Pipelines to the Future

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ON THE COVER:
In the world of science, research, and innovation, there is always something “in the pipeline.” In this issue Theresa Caban explores the future of research administration in her article “Using Technology to Support Novel Collaborative Teams – Is this the Future of Research Administration?” where she shares how communication tools and software can form effective virtual teams. We learn some great platforms to incorporate in our campus training tools from our standing column “Training Tips” by Tolise Dailey and Melanie Hebl.

Winding down the pipeline, Justine Magerman, Andrea Patino, Jenna Pedrin, and Chasimne Stoddart-Osumah describe how the five components of internal controls can provide institutions with processes that will be robust enough for auditors while streamlined for efficiencies to reduce administrative burden in “Internal Controls: Why Do They Matter?” No issue would be complete without a Spotlight on Research. This edition features the possible links between Instagram activity and personality traits over the past. Will Ferguson provides the results of a recently published study from the Journal of Research in Personality by Washington State University psychologists.

In the funding flow, “New Faculty GPS: A Model for Strengthening the Pipeline to a Grant-Active Future” authors Heather Beatty Johnston, Amy Hurley Cooper, and Megan Queen Cantwell share how finding new pipelines to success.

Angela Wishon is a Co-Editor of NCURA Magazine. She currently serves as the Vice President for Research Compliance and Administration at Prisma Health. As a licensed attorney in Texas and Colorado, she focuses on intellectual property and regulatory law. Angela has served as a site visitor for the AHRPP on NCURA’s Traveling Faculty, as a CTSA Regulatory Knowledge Core Director and routinely presents on research compliance and regulatory topics. She can be reached at angela.wishon@prismahealth.org.

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Tony Ventimiglia, NCURA President

It would have been hard for me to believe, over 12 months ago when I wrote my first message for the NCURA Magazine, how quickly the time would pass. While I had at first found the task daunting, I have come to enjoy sharing the great things that NCURA has done and will continue to do. As an organization, NCURA consistently keeps an eye to the future while nurturing what is already “in the pipeline.” The old adage, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” does not really apply to us. NCURA is already a mature organization and yet we must remain nimble and forward-thinking in all aspects of our programming.

I wanted to take a moment to highlight a few ways in which NCURA has been supporting our ever-evolving research enterprise. In August 2019, the NCURA Board of Directors approved the continuation of the NCURA Research Program to move forward as a permanent NCURA offering. During the beta years, NCURA funded 8 projects which resulted in broader impact to our membership and the profession. Some of those projects are still continuing years after their award ended. In addition, two new professional development offerings were developed in 2019 that further the goals of NCURA’s strategic vision: a webinar targeted for executive leadership - Vice President for Research (Executive Level): Successfully Managing Your Institutional Sponsored Portfolio, and an in-person auditor’s workshop. A note of thanks to the PDC and all involved in the development and initiation of these opportunities!

Looking toward the future, NCURA continues to set a path for success and support. One way this has been progressing is through some really incredible mentoring programs being facilitated by a number of NCURA regions (and currently in development in others). New members are our future and ensuring that they are mentored and provided resources to not only succeed as a research administrator, but as an active NCURA member, is critical. A second way is through our commitment to diversity and inclusion. With this commitment threaded through all activities and functions of the organization, we have started to benefit from the knowledge, skills and abilities of a new generation of research administrators.

In my final thoughts, I just wanted to share that I am incredibly impressed with the caliber of volunteers and staff that our organization relies on. There is so much that goes on “behind the scenes” that you may never see (unless you volunteer, which I do highly recommend…) but that contributes to the success of our programs, meetings, publications, and governance. In whatever capacity you volunteer, YOU make a difference and from the bottom of my heart, I am most truly appreciative.

“NCURA continues to set a path for success and support.”

Tony Ventimiglia is the 2019 NCURA President and serves as the Acting Executive Director of Research Administration Services at Auburn University. He can be reached at ventiaf@auburn.edu
New Faculty GPS: A Model for Strengthening the Pipeline to a Grant-Active Future

By Heather Beattey Johnston, Amy Hurley Cooper and Megan Queen Cantwell

There’s a good chance you’ve come across a question Louie Mantia, Jr. (@mantia) posted to Twitter in July 2018: “What’s something that seems obvious within your profession, but the general public seems to misunderstand?” For proposal development professionals, one activity that faculty—never mind the public—misunderstands is that grant-seeking has benefits beyond the financial. More than one PI has discovered that the process of writing a grant proposal has helped them refine a project itself.

With this in mind, Miami University’s Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship (OARS) developed the New Faculty Grant Planning and Support (New Faculty GPS) program.

New Faculty GPS is a five-year, two-phased program. Phase I allows about three months for faculty to work one-on-one with a consultant to create an individual development plan (IDP). The IDP maps out a vision for the faculty member’s years on the tenure track, including facets of teaching, research, work-life balance, and, importantly in this context, grant seeking. In Phase II, selected Phase I participants work intensively with a consultant on one grant application per year for five years.

Supporting faculty new to the tenure track can be a win-win for sponsored research offices and scholars alike. In helping faculty determine how to juggle competing demands, research offices can work to ensure that grant-seeking doesn’t get short shrift. In addition, helping faculty enhance the quality of their proposals improves the likelihood of a successful outcome. This, combined with boosting PIs’ confidence in their proposal-writing abilities, encourages future submissions.

Development of the program

OARS staff had long contemplated a new faculty support program. Anne Schauer, Miami’s Director of Research Support in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s College of Engineering & Applied Science, through shared involvement with the Society of Research Administrators International. Marjorie’s work with new faculty included creating IDPs and developing targeted proposals.

Then, serendipitously, consultant Carl Batt, principal of Stone Fence Collaborative, proposed a similar idea. Carl had been advising Miami faculty on proposals for National Science Foundation CAREER awards and other early career grants. He suggested the expansion that ultimately became the New Faculty GPS framework. The flowchart on the following page summarizes the program as implemented.

Funding, staffing, and buy-in

The budget for New Faculty GPS consists of funds generated by a modest endowment controlled by Miami’s Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI) and contributions from the academic divisions. We used our total budget and the flat fees proposed by Carl to determine the target number of participants per cohort: 20 for Phase I and 14 (two per division) for Phase II each year. With cohorts participating for five years each, we will have 100 participants annually once the program is spun up. Seventy of those will participate in Phase II.

Faced with such numbers, OARS staff realized that multiple consultants would be needed to offer the intended level of service and to provide for contingencies. With Carl already on board, we recruited three additional consultants. Burr Zimmerman of UVG Ltd. and Megan Queen Cantwell of MQC Consulting had previously provided Miami with training and proposal development support. Marjorie Piechowski, now retired from UWM and working as a consultant, was a natural choice, since it was her work that originally inspired us. The four consultants agreed to work at the fixed per-participant flat rate Carl had suggested for each phase.

