remarkable in its willingness to share trade secrets and various documents.
SPO working closely with the AOR/VP of Business and Finance (VPBF) is now a team of ten with an extra director and VP for Research buffer between the pre-award administrator and the AOR. While the VPBF may always have given the pre-award administrator submission authority, there are still a whole host of matters subject to approval from the VPBF office — routing forms, proposal documents requiring a wet signature, just-in-time documentation, etc. While running back and forth to the VPBF can be good cardio, it’s bound to cause problems when you find your signatory is often out of the office in meetings or is focused on a new university initiative. What made sense in the past no longer works as efficiently in the present due to office structure.

So, you ask, why didn’t the AOR designation just evolve too and get reassigned to someone in the SPO office? Because education must come before change. I doubt any upper administration would take kindly to relinquishing authority over something as important as grants without a proper explanation. Just because a pre-award team is knowledgeable and experienced, that doesn’t mean the rest of the university is as well versed in all the nuances of proposal submission and negotiation.

We want to sculpt our processes into something easily understood by our university partners, not intimidating to PIs, and fluid enough that when something “depends,” we can easily adjust to accommodate the future and the inevitable growth of the institution. As new and bigger grants start flowing in, more and stranger requests will be made by the funding agencies.

While the pre-award administrator may understand that a sponsor is collecting basic information needed to process an award, your institutional partners may be surprised that such requests are part of the negotiation process. So, along with poring over other SPOs’ policy documents and asking a listserv how something is done, talk to your university. Explain how your job works — that it’s not just the push of a button. Explain why it’s so important to have easy access to an AOR on submission day. And don’t forget to listen! What will help your PIs be more productive? What information can you provide in the budget to make sure accounting has what they need at the time of an award? If you can’t see the whole picture of your university and its processes, you’ll never effectively change your own.

**Future**

Setting the right mood during the pre-award process is an incredible boost to the entire grant lifecycle and the future of your SPO. If you can establish a community that reaches beyond your SPO colleagues and be open to other people’s needs, you will be better prepared to anticipate change and have the help needed to seamlessly update your processes with your institution’s growth. They say “it’s in the cards” when a future outcome seems certain, but anything can change — a new president with new priorities gets elected, or a new set of regulations are introduced. Fortune telling isn’t so much about knowing for sure what’s in your future, it’s about being prepared for the possibilities. The key to reading the cards, what it all depends on in the end, is your own outlook and ability to change.

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Welcome to the second edition of the new column where Executive Committee members inform the membership of key issues discussed during the Board of Directors (“Board”) meetings. The Board met Saturday, August 4th, 2018 prior to NCURA’s 60th Annual Meeting. It was a “gem” of a meeting where the following few “carats” of items were discussed:

- Tony Ventimiglia, President Elect, presented updates to the board on AM60 including attendance approaching 2,000 members, with over 100 members from 27 countries. More than thirty first-time presenters were included in the program and were paired with experienced presenters.
- The year-end financial statements and audits were reviewed. NCURA is financially strong. A review of the Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) comparing 2017 to 2016 showed increases in Investments ($250k) and Liabilities ($78k), resulting in an overall increase in Net Assets of $560k. The Statement of Activities (Income Statement) included a decrease in Meeting revenues ($399k), primarily due to higher PRA/FRA attendance in 2016 as compared to 2107; Investment income increased $200k; and overall Total Expenses decreased $630k. The Change in Net Assets (Net Income) for 2017 was a positive $560k. The external audit firm issued NCURA an unmodified opinion, which is the highest level of assurance. They also stated there were no internal control finding, which include no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. The NCURA Finance team works diligently throughout the year and it is because of their efforts the organization continues to receive positive audit reports.
- The Board discussed the Accreditation Task Force plan. Dave Richardson, Chair of the Task Force, attended the meeting to provide background and updates on the status of the Task Force (see the article in the August magazine regarding the Task Force). A good discussion took place which will continue at the November Board meeting.
- The Professional Development Committee (PDC) has been working on the development of a research administration program – either a certificate, minor, or undergraduate degree. The PDC has been working with University of California – San Diego.
- The Board approved a revised Diversity and Inclusion Statement for NCURA. The Board first drafted the statement at their February meeting and it was also presented at the Regional Officer’s Workshop for their input. The result is as follows:

  The National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) recognizes, values, and celebrates diversity of persons, skills, and experiences in its mission to advance the field of research administration. Thus, NCURA is committed to building and maintaining a diverse membership and a culture of inclusion. Every member of NCURA has a right, without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, social class, sexual orientation, ability, personality, functional experience, or background, to fair and respectful treatment, equal access to resources to support professional growth, and equitable opportunities to contribute to NCURA’s success.

NCURA will not only adopt the statement, but it also will be considered a living document and incorporated into many different facets of the organization. As a first step, membership profile information will be updated, and committees will report on their diversity and inclusion efforts. NCURA relies heavily on its volunteer members and wants to ensure all members are represented.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to any member of the Board of Directors or NCURA staff. Until the next meeting...

Shannon Sutton serves as Treasurer of NCURA and is the Director of Sponsored Projects at Western Illinois University. She can be reached at sm-sutton@wiu.edu
As another autumn approaches, so does another cycle of NSF’s Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey. The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the National Science Foundation has been collecting Research & Development (R&D) expenditure data through its HERD and predecessor surveys since 1953. The survey has been an annual collection since 1972. It is a census of U.S. degree-granting institutions with at least $150,000 in R&D expenditures. In FY 2017, there were 903 such institutions in the survey frame, that collectively account for more than $70 billion of higher education R&D.

Approximately 95-98% of the surveyed schools consistently submit data each year. That’s an impressive response rate for a voluntary survey. The survey typically runs from November to January, with some extra time at the end for late submissions and data review follow-up questions with institutions to ensure quality responses.

The HERD survey requests data for several areas including: total R&D by source of funds, federal agency sources of funding by field, nonfederal sources of funding by field, type of R&D (basic research, applied research, and experimental development), spending on equipment by field, and R&D spending passed through to subrecipients or received as a subrecipient. Data on foreign sources of funding, medical school R&D, clinical trial R&D, headcounts of R&D personnel, and types of funding agreements (contracts vs. grants) are also collected.

This undertaking enables NCSES to produce 84 tables highlighting a wide range of data including national totals, trend tables, and ranking tables for the various fields and funding sources. The data are used by university and college administrators for benchmarking, by state and federal government policy makers, as well as other academic researchers. In addition to these data tables, NCSES produces short, policy-neutral InfoBriefs highlighting findings from the HERD data. Data from the HERD survey is also included in the biennial Science and Engineering Indicators produced for the National Science Board. Links to the HERD survey data and publications are located at https://nsf.gov/statistics/snyhero.

Data from the FY 2016 survey indicated an increase in federal funding of higher education R&D for the first time since FY 2011 (figure 1). When adjusted for inflation, federally-funded R&D was 1.4% greater than in FY 2015. Total R&D expenditures (in current dollars) at universities increased from just under $69 billion in FY 2015 to $72 billion in FY 2016. Federal funding climbed steeply between 2000 and 2011 reflecting, first, the effect of the NIH-doubling effort and then, in the latter years, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). However, federal research funding to universities then declined after ARRA funding expired and sequestration hit. In FY 2016, federal funding accounted for 54% of higher education R&D support, which equaled the lowest percentage since the survey began in 1953.

Universities’ own funding of R&D represents a significant proportion of total nonfederal funding. Ultimately, institutional funding has been the main driver behind the long-term upward trend in nonfederal funding. In FY 2016, institutional funding accounted for 54% of nonfederal R&D support. The other sources of funding – from nonprofits, businesses, state and local governments, and other sources – have all seen little growth in recent years.

Updates to these trends based on the FY 2017 data will be available at the URL noted above in November. The HERD data will soon be loaded into NCSES’s new Integrated Data System at https://ncsesdata.nsf.gov/ids, which allows users to run and download custom tables and graphs. This is yet another way for researchers to dig into the data. Providing easy access to these microdata is one way that NCSES shows its appreciation for the substantial effort given by participating universities and colleges. You can be sure that administrators, policy-makers, and researchers eagerly await the annual publication of these data.

Michael Gibbons is a Project Officer at the National Science Foundation’s National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics where he manages the Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) Survey, the Federally Funded R&D Centers (FFRDC) Research & Development Survey, and the Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities. He can be reached at mgbibbons@nsf.gov
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IIf there is one lesson that anyone who attends a National Council of University Research Administrators meeting, conference, or workshop should learn it is that we all do the same things differently. This message resonates during sessions, when we are trying to fit ourselves into pre/post/combined/central/department/research intensive/primarily teaching/clinical/other box, and when we are surprised by the different responsibilities someone has, even though they have the same job title as you. A Director of Sponsored Programs at a largish research-intensive university and one of the authors who is a Director of Sponsored Programs at a predominately undergraduate university agreed at the end of a conversation that the main difference between their offices was that one had people to do things and the other had piles of paper and time management issues.

The Body of Knowledge
There have been many magazine and journal articles published by NCURA, the Society of Research Administrators International, and the Grant Professionals Association over the past 20+ years that seek to categorize sponsored programs offices (SPO) by their administrative structures. Each of the models that are described are both reasonable and valuable, and there is enough similarity between them that looking at more than one can provide useful insights.

The models provided in Chapter 3 of NCURA’s Sponsored Research Administration: A Guide to Effective Strategies and Recommended Practices (Mora, 2012) — that is, the traditional, transitional and integrated models — move along a continuum beginning where pre-award and post-award are fully separated and task specific and ending where everyone is fully integrated across the lifecycle of an award. The chapter describes how the models might vary based on where the SPO is located — academic affairs, research, finance — and the focus of the institution — research or teaching. Other articles talk about important and wholly related issues: deconstructing silos, hierarchical vs systemic perspectives, and the use of metrics to document outcomes and progress toward goals.
The process is NOT static; it is NOT one and done.

providing Responsible Conduct of Research training); and the number of staff (1 to hundreds). More critical variables might include administrative unit (academic affairs, research, finance, advancement), the institution’s perception of the SPO’s importance in meeting its goals (minimal to significant), and PI’s perception of the SPO’s importance in meeting their goals (minimal to minimal+1).

The second is a section on vision and mission, the purpose of the organization and the organization’s modus operandi for achieving its purpose. Issues covered here could include: Who defines the SPO’s vision and how is it related to the larger organization’s vision? Who determines the SPO’s mission and the range of activities it represents? Would they be different if they are self-defined, defined by the larger organization’s leadership, or defined by the community it serves? How will steps toward the fulfillment of the mission be marked, assessed, and communicated? How will successes and challenges encountered by the SPO be used to improve future activities?

Take Control

Looking at the list of variables and characteristics of NCURA’s three models will help you determine where your SPO is now. Thinking about your variables and metrics will provide perspective. But how will you know if you are who you should be? How will you change if you need to? Here are 4 steps:

1. Engage stakeholders. First, get their opinions to learn what they need, what they think you are providing (and how well), and what they would like you to provide. Are you helping them achieve their goals? What are the barriers and supports affecting the quality or effectiveness of what they are looking for? Include institutional leadership, influential faculty, and staff in key related units for a broad perspective that will maximize the quality of their involvement.

2. Think systems, inclusiveness, and quality. Traditional organizational structures are hierarchical and focused on accomplishments within narrow bounds that are disconnected from other parts of the organization. Systemic organizational structures are focused on how all the parts of the system contribute to quality outcomes that benefit everyone. Consider the stakeholder’s comments and concerns while studying your processes, policies, and structures. (If at the end of steps 1 and 2 you find that your SPO is just what it should be and that what it does couldn’t be improved, start over!)

3. Develop a plan and gain buy-in. Convert your stakeholders to advocates by involving them in the process to convert what was learned in steps 1 and 2 into a cohesive plan and organizational structure that represents a practical, systems-oriented structure that will enable success for all. Involve your advocates in presenting the plan to your institution’s leadership to encourage its adoption. Reach out to the entire academic community so that they are aware of the planned changes and the positive impact the changes will have.

4. Take the long view. Build a plan that can be phased in over several years. This will ease the movement of staff between units or the hiring of new staff and will allow for the development and implementation of the new or revised policies, processes and technologies that will support the changes. Another important aspect of a stepped plan is to show the increasing quality of the improvements through appropriate metrics and qualitative measures. Maintaining the interest of your advocates can be accomplished through keeping them involved in making adjustments to the plan, in holding the institution accountable to keep the changes moving, and in enabling their communication with their peers.

With the knowledge contained in NCURA’s Sponsored Research Administration guide, the answers to the additional questions, and the results of the steps above, you have the tools needed to assess your current SPO organization, determine if a change is needed and start the process to enact the change. It may be that your office is right where it needs to be within your institution; or perhaps your office is in need of an overhaul. Office organization models are definitely not one-size-fits-all. There are as many unique SPOs as there are universities. What works for one school may not work for another. However, we can all learn from self-assessment as well as from our colleagues.

The process is not static; it is not one and done. In order to grow with the profession a person needs to be constantly looking at different areas and determining if now is the time to forge ahead, stay put or pull back a little. A good reminder comes from Winnie the Pooh, who once said, “Before beginning a Hunt, it’s wise to ask someone what you’re looking for before you begin looking for it.” (A.A. Milne)

References


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Your question did not identify your role, but you stated to me that you are an assistant vice president for research, so the turnover you are dealing with most directly is at the vice presidential level. There are many reasons for such frequent changes in leadership. And these are often stressful periods. One reason is the continual sense that those who report to a leader-in-transit feel a need to continually prove themselves to each new arrival. We will come back to this sense later.

I recommend “The Art of Authenticity,” by Karissa Thacker, to clients. The subtitle of the book is: Tools to become an authentic leader and your best self. It does not speak to dealing with a parade of bosses, but it speaks about holding your own center, values, and effectiveness as you lead in challenging times.

I think many of us would agree that turnover, at the rate you are experiencing, is unusual. Nevertheless, there is endemic turnover in higher education, as new leaders come and go with frequency. Perhaps you are experiencing a period of uncertainty that will reach its apex and soon yield to a period of consistent and calm leadership. It is important to visualize such a positive future for yourself and for those you lead.

So, what does this leadership turnover mean for you—someone who leads sponsored programs administration? Some questions: what decisions do you feel that you can make, rather than your boss? How have you defined those decision-making categories? Could you possibly be referring to too many decisions to the vice presidential level? What authority do you have to implement policies, procedures, systems, and which of these must truly wait on the boss? And, how do you know those answers: are the lines of authority clearly spelled out in job descriptions, or are you assuming your answers based on institutional culture and hearsay? Validate your understandings of the boundaries of your authority to do the things that you say are needed to be done. That effort may reduce the number of issues/items that you believe must wait for a “permanent” boss to be in place.

These questions are simply meant for you to reflect on what your assumptions are about what you can do without undue delay or needing to continually ask for permission. Of course, no one would recommend that you simply make decisions for the sake of making decisions, or to do so without adequate input and consultation under established university policy-making frameworks. This is not about being an irresponsible decision maker or actor.

It is about “owning your function.” I worked for someone years ago who would use that phrase with all of his direct reports. He would exhort us: “Own your function.” Meaning: Do what needs to be done to execute your tasks, responsibilities, institutional assignments so that the work of sponsored programs happens effectively and efficiently. He would say: “Don’t wait to be told to do your job.” This advice may sound gruff and unpolished. These days we might dress it up and say: Act collaboratively, autonomously, and authoritatively.

Also, be mindful of how your own role as an AVP will be perceived if you have placed yourself in a box where you do not believe you can make decisions to move your operation forward. It diminishes staff morale, causes faculty and other stakeholders to question the purpose and efficacy of the office (and potentially, your leadership). Have you abdicated some of your responsibility to lead, despite the leadership flux above you? Yes, we need to be collaborative and authoritative.

Perhaps begin by making an inventory of the decisions and projects that are waiting to take off on your runway of sponsored programs. For those that you assume must be led or decided by the boss ask yourself: how do I know this? what actions or how far can I take this before I would need a boss to move it forward? If I need to have a boss’ imprimatur before moving forward, how can I mitigate the risks for that person so that the most risk averse action the boss can take is to say “yes” and move something forward? Make it easy for the boss to say “yes”.

I hear many clients talk about their perceived need to prove themselves over and over again to a parade of new bosses. Our coaching work takes many paths and every person and situation is different. But a question to consider is: What do you need to know or feel from others to validate your own value to yourself? Start there. Then, ask yourself: how much of your success and happiness in your leadership role as AVP is depending on the validation of others…including your bosses, who come and go.

Leadership is about doing the right things in the right ways, according to Peter Drucker. This advice is good at all times. Even when dealing with a parade of bosses. Try putting yourself at the head of the parade.
Although the general compliance date for the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, known as the “2018 Requirements”, is delayed to January 21, 2019, institutions may implement three “burden reducing” provisions effective July 19, 2018. Those provisions include (1) the definition of research, (2) IRB review of funding proposals, and (3) the subject of this article, exceptions to mandated continuing review.

Big changes in regulations allow us an opportunity for reinvention, reallocation of resources, and reconsideration of process, procedure, and efficiency. With consideration on what will be or could be needed in the future, we can repurpose our resources, message our leaders, and position ourselves to improve value.

Take quality assurance programs, or audits: by letting go of continuing review, we can free resources to dedicate to quality programs. What if our quality program gave the IRB coordinators a chance to work with trained quality reviewers and learn how to review the study “in the field”? Sending a quality team out to meet with PIs and study teams to offer suggestions for best practices, confirm compliance, and problem solve enhances trust and avoids future compliance problems. Enhancing the development of IRB staff should strengthen our compliance program and provide better support for our research community in the future.

Take the NIH policy for a single IRB (sIRB) review for multi-site studies (2016). By letting go of continuing review, we can free resources to dedicate to quality sIRB review. When the institution’s IRB accepts the role of sIRB, workload for that office increases rather than decreases. Pressure for timely communication and response also increases. Likewise, when the institution is asked to cede review to another institution’s IRB, a clear and efficient process must be in place to assure timely communication and compliance. This may mean rethinking processes and roles in order to support these endeavors. Educating institutional leadership and the research community on what it takes to get this work done in a timely manner can help lay the groundwork for a smooth transition to this “new state”.

The University of Colorado, Denver (CU Denver), stopped requiring continuing review for most eligible research on July 19, 2018. Under the 2018 Requirements, unless an IRB determines otherwise, continuing review of research is not required in the following circumstances (Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, 2017):

- Research eligible for expedited review in accordance with the pre-2018 Requirements;
- Research that has progressed to the point that it involves only one or both of the following:
  - Data analysis, including analysis of identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens, or
  - Accessing follow-up clinical data from procedures that subjects would undergo as part of clinical care.
Studies that no longer require continuing review must comply with all other pre-2018 Requirements until January 21, 2019, at which time full compliance with the 2018 Requirements is required.

There are significant exceptions due to conflicting federal regulations or policies. Clinical investigations regulated by the FDA require at least annual IRB review. Also, policies of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) require at least annual IRB review of human subject research (VHA Handbook, 2017 & DOD Instruction, 2011).

Research compliance leadership and IRB chairs discussed whether other types of research should continue to require continuing review. For example, CU Denver still requires continuing review for research involving consent for future unspecified research (e.g., tissue banking). This decision was made due to uncertainty regarding new broad consent provisions in the 2018 Requirements (Lynch & Meyer, 2017). Despite these exceptions, there are many studies for which continuing review is no longer necessary.

**BY LETTING GO OF CONTINUING REVIEW, WE CAN FREE RESOURCES TO DEDICATE TO QUALITY sIRB REVIEW.**

CU Denver chose to remove the requirement for continuing review on a protocol-by-protocol basis. We want to be confident that each such study will be in compliance with all 2018 Requirements come January 21, 2019.

What additional requirements come into effect on January 21, 2019? Without going into all the changes, there are several new requirements for informed consent. These include a new requirement to present key information at the beginning of the consent form. There is a new basic element of consent related to the future use of de-identified study data. And there are three additional elements of consent which address the use of biospecimens for commercial profit, return of clinically relevant research results, and whole genome sequencing. This may seem like a lot to update to remove the requirement for continuing review. However, we found that the consent language required by our templates, policies and practices already addressed most of these issues. When we have to make minor changes to a consent form to be in compliance with 2018 Requirements, the IRB can make those revisions at the time of approval.

Research approved under pre-2018 Requirements needs continuing review unless the study has closed. During continuing review, the IRB considers removing the requirement for future continuing reviews. The IRB also considers this at initial review for new research.

The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) has given IRBs flexibility with oversight of research which no longer requires continuing review (2018). We emphasize to investigators that they are still required to obtain IRB approval for changes to approved research, except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to subjects. We also emphasize that they are still required to submit reports of unanticipated problems and reports of potential serious or continuing non-compliance. Until the IRB has been notified of study closure, the IRB will send an annual reminder to PIs about their ongoing responsibilities for the conduct of the research.

Continuing review may be reinstated by the IRB. For example, if the IRB reviews an amendment that increases risks above minimal, continuing review would be reinstated. Similarly, during review of an unanticipated problem or serious or continuing noncompliance, the IRB may determine that continuing review is required. Although IRBs do not need to document the reason for requiring continuing review until January 21, 2019, the CU Denver requires documentation in IRB records.

We determined that removing the requirement for continuing review would not affect a subject’s willingness to continue in the study and does not require subject notification or re-consent. If the IRB makes changes to the consent form to conform with 2018 Requirements, the IRB will consider whether re-consent is necessary. We anticipate that most of the time re-consent will not be required.

Communication with stakeholders is critical. We discussed the changes with IRB Chairs, IRB staff, researchers and research staff. We also sent written information about the change to IRB members and updated IRB reviewer checklists. Written information was sent to investigators, and we continue to talk with all of these stakeholders as part of change management.

In conclusion, while removing the requirement for continuing review for research requires planning and change management, it is a rare opportunity to better allocate compliance resources. Freeing up resources for sIRB or for quality programs are just two examples of regulatory compliance activities institutions might improve.

Acknowledgement: We want to thank our colleagues at other institutions who have shared their past successes about implementing two or three year approval periods for non-Federally funded minimal risk research and who helped pave the way for these improvements.

**References**


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Keeping up with changes in sponsored program policies and regulations can be daunting. We want to be proactive. Some weeks, we barely have time for day-to-day tasks, never mind reading up on what’s new and on the horizon.

NCURA helps its members stay on top of research administration issues with the weekly “NCURA’s e-Xtra” email, this Magazine, the Collaborate Communities, and more. There are multiple other publications and listservs that provide information; signing up for daily or weekly briefings from publications of interest can bring you to the point of overload.

If it’s hard for “seasoned” research administrators to keep up, it’s much more challenging for those who are new, or learning new aspects of the profession. How can we bring focus to all this information to help our staff and the campus community?

In campus research administration training sessions at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, we routinely provide resource lists to the trainees. Of course, the lists include references and resources for digging deeper on a particular training topic. More broadly, they include recommendations for maintaining professional knowledge, and even a few resources for better appreciating the science we support.

What do our lists include?
- How to join our internal research administration email list and information about internal sponsored programs update meetings
- A reminder that the central sponsored programs websites post key sponsor notifications that affect proposal development and award management
- Links to the NCURA, NIH Grants, and NSF YouTube channels
- Links to number of NIH resources (since that is a key funding source for my institution), such as blogs, NIH RePORTER, and how to subscribe to the NIH Guide to Grants and Contracts
- Information about national certification and higher education offerings
- A general recommendation (with links) to join a professional organization and attend meetings or workshops

Knowing where to begin, and armed with more focused resources, research administrators can hone in on need-to-know information and be ready for inevitable changes in procedures and policies.  

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At the end of 2011, the National Science Foundation Innovation Corps (NSF I-Corps) launched a small pilot program aiming to increase the successful commercialization of research that the NSF funds at American universities. The NSF was dissatisfied with how little of its research funding was resulting in commercialized products and developed the I-Corps to address this problem. It is a training program run by universities for university researchers to learn the Lean Startup techniques developed by Steve Blank at the University of California, Berkeley for Silicon Valley startups. Adapted for engineering and science-based university researchers by the NSF and Steve Blank, the I-Corps has had a significant impact on improving the success rate of university startups and changing the academic research culture to be more innovative and entrepreneurial. University research administrators will likely be coming across more I-Corps grant proposals and awards as the program continues its strong growth at the NSF, and as it spreads across other federal and local government science agencies. Similar programs have been launched overseas as well.

I-Corps Growth. The scale and complexity of the NSF I-Corps have grown quickly over the years. There are now 27 universities running eight I-Corps Nodes at the national and regional level, 86 universities that run institution-specific I-Corps Sites, and more than 1,000 teams of university researchers who have received funding and training through the I-Corps Teams program. The I-Corps is also expanding outside of the NSF to other federal and state agencies that fund university research, as initiated by the 2017 American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (AICA). Although the I-Corps is only available for U.S.-based researchers, George Washington University (GW), where I am the associate vice president for research, innovation and entrepreneurship and co-PI for the DC I-Corps Node, has adapted the curriculum for universities outside the United States and helped spread the benefits internationally. GW has worked with many international universities and/or government ministries and agencies of science and technology from Mexico, Brazil, Korea, Philippines, Japan, and India. This article outlines the history, purpose, and structure of the I-Corps to help university research administrators understand the I-Corps grant proposals and awards that are becoming increasingly common at universities across the United States.

Structure of I-Corps Programs. I was fortunate enough to be part of the first I-Corps pilot as an industry mentor and have since become the co-principal investigator for the DC I-Corps Node at GW starting in 2013. Together with my counterparts at the University of Maryland, Virginia Tech, and Johns Hopkins, the DC I-Corps Node runs national training cohorts for the NSF I-Corps Teams program. There are seven other multi-university regional I-Corps Nodes around the country that operate similarly, although every node has its own flavor.

NSF I-Corps Nodes
DC Regional Node
George Washington University, University of Maryland, Virginia Tech, Johns Hopkins University
Bay Area
University of California Berkeley, University of California San Francisco, Stanford
NYC Regional Innovation Node
City University of New York, New York University, Columbia
IN-LA Node
University of Southern California, University of California Los Angeles, Caltech
Southwest Alliance for Entrepreneurial Innovation
University of Texas Austin, Rice University, Texas A&M, Texas Tech
South Node
Georgia Tech, University of Alabama Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Birmingham, University of Tennessee Knoxville
Upstate NY Alliance for Entrepreneurial Innovation
Cornell, Rochester Institute of Technology, University of Rochester
Midwest I-Corps Node
University of Michigan, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Purdue University
All of the Nodes also run regional I-Corps training cohorts available to all university researchers within their regions, regardless of whether they have received previous NSF funding. The NSF also provides funding to individual universities through the I-Corps Site program for these universities to provide Lean Startup training and micro-grants to support the customer discovery of the researchers at these universities. Nodes also work with I-Corps Sites in their respective regions to assist them in delivering the training. The I-Corps Sites and Nodes usually provide introductory training to screen and recommend potential candidates to the national I-Corps Teams program, although some provide full 7-week programs similar to the national Teams cohorts described below. Universities that wish to apply to be an I-Corps Site can work with their regional I-Corps Node for assistance with their application. In addition to being a node university, GW has an I-Corps Site grant.

I-Corps Teams. The flagship program of the I-Corps, however, is the Teams program. Researchers who have been funded by the NSF directly, or through an I-Corps Node or Site endorsement, are eligible to apply for an I-Corps Teams cohort. Multiple cohorts are held throughout the year at various locations around the United States and run by the I-Corps Nodes. The researchers form teams of three or four participants.

1) Principal Investigator (PI): The PI is the official award recipient and must have received a prior NSF grant within the last 5 years or can be endorsed by an I-Corps Node or Site program leader after participating in one of their training programs. Ideally, the PI should also be the Technical Lead (TL), but this is not mandatory. Often it is a senior researcher or tenured professor who runs a lab or research program at the university. While participation in the actual training program by the PI is preferred, it is not required if there is a qualified Technical Lead participating. There is no expectation that the PI would leave the university to pursue a new venture, but the PI often takes on an advisory board role in any new ventures that result.

2) Technical Lead (TL): This is usually the PI but can also be another researcher who has worked on the technology being investigated. Often another professor, research scientist, or post-doc from the same laboratory or department as the PI. The requirement is that they must be someone with deep and direct technical expertise in the actual core technology that is being investigated for commercialization in the program. Like the PI, there is no expectation that the TL would leave the university to pursue a new venture, but often there is some kind of advisory or management role in subsequent new ventures.

NSF I-Corps Sites (alphabetical)

American University
Arizona State University
Brandeis University
Brigham Young University
California State University, Northridge
Carnegie-Mellon University
City University of New York
Cornell University
Dartmouth College
East Carolina University
George Mason University
George Washington University
Georgia Tech Research Corp
Howard University
Iowa State University
Jackson State University
Johns Hopkins University
Louisiana State University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Michigan Technological University
Mississippi State University
Missouri University of Science and Technology
New Jersey Institute of Technology
New Mexico State University
New York University
North Carolina State University
Northeastern University
Ohio State University
Oldahoma State University
Oregon State University
Pennsylvania State University
Purdue University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rutgers University New Brunswick
San Diego State University
SUNY at Stony Brook
SUNY Binghamton
SUNY Buffalo
Tennessee Technological University
Texas A&M University
Tulane University
University of Akron
University of Alabama
University of Alabama at Birmingham
University of Arizona
University of Arkansas
University of California at Los Angeles
University of California Riverside
University of California-Irvine
University of California-Merced
University of California-San Diego
University of California-Santa Cruz
University of Central Florida
University of Chicago
University of Connecticut
University of Delaware
University of Georgia
University of Houston
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Iowa
University of Louisville
University of Massachusetts Lowell
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
University of Nevada Las Vegas
University of New Hampshire
University of New Mexico
University of North Carolina — Greensboro
University of North Carolina Charlotte
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Rochester
University of South Alabama
University of South Carolina — Columbia
University of South Florida, Tampa
University of Southern California
University of Texas — Rio Grande Valley
University of Texas at San Antonio
University of Toledo
University of Utah
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Vanderbilt University
Washington State University
Wichita State University

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3) Entrepreneurial Lead (EL): The EL is usually a post-doc or graduate student with relevant technical expertise who has the interest and capacity to work on the commercialization of the technology after the I-Corps program ends, if there is a “go” decision on pursuing a venture further. The EL often becomes the founding CEO or Chief Scientific/Technical Officer (CSO/CTO).

4) Industry Mentor (IM): The IM is typically an experienced entrepreneur with prior technology commercialization expertise in the sector being explored by the researchers. While the I-Corps instructors teach the Lean Startup process, the IMs directly help the researchers bridge the gap between the lab and potential customers by opening their networks and sharing their industry knowledge. The IMs often fall into one of three categories:

- Retired and/or cashed-out entrepreneurs looking to give back to the startup community and stay current on the cutting-edge technology coming out of universities;
- Serial entrepreneurs looking for the next big thing;
- Experienced professionals or executives who can participate in the program as part of their day job, e.g., economic development agency, university entrepreneur-in-residence, technology commercialization office.

In the earlier days of the program, there was no shortage of these volunteer mentors to join a team, but it has become increasingly difficult to find mentors as the program scaled up. Consequently, the NSF is experimenting with some teams and cohorts that are sharing mentors provided by the Nodes, rather than brought on by the teams themselves.

Awards. The awards from the NSF for the I-Corps Teams program provide $50,000. These funds are not intended to pay for more technical research, legal expenses, or patent costs, but to offset the expenses of the customer discovery process itself. Travel expenses for customer interviews, trade show fees, and minimal viable product development are all allowable expenditures. The ELs are also allowed to take a modest stipend to support them during the program, but not the PI, TL, or IM. Attendance and participation by all members of the team at all sessions of the 7-week boot camp is absolutely mandatory. Each team is expected to conduct at least 100 customer discovery interviews during this 7-week period. Indirect costs are limited to $5,000 of the total $50,000 grant.

I-Corps Site grants vary from institution to institution, but in general, the I-Corps Site universities are provided with a $100,000 grant that they pass through to researchers taking their training programs. These usually take the form of micro-grants to pay for the costs of customer discovery, as with the I-Corps Teams. Unfortunately, there is no additional funding for the researchers provided through the I-Corps Nodes for teams going through their training programs unless provided from a separate source. GW, for example, has provided micro-grants for its researchers who have taken DC I-Corps Node training programs.

Application Process. There are three avenues for university researchers to apply to the NSF I-Corps program if they have an invention or research they believe is commercial, and they want to investigate its market viability through a potential startup. If the researchers have an active NSF grant or have had one that expired less than five years ago, they are eligible to apply directly to the NSF for the I-Corps Teams program. Application deadlines are rolling, and several cohorts launch on a staggered schedule every quarter. Applications for each cohort open 6 months before kickoff and are accepted until the cohort is filled. The process of applying to NSF is very quick and simple, and the decision-making turnaround is quick as well.

The first step is to submit a simple 2-page executive summary to icorps-apply@nsf.gov. This summary should identify the PI and participating team members (EL, TL, and IM), their roles, and connection to the research. The NSF grant lineage should be established, and the technology, application/market, and commercialization plan described. Before starting the process, however, the researchers may want to contact the cognizant NSF I-Corps program director or their topic-specific program director to vet the idea. Teams that pass the initial screening based on the executive summary will have a phone interview with the NSF I-Corps management team. The primary purpose of this call is to determine whether the team understands the level of commitment required to complete the program successfully. If some questions remain, a second call with members from the I-Corps Nodes may be held. Only after these steps are successfully completed will the teams be invited to submit the full proposal.

The I-Corps has evolved into one of the largest technology accelerators in the world, and the benefits to university research are extensive.

If the researchers have not received prior NSF funding, they have two possible ways to apply. First, they can apply to the I-Corps training programs run by their regional Node. However, every Node is different, so, they will have to look into what their particular Node offers. At the DC I-Corps Node, our offerings are available at our website, www.dciicorps.org. Second, if the researchers are fortunate enough to be at one of the eighty-six I-Corps Site universities, they can apply to participate in those training programs. Successful completion of an I-Corps Node or Site program may lead to an endorsement from the Node or Site leadership in support of a national I-Corps Teams application, but it is not automatic. If the Node or Site leadership provides the endorsement, the researchers would apply as described above to the NSF, but with the added step of including their I-Corps Node or Site as their NSF lineage.

Pedagogy. The I-Corps trains university researchers to think like entrepreneurs, bridging the gap between lab and market. Specifically, the researchers learn Lean Startup and Customer Development techniques to connect directly with potential customers to determine whether their inventions are commercially viable solutions to real-world problems. The key insight to the success of the I-Corps program has been that most university startups fail not because of technical shortcomings, but because of a lack of market need. Arming researchers with the ability to determine the market need of their research themselves has been transformative in many cases, preventing them from wasting time with ideas that do not have commercial potential and providing a road map if they do.

Customer Interviews. The most important part of the I-Corps training is the customer interview. Each I-Corps Team is expected to conduct at least 100 customer discovery interviews during the 7-week training period. It is an intense learning experience that purposefully pushes the
researchers outside their comfort zones, forcing them to view their inventions through the eyes of the people who they believe would buy, use, or benefit from them. Some are able to validate their commercialization plan, and gain insights into how to move forward. In most cases, however, they find out that their initial assumptions and theories about the value of their research in the market are wrong. Some realize that their research may not have the commercial value they thought, and they go back to the lab to work on a new project. Others are able to pivot their projects toward a new customer or value proposition that makes more commercial sense. In either case, the researchers save valuable time and resources to pursue more productive research projects or more fruitful avenues for commercialization.

**Evidence-Based Entrepreneurship.** Despite being pushed outside their comfort zones, researchers are uniquely well-suited to the Lean Startup methodology, which is also known as evidence-based entrepreneurship. It uses the scientific method of experimentation that researchers are very familiar with to test their assumptions, hypotheses, and theories about why customers will buy their prospective new products. They identify who they believe their customers will be and develop questions to test their hypotheses through interviews. Then they conduct these interviews and look for evidence to support or invalidate their hypotheses. A tool known as the Business Model Canvas is used as a kind of lab notebook to keep track of their hypotheses and the results of their experiments. The refined Business Model Canvas that they develop through this process helps provide the road map toward future commercialization.

**Teaching Team.** The instructors in the I-Corps program are all experienced entrepreneurs or venture capital investors who have gone through extensive training. They usually start out as industry mentors on an I-Corps team and have demonstrated excellence in that role as one-on-one coaches. Some of these exceptional mentors are asked to join as adjunct faculty, to learn the core instructor role by observing experienced and nationally certified I-Corps instructors in action. They learn how to provide feedback in a classroom setting and through Launchpad Central, the online platform used to track the progress of the teams. Finally, they may be asked to serve as a core instructor and develop their own lectures materials based on their entrepreneurial experience and participate as an instructor in a national I-Corps Teams cohort. There are also many excellent I-Corps instructors who teach the regional Node and university-specific Site programs. The key is that this is a program developed by entrepreneurs and taught by entrepreneurs who can guide the researchers through the very difficult and unfamiliar process of customer discovery.

**Outcomes.** The I-Corps has evolved into one of the largest technology accelerators in the world, and the benefits to university research are extensive. Not only has it increased the success rate of university startups, but it has helped to instill a more innovative research culture at participating universities. Going through the I-Corps helps researchers understand the impact their inventions might have outside the laboratory to benefit society. This can impact not only their current research, but help them pick future research topics that are more commercially relevant.

As for direct startup launches, more than 450 startups have been launched by I-Corps Teams participants with follow-on funding of $250M as of December 2017. I-Corps Node and Sites have trained thousands more through their regional and university-specific programs, but the metrics for these are not as readily available.
Looking Back and Moving Forward: New Ways of Working

Many institutions are rooted in long-standing traditions and practices. Sometimes, we hear institutions approach a research administration task in a certain way because “it has always been done that way” and/or “it is the way another institution does it.” NCURA Peer Reviewers find the most effective institutions challenge long-standing traditions and practices by continually assessing performance and asking critical questions:

- When did this practice/tradition begin?
- Who has the institutional knowledge to know how this practice was developed?
- What precipitated the current approach/practice? Does this practice still NEED to occur in this way? Is it needed at all? What has changed in the institutional regulatory environment since the practice began?
- Is this still the best way to conduct this work? Are the right individuals involved? Are there ways for streamlining processes? Are there new or other connections that must be made?
- If the practice is modeled on another institution, does this practice really fit the context and organizational structure of your institution?
- Is the practice routinely and systematically re-examined to ensure the practice is keeping pace with a dynamic research administration and institutional environment?