Securing buy-in and cost share from Miami’s divisional deans was fairly straightforward in light of a track record of successful work with consultants. For several years before proposing the New Faculty GPS program, OARS had been paying for significant ad hoc proposal development work between faculty and outside consultants. This investment paid off for OARS and the divisions. OARS’s return averages 19.5x investment, based on our 20% recovery of F&A costs. Had the divisions paid directly for this work, their 60% F&A recovery rate would have given them returns as high as 150x investment.

From OARS’s perspective, New Faculty GPS was an approach to formalizing a process for a segment of Miami’s faculty to secure consultation services. It also allowed us to set an expectation for divisions to help bear the costs of proposal development consultation. The previous successful outcomes predisposed the divisional deans to agree to the predictable and modest cost share (see the table below). In addition, the freedom to choose the participants meant that the deans would have a measure of control over how their money would be spent. In the end, the VPRI had little trouble convincing all seven divisions to buy in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program component</th>
<th>OARS’s % cost share</th>
<th>Divisions’ % cost share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase I (IDP)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II (proposal development)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosting for community meetings</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote collaboration platform</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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The consultant-faculty relationship

The selection of consultants was primarily informed by past performance in providing Miami faculty support. We also accounted for a wide range of faculty skill levels, areas of interest, and work styles. The variation in our four consultants’ backgrounds gave us latitude to pair each New Faculty GPS participant with the consultant who seemed best-suited based on sponsor experience, disciplinary expertise, and personal approach.
Consultants and faculty participants were free to determine the communication structure that suited them best. Some faculty-consultant pairs used a template to guide IDP development and allow for easy tracking of the faculty member’s progress toward meeting proposal development and submission goals. OARS encouraged all faculty-consultant communications, draft development, and resources to be shared (and automatically stored) via a common remote collaboration platform. In Year 1, particularly during the Phase I-to-Phase II transition, the consultants found this platform enabled efficient tracking of participant communication and progress. For faculty participants, meanwhile, the availability of a central repository for their IDP grant-related communications, and funding opportunity prospects aided their organization and prompted them to revisit their proposal development goals regularly.

**“Supporting faculty new to the tenure track can be a win-win...”**

**Conclusion**

The first year of the New Faculty GPS program showed some promising results, with 82% of participants indicating they were “extremely” or “moderately” satisfied with their first year of participation in the program, and with none indicating they were “dissatisfied.” All participants reported feeling more confident about future proposal submissions, and 82% reported that they applied to a more competitive program and that their proposals were of higher quality than they would have been without participation. Participants did indicate a need for more clarity in program goals and expectations. We have used this feedback to make changes as we prepare to welcome a new cohort.

For their part, Miami sponsored research officers Anne Schauer and Amy Cooper are finding that GPS participants are better-prepared and more knowledgeable about the submission process, allowing for additional time on strategy discussions and relationship-building. Feedback shared at an NCURA Annual Meeting session on this topic suggests that many of our colleagues are exploring strategies to develop stronger grant-seeking pipelines on their campuses. New Faculty GPS represents a replicable model for research administrators to engage faculty as early as possible in their careers while driving greater overall grant success.

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**Heather Beattie Johnston, MA, is Associate Director for Research Communications at Miami University. She supports Miami researchers in their efforts to communicate effectively with funding agencies, commercial partners, and other external audiences. She can be reached at johnsthb@MiamiOH.edu**

**Amy Hurley Cooper is Assistant Director for Proposal Development in the Office of Research and Innovation at Miami University and has pre-award responsibility for half of the university’s departments. She can be reached at amy.cooper@MiamiOH.edu**

**Megan Queen Cantwell has supported strategic planning and proposal development efforts of education institutions and other nonprofit organizations since 1994. She founded MQC Consulting in 2013. She can be reached at meg@MQCConsulting.com**
often when discussing what we think the world will look like in the future, we talk about flying cars, walkways that move, computers without screens, space travel, living in biospheres, robot maids…we think about the Jetsons. We don’t often bring that world home to our own real-life experience: what will my job look like in 25 years? What issues will the research administrator of 2044 be dealing with? What will the future of research administration look like?

This article addresses a vision of the future where going to the office may mean dropping in for the occasional all-day meeting and catching a web-based presentation are the norm. Perhaps there is no central office but a central team from which specialized teams spread. The models of centralized and de-centralized offices no longer exist, and all work is accomplished via specialized “virtual” teams who filter task completion through leads. Chinowsky and Rojas (2002) have defined virtual teams as “A group of people with complementary competencies executing simultaneous collaborative work processes through electronic media without regard to geographic location.” The future cradles the notion of “working alone, together” – a group of people working interdependently to accomplish the same or similar end, all the while communicating, sharing, teaching, mentoring, coordinating and accomplishing their goals without ever needing to meet in person.

Work Space – Now and the Future
The difference between this future and current reality is the existence of a defined space for work to occur; this is our normal. The mere presence of a brick-and-mortar location provides enough evidence for people to know that work is done there. This understanding carries certain responsibilities, needs, desires and expectations that happen within the building. “Remove the building and do those same ideologies still exist? Does the building make the job or does the individual?” Technology is now so advanced that the need for a “place” to work is becoming obsolete.

Philosophically we understand that work is always occurring; it’s not relegated to just the “office” necessarily. Face-to-face interactions, outside of the scheduled video conferences with colleagues, become the rare exception. It is because of these technological advances that the reach of research administration can be so broad and profound. Enabling what would otherwise be an impossibility — meeting virtually with folks from around the world in different time zones to resolve issues, move tasks forward and simply brainstorm — would be accomplished easily with little pre-planning. Technology will be so linked to our daily lives that the technology will predict our needs before we do.

The Virtual Team = Alone/Together
The concept of working together/apart has certain complexities that can have negative impact on the team and its goals, such as the inability to understand issues, especially those where emotion and passion exist because of the lack of physical interaction. Human actionable cues are a helpful part of communication and without them understanding can be difficult. Missed cues will occur and people will assume there is an issue rather than working them out. “Moreover, customers might perceive a lack of permanency, reliability, and consistency in virtual forms” (Mowshowitz, 1997). Ideologies like emotional intelligence and leadership become required skills for the virtual team member.

Despite these concerns, the virtual team structure, peppered with experts in specific areas, is likely to continue to evolve and become a permanent model in research administration. Things to consider in building sustainable virtual teams include:

- align each person’s expertise with meaningful responsibilities on the team;
- determine the team goals and, if long term, mission;
- make sure the team is diverse;
- make sure the team has access to the necessary tools; and
- acknowledge that the team is a collaboration of thoughts and skills.

Helpful technical tools to enable virtual team success may include email, text messaging/instant messaging, online chats, telephone calls, video conferencing and multimedia messaging. In addition, coordination work will rely on tools such as shared databases/files, directories, calendars; electronic platforms supporting team workspace, team website, project workflows and project management software, electronic whiteboards/smart boards, and wikis. When labor is partitioned into areas of expertise, the processes appear to be more efficient and effective.