Kris Monahan, Ph.D., is the chair of the Select Committee on Peer Review. She has participated in peer reviews and has more than 17 years of research administration experience, spanning pre-award, post-award, and research compliance at small institutions. She is the director of Sponsored Research & Programs at Providence College.

NOTABLE PRACTICES

AICA. The 2017 American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (AICA) mandates that the NSF continue to expand the program with its own researchers, expand follow-on funding in consultation with the Small Business Innovation Research Program and encourages partnerships with other federal science agencies to assist them with the development of their own I-Corps programs. The National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and others have followed suit with their own versions of the I-Corps. So far, nine agreements have been signed between the NSF and other federal agencies to develop new I-Corps programs. State and local government agencies have also followed suit, including Ohio and the District of Columbia.

International. Because of the success of the NSF I-Corps in transforming U.S. university innovation culture and launching more successful university startups, many foreign universities and government science agencies have been eager to replicate its success in their own countries. However, the I-Corps is a domestic U.S. program, and not available to foreign entities through the NSF. GW, however, has adapted the curriculum and pedagogical approach for international partners, delivering customized programs around the world that takes each country’s particular needs into consideration.

For example, the Korean National Research Foundation wanted its researchers to conduct customer discovery interviews in the United States so that they could be “born global.” The idea was that these ventures would be best served by selling into international markets from the start, rather than being limited to the domestic Korean market. In 2015, GW developed a program with the Korea Innovation Center in Vienna, Virginia, that trained Korean researchers on how to do customer discovery in the United States. We have also provided “train-the-trainer” programs for Korean instructors to teach Lean Startup techniques in Korea. The program has since evolved into a successful multi-node program currently run out of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, Pohang Institute of Science and Technology (POSTECH), and the Korea Entrepreneurship Foundation. GW has also run programs at the Ulsan Institute of Science and Technology and POSTECH separately from the NRF program.

Other similar programs have been run in Mexico (CONACYT), Brazil (FAPESP), India (IIT Madras), Japan (OIST), and the Philippines (DOST). In each case, we worked with the local sponsor to ensure that the program was adapted to their local needs. It should be clear that none of these international programs are I-Corps, but the same instructors, curriculum, and pedagogical methodologies are being used to spread the benefits to a global audience.

Summary. After reading this article, NCURA members should have a better understanding of the unique background and purpose of the NSF I-Corps proposals and grants that come across their desks. They will hopefully also be better equipped to refer their researchers who are interested in commercializing their research to this invaluable resource. The benefits of the program have been transformative at the universities who have taken advantage of it, including GW, which has seen an explosion of new university spinouts and licenses, not to mention a profound deepening of its innovation culture. Since the program is now available to all university researchers in the United States, there is no excuse for not encouraging your researchers to participate.

Jim Chung is the Associate VP for Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at GW, and a Co-PI for the NSF DC I-Corps Node. He was previously a VC/Private Equity investor and M&A professional. Jim has also been a researcher at MIT, Harvard, and Tokyo University. He received his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from Stanford and was a Ph.D. candidate at MIT. He can be reached at jimchung@gw.edu
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COMING SOON: Administering Research Contracts International Research Collaborations

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Every year, Federal agencies prepare to write and publish funding opportunities, receive and review applications, and release appropriated funds before the end of the fiscal year. In the meantime, applicants anticipate the release of funding announcements, consider who will work on the next application submission, and wait for the elusive funded award. Applicants and funders repeat this cycle year after year.

In the Division of Independent Review (DIR) at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), every year, we anticipate the annual planning of activities, patiently await approval of the federal budget, and start reviewing applications when Congress approves the budget. In addition, DIR coordinates the Objective Review Workgroup (ORW) comprised of representatives from HRSA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and National Institutes of Health (NIH). This article focuses on tips when writing grant applications and the importance of collaborating with other agencies.

**Tips to Remember**

Not long ago, the ORW led a panel presentation to a diverse audience sharing information on application submission and the review process. Figures 1 and 2 show a summary of key points from the presentation.

- Figure 1 provides reminders of activities when planning, writing, and submitting applications. In the planning phase, reading the funding opportunity, meeting deadlines, and paying attention to the review criteria are necessary. However, applicants’ competing priorities can get in the way of following that advice. When it comes to writing the application, starting early, following instructions, and getting to the point seem common sense. Nevertheless, funders still receive non-responsive applications and waiver requests for late applications. Finally, yet importantly, remember that applications will need to go through several systems before they reach their final destination. Submit applications early. Do not wait until the last minute.

- Figure 2 describes activities that take place before, during, and after the review of applications. During pre-review, funders are busy recruiting reviewers, checking for conflicts of interest (COI), and giving time to reviewers to evaluate applications independently. During review, reviewers meet and discuss the merit of applications following the review criteria. After review, funders send notification to applicants including scores and summary statements.

In short, the main takeaways of the ORW-led panel presentation on preparing and submitting applications for merit review were as follows:

- Use the funding opportunity as your guide;
- Participate in technical assistance calls and webinars;
- Compare your application to the review criteria before submitting;
- Volunteer to be a reviewer to learn the process;
- Ask questions;
- Do not wait until the last minute;
- Check spelling, calculations, and due dates;
- Check application to ensure all required information and attachments are included, page number restrictions are followed; and
- Mark your calendar. An estimated date of award is included in the funding opportu-
nity. You will hear from agencies whether or not your proposal is selected for funding.

Agencies also receive feedback from reviewers when evaluating applications. Reviewers know when applicants:
• Skip over the review criteria;
• Submit incomplete applications;
• Request more funding than allowed;
• Do not follow instructions; and
• Do not pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Reviewers are experts in the field you are applying for funding. Write your proposals at the level the audience is expecting.

Let’s Collaborate
The creation of the ORW was a byproduct of looking for ways to improve internal processes. As described in the federal internal control standard for information and communication (GAO.gov, 2014), DIR understands the value of communicating with internal and external stakeholders as necessary to achieve results. Even though some organizations, including government agencies, work in silos (Clark, 2012; Norris, 2010), for DIR reaching out to others became a priority. For this reason, the Division contacted other agencies to learn how they evaluated competing grant applications. Do they have the same challenges we have? What works for them? What does not work? It seemed a never-ending inquiry. The time was right to ask those questions. Senior management was already considering changes in the review process to increase the efficiency of what we do.

Following the Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle (AHRQ.gov, n.d.) approach, DIR developed a plan to collect and analyze information, design and implement activities, and monitor results. The planning phase included identifying individuals who manage the application review process at other Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies. Even though these agencies have similar policies and procedures, their missions, programs, and resources differ. DIR visited five agencies and met with people working on evaluating the merit of applications. After analyzing the information from the meetings and considering changes in processes, DIR decided to continue the relationship with agency contacts. In fact, collaborating with other agencies became a valuable resource as the best ideas often times occur while working with partners.

That is how, in June 2016, the ORW formally started holding monthly meetings with the primary purpose of sharing information. At these meetings, members discuss topics of interest depending on immediate needs. Two years has passed and the ORW continues sharing information and working together on projects. Further, members in the group formed a bond based on sharing a common professional interest and for some professional interest has become friendship. Thinking back, I believe there are several factors that contribute to this group succeeding:

• Need to share information. Working in a vacuum helps no one. Members ask insightful questions and bring up ideas to guide decisions. They share internal policies, practices, and documents such as published articles to keep everybody updated on potential changes coming from OMB, HHS, or Congress.

• Respect for each other. Each agency in the group has different missions, programs, and resources. We are not there to compare who has more or less funding or awards. The purpose of the meetings is to share information, not to compete with one another.
Willingness to participate and keep the momentum going. Some individuals dropped from the group; others remain. Two years later, the ORW still believes this hour-long monthly meeting is worth having. The group strives to protect and maintain rigorous standards to ensure a level playing field for competing grant applications.

Foster collaboration across agencies that may benefit the applicant community. The free flow and sharing of information provides the opportunity to seek consistency in operations, as applicable. Even though the aim of the ORW is not full standardization of policies and procedures, learning how other agencies operate is a first step when revisiting internal operations.

What is next for the ORW?
Since the release of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards on Dec. 26, 2013, everybody, including recipients, has been busy coming to terms with changes to meet new requirements. Changes provided the platform for the ORW group to flourish and continue activities. As a team, the ORW is busy identifying new projects, discussing challenging topics, and planning the next team presentation. Currently, two major activities are the revamp of the funding opportunity announcement process, and evaluating the impact of recent changes in the System for Award Management (SAM Update, 2018).

Sometimes, when we do not know what lies ahead, mystery feeds anticipation. Curiosity got us started on a project that led to forming the ORW. In our line of work, there are no straight paths. There are winding roads with multiple checkpoints and deviations. At times, it is okay to turn around and go back, as well as get lost and find the path again. As a best practice, a learning community can help you in many different ways. Members learn from one another by sharing their knowledge and expertise. The ORW is working to be more efficient serving the applicant community and strengthening the standards to ensure an unbiased review process.

References


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Research Administration in the Middle East and North Africa

Universities CATALYZING Research, Discovery, and Economic Development in the Gulf Countries

By Bhanu Chowdhary

Research is slowly yet steadfastly finding its much-deserved place in various academic institutions in the Gulf countries, which have emerged on the global map this past century. Calls for greater emphasis on research in these countries is coming from all corners, among which the most pleasing to learn are the pleas from national leaders and diverse regional visionaries. Needless to say, this moment must be seized to rapidly build on current strengths and create sustainable pockets of research excellence in key disciplines of national and regional interests.

Of the multiple scenarios that can advance the research agenda in these countries, the most effective is one where academic institutions serve as the primary national hub, think-tank or convergence point for coalescing diverse research forces for larger societal benefits. The latter becomes even more important considering that i) these countries have evolved at an incredible pace the past decades, and ii) there is a clear mandate to strengthen the national research framework. In the following paragraphs, I will further elaborate my viewpoint.

Perspective on national research growth: The buildup of research as a foundational component for national advancement in the Gulf/MENA (Middle East and North African) countries has occurred mainly during the past couple of decades. Currently, it is progressing at a variable pace at three different sites: i) higher educational institutions as the lead locations, ii) national agencies/laboratories/centers as a parallel platform, and iii) industries that provide a much smaller contribution than the other two. Below I submit my thoughts on each one of them.

The national higher education institutions, particularly those established during the 1970s and 1980s with the primary purpose of providing regional foundations for higher education, embraced research more recently as a necessary element for strengthening their profiles and upgrading into institutions providing graduate education. Following this initial effort, research steadily gained ground in these as well as the more recently established educational institutions – a truly positive progression. Some of these institutions are on a transformational path to become research-intensive universities, which, despite the delay, is a welcome and noteworthy development. The development will become more worthwhile if a highly organized attempt to lay a solid foundation for research and discovery, coupled with major investments in targeted areas, is made to ride the wave and realize the aspiration for research transformation of key educational institutions. Several recent successful models evident globally serve as guiding beacons; however, a model that serves the local setup best will be ideal.

Further, a number of national agencies/laboratories/centers established during the past decade are a noteworthy development and must be commended. The effort occurred largely in parallel with the advancement of research in the universities. This parallel development, though most likely very well intentioned, remains a topic for serious reflection and dialogue to better understand to what extent it resulted in a symbiotic and exponential growth of research in each of the countries. Undeniably, in most cases, cross-talk between the those efforts requires considerable coordination and promotion. Thus, despite the best intentions, noble vision and substantial financial investment for promoting research and
scientific/technological advancement through select centers of excellence, the true spirit of discovery that can guide these nations towards regional/global prominence still remains a goal to be achieved. But the positive thing is that the march towards achieving the goal has started.

Last, an overview of the industry mediated research in the Gulf countries shows that the concept has been very enthusiastically introduced. Excellent groundwork has been created for this through establishment of free-zones, incubators, and research parks, and reasonably good funding is available for start-ups. Some of the large global industries conducting business in the region also have their own mini R&D units in the region. The latter provide some level of support to research, education and training for fulfilling their social responsibility; however, whether the scope of this effort truly enables innovation and discovery in the region is debatable and yet to be documented. Furthermore, individual research efforts by the select few large-scale industries in the region have been more or less padlocked and rightfully directed towards their personal economic success (perhaps rightfully so) and has not evolved as a joint R&D venture for stimulating local engagement, capacity development and most importantly indigenous generation of intellectual property. Thus, the impact of industry in advancing the research and education landscape of these nations requires considerable groundwork before true benefits will become evident.

Synergy in research: After closely assessing the above outlined state-of-affairs of research in academic institutions and understanding the need for catalyzing it, synergy is the keyword that has to be adopted for strengthening national capacity, output and quality in research. Synergy is also the mantra for advancing into the cutting-edge zone and becoming regionally and globally relevant. Synergy will lead to i) optimal utilization of diverse expertise, infrastructure and resources, ii) creation of greater value from smaller pockets of excellence, iii) promotion of cross-talk across disciplines, and iv) thus premeditatedly directing all research efforts to vertical growth in areas of strategic national importance. If diverse national agencies, key/central laboratories, industry and the universities align their efforts and work seamlessly, the cohesion will be the recipe for advancement and academic institutions will evolve into significantly enhanced breeding grounds for creativity and capacity.

It is encouraging to see that the intentions for synergy are abundantly discussed in these countries time and again through various forums. However, implementing synergy in practice among various entities still requires incentivized directives and catalyzation. One of the ways by which such hurdles can be overcome is by placing key cutting-edge national laboratories in the campuses of prominent higher education institutions and aligning the off-campus laboratories to cater to both research and education. Bridging this gap will promote high-level research interaction among national scientists, educators, trainees and students. Moreover, this purposely driven effort will encourage discovery, IP generation, capacity building, translation of research into incubators and effective dissemination of results.

Transforming economy through research: Transformation to a knowledge-based, diversified, non-hydrocarbon based econregion is a well-recognized necessity. Research is the only engine that can drive this agenda forward and bring discovery to the forefront. However, this needs to be organized very thoughtfully because, in a highly-competitive world, identifying niche areas for research, creating expertise in them, maintaining uniqueness and eventually attaining regional and global leadership is a mammoth challenge. Hence, meticulous strategic planning, implementation roadmap, persistence, dedication, and unwavering contribution from all corners – leaders, educators, industry and society - is essential for laying a lasting foundation for research. Such fervor is essential (thankfully it exists in the leadership) for i) establishing a vibrant yet far-reaching research culture, ii) a much required supporting/promoting research environment of the highest standards, iii) encouraging discovery with a clear purpose, and iv) nurturing the youth under the guidance of some of the best intellects in desired disciplines. The path for national transformation, as measured by economic diversification, will be carved out through these measures.

Establish institutional focus research areas: Educational institutions in some of the Gulf countries are relatively young compared to their global peers. After fulfilling the national needs for providing academic degrees to the indigenous population, these institutions started building a research profile initially by stimulating research in a very broad manner. Hence, research funding/support was provided to any creative idea that added an element of research to the university profile, with due consideration to national needs. While this did not lead to a vertical rise in research productivity and quality, the horizontal expansion of the research landscape including establishment of high quality infrastructure and resources was definitely achieved. However, following this initial encouragement and growth phase, a vital need for these institutions is to engage into a simple yet extremely important exercise: identifying key strengths of the institution and polarizing around select niche areas aligned with national priorities. Individual colleges within these universities have to make a conscious and strategic decision regarding how they would like to be known externally to prospective students, stakeholders and peers. Thus, each college in these universities must identify 2-4 niche areas around which their research efforts must converge. The niche areas must largely align with 5-6 primary and an equal number of secondary/emerging areas, which are signature inter-disciplinary areas for the mission and vision of the university. It is important to note here that each university need not be tackling all the nationally important research areas – an over- aspiration that can dilute the thrust for gaining leadership in individual areas. Instead, the universities have to strategically choose areas depending on their strengths and future direction.

This exercise, once completed institution-wide (5-6 months devoted effort), will allow each university to take a strategic approach in deciding its course for research, define expectations, and accordingly invest in strengthening expertise, infrastructure and resources. Thereafter, dedicating the subsequent 3-4 years to a phased implementation of the research roadmap will lead to a dramatic shift in the future course of research progression. This process will allow the institutions to develop a research identity through select clusters of excellence. However, careful strategic planning, engaging internal and external experts, and ensuring sustained funding prior to rolling out the implementation plan will be paramount for achieving desired results.
Interdisciplinary Research: While the above exercise will help identify niche areas for colleges and individual universities, a much bigger need for almost all institutions in the Gulf countries is to target bigger and complex problems of national and regional significance and find lasting and effective solutions for them. Such solutions require approaching the problem from multiple angles and finding a comprehensive solution. The latter requires diverse teams to work in a coordinated manner. The good news is that most universities in the region have a basic setup for this through various centers of excellence, which largely happen to be in priority areas that are nationally relevant. However, for these centers to become even regionally relevant, it is essential that they have i) world caliber expertise, ii) well-defined objectives and strategic plans, iii) clear expectations/deliverables, and iv) a highly-interactive work culture that draws from considerable breadth of expertise available in different units within each of the universities. Recruitment or affiliation of faculty members in these centers from different units nationwide is still largely conceptual and requires effective materialization for the centers to evolve into functional/highly-productive interdisciplinary units. Establishing interdisciplinary programs and building graduate programs around them - a natural sequel - should be a goal in all institutions within the next five years.

Conclusions: Ideally, national academic institutions are best poised for advancing the research agenda of a country. Transforming the role of these institutions from one fulfilling the academic needs of the country to those serving as primary catalysts for inquiry, discovery, education, training, and translational research is a need, not an option, for leading the Gulf countries on a path of discovery-driven progress. It is, therefore, imperative that key national institutions in the region convert into hubs that align with and feed into the needs of diverse national agencies, governmental organization and industries. Concurrently, the key national institutions should be splendidly poised to prepare future generations (capacity building) and better serve society.

The good news is that our key national institutions have a clear resolve and sufficient resources to adopt paths to research advancement. Hence, the needs of the hour consist of strategic planning, premeditated and timed implementation of the plan, vigorous investment in key educational institutions, and above all, synergy. The Gulf countries are thus writing a chapter of their own to advance research and make their educational institutions globally relevant.

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NCURA Participates in 4th Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan (RMAN-J) Annual Conference in Kobe, Japan

STANDING: Norifumi Miyokawa, Hiroshima University; Dave Richardson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; John Westensee, Aarhus University; Makiko Takahashi, Kanazawa Institute of Technology; Mitsuru Mizuno, Kanazawa University.

SEATED: Koetsu Yamazaki, RMAN-J President, Kanazawa University; Georgette Sakamoto, NCURA President; Masuo Ikeda, Osaka University.
Denise Clark received the Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration Award at the 60th Annual Meeting. This is NCURA’s most prestigious award given to the member who has made a significant contribution to the profession and demonstrated noteworthy service to NCURA. The following is her acceptance speech:

Thanks to Dick Seligman and Pamela Webb for their eloquent and personalized introduction. I cannot adequately express my appreciation for being recognized with this prestigious award. Having Dick and Pamela, two of the most unique colleagues, mentors, and friends be a special part of this event is truly heartwarming. I have been in research administration for more than 30 years and have been lucky enough to be a member of NCURA for almost all those years. When contemplating what to say here at this moment, I fell into my comfort zone and planned this like any other speaking engagement – there should be a title, description, learning objectives, and teaching moments.