Dr. Janice Presser, Co-Founder and CEO of The Gabriel Institute and Teamability.com (Presser, 2019) says, “To build positive, collaborative team interaction it is essential to recognize that a team has a life of its own, and that different modes of teaming can be just as important to collaboration and productivity as different areas of expertise are to the work that needs to be done.”

Communication, Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration
So then, what is needed to avoid issues that undermine teams? In a word, Trust.

Trust is at the crux of every relationship. When we discuss teams, virtual or otherwise, we are talking about relationships. Therefore, it is imperative
that team members trust each other regardless of their differences. Remember, team members may not know each other or may never meet in person, so identifying potential issues at the outset and setting expectations will help mitigate trust issues. After all, the success of the virtual team is dependent on the shared vision and trust in the team.

Additionally, teamwork is only as good as the members allow it to be. Virtual teams need to be cognizant of their differences, afford the opportunity to rectify situations and consider each other in each approach. The smallest insurgent can topple a virtual team and acknowledgment of this is key, as is noting key elements of successful teamwork: communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

When all team members have these skills, the team works faster and better, is customer-driven, has increased control over tasks and deliverables, is more strategic, can adapt to change easily, and can make decisions based on principle not power. There is a resulting increased return on investment.

In order to meet this call of the future, research administrators need to be able to communicate, compromise, be reliable and consistent, work well with others (teamwork), and be tolerant and authentic. Team leadership roles will vary depending on the goal and the client ask. Virtual work well with others (teamwork), and be tolerant and authentic. Team leadership roles will vary depending on the goal and the client ask. Virtual workers need to be a leader because of the lack of direct human contact. Know that disagreement is normal and healthy as long as team members aren’t afraid to share their truths while always being respectful and professional.

Looking Ahead
As the field of research administration continues to mature, utilizing technologies as it grows, the endemic spirit of interdependence will continue. There may come a time, perhaps before 2044, when the research administrator is carrying on with life, when work and non-work life are so inter-meshed and work processes so advanced technologically, that work happens wherever you are. Meetings quite literally pop-up, no screen or meeting room necessary – virtual reality becomes work reality. Ad hoc meetings happen on the fly, and those with whom you work, support, or provide a service may never meet you in person. The research administrator of 2044 may be on a team rife with expertise where the biggest challenges are meeting deadlines and human behavior. No real difference from today, except that a healthy work–life balance may actually be the norm in the future.

References

Theresa Caban, MPA, CRA, is the Manager of Clinical Trials and Industry Contracts in the Office of Research Administration, at the Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance, California. Theresa and her team manage a portfolio of over 200 clinical trials and industry projects. She is a mentor in Region VI’s Lead Me Program and an educator. She can be reached at Theresa.Caban@lundquist.org

The Research Administration as a Profession (RAAAP-2) Survey

The second iteration of the RAAAP survey is still live – but hurry, it closes on Friday 13th December 2019 – so you don’t have much time left to contribute!

INORMS associations are circulating the survey link to respective members – around 30,000 individuals working in Research Management and Administration across the world.

We hope that your participation in the survey will provide greater knowledge on the profession across several geographic regions, as well as how the profession is changing over time.

The survey can be found at http://bit.ly/INORMSRAAAP2 and should take around 15 minutes to complete.

You can find out more on the project website: https://inorms.net/activities/raaap-taskforce

And see progress on: https://inorms.net/activities/raaap-taskforce/raaap-survey-2019

Associations include: ACU, ARMA, ARMA-NL, ARMS, AURAM, BESTPRAC, BRAMA, CalRIMA, CARA-ACAAR, CASSP, DARMA, EARIMA, EARMA, Finn-ARMA, FORTRAMA, IceARMA, India Alliance, NARMA, Ncura, NORDP, PIC, PraxisAuril, RMAN-J, SARIMA, SRAI, SWARMA, and WARIMA.
Like all research administrators, research compliance professionals must react to emerging and unanticipated risks. Most experienced research compliance professionals have tactics and a toolkit for their daily work in addition to responding to unanticipated changes in the regulatory environment or unanticipated noncompliance events. However, it is also critically important to the health of the research organization that research compliance professionals focus on strategic activities. This article will explore how research compliance professionals can use strategy to ensure a robust pipeline for the future of their institutions in addition to tactics and toolkits. These strategies will be grouped into three main categories: educational activities, institutional engagement, and utilizing connections and collaborations.

Continued education is critical for all individuals supporting research since cutting edge discoveries and the national and international political environment can both drive regulatory and policy change. Compliance professionals, especially those that support more than one domain, can find it incredibly challenging to keep up with the regulatory landscape and implement necessary programs at their institution. One strategy to ensure that research compliance professionals are keeping up with these changes and that institutions are not relying on a single point of failure, is to have a broad approach to education about research compliance requirements. Not just to focus on training for research compliance professionals, but also for other key individuals at the institution.

Research administrators have many options for continuing education related to compliance. These include broad research administration conferences such as those hosted by NCURA, to more specialized conferences. For example, the Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM&R) annual conference is focused on human subjects’ protection or animal care and use. Research compliance professionals should encourage their research administration peers to attend compliance-oriented sessions at these professional development conferences. For more in-depth training, there are several Master’s programs in Research Administration now offered, all of which have at least one-semester long course focused on research compliance. Research compliance professionals should also attend meetings where emerging issues and potential solutions are discussed. Two examples of such meetings are the Council on Government Relations (COGR) meetings and the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) meetings. Both meetings bring in federal agency representatives and others to discuss emerging concerns in research administration, many of which are research compliance related.

Finally, related to educational activities, providing local education on research compliance is critical to this strategic educational pipeline. At George Mason University, for instance, we approach this in several ways. First, all members of the research compliance team are provided funding to attend professional development conferences pertinent to their responsibilities in addition to webinars. The research compliance team trains researchers in a variety of topics relevant to the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). We have also held several retreats with our Research Council (Associate Deans for Research and other key research positions) focused on RCR and also discussed RCR case studies at our regular Research Council meetings. Finally, we developed an Advanced Certificate in Research Integrity for research administrators (Dade, 2018). So far, 38 research administrators have completed a semester-long five-course series on various topics related to research compliance. By approaching RCR education holistically we hope to build a pipeline of informed individuals around campus who can discuss RCR and report RCR concerns in addition to having knowledgeable, trained individuals for succession planning.