The title of this talk is “The Life of a Research Administrator – My Story” – the names have not been changed because the stories I am about to tell are better than anything I could make up. I may add some dramatic effects because my friend Ann Holmes says, “Never let the facts get in the way of a good story.” The specific aims of this talk are for realism and unpretentious acts...to relay onto you my experiences and views in and of the world of research administration.

There is one simple learning objective: For participants to understand, value, and appreciate their role and impact in the world of research by having research administration as their chosen profession.

I started my research administration career in 1986 and attended my first NCURA meeting in 1989. My boss and mentor Frank Feocco gave me the following advice: Go to any session led by Julie Norris and Jane Youngers, attend any session with A-21 or A-110 in the title, and make introductions and network. The individuals you will meet will be your colleagues for the length of your career. I faithfully followed his sage advice. I went to a workshop delivered by Julie Norris and Jane Youngers. I was so impressed and enthralled with their ability to talk about a seemingly dull, boring, and dry topic with candor, humor, and enthusiasm. I wanted (and promised myself) to learn how to pay it forward. Jane had me at “Hello”.

Teaching Moment: Add a sense of personality to the job, take ownership in creating your own methods and means for not only learning but for becoming a mentor to the next generation of research administrators. It’s OK to incorporate and show passion. Know your audience and prepare accordingly. Talk to the audience, not at the audience, make it a conversation that flows to those in attendance.

I attended a concurrent session at that meeting in 1989 that was entitled “Revision of OMB Circular A-110, the uniform doesn’t fit”.

Teaching Moment: Wait 30 years for the idea to resurface and be implemented as the “Uniform Guidance”.

While working at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, my supervisor and mentor, Kirsten Volpi asked me for my goals for the coming year. While I was thinking about restructuring opportunities and other daily responsibilities that I was accustomed to accomplishing, she alerted me to the fact that I would be overseeing the facilities and administrative cost calculation and negotiation as well as the employee benefit rate negotiation.
WORK SMART

Anticipate, Plan, Prioritize: APP for Research Administrators

As research administrators, our day-to-day jobs are manifold—we are constantly multitasking and juggling countless deadlines (sometimes, at the same time!), all while dealing with a variety of personalities. You are probably wondering if there’s an “app” out there to help you manage all your work. As it turns out, there is…sort of.

Anticipate, Plan & Prioritize (APP)—it’s more of a cognitive exercise than it is a smartphone application, but the concept behind it is no less sophisticated. Here’s how it works.

Anticipate All Possible Scenarios
Just like boy and girl scouts, research administrators should always “be prepared.” Compiling information on all potential questions prior to meetings will avoid being caught off-guard. Naturally, this also shows you have a high level of competency and increases your colleagues’ confidence in your abilities. For proposals, try thinking of all the last-minute disasters (system glitch, personal emergency). Being keenly aware of Murphy’s Law greatly prepares you for any haywire situation.

Plan Ahead
Notes and checklists are excellent tools for organizing. Whether you go old school by using Post-it notes, or use advent technology like Google Keep or Microsoft Outlook Task, to-do lists are key in keeping important tasks on track. Just like a routine grocery list, knowing exactly what you need to get done is key. Determine ahead of time what needs to be done, who needs to be involved, and when they need to be completed. Use it to plan your workload or your next project.

Prioritize the Small Things (too)
Deadline-driven projects are usually on the top of our list, but don’t forget to spare time for the little projects, too; even if that means 30 minutes to an hour per day. Of course, things like writing standard operating procedures are incredibly mundane, but your office flow becomes much smoother as a result. Online calendars (Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, etc.) help squeeze the little tasks into your busy schedule. Reminders on your computer or phone keep you connected, but also help you switch gears physically and mentally. Be proactive; don’t put the small tasks on the back burner for too long. Remember, the little things make the biggest impact.

Build your network, be yourself, and smile.

In closing, I’d like to offer you the following: Look at your journey in this profession as a shared service center and approach it that way…utilizing and relying on varying levels of support around the country and within the organization. For me, that has included my colleagues at a national level: Dick Seligman, Pamela Webb, Jane Youngers, Steve Dowdy, Tim Reuter and Ann Holmes. At a regional level, I have been blessed with opportunities given to me by Marti Dunne and Gunta Liders, and now by our current Chair Dennis Paffrath. At a local level, count on your home institution to be your major area of support. I’d like to acknowledge my boss, Dr. Laurie Locascio, and thank her for her belief in me and for her support and trust on a daily basis, allowing me to constantly entertain new avenues and issues to tackle. My internal team at the University of Maryland stands strong as one of the best in the world…not only the country, but also the world. I share all of my successes with them; it is because of them and their dedication that we accomplish what we do at UMD. Of course, there is the root of our being, our family tree. My parents raised me and my siblings to have the work ethic we have, to believe in ourselves, and to reach for the stars, they truly are the foundation of our successes. To my siblings, Deb and Bob, Dick and Peg, Darrell and Jill, Dan and Cori—you have always been there for me to lean on and smile with and most importantly laugh with and be proud of. For my kids—they have been my biggest supporters and have always hung in there with me through hectic travel schedules and long, working hours. My daughter Courtney Patel and her husband Abhijit, who are here with my two-week old granddaughter, Drew (she’s so pretty), my son Andrew who is on his second humanitarian mission to Puerto Rico, and my daughter Jillian who is on a semester abroad in India interning in social work—you are my proudest moments. To my husband Mark, who has been in this with me for my whole career, who is the strength of my being—may our prosperity continue.

To NCURA members—volunteer—no matter how little the opportunity may seem, take it. Build your network, be yourself, and smile.

- If you do it, DO IT WELL
- Think before you act
- and last, but not least—VOLUNTEER, accept any opportunity!
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Many institutions have already converted to an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system to maintain their patients' records and billing information. A number of institutions also employ the use of a Clinical Trial Management System (CTMS) in order to keep track of their clinical research studies. An EHR system is patient centric, whereas a CTMS is study centric. This creates an issue getting the two systems to communicate with each other in order to create efficiencies, avoid double entry between systems, maintain standardizations, and lower data entry errors. Interfaces between the two systems can be very technically involved and costly as each of these systems are created by different software companies and difficult to keep in alignment when software packages get updated.

At MD Anderson Cancer Center, we anticipate EHR systems will eventually incorporate the CTMS functionality in the coming years, eliminating the need to create interfaces between different software system packages and creating streamlined efficiencies within a single system.

We decided to test the limits of our current state EHR system to verify how much CTMS functionality it already contains. Specifically we are looking to create the Medicare Coverage Analysis (MCA) (currently created in our CTMS) directly in our EHR system, without the use of interfaces. The MCA creates a map of the patient billing based on the national and local coverage determinations provided by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services during the course of a qualified study, where items and services would be considered routine care and billable to a patient and/or his or her insurance. Items which are not billable would need to be paid by a study sponsor. This MCA would then be utilized as the billing mechanism (Billing Grid) in the EHR to properly route the patient charges. This eliminates the need to either interface an MCA from another system, or re-create the MCA as the Billing Grid within the EHR system.

In order to test our theory, we began with a gap analysis in order to identify the data we had in the CTMS versus the EHR system. This required the use of Subject Matter Experts to assist with the process. We identified the following elements needed:

a. **Billing Grids** create the items and services along with the time-points needed to construct a coverage determination, allowing the placement of the research modifiers indicating Q1, Q0 or sponsor supported.

b. **Resources** trained to build MCA into the EHR system.

c. **Demographics and Comments** capture the demographic information and comments both on a study level and at a line-item level to provide information to all teams.

d. **Charge Description Master (CDM)** provides flexibility to account for research discounts. The CDM allows for us to bill for the items and services offered. Research discounts are needed to account for discounts provided to the sponsor funding source ensuring we bill both the patients and our sponsors accurately.
e. **Orders** correlate with the billing information provided by the billing grid. This will ensure the charges drop into the system once the items are ordered in a real-time environment, allowing for faster billing turnaround times.

f. **Reports** are needed to document the MCA and allow for budgeting properly for sponsor-related items and services.

g. **Coordinated Processes** within one system creates efficiencies for use; however, the processes to enter the billing and order information requires coordination. The staff entering and validating the clinical order information may not be the same staff needed to enter and validate the billing information. Coordinated processes ensure accurate versioning of the clinical orders and billing information as amendments to the study protocol are coordinated. Standardized terminology is also needed in order for the teams to communicate and coordinate with each other efficiently.

h. **Cutover Strategy** is needed to determine how to move into the new system. Will information in the old system be converted over all at once? Or, will it need to gradually be created in a new system over a period of time? How will we direct teams to where the most updated information will reside?

In our current EHR system, we identified the following features in the current state release:

a. **Billing Grids** are available in the EHR system along with the ability to enter line items and services at various timepoints with the CMS modifiers Q1 and Q0. Currently a “blank” represents sponsor supported items.

b. Resources were developed within our department by having current staff self-teach required courses and acquire a proficiency status to build in the EHR environment.

c. Demographics and Comments are supported in the EHR. The system includes a study record allowing study demographic information to be stored in the system. The billing grids allow for notes to be entered on a calendar level, but unable to record information on a line item level.

d. **CDM** does exist in the EHR system. It is limited to only items which currently drop patient charges. It does not include items provided by sponsors (i.e., a sponsor provided device). Research discounts are accounted for on the study record, allowing for discounts to be applied on a study level. If the institution utilizes multiple study discounts, then the additional discounts need to be modified manually to accurately capture the sponsor billing information.

e. Orders correlate with the billing grids. The resulting orders/billing grid calendar build is flexible enough to allow different days to be captured in each and assembled together accurately. When associated to a patient, it will route the charges accurately.

f. Reports were developed to capture the MCA and orders separately, allowing for different members of the staff to review the clinical and billing information separately.

g. Coordinated processes were developed to communicate between the two staffs responsible for creating the billing grids and order builds. Efforts are coordinated with the IRB to ensure the most recent version of the IRB approved studies are reflected on the billing grid and order set, leading to the creation of a coordinated activation process around study amendments.

h. Cutover Strategy, based on limited resources, was developed to include all new and amended studies as they are submitted for IRB review. This allows the MCAs to be transitioned over time. The billing grid calendar statuses are to be utilized to determine the most recent version of the MCA.

Limitations that were identified:

a. **Billing Grids** need to develop a sponsor-related modifier to more easily identify items/services requiring sponsor support vs. items which may have been overlooked during the build.

b. **Demographic and Comments** need an ability to add comments on a line item level. The current workaround is to utilize the calendar notes section to add the line item notes.

c. **CDM** needs to develop the ability to adjust for studies with multiple sources of funding which are discounted at different rates in order to automate the sponsor billing reports and to eliminate manual effort to reconcile research discounts.

In conclusion, creating the MCA by utilizing an EHR versus an EHR/CTMS provides many desired efficiencies, including the lack of a costly interface build and/or resources committed to recreating the billing information manually in the EHR system. Based on our analysis, we have begun transitioning the MCA build to our current state EHR. We look forward with great anticipation towards the development of additional functionality in the near future to address some of the current limitations identified in our implementation.

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We want to get it right. The temptation is strong to strive for perfection. I’m guilty of it, too. If I research a problem thoroughly, talk to the right people, and work hard enough, I can build a successful solution. That’s the dream. But it’s just not a dream that meshes with the reality of research administration. Our world changes all the time: Forms D, Biosketches, updated FDP templates, Subrecipient Monitoring developments, Forms E. Additionally, we see staff changes, caseloads shift, and our institutions develop their own new policies and procedures that require us to adapt. Yet, perfection is a lure.

If we can steer clear of this quest for perfection and instead explore the iterative design process, our solutions will be more powerful, robust, and adaptable to the changes that are inevitable in research administration. It also liberates us to explore more innovative solutions without the pressure of perfection.

**What is iterative design?**

It is a cyclic design process born in manufacturing based on prototyping, testing, analyzing, and refining a product or process. Other names for iterative design are “spiral prototyping” and “rapid prototyping,” because it is a process that moves quickly through design stages, gathering data from each test and moving on to create a new prototype and test based on information gleaned. Iterative design doesn’t aspire to get it right the first time around; it aspires to improve through a series of solutions and tests.
How does iterative design work in research administrative when we aren’t creating prototypes of products?

Research administration perpetually requires us to be nimble and adaptable, so the iterative design process is optimal for us. We can use it when we create workflows, processes, and forms to adjust to the frequent changes we experience in our field. A staff member leaves and her caseload needs to be redistributed until a new staff member has been hired and trained. How do you decide how to distribute the work? You could make one big decision about it. Or, you could gather information on existing staff capacities, try out a distribution, gain feedback after a couple of weeks, tweak the distribution, gain further feedback, tweak it again, and so on, until you arrive at a case load distribution that makes sense.

Traditional waterfall methodology provides you with the details about what is needed before you build a process or product, whereas when you employ an iterative design approach, you acknowledge that you will not fully understand something until you have built it. Waterfall methodology is more comfortable. Someone comes to you and defines the problem and tells you exactly what the new process will be, you just need to build the way to deploy it. Forms E requirements are changing with a team to design a way to integrate those changes into your team’s workflow. This is not possible in the waterfall design method. The difference is that you employ an iterative design approach, you acknowledge that you will not fully understand something until you have built it. Waterfall methodology is more comfortable.

Iterative design keeps minds open and keeps solutions possible in response to changing environments.

Iterative design KEEPS MINDS OPEN and KEEPS SOLUTIONS POSSIBLE in response to changing environments.

and this is how we are implementing those changes in the system. Design a way to communicate that to our researchers efficiently. That is a waterfall methodology.

When using iterative design, you begin building your pilot process or product much earlier, and work through iterations as you test it—growing your knowledge of what is needed in the final process along the way. This process empowers the team to suggest changes and ideas that would not be possible in the waterfall design method. The difference might be that you discover the changes coming for Form E and work with a team to design a way to integrate those changes into your team’s practice, systems, and communication strategy, honing the approach along the way by testing prototypes.

Isn’t iterative design a waste of time?

When you design a solution and quickly test it on a small group of users to gain feedback, your risk is low. You haven’t invested much time developing a concept or process yet, so if you need to change it, the time lost is minimal. However, if you set out to design the right process in one shot, and you design the entire process from start to finish and then roll it out, you have a lot invested. If you find out, at rollout, that there is a flaw in the process, missing data on your form, or a perspective you haven’t considered, you will have wasted time exploring and developing something “finished” that must be changed or, worse, you must live with the flawed process since you’ve already officially implemented it. Iterative design gives you the opportunity to work out all the kinks before you invest time in a final solution.

Change fatigue, however, is a risk with iterative design. People need time to think, experience, test, and provide thoughtful feedback. I recommend rolling out a prototype solution to a small test team and allow them to provide feedback, perhaps on different prototypes over time, before implementing a potential solution across a larger group. The data gained from the testers will be valuable and will help you move through several iterations before risking change fatigue with your bigger team.

Perfection is an appealing lure but, like the siren’s song, it is a trap. Instead, stay on the boat and keep rowing through possible solutions to the problem. Iterative design will help your team find innovative, clear, and nimble approaches to solving the problems we encounter in research administration processes today.

References


Interactive Design


Amy T. Raubenolt, MFA, CRA, is a Grants and Contracts Officer in the Office of Sponsored Projects at the Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. She currently leads the Research Institute’s Solution Team and is a member of the NCURA Region IV Professional Development team. She can be reached at amy.raubenolt@nationwidechildrens.org

At the Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, I have been drawing on the iterative design process in developing a request form staff use to initiate a subrecipient agreement. Staff members use the form to gather and report information we need to draft a contract. We are on our sixth iteration of the form currently, and we are, at this stage, considering a dramatic redesign of the process, based on feedback we’ve gathered over the past year. We’re considering turning the process inside-out and re-evaluating some long-held beliefs in the department, due to some important system changes that have changed workload burdens.

Improvement, not perfection, is the goal. With each form prototype, I am learning more about the role intersections of our department, the complexities of communication, the contracting process, and the psychology of change. It’s been fascinating. I hope to find a solution that works optimally, but we’re not there yet with this particular corner of the department. If we had considered the first development of the process as the final answer to the problem, we would feel frustrated by the need to revisit a problem we already “solved,” and we would be less open to the changing needs of our department and team. Iterative design keeps minds open and keeps solutions possible in response to changing environments.
The new European Union (EU) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) went into effect on May 25, 2018. The GDPR applies to the processing of personal data by an establishment in the European Economic Area (EEA) and in certain extraterritorial settings. The EEA is composed of the twenty-eight (28) EU member states as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. The impact of the GDPR is expansive as it adds new requirements for the collection, processing, storage, and sharing of personal data. It also expands the rights of the identifiable individuals to whom the personal data relate, known as “data subjects” under the GDPR.

In addition to applying to the processing of personal data by an establishment in the EEA, the GDPR applies to any organization established outside of the EU that processes personal data about persons who are in the EEA when that processing is related to either:

1.) The offering of goods or services to such data subjects in the EEA, irrespective of whether the data subject is required to pay for those goods or services; or
2.) The monitoring of data subjects’ behavior within the EEA.

For U.S. universities, the GDPR could apply either directly to the universities’ establishments in the EEA or extraterritorially, as a result of a range of operations. University operations outside the EEA that may trigger GDPR obligations include collection of any personal data for administrative, academic, research, or other activities such as student enrollments, online courses, research including online surveys, alumni relations, contracts with entities or individuals in the EEA, hiring of staff in EEA countries (Barnes et al., 2018), etc.

Another important area is human research projects conducted in the EEA countries or otherwise collecting personal data from data subjects located in the EEA, e.g., through online surveys. Institutional Review Boards and Ethics Committees should ensure that the consent forms used include specific GDPR-compliant language.

What information is protected under the GDPR?

The GDPR defines “personal data” to mean “any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (“data subject”); an identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that person.”

It further defines a subset of data as “special categories of personal data,” which includes information on an individual’s ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, or health data. This subset of personal data is subject to heightened protections under the GDPR, and should be given special attention, because some “special category” information is not afforded similar protection in the United States. For example, information regarding political affiliation is generally considered publicly available in the U.S. and information regarding criminal convictions is processed...
in a variety of contexts, including employment and academic admission applications.

**GDPR Principles**

The GDPR sets out seven key principles for processing personal data:

1.) **Lawfulness, fairness, and transparency:** Personal data must be processed according to legal requirements, in a manner that is fair and transparent to the data subject.
2.) **Purpose limitation:** Collection of personal data must be limited to specific purposes (defined in consent or notice) and further processing must not be incompatible with those purposes.
3.) **Data minimization:** The personal data collection and processing must be limited to the minimum required to achieve the identified purposes.
4.) **Accuracy:** The GDPR requires that “every reasonable step must be taken” to ensure that the data collected, or stored, are accurate. The GDPR also gives data subjects the right to request their data and ask that inaccurate or incomplete data be erased or rectified without undue delay, which the United Kingdom Information Commissioner’s Office has interpreted to mean within one month.
5.) **Storage limitation:** The regulation requires that personal data be deleted when they are no longer necessary for the purpose for which they were collected.
6.) **Integrity and Confidentiality:** The GDPR states that personal data must be “processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorized or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organizational measures”.
7.) **Accountability:** The controller is responsible for, and must be able to demonstrate, compliance with the GDPR.