The second strategic approach, institutional engagement activities, can build an additional pipeline of knowledge and leverage talent within an institution. Within the Office of Research, research compliance professionals should regularly engage with the sponsored programs and technology transfer staff to share information and gain knowledge of the activities in those units. There are other critical connections outside...
of the Office of Research, as well. Many institutions engage in enterprise risk management or risk assessment activities carried out by an Enterprise Risk Management Council or Internal Audit. Engaging with these activities can be very helpful in ensuring that appropriate policies and practices have been developed, bringing in outside perspectives, and also leveraging knowledge about, and suggestions for, an effective compliance program. Additionally, gaps that are identified through these formal processes might enable additional resources for the research compliance program to ensure that it is comprehensive and strategic. Another institutional engagement activity that can be extremely valuable is with the Government Relations office. At many institutions, there are experts in both state and federal government relations, and these individuals can keep an eye on emerging legislation and regulations that could potentially lead to new compliance requirements. Finally, regularly engaging with the institution’s legal counsel can be very helpful in ensuring they are aware of the compliance programs and also having resources when noncompliance issues arise.

The final strategic approach, utilizing connections and collaborations, is key to having a pipeline into the future for an institution. There are many opportunities to engage with peers at other institutions who have similar research compliance roles. Attending conferences, both the large national ones described above as well as more specialized local or regional ones are valuable opportunities to get to know peers. Outside of conferences, professional societies provide extensive opportunities for connecting with other research compliance professionals. NCURA offers the Collaborate online community, traveling workshops in which peers can come to your institution and provide training, and the Peer Review program in which your institution’s research compliance program can undergo a detailed analysis with recommendations provided which can serve as a strategic roadmap for the future of the institution’s research compliance program.

Although these strategic activities take an investment of time, and in some cases money, they are well worth that investment. The pipeline into the future for any research institution must have a robust research compliance program to ensure success.

Reference

Aurali Dade, PhD, serves as the Associate Vice President for Research and Innovation at George Mason University. She provides leadership for the Research and Innovation Initiatives (RRI) team which includes programs, offices, institutes and centers that are focused on supporting, connecting, communicating about, and convening researchers internally and with external partners. Prior to accepting this role in 2019, she led research compliance focused units for twelve years and led and served in environmental health and safety functions for eight years. She can be reached at adade3@gmu.edu
For the Middle East, the name of the game in the past 15-20 years when it comes to research has been growth. For the Arabian Gulf region specifically, we have seen marked increases in the volume of scientific publications and the quantity of institutes that produce research of a high caliber. There is still however considerable room for improvement relative to other regions of the world. Preparation for the future thus involves efforts to maintain this growth and to establish these accomplishments within a sustainable and more mature research ecosystem. This article will discuss some of the efforts being undertaken in Qatar, at the country level and from my vantage point at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI).

Many of the Arabian Gulf countries score fairly high when it comes to per capita income or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but their research productivity or knowledge output is lower than it should be when compared to similarly high-income countries. This is partially a result of economies mostly dependent on the extraction and export of oil and gas reserves. Another reason however is a dearth in research human capital. As such, it is incredibly important to establish a pipeline that produces researchers and the necessary support staff to sustain and maintain growth. Considerable investment was undertaken in the country to recruit highly capable researchers from other countries, but the challenge now is to build on this and develop the next generation of homegrown capabilities and resources. Organizations like the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) have therefore increasingly emphasized the issue of capacity building when making funding allocation decisions and have modified their eligibility rules to mandate positioning the locus of research endeavors within the country. Within local universities such as the DI, we have developed initiatives to support our graduates obtain employment as researchers within our externally and internally funded research projects and have attained some success in this realm. There is still much work to be done however to make research an attractive and suitable employment prospect from both a demand side (research projects and initiatives) and supply side (quantity and quality of university graduate programs). These efforts will not only develop the research enterprise but also directly feed into country objectives that seek economic diversification beyond oil and gas and the establishment of a knowledge-based economy.

On the funding side, we are seeing more initiatives that directly serve the idea of generating a pipeline of research projects. At the DI, we have developed programs that offer seed funding for faculty to conduct preliminary studies in the hope of this resulting in more expansive and impactful research projects. There are also increased efforts to encourage interdisciplinary research in targeted topic areas or strategic priorities. This is being accomplished through specialized calls by the funding organizations, and by active facilitation in the universities and research institutes. Research funding diversification is also arguably important in the discussion about sustainability. Funding in the Arabian Gulf primarily comes from government sources, but there is a strategic push towards engaging the private sector in this realm. There remains to be some structural challenges to achieving this, largely as a result of the fossil-fuel centric economies.

Establishing a successful research ecosystem requires active engagement and contributions from non-academic stakeholders in the public and private sectors. In the Middle East, this matter is very much a work in progress. Rather than a one-way pipeline, the above would establish a two-way feedback loop that is mutually beneficial for both sides. Research should produce tangible benefits to local communities and economies, which in turn will further investment in the research enterprise. There are numerous initiatives being undertaken on this front. QNRF for example has recently modified its flagship-funding program from an investigator driven model to a mission driven one that is more focused on priority themes in line with the country’s national research strategy. QNRF is also actively encouraging partnerships or funding commitments from non-academic stakeholders in order to clearly delineate the research results’ “end-users” and to serve as an impetus for research funding diversification. Other initiatives on this front include a greater focus on the transferability of research to outcomes like patents, technology and policy prescriptions that can directly benefit society and regular stakeholder forums that seek to garner input from a diversity of views towards the crafting and updating of national research strategies. The focus on applied research should however not dismiss the importance of basic research, which is increasingly being funded internally at universities and research centers. The increased awareness and support of the research enterprise within society should be leveraged to educate and inform the public about the benefits of basic research, which often create the necessary pipelines for applied research processes.

It is important for the region to maintain its research productivity growth. Research ecosystem maturity can however only be attained with mechanisms that assure sustainability and long-term continuity. Achieving this will require a substantial commitment by policy and decision makers for the benefit of their societies and economies.
The latest in-person Board of Directors (“Board”) meeting was held at the Historic Kent Manor Inn from November 2-3, 2019. The inn dates to 1820 and is often used by NCURA for the Executive Leadership Program retreats. It’s a lovely place and I would highly recommend staying there if you’re ever thinking of going to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Since we were there right after Halloween, some of us were a little more sensitive to the spookiness of the almost 200-year-old inn than usual. I’m not saying the middle-of-the-night creaks in the hall were ghostly footsteps…but I’m not saying they weren’t either!

On Saturday, the Board attended a workshop led by Susan Dunlap about productive communications as it relates to our duties as NCURA leaders. We learned about powerful questions to ask such as “What have you tried?” or “What risks do you see?” We also learned about productive and destructive responses to conflict and managing over-commitment—the always difficult “saying no,” something research administrators often have problems doing.

On Sunday, the Board had many action items to review and approve. A revised NCURA Administrative Policies and Procedures document was approved. There was also new Education Scholarship Fund Financial Policies and Procedures document submitted by the Financial Management Committee that was discussed in detail, then approved with some small changes.

The Financial Management Committee also submitted the NCURA 2020 budget for examination and approval. After the Treasurer (me) noted that we have a rather tight budget next year ($5,000 net operating income), some of which is due to new programs’ budgets, such as the NCURA Research Program and Humanitarian Fund, the budget was approved as-is.