The GDPR establishes a set of strict compliance requirements . . .

The GDPR’s requirements apply to “controllers” (the persons or entities that are responsible for determining the purposes and means of the processing of personal data) and “processors” (the persons or entities that process personal data on behalf of the controller).

**Compliance**

The GDPR establishes a set of strict compliance requirements, including (1) the appointment of a Data Protection Officer (DPO) unless the processing does not involve (a) regular and systematic monitoring of data subjects on a large scale or (b) processing on a large scale of special categories of personal data, or personal data relating to criminal convictions and offenses; (2) establishing data security program with reporting requirements for data breaches; (3) responding to data subject inquiries regarding their personal data and requests for corrections or deletion; (4) ensuring that contractors and sub-contractors are following the GDPR’s requirements; and (5) documenting what personal data is held and for what purpose.

Universities should review all of their operations to identify each area in which they are collecting personal data from EEA citizens and make sure that they have established documented programs to comply with the GDPR requirements. Violations of the GDPR could be expensive, with fines up to €20 million or four percent (4%) of global income, whichever is greater, for the most serious offenses.

The documentation of your GDPR compliance program is important to show EU and EEA member state regulators in the event of a reportable breach or complaint. The details included in your documentation will depend on the scope of your operations and activities that fall under the GDPR. At a minimum, the documentation should include information on who to contact with inquiries (e.g. your DPO), a list of personal data you are collecting and for what purpose (e.g. student enrollment, online courses, alumni, etc.), a list of where the data are stored and who is responsible for storage, a list of any subcontracts or research collaborators with whom you share personal data from subjects within the EEA, a data security plan including notification process for any data breaches, and your training program for those who are involved in collection, storage, or processing of personal data subject to GDPR requirements.

It is a good practice to include some of this information, for example about what information you are collecting and the contact information of your DPO, in your GDPR Privacy Statement on your institution’s website.

**Conclusion**

The requirements of the GDPR likely apply to all U.S. colleges and universities who enroll students from the EEA, interact with alumni located in the EEA, perform collaborative research with or in the EEA, or have contractual agreements with entities from EEA. Compliance with the requirements could be complex for colleges and universities, in part due to the decentralized nature of most institutions and the distributed data collection and storage. It is important the institutions establish working groups with stakeholders from all operational units (e.g. research, admissions, procurements, alumni relations, etc.) where personal data are being collected to develop the infrastructure necessary to meet the GDPR requirements as well as the processes to respond to data subject inquiries.

**References**


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**Mark Barnes, J.D., I.I.M., is a partner at Ropes & Gray LLP and represents universities and academic medical centers in research and data privacy issues. He is the co-founder and co-director of the Multi-Regional Clinical Trials Center of Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard University, and holds faculty positions at Yale Law School and Yale School of Medicine. Mark can be reached at Mark.Barnes@ropesgray.com**
In September 2015, FDP member institutions identified the need for a low-burden method for sharing data that cannot be made publicly available. When every data provider uses a different agreement, significant time must be spent reviewing and negotiating widely varying terms, which can unnecessarily delay important research projects. The FDP Data Transfer and Use Agreement (DTUA) template has been created as a first step towards creating greater consistency in terms and format to reduce the administrative burden associated with data sharing. The project has come a long way since it was first introduced to the NCURA community in a May 2017 article in the NCURA Magazine. At that time, template components needed to issue a DTUA for De-identified Data about Human Subjects or a Limited Data Set were published to the FDP website (http://thefdp.org) and are available on both the Contracts and Data Stewardship subcommittee pages.

The format of the DTUA template is modeled off the FDP’s Research Subaward Agreement and consists of a face page with core terms common to every DTUA and various attachments used to incorporate data-type- and project-specific information and terms. The DTUA 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, etc. The form fields include instructions to the drafter as to the suggested information to be incorporated into each field.
- **Attachment 2** includes terms required based on the specific type of data being transferred. Versions of this Attachment for use when sharing De-identified Data about Human Subjects or a Limited Data Set have been completed and published for use.
- **Attachment 3** identifies permitted collaborators if the parties have agreed to include any.

The Face Pages, Attachment 1, and Attachment 3 have been posted on the FDP website as a single pdf package whereas the different versions of Attachment 2 are currently posted as stand-alone documents.

Several guidance documents have been posted on the same web pages:

- **DTUA Glossary** – A great resource for definitions of terms commonly used when discussing data sharing arrangements. We hope this resource will help ensure we are speaking the same language when talking about DTUAs.
- **DTUA Guidance Chart** - This chart is designed to provide some guidance on when and how to use the FDP DTUA Template. Remember to also check your institutional policies and procedures, as these may vary based on institution type (i.e. hospital versus university).
- **Tool for Classifying Human Subjects Data** - This chart is designed to streamline review of the type of human subject data for the purpose of classification for a DTUA. Remember to also check your institutional policies and procedures for further guidance.

The working group is putting the finishing touches on versions of Attachment 2 that can be used in sharing Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Despite our best efforts to incorporate language to cover the Common Rule, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements all in one attachment, this proved only to further complicate an already complicated attachment, and we determined that the most effective course would be to create three versions tailored to the specific regulations...
governing the data. Working group members have found that other institutions routinely deal with only one of these types of data; therefore, incorporating references to regulations that do not apply to the particular data being shared would possibly be concerning or confusing to the other party. To minimize these concerns, we have created three separate versions of Attachment 2 for use in sharing PII, which will be finalized and published in fall 2018 concurrently with a set of FAQs regarding use of the templates.

Our next drafting effort will be a collaboration with the Subawards Subcommittee to develop language that can be incorporated into the FDP Research Subaward Agreement to address data transfer and use terms so that a separate DTUA may not be necessary. Work on this aim will kick-off in January 2019 with the goal of having completed language in fall 2019. If there is language or other DTUA template components that you and your institution would find most helpful, we would love to hear that feedback to help us prioritize future drafting projects.

Upcoming Pilot!
In fall 2018, FDP will formally kick off a pilot of the DTUA in order to gather information on where and how the forms best accomplish their purposes. As of this writing, over 25 FDP member institutions have expressed their willingness to participate! We will gather quantitative information on volume and turn-around time to evaluate whether the template has the desired outcome of reducing the administrative burden of data sharing and, in addition, use an on-line questionnaire to gather qualitative feedback on what changes to the templates and/or methods of use may be needed to optimize the benefits. We welcome feedback on the template documents from anyone who has used them and would like to provide feedback through this same on-line questionnaire, which will be available via the FDP website at kick-off of the pilot. Further details on pilot specifics are available via Pilot FAQs posted to both Contracts and Data Stewardship pages on the FDP website.

Results of the pilot will be shared with the FDP community via the FDP Contracts and Data Stewardship listservs and updates provided during the regular FDP meetings in January, May, and September. So, please stay tuned for further information and updates on this exciting demonstration!

If you have questions about the templates or would like to learn more about the templates and/or upcoming pilot, contact Melissa Korf at Melissa_Korf@hms.harvard.edu.

“...a first step towards creating greater consistency in terms and format to reduce the administrative burden associated with data sharing.”

Melissa Korf is Associate Director, Grants & Contracts in the Harvard Medical School Office of Research Administration and can be reached at Melissa_Korf@hms.harvard.edu. She serves as Co-Chair of the Data Stewardship Subcommittee for the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) and Co-Chair, along with Martha Davis, Brandeis University, of the FDP Data Transfer and Use Agreement Template Working Group.
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Growing a Grant-Seeking Culture in the Arts and Humanities

By Paige Belisle and Jimmy Matejek-Morris

When thinking of “research,” we often imagine scientists working in a laboratory. But as members of a diverse academic community, we serve faculty whose projects may not fit this traditional image. While a grant-seeking culture is encouraged and expected in the sciences, this is not necessarily the current reality in the arts and humanities. Arts and humanities departments generally have less grant activity, and therefore, faculty may not realize the range of opportunities available to them or the benefits grant funding can provide. As a result, they may be less inclined to seek sponsored funding. How can we support researchers, artists, and administrators in these fields who may be new to pursuing funding opportunities and managing sponsored funds?

Outreach to Arts and Humanities Faculty

In departments with a higher level of grant activity, there may be one or more grant managers. In the arts and humanities, however, grant activity may be managed by a sole financial assistant, a school-level administrator, or a central sponsored programs officer. It may be difficult for this administrator to connect with a faculty population who may not know of the grant support services available to them. We have found it helpful to leverage existing meetings that put us face-to-face with the faculty.

One outreach opportunity occurs each Fall, where our team presents at a new faculty orientation program. After an overview of our services, we sit with the incoming arts and humanities faculty in a small group, encouraging them to introduce themselves and to share their research interests. If they express concerns that their work falls outside the realm of fundability, we take this opportunity to convince them of the breadth of sponsored research available in the modern grants landscape. In her article “Why Seek Grant Support for Research in the Humanities and the Arts,” Barbara L.E. Walker suggests strategies for describing what grant funding can provide—for example, materials, travel to an archive, research equipment, sabbatical leave, summer salary, or student support. Furthermore, a grant proposal may bring increased visibility to one’s work, and feedback received from a review committee can raise a faculty member’s research profile and inform their scholarship.

Our outreach efforts also include giving short presentations at recurring arts and humanities department administrator and faculty meetings. Answering direct questions from these groups can be an effective way to determine a department’s specific needs and to raise awareness of the support you can provide. We look upon these initial group meetings as an important first step in building relationships.

After spreading the word about your office’s services, you’ll most likely receive individual requests from faculty who are interested in finding funding. To prepare for these one-on-one meetings, we familiarize ourselves with the faculty member’s previous scholarship or art by looking at their website and curriculum vitae (CV). If the faculty member is interested in discussing a particular funding opportunity (“FOA” or “RFP”), we read the RFP in advance of the meeting and gather pertinent information about the sponsor’s interests, requirements, and previous award history. In the meeting, we listen carefully to the faculty member’s description of their current research and needs. We allow the conversation to develop organically by asking some helpful guiding questions such as “What are you currently working on?” or simply, “How can we help you today?” It is helpful to encourage faculty to think more long term and to consider how each potential project may contribute to their larger body of research. When describing our services, we are careful to avoid speaking in acronyms or becoming too bogged down in administrative details. However, initial meetings can be a helpful time to introduce relevant institutional policies and additional support services. We conclude by establishing clear next steps and a timeline for moving forward.

Finding Funding Opportunities for Faculty

Faculty members in the arts and humanities pursue a diverse range of projects from international archival travel to multimedia performance pieces to museum exhibit curation. Finding funding to support such a broad range of programs can be daunting. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) are the most prominent federal funders for these disciplines, but many projects may be better suited for more specialized or discipline-specific foundations. Some tools we have found helpful for exploring possible funders are ProQuest’s Pivot and InfoEd’s SPIN (searchable funding opportunity databases), Foundation Directory Online/FDO (profiles of sponsors and funded projects pulled from tax records), and grants.gov (a free database of federal opportunities). While Pivot, SPIN, and FDO are subscription services, your institution’s library may be able to assist in negotiating competitive prices and providing digital homes for these resources. FDO is also available through many public libraries. In addition to databases, you can also find relevant opportunities by looking at funding newsletters from sponsors, local governments, and higher education institutions.

Because sponsor websites can be time consuming to navigate, we aim to create concise overview documents to share with faculty members. These documents contain summaries of the relevant funding opportunities highlighting deadlines and award amounts. If other faculty members at our institution have received funding from a recommended sponsor, we will list...
their names, departments, and project titles as well. We also recommend next steps, which may include tips for reaching out to a program officer, preparing a letter of inquiry, or internal coordination guidance if the entry is a limited submission opportunity. When we send the document to the faculty member, we offer a follow-up meeting and also outline the proposal development services detailed below. These funding opportunity overviews are considered working documents, and we offer to provide updates as their programs evolve.

**Developing Proposals in the Arts and Humanities**

When a faculty member in the arts and humanities is ready to develop their proposal, an administrator may face a new set of challenges, especially if the department has limited experience with external funding. University policies and sponsored research terms such as ‘cost sharing’ or ‘indirect costs’ can be confusing but are important when applying to an agency or foundation. Your institution’s sponsored programs office would typically store this information on their website. The sponsor’s program announcement and website can also provide invaluable insight into these terms, as well as additional application tips, FAQs, and information on previous awards that may enhance a new proposal. Some sponsors will offer sample proposals and budgets. We also always check our own institutional records to see whether another faculty member has applied to and received funding from the same program. We can refer to previous proposals as a guide and may consider connecting the current award recipient with the applicant to serve as a mentor.

Referencing other grant proposals can be beneficial even if they are not to the same sponsor or announcement. A Facilities and Other Resources document from a National Science Foundation proposal, found in many science proposals, could be reformatted to a foundation’s request for institutional or departmental information. Similarly, when preparing a budget for faculty in the arts and humanities, consider items that colleagues in other divisions have requested, such as student support, faculty sabbatical salary, or computer supplies. We strive to offer as much support as possible by providing sample documents, summarizing key policies, directing administrators toward useful institutional trainings, reviewing proposal drafts in relation to sponsor guidelines or review criteria, and generally being available for questions throughout the entire submission process.

With each arts and humanities proposal, the process will become more familiar to both faculty and administrators. Ultimately, we recommend these efforts to help grow a sustainable grant-seeking culture that enriches the faculty’s research and creative programs.

**References**


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**Paige Belisle**, Research Development Officer, Harvard University. Paige’s responsibilities include identifying funding opportunities and proposal development support for faculty across the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. She also authors a monthly funding newsletter for Arts and Humanities Faculty. She can be reached at pbelisle@fas.harvard.edu

**Jimmy Matejek-Morris**, Sponsored Research Administrator for the Arts and Humanities, Harvard University. Jimmy’s responsibilities include assisting faculty in the arts and humanities with proposal preparation, submission, and award management. He can be reached at jmatejek@fas.harvard.edu

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**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subbatical Opportunities</th>
<th>Award Amount</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>National Endowment for the Humanities</td>
<td>$5,200 per month</td>
<td>4/1/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockefeller Foundation</td>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Funding</td>
<td>Award Amount</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple Foundation for American Art</td>
<td>up to $25,000</td>
<td>8/8/18 (R.O.); 8/15/18 (Full Proposal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication Funding</td>
<td>Award Amount</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; Curriculum Funding</td>
<td>Award Amount</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subbatical Opportunities</th>
<th>Award Amount</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Endowment for the Humanities</td>
<td>$5,200 per month</td>
<td>4/1/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockefeller Foundation</td>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple Foundation for American Art</td>
<td>up to $25,000</td>
<td>8/8/18 (R.O.); 8/15/18 (Full Proposal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication Funding</td>
<td>Award Amount</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
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<td>Teaching &amp; Curriculum Funding</td>
<td>Award Amount</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[depends on amount]</td>
<td>[deadline date]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ABOVE:** We use a Word template with a summary cover sheet that divides the suggested opportunities by project type supported (Figure 1). This cover sheet includes an award amount range and deadlines for each entry. Each opportunity listed is also an anchor link which, when clicked, brings the faculty member to a full summary that we have pulled and condensed from the sponsor’s website (Figure 2). We are happy to share our templates, so please do not hesitate to send us a request via email.
Looking for a roadmap to research administration?

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The Art of Anticipation” implies the analytical ability to foresee the future course of events and plan accordingly. Here, I describe my journey with an institution called PARI and its path to deliberately plan anticipating the future.

About Policy Alternatives Research Institute
Policy Alternatives Research Institute (PARI) was established as a think-tank organization. It is a relatively new research center at Japan’s oldest and largest national university, the University of Tokyo (UTokyo), which was established in 1877. PARI’s mission is to be “an interfaculty research organization to contribute widely to the future society and the global community by proposing new policy alternatives through the integration of varied and advanced knowledge accumulated at UTokyo.”

PARI was established in 2008 as an organization directly supervised by the Office of the President of UTokyo. In 2013, upon review of its activity reports and feedback from the Office of the President, it was elevated to the status of a university-wide center. It is the first case of the incorporation of a national university in Japan since 2004. It has 70 members in total: 50 academic staff and 20 supporting staff. Our organization is compact; therefore, the administration is flexible.

Through insight, anticipate the future: The image is a visualization of the ties that members of the Policy Alternatives Research Institute have with research units in PARI and external organizations. It illustrates PARI’s characteristic of being open to various relationships even beyond the boundaries of the University of Tokyo. We use this “relationship finder” to anticipate the future through insight. The image was designed by Kenjiro Totsuji and was originally presented on the cover page of the Annual Report 2014, Policy Alternatives Research Institute and the PARI Website.
Before becoming a University Research Administrator (URA)

When the center was inaugurated, there were just three full-time faculty members, three supporting staff, and myself. First, we began by setting up the laboratory; we met other research groups and launched seven projects. Since then, we have established an evidence-based research unit of PARI that disseminates policy recommendations on social issues such as aging societies and intellectual property rights. Before becoming a URA, I was in charge of planning and providing support for the applications for medical and IT research funds. Additionally, I collaborated with other University departments and organizations, such as government agencies, on international conferences on intellectual property and supported Japanese proposals at attorneys’ meetings concerning triadic patents.

Through working with the Security Studies Unit (SSU) of PARI, I coordinated with the faculty in advance and presented the national research budget for security policy to the person in charge at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), since MOFA seeks PARI’s advice on this matter. Following this proactive action, one of the security policy budget frameworks of MOFA was prepared. I put forth the budget application for the pre-award process, which was accepted. I think this case was one of the catalysts for future activities relating to the subsidy project for URAs.

After the pre-award process, I shifted to the post-award process for the progress of SSUs’ research, hired new assistants, and invited a researcher from abroad to participate who is now also supporting other projects too. These efforts have also led to conferences in partnership with the National Academy of Science and Engineering (acatech), joint conferences with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc.

The subsidy project for URAs — another work as a catalyst

Before I came to UTokyo, I was interested in higher education policy and read a report of an advisory board meeting about Japanese higher education. I realized that the report emphasized the necessity for URA talent. I made this fact known to the director before UTokyo received subsidies for the project “Development of System to Foster and Ensure Availability of Research Administrators (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Japan - MEXT).” Upon receiving a pre-award application, with advice from the director to apply for the position of a URA, I followed through and my application was accepted, making me one of the eight URAs at UTokyo. Since then, there has been a field survey of NCURA, and I used my experience of pre- and post-awards of the URA project to help establish nationwide URA skill standards.

Then, at UTokyo, a URA accreditation system was created in 2017. At first, 15 URAs, including me, were certified. Currently, the number of certified URAs has almost doubled and further increases are expected in the future.

Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (CSTI, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan) and URA

Following the subsidy project for URAs, PARI has expanded to a certain extent. Practicing the art of anticipation, I started supporting the intentions of our director because he had assisted the president of UTokyo in preparing “The Fifth Science and Technology Basic Plan” for Japan as a committee member of CSTI. PARI’s director and I, as the CSTI liaison officer, also supported the president to enable him to disseminate issues from a national policy standpoint. A liaison officer does not have an employer-employee relationship with organizations, but does have the responsibility of identifying the priority measures required to achieve the science and technology goals of Japan for the next five years. Until the required measures are identified, a framework of the activity planning policy is prepared before the next budget.

After sufficient discussion among citizen experts, such as people from industry, academia, and bureaucracy, the major goal, “Society 5.0” (www.gov-online.go.jp/cam/s5/eng/index.html) was laid out, along with the government’s Research and Development (R&D) investment plan. Japan is an aging society with a declining birthrate, which may lead to the decrease in tax revenue of the country. However, we must raise our R&D investment to be a global leader in science and technology development. Society 5.0 is one of the concepts of an innovative ecosystem that aims to increase our R&D investment. It is very difficult to achieve this goal, but our citizens will try various methods to accomplish it. Through my liaison support role, I realize spreading awareness is important for researchers as well as for URAs

Preparation for the future

In June 2017, UTokyo was recognized as a “Designated National University” by MEXT. This emphasizes that extensive reforms can enable researchers to compete at all levels, domestically as well as globally. During budget competitions in PARI, I use every opportunity to interact with researchers to help them with budget planning for projects. Whether or not the budget is approved, the researchers gain valuable experience from the entire process.

Our current director is the Principal Investigator of the SSU, which is one of the seven units we set up 10 years ago just after the establishment of PARI. Now, we have also set up a new project to link the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and SDGs-related academic knowledge available on our campus to create new knowledge for sustainable development. This partnership will enable us to collaborate with the UTokyo Future Society Initiative (www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/adm/fsi/en), which is a new project developed under the authority of UTokyo as a Designated National University. With this initiative, PARI also takes a new step to anticipate future research needs.

Acknowledgments: I wish to thank Mr. Kenjiro Totsui for agreeing to use the sophisticated design image. 

...we must raise our R&D investment to be a global leader in science and technology development.

Toshie Murakami is a research administrator at the Policy Alternatives Research Institute (PARI) of the University of Tokyo. She is in charge of assisting the director and the organizational management of the Institute in activities such as strategic planning, pre- and post-awards, etc. Besides being an assistant to an executive member in the CSTI (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan), she is also a delegate of an individual member who is not an organization member of Research Manager and Administrator Network Japan (RMAN-J). In addition, she is an appointed committee member of the program International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) 2020 Hiroshima of RMAN-J. She holds an MA in Higher Education Administration and can be reached at tmurakami@pari.u-tokyo.ac.jp
ARM A is the professional membership Association for Research Managers and Administrators in the United Kingdom. Its objective is to provide its members with knowledge, expertise, personal development, opportunities to network and shape and influence policy within the sector.

Although ARMA has been around for more than a decade, it has grown significantly with more than 3000 members representing universities, research organisations, funding bodies and the National Health Service (NHS). This growth has meant that over the last couple of years the ARMA board has been reviewing their governance, policies and structures to ensure that the membership is at the heart of all future development and decisions. As with any change programme, this has been a difficult and challenging process, but the Association is reaping the fruits of its labour with a new improved training programme to advance skills and develop future leaders.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are key to ensuring added value for members as well as being an integral part of the Director’s strategy for member engagement. These groups share knowledge and experience in those niche areas such as Impact, Audit and Compliance, Ethics and Governance to name but a few. They also provide members with a number of useful resources through the website and allow networking with like-minded individuals. Through collective bargaining, they also have the opportunity to influence policy and improve understanding between funders and institutions bringing them closer together.

As part of its communication strategy, ARMA has also improved its website (https://arma.ac.uk) and aims to engage the membership further through monthly newsletters and its new magazine “The Protagonist” where members are encouraged to send in articles for topics that interest them. They have also provided members with tools allowing them to meet virtually where a group meeting could prove difficult.

A significant shift has taken place to ensure ARMA works more closely with its sister organisations including NCURA. After hosting a very successful conference, it has taken over as chair of INORMS and has already instituted a couple of working groups similar to SIGs. ARMA would like to ensure that there is a significant legacy for cooperation and collaboration across all sister organisations from around the globe building on the work begun at the INORMS conference in Edinburgh in 2018.

The association is excitedly preparing for its next conference in Belfast 2019 which is the first time the conference will be held in Northern Ireland. The purpose of the conference is to promote excellence, share best practice and allow networking both locally and with our international colleagues. Although the programme is yet to be announced it will undoubtedly include a number of topical plenary sessions, workshops, fireside meetings, a poster competition, symposiums and of course the conference dinner and prize giving.

It has been and continues to be an exciting time to be a member of such a diverse and engaging organisation which not only promotes the importance of research administration as a career but is focussed on ensuring that its members have the opportunity to develop and the resources and support to ensure they can effectively undertake their daily tasks.

Charles Shannon is the Research Funding Assurance Manager at Imperial College London, ARMA SIG Coordinator & Director of Research Grants Consulting and Services (RGCs). He specialises in audit, compliance and assurance. He is a member of the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) and in this capacity chairs the special interest group on audit and compliance and is also a member of the Stakeholder Engagement Committee.
Researh is the outcome of systematic investigation, testing, and evaluation. Its purpose is to develop, contribute, and generalize knowledge (Epstein & Lascher, 2016). According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, one of the key tools in research is clinical trials. Clinical trials are conducted to advance medical knowledge and patient care safety. It is important to investigate the validity of new approaches in medical research to secure effective and best treatments.

The two main concerns that have plagued clinical trials are patient safety and bias because of potential conflicts (Dade, Olafson, & Moody, 2016). In addressing the safety concern, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services states that a major aspect in clinical trials is the involvement of participants, whether humans or animals. There are risks associated with clinical trials that could pose physical harm to the participants. These risks could lead to injuries or side effects of experimental drug use (2017).

The second main concern with clinical trials is bias. Bias could be a result due to Conflict of Interest (COI). A conflict of interest exists when a competing interest has the potential to influence the conduct of professional responsibilities such as teaching, research, and advising or mentoring” (Dade, Olafson, & Moody, 2016, p124, 2016).

The Problem
There are multiple factors that lead to COI in clinical trials due to the following: Acceptance of a gift by the doctor to find and recruit participants that are his patients. The doctor could receive a fee in order to complete a specific study in a specific time frame, or the doctor accepted participation in clinical trial conducted by a company that he has financial interest with (Dade, Olafson, & Moody, 2016).

Researchers might have special interests that could affect the scientific objectivity, such as getting a promotion, or meeting certain academic requirements for publishing purposes. There is no agreement on one specific factor that could lead to COI but the focus frequently is on financial conflicts (National Council of University Research Administration, 2012). Conflict of interest in clinical trials are results of the perception of financial rewards that negatively affect the researcher’s judgment when it comes to the design of studies or reporting the studies’ results (Dade, Olafson, & Moody, 2016).

The US Public Health Service has established regulations that require investigators to disclose any significant financial interest to the organization. Significant financial interest means anything of monetary value that exceeds $10,000 if it will affect the research (National Council of University Research Administration, 2012).

Institutional/Organizational Response
Waldstreicher & Johns state that significant strides have taken place since US Bayh-Dole Act was passed; to effectively manage COI issue, (2017).

To improve transparency and restore trust and integrity in research, several guidelines, laws, and regulations have been implemented such as the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) Principles on Conduct of Clinical Trials, regional voluntary codes of conduct, recommendations from the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the Physician Payments Sunshine Act (Waldstreicher & Johns, 2017, pp1751-1752).

These principles were designed to emphasize that pharmaceutical companies and voting members of data safety and monitoring boards do not have significant financial interests and to emphasize consistency of modest payments to participants in clinical trials, with reimbursement for travel and time should be approved by institutional review boards. Investigators should receive reasonable payments and these payments should be based on work performed and included in the statement of work. For trials with stock or stock options, investigators should not be engaged. Consistency of payments to investigators should be modest and should not include recreation or entertainment (Waldstreicher & Johns, 2017).

A conflict of interest exists when a competing interest has the potential to influence the conduct of professional responsibilities…

Authors should disclose the sponsor’s role in the design, conduct, and interpretation of the trial and results as well as in generating the manuscript, when submitting publications, as well as financial and nonfinancial COI, and source and funding of writing assistance (Waldstreicher & Johns, 2017, pp1751-1752).

An increased transparency and high levels of objectivity in clinical research were seen over the past several years as a result of this endeavor (Waldstreicher & Johns, 2017).

The National Science Foundation has set forth some restrictions to eliminate COI as well, for example, research should be monitored by independent reviewers and research plans should be modified if there is a COI risk (n.d).

Alexander Gaffen states that the United States Food and Drug Administration requesting applicants to submit a list of all investigators who will be working on clinical trials paired with a certification that states no financial arrangements exist that would interfere with the objectivity of research (2013).

According to Cannon, a former domestic policy analyst for the US Senate Republican Policy Committee and a blogger, in Forbes magazine, “With so much medical research funded by pharmaceutical companies and others with a financial interest in the outcome, it can be hard to avoid conflicts of interest” (2016). Therefore, I recommend training to all employees in the industry periodically.

This could be accomplished through a cloud-based training management system that would be available to all personnel. The training would include
information about the importance of conducting clinical research in ways that will not compromise the integrity of the institution or the trust. The information would also define conflict of interest and its occurrence when there is a divergence between an individual’s private interests and his or her professional obligations to the institution and the fact that these interests can compromise, or be perceived as compromising, important academic values, research integrity, or the institution mission.

A part of the training will also include a comprehensive guide on policies and regulations related to COI in clinical trials and resources to answer any questions. In addition, a COI cases will be available so personnel learn about how COI could jeopardize the safety of patients or the integrity of research. A handbook could be developed to include directions on how to access and use the cloud-based training that includes links to websites and educational videos. The websites are covering federal regulations and policies related to COI, such as U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Code of Federal Regulations websites and integrity in research and the videos for instructors teaching the materials.

References

Amira Shalaby is an intern at Florida Premier Research Institute and a member of the National Council of University Research Administrators. She recently obtained her Master of Research Administration (MRA) from the University of Central Florida. She can be reached at ashalaby@knights.ucf.edu
“To err is human, to forgive, divine.” Or so said Alexander Pope. What follows is a brief summary of how research administrators working in public service might achieve such divineness courtesy of the federal government by having their federal student loans forgiven.

Here is the gist of the issue, which may apply to many research administrators working for public universities and other not-for-profit entities:

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF) will absolve the remaining balance of your federal student loans after you have made 120 payments (usually ten years) if you have been employed by eligible public service organizations. Eligible organizations include:

- Government organizations (federal, state, local, tribal);
- 501(c)(3) tax-exempt not-for-profit organizations;
- Certain other types of not-for-profit organizations which are 501(c)(3) but their primary purpose is to provide certain types of qualifying public services.

But as any good research administrator knows, the devil really is in the details (especially when it comes to interpreting federal regulations): This “forgiveness” only applies to loans granted under the William D. Ford Direct Loan Program. **On-time payments made under other federal loan programs are not eligible and cannot be grandfathered in, even if you have been working for eligible organizations.** This is where people often slip up: You may be fresh out of college, starting a new job, focusing on that, dutifully repaying your student loans, and may have even heard of the federal loan forgiveness program, but do not realize that your particular flavor of loan is ineligible for the program and that all of your on-time payments do not count toward it.

The good news: Your non-eligible federal loans may become eligible for cancellation if you consolidate them into a Direct Consolidation Loan. The trick is to consolidate the loans early if there is any chance that you will stay employed in public service. The 120-payment clock does not start ticking until you begin making payments under an eligible loan. I have heard from many people over the years that they could have had their federal loans forgiven much sooner had they only known to consolidate them right away.

Please consider this article merely as a “head’s up” about the PSLF program and not definitive information. For the real scoop, visit the US Department of Education’s Federal Student Aid website at https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service.

If you are currently repaying federal student loans yourself, look into this program. If you are a supervisor with a younger employee who might be eligible, pass the word along. PSLF can be a great benefit—but only if you know about it. And as the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus noted, “Forgiveness is better than revenge.”

Bill Sharp, Ph.D., retired from research administration at the University of Kansas, is past recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and co-author of The Dashing Kansan: Lewis Lindsay Dyche. He can be reached at willsharp@gmail.com
You’ve long awaited approval for a training education program at your institution, and you’ve finally been given the green light. Eager to put the pedal to the metal, there are a number of items that should be in place prior to hitting the accelerator.

#1. Educational Assessment (Carrie)
Before the green flag flies, spend time getting to know the course, your car, and your pit crew. Below are possible sources to identify educational needs.

• Survey faculty and administrators to determine high priority topics.
• Analyze topics of concern from institutional audits or national audit trends.
• Monitor new policies and regulations for educational needs. Assess staff and financial resources available to support the program.
• Keep institutional culture in mind during assessment and planning.

#2. Program Goals (Tricia)
Program goals should be set by the research administration community at large and recognized by the institution as a whole. Sample goals might include:

• Enhance administrative support for faculty/researchers.
• Strengthen compliance efforts and reduce risk.
• Create promotional paths for upward mobility in research administration.

#3. Types of Training (Roseann)
Training types should be varied to meet the diverse needs of your community. There should be a mix of in-person, on-demand, formal and informal training options.

• In-person: Training participants in-person provides an opportunity to synthesize content within a group, jointly problem solve and develop networks. In-person training can be on-campus or at a conference site with participants engaging directly with the instructor and co-participants.
• On-demand: On demand training resources allow participants to access training content as training needs arise in the moment. This allows for quick content transfers. On demand training resources can include curated web content and resources, online training, recorded webinars, Lynda.com resources, NCURA YouTube Tuesday Videos, and NCURA Magazine.

• Formal: Formal training is structured and will have specific goals and training objectives identified in advance of the training. Formal training can include classes, presentations, certifications, online courses, conferences, and webinars.
• Informal: Informal learning allows the learner to lead and direct their own learning. This can include mentoring, networking, job shadowing, reviewing job aids, and stretch assignments.

#4. Design and Structure (Tolise & Carrie)
As in any race, it is important to keep the finish line in mind as you run the course. Putting your practice and preparation into action requires a road map for success.

• Create an overall learning plan for your program, then narrow in on content for each session.
• Identify clear and achievable learning objectives for each session and gear the content for accomplishing those goals.
• Partner subject matter experts and training specialists to develop and refine content for an effective product.
• Plan for the future of your training program and make the adjustments necessary to stay current with training needs.

Look to successful models, such as Harvard University REACH, (Research Excellence in Administration Certificate at Harvard), Washington University STAR (Specialized Training for Administrators of Research) program or Weill Cornell Medicine’s ETRA (Education and Training in Research Administration) program. Also, join the NCURA Research Development – Education and Trainers/Training Collaborate Communities and get valuable feedback that will speed you toward developing a successful program for your institution.

Trainers: Carrie Chesbro, University of Oregon; Roseann Luongo, Harvard University; Tolise Dailey, University of Colorado; and Tricia Callahan, Colorado State University.
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A FEW REASONS COLLEAGUES RECOMMEND THESE CONFERENCES:

"I was able to get answers to questions I had at my institution and was surprised to find that other institutions have some of the same issues.

I'm already applying what I learned!

This was a great conference and I would recommend it."

ABSTRACT. This paper presents housebuilding as a coherent metaphor for the logical construction of a strong grant proposal, where each major component—Research Theme, Project Goal, Research Objectives, Project Activities, and Impact—is tightly linked to its adjacent sections, so the entire composition forms an organic whole. Researchers, especially those who are new to the grant writing game, can use the metaphor to outline the entire scope of their proposal before adding the necessary details.

Logical coherence is of great importance to grant reviewers, but there is evidence that they are often disappointed. As one senior reviewer commented to the author:

The great lesson here is how pitifully, poorly written a lot of proposals are. It’s truly an eye opener for all of your life. You say to yourself, ‘Oh my gosh, we got 150 proposals and half to two-thirds of them are in the No Merit/Do Not Fund category, so only about 50 are still in the game, and you’re only going to fund 20 or 25 of those, so you’re looking at a pretty small number’ (S. Sumner, personal communication).

I. Bed Rock: Research Theme, Problem Statement, Significance

The scriptural admonition to build a house on rock rather than sand is a familiar part of Western culture. In grant writing, the entire project must rest on a compelling argument for the need to do the proposed research. Whether the section title is “Significance,” “Intellectual Merit,” “Problem Statement” or “Case for Need,” the essential purpose is the same: To present a persuasive case for supporting the central research theme to be investigated. From the grant reviewer’s perspective, this section functions as the gatekeeper. If strong, the proposal remains alive; if not, nothing else matters, and the proposal fails.

The problem makes the proposal. Seasoned grant writers know that reviewers are quick to decide whether they do or do not like the proposal they are reading, and they often form strong first impressions immediately upon reading the abstract (Molfese, Karp, and Siegel, 2002; Porter, 2005). In starting to build a persuasive case, the proposal writer should
heed the familiar adage, “The problem makes the proposal.” So what’s the problem? The word itself connotes a deficiency, something that cries out to be remediated. From a negative perspective, three distinct dimensions of the problem can be explored: 1) An important need or issue that should be addressed; 2) A limitation of current knowledge or way of doing things; and 3) A gap between where we are now and where we could or should be. Some questions that can drive the narrative on each of these dimensions include the following:

1. An important need or issue that should be addressed. Is there evidence that the problem is recognized as a significant issue in the field or academic discipline? Can a case be made that there is a particular urgency to address the issue? From early in his Administration, President Obama set a priority on STEM education (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), in response to mounting evidence that the United States’ leadership in this critical area was rapidly eroding, thus placing much of our economy in jeopardy.

2. A limitation of current knowledge or way of doing things. What is the current state of the art, and why should we be dissatisfied with the status quo? Why do we need to know more and do better? What bad outcomes might accrue if we do not improve? Decades of dissatisfaction with the limitations of traditional modes of cancer treatment—surgery, radiation, chemotherapy—have led to exciting new developments in immunotherapy and personalized genomics, using the body’s own disease fighting capabilities to attack tumors without the debilitating side effects of traditional methods.

3. A gap between where we are now and where we could or should be. What desirable changes or benefits can be derived if we commit to new knowledge and discoveries? What evidence do we have that a particular research strategy will lead to such benefits? Physicists have long understood that advancing knowledge in just about any aspect of energy or matter (let alone the origin of the universe) requires a better understanding of the mysterious subatomic particles known as neutrinos. Because they are so important on so many levels, there is a robust array of neutrino research currently being pursued worldwide, with intriguing advances announced from time to time.

The “problem” can also be positive. In the sometimes quirky world of grant writing, the core concept of “problem” need not be negative; it can also be driven by a positive valence, an urge to seize an opportunity, to create something entirely new rather than address a deficit. From the positive side, the grant writer can choose to explore three possible dimensions: 1) A fresh idea that can advance our understanding or address a societal need; 2) A refinement that improves efficiency or lowers the cost of goods and/or services; or 3) A new paradigm that reshapes our thinking or way of doing things.

1. A fresh idea that can advance our understanding or address a societal need. In the history of consumer goods, from paper clips to Post-It notes to desktop computers, there are many examples of innovative products that quickly gained popularity, not because they addressed perceived problems, but because consumers immediately recognized good ideas when they saw them.