One very exciting discussion that took place was whether NCURA should consider having our Annual Meeting of the membership somewhere other than the Washington, DC when our current Washington Hilton contract expires after 2024. It was felt that there could be some options for the meeting’s location such as two years in DC, one year away or even every other year. If this was something the membership felt strongly about, there would need to be a change in the bylaws to accommodate the change and at this point there is no consideration in changing the August timeframe. There will be a survey coming out from NCURA so every member can have their voice heard in this matter: please make sure to keep an eye out for it in the near future.

After this, the Board approved various appointments to the Board of Directors, the Select Committee on Global Affairs, the Education Scholarship Fund Select Committee, the Select Committee on Peer Review, the Professional Development Committee, the Financial Management Committee, and the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. We also approved two new Education Scholarship Fund recipients and seven NCURA Global Fellows.

The Board then thanked Tony Ventimiglia, the 2019 NCURA President, for all of his hard work and leadership this year and our last in-person meeting for the year adjourned.

Feel free to reach out to any member of the Board of Directors or NCURA staff if you have any questions, concerns, or comments!

Anne Albinak is the Director of Research Administration Operations at the Johns Hopkins University’s Whiting School of Engineering. She is currently the Treasurer of NCURA and sits on the Financial Management and Education Scholarship Fund committees. She is also a Lecturer in Johns Hopkins University’s Master of Science in Research Administration degree program. She can be reached at aalbinak@jhu.edu
Welcome to the inaugural installment of the NSF OIG Corner! We, the National Science Foundation Office of Inspector General, are honored to partner with NCURA Magazine to share insight into the workings of NSF OIG, including common audit findings, research misconduct concerns, and best practices. In this introductory article, we’ll explain a bit about what we do and share some resources from our office.

**What is an Inspector General?**
Federal IGs have been in business since 1978, when President Carter signed the Inspector General Act creating the first 12 offices. Today there are 74 IGs, about half of which are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate; the remaining IGs are appointed by the heads of the agencies they serve. IGs are charged with preventing and detecting waste, fraud, and abuse — as well as promoting economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in their agency’s programs and operations. IG offices are organizationally independent from their agencies; for example, our IG reports to the National Science Board and Congress. Because IGs are nonpartisan, they don’t have to leave when the administration changes, and Congress must be notified if the President or an agency head wants to remove them from office.

**What does NSF OIG do and who works there?**
We conduct independent audits, investigations, and other reviews to help NSF improve its policies and practices to better support its mission. Auditors, investigators, attorneys, scientists, and data analysts all call our office home. The investigations side of the house pursues allegations of research misconduct — plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification, as well as allegations concerning misuse of NSF funds, false statements in documents submitted to NSF, and employee misconduct. The audit side reviews NSF-funded grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements to determine if costs claimed by award recipients are allowable, reasonable, and properly allocated. Our auditors also evaluate internal controls, as well as financial, IT, and other systems that affect the operation of NSF programs.

**What is the difference between an audit and an investigation?**
Audits are objective and systematic assessments of how well offices are carrying out programs and operations and focus on process. Auditors follow the Government Auditing Standards, known as the “Yellow Book,” issued by the Comptroller General. Audits focus on program performance or look at programs’ financial management. Audit reports containing findings and recommendations are issued to agency heads and management officials that can act on the audit recommendations. Audit reports are almost always public documents and are always sent to Congress. Investigations are usually undertaken in response to allegations of wrongdoing and focus upon a person or entity. Investigators follow the Quality Standards for Investigations issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Investigations may result in referrals to the U.S. Department of Justice or other prosecutors for criminal or civil remedies or referrals to NSF for administrative actions such as government-wide suspension or debarment. Public access to investigative reports is usually limited and is governed by statutes, including the Privacy Act.

**Where can I find more information?**
Head to our website at nsf.gov/oig for more information. There you’ll find:
- Our reports and reviews, and NSF’s management responses
- Investigations’ case closeout information
- Our annual Audit Work Plan
- Our tweets, also available on Twitter @NSFOIG

**How can I report fraud, waste, abuse or whistleblower reprisal?**
- **Anonymous Hotline:** 1.800.428.2189
- **Email:** oig@nsf.gov
- **Mail:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
  ATTN: OIG HOTLINE

Whistleblowers play a critical role in keeping our Government honest, efficient, and accountable. Please visit [www.nsf.gov/oig/whistleblower.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/oig/whistleblower.jsp) for information about whistleblower protection.

Have a question or an idea for the NSF OIG Corner? Please contact us at OIGPublicAffairs@nsf.gov.

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**Ken Lish, CPA, CFE, MBA,** is the Director for the Contract Grant Audits team in the Office of Audits at the National Science Foundation. He is responsible for overseeing NSF OIG audits of NSF award recipients. Ken joined the NSF OIG in 2009. He can be reached at klish@nsf.gov

**Additional Contributors:**
Lisa Vonder Haar, Chief of Staff, NSF OIG
Elizabeth Argeris Lewis, MPA, Executive Officer, Office of Audits, NSF OIG
Aliza Sacknovitz, Ph.D., CFE, Senior Investigative Scientist, Office of Investigations, NSF OIG
NCURA PEER PROGRAMS

PEER ASSISTANCE BY RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS FOR RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS

NCURA Peer Programs brings expert research administrators to your institution to provide detailed, specific recommendations on how to improve operations at your institution. These research administrators bring to your institution an understanding of best practices in models of operation and environments similar to your own.

NCURA Peer Programs offers holistic reviews of both sponsored programs and research compliance operations, as well as more focused Advisory services, tailored to your specific wants and needs.

HTTP://WWW.NCURA.EDU/INSTITUTIONALPROGRAMS.ASPX PEERREVIEW@NCURA.EDU
As research grows and the demand for research administration service increases, many institutions are looking towards expanding their services to faculty members. Keep in mind that we strive to maintain minimal administrative burden for the faculty member so they can focus on the science. The goal of this article is to share two different paths in creating research services with hopes of providing some novel, simple ideas for those looking to develop services in their respective department, school, or college.

Building Infrastructure in the School of Public Health at UNTSC at Fort Worth
It’s been five years since launching the Office of Research Services (ORS) in the School of Public Health (SPH) at the University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC) at Fort Worth. What started out as a request by the SPH faculty to the Dean to create a Research Manager position that would provide assistance with most everything except writing the proposals has turned into a small, resourceful team offering Pre- and Post-Award with some Compliance support.

During the process of creating a research services team, some key areas that were necessary to help in the development became clear. The development of ORS took a year to roll out, and there is so much that could be shared about the journey. However, these are some key highlights: know your faculty, know key university stakeholders, and know your people.

Know your faculty
Touch-base, face-to-face meetings were scheduled with each faculty member and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The purpose was to get to know the faculty and to learn about their research interests. Each faculty member was asked “What are your top two needs with research assistance?” Not only did we learn about each other, but this created the opportunity to start building trust. Being proactive and knowing that someone has their interest in mind goes a long way in building research services.