2. A refinement that improves efficiency or lowers the cost of goods and/or services. Our ubiquitous cellphones with their many marvelous capabilities are, at heart, small, powerful and inexpensive computers based on digital computations, many 0’s and 1’s in tiny electronic circuits that are either on or off, a technology that has been steadily refined for more than seventy-five years. Battery powered cars have been around for more than a century, but only

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**Figure 1: Phases of Construction**

**Constructing the Research Proposal: A Housebuilding Metaphor**

**I. Bed Rock: Site Location**
- Research theme
- Problem to address
- Determines significance

**II. Foundation**
- Goal, the ultimate purpose of the project
- Drives general shape of research design
- May also be hypothesis or research questions

**III. Frame**
- Research objectives
- Creates “skeleton” for the work plan
- Shapes project activities & budget

**IV. Finish Work**
- Specific project activities
- Requires resources: personnel, materials, supplies, etc.
- Final driver of project budget

**V. Curbside Appeal**
- Overall Impact
- Benefits to society
- Attraction to buyer (funding agency)
in recent years have the batteries’ power-to-weight ratios improved to the point where electric cars can perform on a par with gas-powered vehicles.

3. A new paradigm that reshapes our thinking or way of doing things. Many of the great advances in science and technology were far from predictable, and quite a few can rightly be described as changing everything. The Nobel Prize winning work of three researchers—Richard Smalley, Robert Kurl and Harold Kroto resulted in the creation of a new manmade carbon molecule—the C60 Fullerene or “buckyball”—with such remarkable characteristics that it did much to launch the exciting world of nanotechnology. While most funding agencies tend to be risk averse, there is one for which high-risk, high-reward projects are the norm. Research that led to two transformative innovations, the internet and global positioning systems, was initially funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). In a similar vein, the European Research Council (ERC) program of Horizon 2020 will fund only “frontier research, cross disciplinary proposals and pioneering ideas in new and emerging fields which introduce unconventional and innovative approaches” (ERC, 2017). A side note here: Researchers of any nationality are eligible to apply for the prestigious ERC award, if they agree to perform the work in any EU Member State or Associated Country.

II. The Foundation: Three ways to construct the underpinning of the research design

Once the research theme has been identified and its significance delineated, the second phase—articulating the project’s ultimate purpose, what the researcher actually wants to accomplish with the project—can be expressed. This critical step, the foundation which drives the general shape of the research design, can be formulated in three widely accepted ways: a) A goal statement; b) a hypothesis, or; c) research questions.

Choosing the right foundation. The researcher’s choice among the three starting points depends upon the nature of the proposed project, the culture of the funding agency, and accepted traditions within certain academic disciplines. Most proposals to the National Science Foundation three starting points depends upon the nature of the proposed project, the culture of the funding agency, and accepted traditions within certain academic disciplines. Most proposals to the National Science Foundation are driven by goal statements, while reviewers at the National Institutes of Health usually expect to see hypothesis-driven designs. Studies undertaken by social scientists or educators often begin with a set of research questions. These are generalizations, of course, as many exceptions to the above trends can be cited, but it is important for the grant writer to know how these foundational options are defined and how to express them properly in writing.

1. Goal: A general statement of the project’s ultimate purpose; a desirable state or condition that is sought. A goal statement can be open-ended, idealistic, even visionary, and is usually framed around an active verbal phrase. The following are examples, with the verbal phrase underlined (Friedland and Foll, 2009):
   - Our goal with this project is to improve the teaching of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) to undergraduates.
   - This project will deepen our understanding of the effects of global climate change on populations of saltwater plankton.
   - We seek to understand how cell division and differentiation are regulated by a myriad of extracellular and intracellular signals.

2. Hypothesis: A specific, testable assumption or conjecture that the research data are expected to support. Here the researcher constructs a simple declaration of a particular state or condition that the data may or may not support to a statistically significant degree. In many cases the researcher(s) have obtained preliminary results that suggest how the hypothesis should be framed. (Note: Whether the data do or do not support the hypothesis is of equal scientific importance!) Some examples:
   - We will test the hypothesis that large neurons are selectively destroyed in Alzheimer’s Disease by measuring the sizes of ganglion cells in retinas of AD patients compared with those in control groups.
   - We hypothesize that increased consumption of Omega-3 seafood, fresh fruits and vegetables will reduce the progression of cognitive impairment in patients diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease.
   - Soldiers exposed to live combat will exhibit higher levels of domestic violence post discharge.

3. Research Questions: Inquiries related to lack of knowledge in an important area of research, answers to which are sought through the research design. In some instances, so little is known about a particular phenomenon that researchers are not prepared to formulate a solid hypothesis. When this is the case, an appropriate first step is to list the key questions that must be answered before a more rigorous research design can be considered. Work of this kind is variously labeled “field research,” an “empirical design,” or simply a “qualitative study.” For example, medical

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| Table 1: Construction of a Successful NSF Proposal |

**WITS: A Wireless Interactive Teaching System**

**NSF Award # 0618646**

**PI: Sheryl Ball, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**

I. BEDROCK (Research theme): STEM education, widely recognized as a growing problem that could pose a threat to the US economy, and a subject of particular interest to the National Science Foundation

II. FOUNDATION (Goal): Using wireless technology, improve the quality of STEM education for undergraduate students

III. FRAME (Research objectives): 1) New exercises and materials: Create and test ten new modules for undergraduate courses in STEM subjects; 2) New users: Conduct training sessions for targeted faculty and graduate Teaching Assistants at participating universities; 3) New audiences: Design and administer two new sets of tests to determine whether learning gains attained in the WITS pilot study will generalize across other disciplines

IV. FINISH WORK (Project activities): Excerpt from page 11 of proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>New Extranets &amp; Materials</th>
<th>New Users</th>
<th>New Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1st Year</td>
<td>Develop principles</td>
<td>TRANS UTD students (cohort 1)</td>
<td>Evaluate WITS with UTD students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1st Year</td>
<td>Create principles manuals, 3 exercises completed</td>
<td>UTD students teach principles</td>
<td>Evaluate WITS with UTD students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2nd Year</td>
<td>Create principles manuals; 5 exercises completed</td>
<td>UTD students teach principles</td>
<td>Evaluate WITS WITH UTD students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2nd Year</td>
<td>Interactive micro</td>
<td>TRANS UTD students (cohort 2) Transfer VT instructor</td>
<td>Evaluate WITS WITH UTD students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2nd Year</td>
<td>Revise interactive micro exercises and manual</td>
<td>UTD students teach principles VT interactive micro principles</td>
<td>Evaluate WITS WITH UTD students Evaluate WITS in in micro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2nd Year</td>
<td>Revise interactive micro exercises and manual</td>
<td>UTD students teach principles VT interactive micro principles</td>
<td>Evaluate WITS WITH UTD students Evaluate WITS in micro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 3rd Year</td>
<td>Refine manuals for instructors and students Complete analysis of evaluations</td>
<td>Complete analysis of evaluations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. CURBSIDE APPEAL (Project Impact): a) By involving both undergraduate and graduate students, the project furthers NSF’s mission to integrate education with research; b) the WITS system has strong potential to engage more women and underrepresented minorities in scientific research, another priority for NSF
researchers may wish to know more about how physicians in a given region are treating patients diagnosed with diabetes, specifically, whether the patients' lifestyle traits factor into their treatment plans. Their opening questions might be:

- Are there common lifestyle traits among those suffering from diabetes in this region?
- If so, do local physicians address these traits in prescribing treatment and follow up regimens?
- If patients' lifestyle traits are factored in, are there significant variations in standards of practice among physicians?
- If variations exist, is there a rational basis for them?

III. The Frame: Research objectives

In contrast to the general nature of the goal statement, a research objective is a specific, measurable, benchmark, milepost, or outcome achieved in moving toward the goal. Whether starting with a goal, a hypothesis, or research questions, the next step is to formulate the project’s objectives. Most successful research designs are driven by two to four objectives, with three being the most common and five being rare. Active verbs are key to writing strong objectives, as they convey a series of specific targets in the research plan, helping the reviewer to envision what the researcher actually intends to do. With this step, the grant writer solidifies a firm outline of the project’s overall design, the framework which will determine and shape every detail in the actual work plan. Upon completion of the final objective, the goal should be obtained (or at least major progress should be achieved). In health-related research, objectives are often referred to as “Specific Aims.”

Four kinds of objectives. Below are four common types of objectives, with an example for each (The Foundation Center, 2001):

- **Behavioral** – a human action is anticipated. Rehabilitation patients receiving dual treatment modalities will learn to walk without the use of mechanical support.
- **Performance** – a specific time frame and proficiency level for a particular behavior. Upon completing the new curriculum, at least 75 percent of participating students will pass the certification examination.
- **Process** – a specific action step in the research plan. Design and test three new modules for teaching economics to undergraduates.
- **Product** – A tangible item will result. “Biology in a Box” teaching kits will be distributed to six rural schools in the county.

Just as the completed frame of a house defines all of its spatial dimensions, research objectives determine every specific activity to be included in the research design. Every method, technique and action step in the work plan must be linked to an objective, and nothing can be included that does not serve to advance that objective.

**Objectives cannot be sequentially dependent.** Occasionally one sees a successful proposal where two or more objectives can be pursued at the same time, but **sequential** objectives are more common, and here is where a logical flaw can present itself. In examining a set of phased project objectives, reviewers will look for the possibility that any two objectives might be sequentially dependent, i.e., whether any early objective might not be achieved, thus blocking all subsequent objectives from completion, an impasse that can implode the project. In the successful STEM education proposal outlined in Table 1, one can sense the strong likelihood that each of the three sequential objectives can be readily achieved (Ball, 2006).

IV. Finish work: Project activities, resources and budget

Upon completing the project frame (research objectives), the proposal writer can now lay out a work plan, the specific activities to be performed in pursuing each objective in sequence. In this house-building analogy, the work plan consists of project activities, resources and budget. In the work plan, the grant writer describes in detail the methods to be employed and the techniques and skills required. Typically, this section consumes a high percentage of the proposal’s allowable pages. In the set of successful applications posted online by NAID, for example, the sections titled “Approach” take up about four-fifths of the proposals’ narratives (NIH, 2017).

- **Make a picture.** One of the challenges in writing a strong work plan is to provide sufficient detail within sometimes strict page limitations. In 2010, for example, the National Institutes of Health reduced the maximum number of pages allowed for many of its funding mechanisms by nearly fifty percent (NIH, 2010). But no matter how few pages are permitted, if the work plan consists of only uninterrupted narrative, there is a danger that reviewers’ eyes will glaze over.

Here is where proposal writers should heed the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. We are visual creatures, and by illustrating the work plan, the writer conveys a great deal of concrete information to reviewers instantly and almost pre-consciously, without readers having to slog through long sections of dense academic prose. The most common format to visualize the research plan is the time-honored Gantt chart, which maps major project phases and activities over time (Table 2).

**Table 2: Project Work Plan Chart**

• **Match activities to budget.** While reviewers are advised not to consider the project’s budget in their evaluation of the proposal’s merits, it would not be reasonable to think they ignore it entirely. Likewise, if the proposal is scored high enough to be considered for funding, it is a sure bet the agency’s budget analysts will scrutinize the numbers quite thoroughly, as budget negotiations are frequent challenges faced by post award specialists. In the pressured days leading up to the proposal’s deadline, the research design is often modified multiple times, which can lead to the unfortunate circumstance of the seventeenth version of the work plan attached to the sixteenth version of the budget, a discrepancy that will not escape the attention of any budget maven who happens to sit on the review panel.

**V. Curbside appeal: Impact of the completed project**

To stretch the housebuilding metaphor a bit, one should consider the impact of the completed property (including landscaping) on the neighborhood and on potential buyers. As early as the abstract, the proposal writer should present convincing answers to critical concerns in the mind of every reviewer: If the proposal is funded and the project completed, what difference will it make? What will we know that we didn’t know before? What will we be able to do that we couldn’t do before? How important will such gains be?

With its revision of the peer review process in 2010, NIH introduced “Impact” as a new criterion, the score of which is the critical determinant of funding, regardless of scores allotted to the five traditional review criteria (NIH, 2010). Ironically, while the revised NIH application format requires writers to address the traditional criteria under specific headings—Significance, Innovation, Approach, Researcher, Environment—there is no required heading for “Impact,” though savvy grant writers will insert this heading on their own. It never hurts for the researcher to advise reviewers about the project’s impact, knowing that reviewers will always feel free to judge for themselves.

**Build a collection of successful proposals.** For academics who are new to the mystifying world of grant writing, the learning curve for constructing a successful proposal can be shortened considerably by looking at what has worked for other proposal writers. Even a cursory review of a successful proposal can reveal effective writing strategies that can be imitated. One proposal might feature strong ways to highlight important points by outlining, bolding, underlining, or italicizing. Another might display an intriguing variety of visual illustrations. A third might present a compelling way to phrase an impact statement, and so on.

Many universities have posted sample proposals on the web pages of their research offices. At NIH, the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases has posted well-written applications for its more common funding mechanisms (NIH, 2017). A set of successful NSF proposals has been posted by Carleton College (Carleton College, 2017). The National Endowment for the Humanities posts numerous successful proposals in most of its funding categories (NEH, 2017).

**Need for presubmission review.** A common misstep of beginning writers is to submit their proposals without first having them scrutinized by grant savvy colleagues, folks who can quickly spot weaknesses in the overall composition. While pre-award personnel in the research office can help in this regard, they often lack the academic background necessary to zero in on the proposal’s possible thematic or structural weaknesses. Especially for the very large proposals with budgets in the million dollar plus range, an internal review, sometimes labelled a “Red Team” review, can make a critical difference. But even with smaller projects, leaders of academic units who wish to ensure the success of their recent hires in the highly competitive world of sponsored research should find that pre-submission reviews, even if done by one person for each proposal, will increase the chances for success.

Finally, the housebuilding metaphor described here, though simple in structure, can be a useful tool for grant writers to enhance the logical coherence (and thus the persuasive power) of their research proposals.

**Acknowledgement:**

Susan Sumner, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Tech

**References**


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Robert Porter, PhD, has presented grant writing workshops at leading universities internationally. Formerly Director of Research Development at the University of Tennessee, he now leads Grant-Winners Seminars, a firm specializing in grants workshops for academic researchers. He has received the Distinguished Faculty Award by the Society of Research Administrators International. He can be reached at reporter@grant-winners.com
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The academic research enterprise. That seemingly simple phrase – foundational to our health, prosperity, economic and national security, and quality of life – has quite different meanings depending upon the audience. To the research administrator, it means a seemingly endless array of rules and regulations, audits, impatient faculty, last-minute proposal submissions, and complex negotiations and award management activities. To faculty and other researchers, it is an intellectually stimulating, challenging, and rewarding environment that underpins their professional lives. To students, it means studying an interesting topic and writing a thesis or dissertation, and perhaps publishing, performing, or exhibiting the outcomes, as a step toward pursuing career options. To senior research officers, it means helping faculty and students succeed in creating and disseminating new knowledge, as well as increasing external grant and contract dollars to the institution. To private companies, it represents the seed corn of innovation and a major source of intellectual property. To funding agencies and private foundations, it represents the repository of talent where investments lead to discoveries, solutions, and the next generation of researchers. And to the general public, it means a respected, albeit somewhat mysterious, element of society that yields outcomes generally viewed as beneficial.

Although these and other groups view the academic research enterprise through vastly different lenses, they share, with the exception of the general public, one important characteristic: discovering and coming to understand the many and complex elements of this enterprise very slowly, mostly via direct experience, as they progress through their careers.

That certainly was the case for the first author, even though he had the good fortune 42 years ago, as a university undergraduate, to work at a Federal research laboratory under the college work-study program. As he progressed through his studies and even conducted research, he was, perhaps not surprisingly, completely unaware of the broader elements of the research enterprise upon which his present and future so critically depended. Greater clarity came in graduate school as he attended professional conferences to present results, and as his advisor involved him in writing grant proposals and joining in meeting Federal agency program officers. However, it was not until several years into the first author’s career as a research university professor, when he obtained his own funding and started serving on national organization boards, committees, and review panels, that he truly began to understand and appreciate connections among the many components and complexities of the academic research enterprise.

Having supervised the research of numerous graduate students, undergraduate students, and post docs for 33 years, served two terms on the National Science Board, and spent nearly nine years as a vice president for research, the first author came to realize that the enterprise would benefit from a more effective and efficient way to explain the many dimensions of its ever-changing academic research enterprise. The value and necessity of research; how research is funded; public attitudes toward research; how research is performed and how one finds or creates the things needed to conduct it; how outcomes are utilized, made known, and owned and protected; ethical conduct, subjecting research to scrutiny such as merit review, and collaboration and multidisciplinary inquiry; and of course, compliance and the future of research. Although information on these and other topics is readily available, no resource exists that brings everything together – in a coherent and interrelated manner accessible to multiple audiences – irrespective of their academic discipline or interest area. As a result, the first author decided to create it.

The result is an online resource called DARE: Demystifying the Academic Research Enterprise. Offered within a highly innovative online learning platform known as Janux, DARE consists of 12 modules that address the aforementioned academic research enterprise topics in considerable depth. Each module contains four to six videos, each having an average duration of six minutes, along with self-directed quizzes, supplemental reading materials that expand upon the topics being discussed, and special deep-dive projects that can be utilized in appropriate settings. Unique to DARE is a national repository of additional materials, contributed by those using DARE and including discipline-specific and contemporary articles, examples and personal testimonials, which enrich the overall experience.

One of the most powerful features of Janux, and one critical to the concept behind DARE, is the ability for users to interact with one another in a variety of ways, including via interactive messaging, sharing of comments made on video scripts (which roll in a highlighted, closed-captioned manner as each video is played), and through a facilitator if one is utilized. DARE can be taken independently, as a stand-alone “course,” or offered by an institution such as a university or professional organization, for credit or credentialing. Additionally, DARE modules can be integrated, in whole or in part, into existing courses or training materials. Even though the modules reference one another to some extent, they were designed to be utilized largely independently and can be viewed in any sequence desired.

For example, in the context of research adminis-
nstitution’s role in research, and the challenges faced by their senior research officer, as well as faculty and student researchers. Indeed, efforts are underway to explore linking certain DARE modules to training materials for the Certified Research Administrator (CRA) credential. As a result, those sitting for the CRA exam would have a more complete context for the topics on which they are to be tested, and thus be more effective and perhaps even more fulfilled, in their work.

Likewise, the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), which provides training to university and other researchers on topics ranging from human and animal subjects compliance to responsible conduct of research and export controls, is considering utilizing DARE as an adjunct to some of its training courses. Other organizations, such as the National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP), are being approached to explore using DARE as a professional development tool. In all of these examples, continuing education credit is possible through the University of Oklahoma, which is the home of DARE.