Know key university stakeholders
Working closely with the central Office of Sponsored Programs was important during the process because they became a champion for ORS. At a time when resources were stretched, they welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with our team. The opportunity to have assistance for faculty at the college level, where time could be spent on the nuts and bolts of proposals and assisting in managing awards, would help ease the pre- and post-award process at the central office. Many of our faculty engage in research involving human subjects, so working with Office of Research Compliance proved beneficial to our faculty.

Know your people
Don’t try to reinvent something that has already been done. Fellow NCURA colleagues were outstanding resources during the development of ORS. NCURA Collaborate was used as a way of posting a request when looking for information on how to do something. Many colleagues offered their best practices and allowed us to use or tweak their process to make it work for SPH. This saved a tremendous amount of time. In addition, we identified other peer institutions that have research services in their school of public health, and which shared their best practices.
Faculty members appreciate the personalized assistance with proposal preparation, budgets, and post-award monitoring. Another set of eyes during the review process is also appreciated by the central Office of Sponsored Programs. By offering this type of assistance, ORS is able to streamline the process for our faculty by reducing some of the administrative burden. We are able to submit complete proposal packages to the central office timely so that they are able to review and prepare for final submission. Our assistance in post-award monitoring aids both the faculty and the central office in tracking effort, cost principals, and other compliance issues in sponsored projects. We continue to look for new ways to support our faculty and to add to the research pipeline at UNTHSC.

Building Infrastructure at Dell Medical School at the UT Austin
During this time, at another school in Texas not too far down the way, the Dell Medical School was also launching a new centralized departmental research administration unit. Unlike UNTHSC, the Dell Medical School at the University of Texas at Austin was itself just beginning. The Sponsored Projects Administration unit was starting from scratch, trying to find its place in both this new medical school and the greater campus. Though similarly, what began as a single position to support faculty research endeavors, quickly evolved.

The Dell Medical School’s Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) was created as one of five centralized business units within the School. Of course, as with most start-up endeavors, the application of these business units has evolved over the last five years, and SPA’s place in the School has changed over the past four years, moving from the Finance & Administration portfolio to Research Operations and then about eighteen months ago to being within the then created Dell Medical School Office of Research. As part of the Dell Medical School Office of Research, the SPA team supports the School’s comprehensive book of departmental sponsored projects administration needs. The greater mission of the Office of Research is to support all research activities within the Medical School, including compliance and regulatory needs, and building clinical research/trials infrastructure in partnership with our clinical teams and our partner hospital.

Throughout all of these changes, three areas have emerged as key to ensuring the success of the Sponsored Projects Administration unit: communication is critical, find your champion(s), and get to know people as individuals.

Communication is Critical
In the beginning, it was an office-of-one at a brand new school. Communication, reaching out across campus, meeting with faculty, finding out what they were doing and when it might be due, and figuring out who was who was integral to being successful. As the portfolio has grown in complexity, continuing to identify the appropriate resources and policies, create local policies, ask questions of our leaders, and get items in front of the right people before they become issues, has been critical.

Find your Champion(s)
Find the people within your school and around campus who are going to advocate for and support you. There will be bumps along the way. Knowing who to seek guidance from and who has your back will go a long way. Keep these people abreast of what is happening and do what you can to ensure that they do not get blindsided.

Get to know people as Individuals
For many of us, email is our primary form of communication and often we have work “friends” that, like Facebook friends, we may never see or actually speak to. Go to lunch; be the one with the candy bucket; when in doubt (or on the third reply in email); call. Sitting down with a faculty member, calling or going to meet in person with colleagues and counterparts on campus, and team lunches are relatively small things that helped to foster a sense of community, comradeship, and trust which played a direct role in SPAs success. Dell Medical School’s SPA is an ever-evolving enterprise and there has been quite a lot of building the car while driving it. This model for SPA has allowed the unit to grow as the portfolio has grown. It has built success around ensuring consistency and professionalism in sponsored projects administration. Additionally, the inclusion of our team within the Office of Research has allowed sponsored projects to continue to play an integral part in the conversations around the future of research at the medical school.

Building a research services infrastructure requires the collaboration of many people on campuses. For the different strategies outlined above, faculty were the core and should be the top priority for success as their support can be a key selling point. They will help you build your credibility. By providing excellent service, the two institutions first understood the needs, experiences, and pain points. Empathy and patience are important, with the end result being to ensure that faculty are afforded the best research services to help them advance their research endeavors.

“…knowing that someone has their interest in mind goes a long way in building research services.”
When we think of training others, we often think of how we are educating them in the present: instructor-led courses, webinars, online tutorials, and videos. However, our next generation of research administrators will be working in a world that will be dominated by technology, giving them an abundance of learning resources. Even with countless learning resources at hand, our future learners may still need dedicated support to develop and thrive. The urgency is on this generation of trainers to filter through today’s technology so we can begin developing meaningful digital learning platforms that will prepare all research administrators for the next frontier.

“Digital Learning” incorporates technology into the training process by enhancing the learning experience. This can include any type of learning that is accompanied by technology or makes effective use of technology to improve learner outcomes. Examples of digital learning that you are likely already familiar with are Blending Learning, Online Learning, and Mobile Learning.

Here are three digital learning concepts that may be new to you:

**Gamification**
Incorporation of games into training sessions to challenge and engage the audience.

**Added Value** – Stimulates the transfer of information and makes it retainable

**Platforms to Consider** – Kahoot.com, Quizizz.com, Mindspace.net

**Microlearning**
Incorporation of small, specific bursts of content giving learners control of what and when they are learning. Online Microlearning bursts work best when kept to 5-minutes or less.

**Added Value** – Makes learning instant, adaptable, self-directed, and efficient.

**Platforms to Consider** – UMU.com, mysimpleshow.com, powtoon.com

**Social Learning**
Learning from our peers using social media; blogs, organizational discussion platforms.

**Added Value** – On demand access to information when you need it

**Platforms to Consider** – Blackboard.com, Google Groups

As research administrators, we must stay abreast of the ever-evolving research enterprise with its changing policies, changing procedures, and our changing responsibilities. As trainers we must try to stay ahead of these changes to prepare our learners for the future. Consider adding digital learning to your training program to enhance the learning environment. By being creative, moving outside of our comfort zones, and taking some risks we will be able to produce and provide a flourishing learning environment for our learners now and into the future.
NCURA GLOBAL INITIATIVES:  
Supporting Research Globally…Together

The 10-year anniversary of NCURA’s Global Fellowship Program afforded us the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the programs and knowledge we have shared around the world since 2009. Having positioned ourselves at the forefront of strengthening US universities’ engagement with the world and to empower research across borders, disciplines, and sectors, we recently rebranded NCURA Global to Global Initiatives, to more accurately reflect all we are doing to support research around the world.