Finally, by utilizing an interactive, engaging, and collaborative learning tool that can be used as a stand-alone offering or integrated into any existing university course, from anthropology and art history to zoology, DARE provides a mechanism for students, especially freshmen and sophomores, to begin engaging in academic research earlier. For those already performing research, such as graduate students, post docs, and early career faculty, DARE provides exposure to the many facets of the academic research enterprise, thereby helping them be more effective in advocating for; and seeking and obtaining funding; understanding public attitudes toward research; applying research methods; utilizing peer review; publishing, presenting, and protecting their work; developing collaborative and interdisciplinary teams; complying with growing body of rules and regulations; and understanding the trajectory of the enterprise and their role in helping shape it. Perhaps most importantly, DARE will democratize understanding of the academic research enterprise and help open doors of access to those who might otherwise not have an opportunity to engage.

To learn more about DARE, visit http://janux.ou.edu/dare.
Region I Football Toss Challenge

Winners at the National Meeting:
L-R: 2nd Place Kyle Lewis, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, 1st Place Josh Ferreira, Boston University, and 3rd Place Jackie Cen, MIT.

Congratulations to your newly elected Officers! A special thank you to John Harris, Chair, Northeastern University, and the rest of the Governance Committee for putting together an outstanding slate of candidates.

2018 Election Results:

Chair-Elect: Louise Griffin, University of New Hampshire
Treasurer-Elect: Sonya Stern, University of Vermont
Secretary-Elect: Laurel Donnell-Fink, Brigham and Women’s Hospital

The Curriculum committee, chaired by Laurel Donnell-Fink, has been hard at work planning our Fall offerings! Our first offering Essentials in Research Administration, was held September 10th at our new location at Partners Healthcare in Somerville. Taught by Karen Woodward Massey, Harvard University, Susan Zipkin, University of New Hampshire, and Danforth Nicholas, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, attendees were given a broad overview of the various aspects of research administration.

Looking forward, we will be offering Advanced Topics in Research Administration on October 16th which will provide participants with in-depth guidance on financial audit and compliance risk areas, research compliance, and other institutional high-risk areas relating to research administration. On November 1st we will offer Clinical Trials. Participants will examine key administrative, contractual, financial, and regulatory issues that arise in the planning, funding and conduct of clinical trials. Both all day workshops will be held at Partners Healthcare in Somerville. Registration links as well as directions, parking, and transportation information are available on the Region I website.

Mark your calendar for a FREE NCURA Region I Night of Networking event to be held October 25th at 5pm at MIT. Details will follow in an eblast. Registration will be required to attend.

Spring will be here before we know it (hopefully after a short and mild winter!) and we are already looking forward to the Region I Spring Meeting 2019. As chair-elect, Louise Griffin has already started planning what will be another can’t miss meeting. The 2019 Spring Meeting will return to the Westin Portland Harborview in Portland, ME April 28th through May 1st. The location is a 4-star hotel centrally located in Portland close to many restaurants, shops, and museums. Be on the lookout for eblasts with more information and a call for eblasts with more information and a call for proposals.

Denise Rouleau, CRA, is Region I Chair and serves as Associate Director, Research Administration, School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. She can be reached at chair@ncuraregioni.org

I am sure everyone who attended the 60th Annual Meeting in Washington DC., had a fantastic time and experienced many excellent workshops, sessions and discussion groups. Now it’s on to our Region II meeting, “Country Roads: Managing Twists & Turns in Research Administration” to be held at the Oglebay Resort in Wheeling, West Virginia, on October 21-24, 2018. By the time this issue comes out, we should all be geared up and ready to experience some great workshops and sessions.

Congratulations to our very own Denise J. Clark, University of Maryland. Denise was awarded the Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration Award at the Annual Meeting in Washington, DC.

Our new SubRegions have been holding networking events since late spring. If you would like to get more information about an event in your SubRegion, please check out our website at https://ncuraregionii.org/subregions

Congratulations is in order for our newly elected officers who will be assuming their roles on January 1, 2019. Chair-Elect: Katie McKeon, University of Maryland, Treasurer-elect: Lamar Oglesby, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and the Regionally Elected Member to the National Board: Timothy Schailey, Thomas Jefferson University. Region II will have a great group of officers in 2019.

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

Dennis J. Paffrath, MBA, serves as the current chair of Region II and is the Assistant Vice President of Sponsored Programs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. He can be reached at dpaffrat@umaryland.edu
2018 Elections. The Fall semester has started with a bang, including the results of Region III’s 2018 elections. Kay Gilstrap, Assistant Director for Business Operations-Center for Molecular & Translational Medicine at Georgia State University, is our new Regionally Elected Board Member. Her term will begin January 1, 2019. Laura Letbetter, Associate Director for Sponsored Research Development, J. Mack Robinson College of Business at Georgia State University, will take on the role of Chair-Elect starting with the adjournment of Region III’s 2019 Spring Meeting. Congratulations to both Kay and Laura and a big thank you to our other talented candidates for continuing to help Region III excel!

Region III at AM60. Region III played an integral role in the success of AM60 with over 60 presenters and workshop faculty sharing their expertise with the NCURA community. Members donated $3,664 to the Education Scholarship Fund, putting us in 4th place in the per capita competition. In addition, Region III successfully hosted the NetZone with our international friends in Region VIII and we look forward to strengthening our friendship at our joint Spring Meeting in 2021. We’d also like to congratulate our own Cynthia Hope, Assistant Vice President for Research & Director of Sponsored Programs at The University of Alabama, who was named one of four NCURA Distinguished Educators for 2018.

Spring Meeting. Region III is getting ready for its 2019 Spring Meeting at Margaritaville Resort in Hollywood, FL, taking place May 5-8, 2019. All NCURA members are welcome to join us at the beach and be honorary flamigos! Keep up to date with registration information on Region III’s website at http://ncuraregioniii.com/2019-spring-meeting. This meeting’s theme will be “Collaboration: Creating Connections that Count” and we’re putting together an exciting program that will cater to everyone from first-time attendees to seasoned research administrators. This includes more advance level sessions, providing our incredible members with quality professional development opportunities right in their own region.

Region III members are also better able to keep up with their fellow flamigos and stay engaged with the region through the Region III Members Collaborate NCURA community. We hope this great platform will help give a voice to all our members and encourage conversation beyond our monthly newsletter and national and regional meetings. You can also keep up with Region III via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Justo Torres is Chair of Region III and serves as Director, Office of Contracts and Grants at North Carolina State University. He can be reached at justo_torres@ncsu.edu

Happy Fall NCURA Region IV! Thanks for swinging by our Regional Corner. We have updates on our spring 2019 meeting, local workshops, Region IV shout outs, and more!

Join us for the Region IV 2019 Spring Meeting in Columbus, Ohio! Mark your calendars for April 28 – May 1, 2019. The meeting will be held at the Sheraton Columbus Hotel at Capitol Square. The Regional Meeting is a great place to network and learn among colleagues. If you are interested in presenting, visit our Region IV website to learn more: www.ncuraregioniv.com/conferences.

Region IV on the National Stage. NCURA Region IV is well represented at the national level. NCURA Board members include Glenda Bullock from Washington University in St. Louis and Sue Kelch from University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, as well as Officer/Treasurer Shannon Sutton from Western Illinois University. Additionally, at AM60 we celebrated several Region IV award winners. Twila Reighley from Michigan State University and Sue Rivera from Case Western Reserve University received the Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award. Bob Andresen from the University of Wisconsin – Madison and David Richardson from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign received the NCURA Distinguished Educator Designation.

Run for the Region IV Board! Visit our website www.ncuraregioniv.com to learn more about how you can nominate someone or yourself to run for the Region IV Board. Serving on the Board is a great way to get more involved in NCURA on both the Regional and National front. Feel free to reach out to any of the current board members for more information. Nominations are due January 4, 2019.

Introducing Region IV Traveling Workshops: Sponsored Research Essentials. We will bring two half-day workshops, as one full day, to your institution! Orient your local research administrators in the most essential aspects of pre-award and post-award administration, from budgeting to submission to award management, reporting, and closeouts. Contact Patricia Graybill (patience.graybill@wustl.edu) to learn more about hosting a workshop at your institution!

Bonniejean Zitske is the Chair of Region IV and the Assistant Director for Research Financial Services at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She can be reached at bheitske@wisc.edu
It was great to see so many Region V members at AM60 in Washington, DC in August. I was also excited to see so many Region V members participating in all the available volunteer opportunities and events that were offered. You all were a grand slam in my eyes!

I would like to once again congratulate Robyn Remotigue, University of North Texas Health Science Center and Mario Medina, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, on receiving the 2018 NCURA Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award. They really demonstrate a true reflection of the Region V membership.

In addition, I would like to recognize Tiffany Biggers, Northeastern State University, and Genevieve Alvarez, University of the Incarnate Word, on receiving the Region V 2018 Joan Howeth National Travel Award. Each was awarded $1,500 to offset travel expenses to attend NCURA AM60.

The Mentoring, Leadership and Professional Development Committee is pleased to announce the formation of several new Mustang subcommittees:

- Online Resources subcommittee - will be responsible for collecting and maintaining sample templates, forms, flowcharts, best practices and other written resources currently used by institutions within the region.
- Career Development subcommittee - will be providing resources to help encourage and guide career paths.
- Training subcommittee - will be offering local in-person and online topical training sessions on a quarterly basis.

We will also have a subcommittee that will provide connections to specialists that will aid with pairing those in need with regional members of expertise in various research administration functions. Look for more information on the subcommittees and how you can become involved in eblasts to come in the following weeks. Questions may be addressed to the MLPDC Chair, Katherine Kissmann at kkissmann@tamu.edu

We are pleased to announce that the Region V 2019 Spring Meeting will be held in Houston, TX on Apr. 28-May 1, 2019, and our theme for the meeting will be, “Houston: The Research Administrators have Landed,” in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landings. We are finalizing our contract with the hotel and expect to announce the specific location soon. The program committee has issued a call for presentation proposals in late September, and proposals will be due on Nov. 7, 2018. While most of our program committee is set, if you are interested in serving on it, please email Chair-Elect Katie Plum (katie.plum@angelo.edu) as soon as possible.

Michael R. Castilleja is Chair of Region V and serves as Grants Accounting Manager at the University of the Incarnate Word. He can be reached at micasti2@uiwtx.edu
It's a week after AM 60 and I am recovering (or perhaps going through withdrawal) from educational and networking overload. So many great sessions and activities! I particularly enjoyed the Region V II Business Meeting – the perfect mix of new members and longtime colleagues!

Several Region VII members received special recognition during the AM60 meeting. Congratulations to:

- Sylvia Bradshaw, Dixie State University, NCURA Education Scholarship (one of the first two ever).
- Angela Valencia, University of Arizona, Catherine Core Minority Travel Award.
- Shannon Malone, Fort Lewis College, Region V II travel award winner for AM60.

I am pleased to announce the three recipients of the Region V II Regional Conference Travel Awards:

- Alicia Armentrout, Colorado State University
- Kewyn Richards, University of Idaho
- Sharon Buck, Northern Arizona University

Kudos to the Travel Award team that reviewed applications and selected the recipients: Joelina Peck, Teresa Dillon, and Consuelo Jorge. These ladies also ran the competition for the NCURA AM60 travel award.

Elections are coming up and may even have taken place by the time you receive this issue of the Magazine. Many thanks to Sandra Logue, Immediate Past Chair for Region V VII, who agreed to spearhead the recruitment and electoral process.

By the time you read this, it's quite likely that the Region VI/VII Regional Conference in Billings, Montana, will just be over. As I write this in August, we have fabulous plans for the conference in terms of programming and networking activities. Whether you loved the conference or (gulp) hated it, let me know which and why, because feedback is how we improve our worth to our members.

There's just not enough room in this article to thank by name each of the myriad of people who helped (or will help) put on the Regional Conference. However, I would like to give a special shout-out to Cindy Bell and Jenay Cross from Montana State University in Billings. We could not have done this without their local knowledge and active support.

Finally, congratulations to Bella Blaher from the University of Melbourne, Australia for being awarded the Best Poster prize at INORMS 2018!

**Deb Shaver, CRA, is Chair of Region VII and is the Assistant Vice President of Research Administration and Director, Office of Sponsored Programs at University of Idaho. She can be reached at dshaver@uidaho.edu**

**Stefania E. Grotti is Secretary of Region VIII and serves as Head of the Research Office at Politecnico di Milano (Italy). She can be reached at stefania.grotti@polimi.it**

The biennial congress of the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) 2018 was hosted in the wonderful city of Edinburgh, Scotland on 4-7 June, 2018. The Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) based in the UK was the host for 2018. Region VIII was represented by numerous members at INORMS.

The Congress attracted over 1,100 research leaders, managers and administrators from all over the globe and brought together delegates from across Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia and the USA.

There were a variety of plenary sessions, seminars and workshops covering key research management topics, specifically exploring our theme, Promoting Global Research Management, Supporting Global Research Challenges.

During the four-day conference, it was possible to hear very high-level speeches as the people profiles attending the conference: this was a great and rewarding experience. A mixture of mentoring, development of relationships, encouragement, and the ability to find common grounds. The main takeaway from INORMS 2018 was the fact that it helped me to navigate into my professionalism and to capitalize the experience and learnings when returning to your home institution. It was also an amazing opportunity to develop personal and professional skills and reconnect with colleagues.

The context in which INORMS operates seems to be really exciting and proactive: networking activity during the conference was a valuable exercise that gave the opportunity to learn a lot.

Save the date - The next INORMS conference will held in Hiroshima, Japan in May 2020 [http://inorms2020.org](http://inorms2020.org)
Study shows yogurt may dampen chronic inflammation linked to multiple diseases

By Nicole Miller

I
flammation can be good. It’s part of the body’s innate immune system, our first line of defense against illness and injury.

However, if the inflammatory response goes on too long, it can lead to a condition called chronic inflammation, where the body essentially attacks itself, wreaking biological havoc on our organs and systems. Chronic inflammation is a factor in inflammatory bowel disease, arthritis and asthma. It is also associated with obesity, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic diseases.

A recent study—described in two papers, including one published in May in the Journal of Nutrition [Pei et al., 2018] —provides new evidence that yogurt may help dampen chronic inflammation. The study explored the hypothesis that yogurt may help reduce inflammation by improving the integrity of the intestinal lining, thus preventing endotoxins —pro-inflammatory molecules produced by gut microbes—from crossing into the blood stream.

“I wanted to look at the mechanism more closely and look specifically at yogurt,” says Brad Bolling, University of Wisconsin–Madison Assistant Professor of Food Science, whose research focuses on the role of food in preventing chronic disease.

While anti-inflammatory medications like aspirin, naproxen, hydrocortisone and prednisone can help mitigate the effects of chronic inflammation, each comes with its own risks and side effects. There is a need for additional options—particularly safe, gentle, long-term treatments. Researchers have been exploring dairy products as a potential dietary treatment for more than two decades. Findings have been mixed, setting up a scientific debate about whether dairy products are pro-inflammatory or anti-inflammatory.

“There have been some mixed results over the years, but [a recent article] shows that things are pointing more toward anti-inflammatory, particularly for fermented dairy,” notes Bolling, citing a 2017 review paper that assessed 52 clinical trials.

Bolling’s study enrolled 120 premenopausal women, half obese and half non-obese. Half of the participants were assigned to eat 12 ounces of low-fat yogurt every day for nine weeks; a control group ate non-dairy pudding for nine weeks.

This investigation, among the largest human intervention studies to look at yogurt’s impact on chronic inflammation, was funded by the National Dairy Council, a non-profit organization supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s national dairy checkoff program.

At various points during the study, Bolling and his team took fasting blood samples from participants and evaluated an assortment of biomarkers that scientists have used over the years to measure endotoxin exposure and inflammation. As described in the British Journal of Nutrition this past December [Pei et al., 2017], the results showed that while some of the biomarkers remained steady over time, the yogurt-eaters experienced significant improvements in certain key markers, such as TNF-a, an important inflammation-activating protein.

“The results indicate that ongoing consumption of yogurt may be having a general anti-inflammatory effect,” says Bolling.

The new Journal of Nutrition article focuses on a different aspect of the study. Participants were also involved in a high-calorie meal challenge at the beginning and end of their nine-week dietary intervention. The challenge, meant to stress an individual’s metabolism, started with either a serving of yogurt or non-dairy pudding followed by a large high-fat, high-carb breakfast meal.

“It was two sausage muffins and two hash browns, for a total of 900 calories. But everybody managed it. They’d been fasting, and they were pretty hungry,” Bolling explains with a smile.

“Eating eight ounces of low-fat yogurt before a meal is a feasible strategy to improve post-meal metabolism and thus may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases.”

For both challenges, blood work showed that the yogurt “appetizer” helped improve some key biomarkers of endotoxin exposure and inflammation as participants digested the meal over the ensuing hours. It also helped improve glucose metabolism in obese participants, by speeding the reduction of post-meal blood glucose levels.

“Eating eight ounces of low-fat yogurt before a meal is a feasible strategy to improve post-meal metabolism and thus may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases,” says Ruisong Pei, a UW–Madison food science postdoctoral researcher involved in the studies.

The findings help expand the overall body of scientific knowledge about how foods impact inflammation.

Bolling’s study doesn’t identify which compounds in yogurt are responsible for the shift in biomarkers associated with the health-promoting effect—or how they act in the body. Solving that piece of the puzzle will require more research, Bolling notes.

“The goal is to identify the components and then get human evidence to support their mechanism of action in the body. That’s the direction we are going,” he says. “Ultimately, we would like to see these components optimized in foods, particularly for medical situations where it’s important to inhibit inflammation through the diet. We think this is a promising approach.”

References:


WORKSHOPS OFFERED:

- Departmental Research Administration
- Export Controls
- Financial Research Administration
- Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration
- Level II: Sponsored Project Administration: Critical Issues in Research Administration
- The Practical Side of Leadership

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NCURA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NATIONAL TRAVELING WORKSHOPS

Contract Negotiation and Administration Workshop
October 15-17, 2018 .......................................................... Charleston, SC

Departmental Research Administration Workshop
December 12-14, 2018 .......................................................... Savannah, GA

Export Controls Workshop
November 8-9, 2018 .......................................................... Alexandria, VA

Financial Research Administration Workshop
December 12-14, 2018 .......................................................... Savannah, GA

Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
December 12-14, 2018 .......................................................... Savannah, GA

Level II: Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
December 12-14, 2018 .......................................................... Savannah, GA

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Region II – Mid-Atlantic
October 21-24, 2018 .......................................................... Wheeling, WV

NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Financial Research Administration Conference
March 11-12, 2019 .............................................................. Las Vegas, NV

Pre-Award Research Administration Conference
March 14-15, 2019 .............................................................. Las Vegas, NV

ONLINE TUTORIALS – 10 week programs
A Primer on Clinical Trials
A Primer on Federal Contracting
A Primer on Intellectual Property in Research Agreements
A Primer on Subawards

WEBINARS

- Strategies to Maximize Opportunities While Managing Risk in Pre-Award
  October 18, 2018, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Growing a Grant Seeking Culture in the Arts and Humanities
  October 24, 2018, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- The Power of Metrics in Research Administration
  October 30, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Service Centers: An Introduction to Basic Accounting and Management
  November 8, 2:00-3:30 pm ET

DEADLINES FOR DECEMBER 2018

Submission of Articles to Contributing Editors ......................... October 5, 2018
Submission of Advertisements ................................................. October 10, 2018

Additional information for authors can be found at:
www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore/NCURAMagazine/Submissions.aspx

For further details and updates visit our events calendar at www.ncura.edu