NCURA’s mission of “advancing the profession of research administration through education and professional development programs, the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and the fostering a diverse, collegial, and respected global community” is supported by our Global Initiatives which offer numerous programs to the research community. As we continue to serve all NCURA members — including those in our international region and our US members who are involved in global research administration — we provide a global network of organizations and institutions for support and partnerships. Our extended network of research administrators and managers from all over the world, including our close relationship with many embassies here in Washington, DC, serve as vital starting points to further international research collaborations. In addition, other professional development opportunities, such as our Global Fellowship program and Global workshops are available to assist in building the requisite infrastructure for the global research enterprise.

Current Objectives:
1. Effectively identify, build and facilitate global research partnerships and integrate the activities of our Global Initiatives into the core fabric and vision of NCURA.
2. Build, maintain and expand international outreach in Washington, DC and from all geographic areas for delivery of NCURA offerings, in consultation with regional members and volunteers.
3. Develop and manage programs aimed at supporting professional education for research administrators and managers and for enhancing global research collaboration.

Talking about his experience with NCURA’s Global Initiatives, Ara Tahmasmine of Harvard University, shared:

“NCURA’s Global Initiatives truly reflect the motto ‘Supporting Research Together.’ Their programs bring global research administrators and managers together to share their experiences in order to facilitate international research collaboration amongst researchers and institutions. Global Initiatives’ activities include hosting research administrators from across the globe to meet in the US; awarding fellowships for exchange of experts; coordinating with Science Diplomats at embassies in the US; and sending experts to conduct global workshops across the world on how to manage US funded research.”

Current Programs and Resources:

1. NCURA Global Fellowship

The NCURA Global Fellowship programs are a joint initiative between NCURA and our sister research administration organizations as well as between our US Regions and the International Region. The fellowship programs have two underlying objectives: (i) the training of research administrators, and (ii) enhancing global research collaboration. These programs are intended to reduce barriers to global research administration and create an administrative framework conducive to global research collaboration. These fellowship programs provide an opportunity for research administrators to travel to another country’s research organization and to immerse themselves in a program of mutual learning and knowledge exchange. NCURA will support up to USD $2,000 in travel costs, and fellows are expected to pass on their experiences and knowledge of how research administration management operates at their institution, to identify best practices and the local knowledge of their host institutions, and to respect all appropriate organizational rules and cultural practices.

2. Horizon 2020 funded projects to facilitate EU-US research collaboration.

NCURA was an official partner in the Bilat USA 4.0 project and continues to promote US participation in Horizon 2020 programs through workshops, on-line communications, and face-to-face meetings.

Similarly, NCURA is also a part of ENRICH (European Network of Research and Innovation Centers and Hubs), and currently offers services to connect European research, technology and business organizations with the US technology and innovation ecosystem.

3. Global Educational Programs

NCURA’s Global Initiatives have brought workshops to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. These international workshops focus on the fundamentals of research administration, including best practices in grant proposal preparation, US funding opportunities for international researchers, how to manage US federal grants, etc. These workshops also serve as venues for forming research collaborations and partnerships while also enabling research administrators to develop their professional networks. The aim of each workshop is to provide participants with the opportunity to learn research administration through a combination of formal presentations, case studies, and group discussions. Our workshops can be held and prepared for any institution worldwide and we encourage our participants to share best practices and to learn from each other.

4. Hosting International Delegations in Washington, DC

Global Initiatives also acts as host to international delegations who come to the US to learn about various topics and issues in research administration. We provide customized events, which include crash courses, workshops, networking events, and other activities to not only teach about the importance of research administration to a diverse international audience but also foster partnerships and connect them with our members.

Our Global Initiatives reflect NCURA’s continuing effort to advance the profession of research administration, all over the world, as we support research...together.
Before you know it, December 2020 will be here. Here’s what you need to know about the transition from the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

**Today**
- Business as usual

**Transition (to December 2020)**
- Business as usual
- Continue to use DUNS number
- Behind the scenes, GSA will phase out the DUNS number
- Existing registrations will be assigned a new UEI

**Complete (December 2020)**
- UEI, generated by SAM, becomes the official identifier
- Existing core data, assertions, reps & sets will not change
- New registrations will request the UEI through SAM.gov

**The UEI**
- 12 characters, alpha-numeric
- DUNS +4 will become “EFT Indicator”

**Next Steps!**
- Review your institutional systems & informational web pages for reference to the DUNS number(s).
- Understand how many active SAM registrations/DUNS numbers exist at your organization.
- Review the links below.
- Send your questions to entityvalidation@gsa.gov

**References**
- 2 CFR 25: www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2ceab89de59659e5b128a5be6488e5b0300&mc=true&node=sp2.1.25.cfrg n=dv6
Internal Controls: Why Do They Matter?

By Justin Magerman, Andrea Patino, Jenna Pedrin and Chasmine Stoddart-Osumah

Efficient internal controls are the lifeblood of universities, academic medical centers (AMCs), hospitals, non-profit organizations, and other institutions that conduct research using sponsored funds. When an organization is granted a new award, some may think that the most difficult part of the project life cycle is over. However, those involved in an institution’s post-award processes understand that this is when the real work begins. The financial management of a sponsored award involves extremely detailed tasks such as account establishment, billing and cash flow management, monitoring of transactions, effort reporting, cost transfers, audits, and complying with general cost accounting standards (Kulakowski and Chronister 2011). These tasks and reporting responsibilities require organizations to have strong internal control systems in place.

Defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as “a process, implemented by a non-Federal entity, designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives,” internal controls are designed to improve “effectiveness and efficiency of operations, reliability of reporting for internal and external use; and compliance with applicable laws and regulations” (2 C.F.R. 200.61, 2014). Put simply, internal controls are a guardrail to prevent any chance of wrongdoing at an organizational level. For example, an institution might have an internal auditing office that monitors federal award spending to identify and rectify any unintentional cases of inappropriate spending or inaccurate expense posting. Efficient internal controls are essential because they hold institutions accountable for any oversight in financial management, compliance, and research misconduct which can be managed internally and externally if needed.

The five components needed for effective internal controls are control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. An organization’s top leadership sets the tone for these components which guide the operations of the entire research enterprise. It is the responsibility of authorized officials from the organization to review their code of conduct and establish policies and procedures for the rest of the organization to follow in order to minimize and prevent errors. The first step is to ensure that all policies and procedures are current and accurate with regard to the ever-changing laws surrounding research, and next, appropriately disseminate to central offices and departments. Dissemination is a critical element of the internal control system because many issues in research compliance arise from miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misinformation. By monitoring and analyzing the efficiency of an organization’s internal controls, updates can be made based on evidence that highlights ineffective or insufficient policies. This is an important process because as recipients of sponsored funding, it becomes the responsibility of the awarded organization to adhere to the sponsor’s requirements and routinely ensure working internal controls are in place that confirm efficiency and appropriate use of funding.

If an institution has poor internal controls, it runs the risk of having significant findings identified from auditors as well as negative reputations developed with outside organizations and agencies. Unfavorable audit findings may deter potential sponsors from entering into funding agreements with the institution. If not addressed accordingly, the audit findings could be detrimental to an institution’s long-term standing in the research community. The advantages of efficient internal controls, along with the risks associated with poor internal controls, significantly outweigh the burden placed on institutions to establish and maintain these controls.

The presence of an adequate internal control system is an important function of a research enterprise, and the importance is now greater than ever. As the competition for funding continues to increase, an institution’s concern with internal controls must increase also. Having an understanding of the specific needs of your institution, as well as the resources available, and requirements from federal and nonfederal sponsors, are important factors for developing effective internal controls. The ability to establish internal communications within your institution will help ensure successful monitoring of these controls. Strong internal controls with appropriate monitoring are exceedingly important for an institution to have sustained success in the future. As policies around sponsored research management continue to evolve, the road ahead will be paved with many new challenges and strong internal controls will become increasingly important for an institution’s sustained success in the future.

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Justin Magerman works as a departmental grants management specialist at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. He studied Accounting and Spanish at the University of Rhode Island and graduated in 2016. He is currently working on his MSM in Research Administration at Emmanuel College.

Andrea Patino graduated from Northeastern University with a Bachelor’s of Business Administration in Accounting. She is a passionate Financial Administrator, who currently works at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She previously worked at Harvard University for 9 years.

Jenna Pedrin is a Grant Manager in the Department of Cancer Immunology and Virology at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. She received a bachelor’s degree in social policy from Michigan State University and is pursuing her MSM in Research Administration from Emmanuel College.

Chasmine Stoddard has over 10 years of research administration experience between Johns Hopkins University and Georgetown University. She received her BS in Business Administration from Towson University and is currently working on her MSM in Research Administration at Emmanuel College.
The University of Gothenburg is a large Swedish university with about 6,000 employees, of which 3,000 are researchers. We depend on multiple sources of external funding, ranging from governmental funds to private foundations. Around 90% of our income comes from national sources, the remaining 10% from international sources, typically the European Union’s Horizon 2020 framework program. Despite our size, we submit relatively few applications to American federal funding agencies – only 10-15 per year and mostly to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In total, our federal American funding is approximately $1,000,000 per year, mostly granted as sub-awards, but some as a prime awardee. Given that we have limited resources that can be spent on pre- and post-award support for these projects, how do we ensure we stay well-informed, up to date, compliant with all rules and regulations, and prepared to meet future challenges?

It would not be cost-effective for individual departments to train individual administrators. Therefore, all pre- and post-award support that we give to international applications and projects is managed centrally by our Grants and Innovation Office. Here, we have gathered a team consisting of research, financial and innovation advisors, together with business lawyers. Each team member is specialized in international funding and together we are able to guide researchers and administrators throughout the entire pre- and post-award process. We share the same office and we work tightly together during the application phase to avoid any surprises during the post-award phase. We find it very rewarding that all of us are involved with different expertise during the entire life cycle of the project. The added benefit of sharing an office is that we can easily and immediately forward questions from researchers or departments to the correct expert.

Another problem we face as a foreign organization is that we are limited to a non-negotiable Facilities and Administrative (F&A) rate of 8% from NIH. Furthermore, this 8% must be kept exclusively for activities that can be linked to compliance. Therefore, this amount is kept at our Grants and Innovation Office and used exclusively for compliance activities. However, this might deter our researchers from applying for NIH grants, since their projects would not be fully funded. To compensate for this, our University co-fines all indirect costs that arise in American federal-funded projects. Consequently, individual researchers and departmental administrators can sleep well, knowing that their project costs are fully covered.

To make sure we stay compliant, we continuously monitor the American federal-funding rules and regulations in order to detect any changes. This way, our procedures are always up to date. We keep track by regularly attending NCURA’s annual meetings, especially the ones organized by Region VIII (the international region). In addition, we take part in the NCURA global workshops designed especially for foreign organizations, for example the workshop at King’s College in London 2019 (Amadio, 2019). These events are of high value to us, since we have the opportunity to learn from each other. However, we must also make sure we follow Swedish rules and regulations that are not always 100% compatible with American...
rules. Therefore, we have established a Swedish network for American research funding, to share experiences and provide support through active discussion forums and regular meetings.

Our work does not always stop when the project is finished. In case the researchers need help to utilize the results from their projects, our innovation advisors and business lawyers are always on standby. They guide the researchers to develop ideas into solutions for real problems, and thereby, have impacts outside of academia.

The challenge of having centralized support is that it tends to lower awareness of the rules and regulations at the departmental level and for individual applicants. Therefore, to anchor the application at the departmental level and to ensure implementation of the project, we always inform the departments about the terms and conditions associated with any awarded grants. The Principal Investigator (PI), Head of Department and Head of Departmental Administration must sign an approval form prior to submission to make sure that everyone is on board. Once the project is granted, we organize, as part of the compliance process, a mandatory start-up meeting that both the PI and their financial administrator have to attend, where we inform them about the regulations and policies that apply to the funding in question (e.g., an NIH grant), in addition to institutional requirements. Specifically, we emphasize the importance of reporting obligations and cost principles. This ensures a smooth implementation of the project, and our overall impression is that our centralized way of working is perceived well – everyone is positive and eager to follow the rules and regulations.

Lastly, we believe that the best way to prepare for the future is to constantly meet with our peers and exchange experiences. We always welcome visitors who wish to pay us a visit: feel free to reach out to us if you want to know more about the Swedish way!

Reference
Having worked in research administration for more than 20 years, I am accustomed to the phenomenon that the staff of virtually every university research support office are overwhelmingly female (Shambrook, et al, 2015), while the executive roles are usually held by men.

Is this because only men can lead? Obviously not. Systems of exclusion and marginalization have kept women largely out of leadership roles in virtually every profession. Higher education is not an outlier in this regard.

However, we all can work together to plug the leaky leadership pipeline for women, if we are willing to do the hard work of examining and changing our behavior. That goes for women and men.

When you enter a room, do you shake hands with all the men in the room and merely say hello to the women? Why?

Have you organized a conference panel consisting only of men? What would happen if you suggested opening up a spot for a female colleague?

What steps have you taken to give visibility to a promising female employee by offering membership on a high-profile committee or nominating for a prestigious award?

Do you interrupt sexist jokes or inappropriate behavior that contributes to a hostile work environment?

Who does the nurturing duties in your office? Ask yourself—and be honest—when a cake needs to be ordered for an office birthday or shower: who does it? When somebody needs a couple of Advil for a headache: who do they ask? When it is time for that annual office picnic: who organizes the games? In many offices, women are expected to do these activities and it somehow makes them seem less like executive material. If male counterparts were to order cakes and plan social gatherings with equal frequency, employee nurturing would not be perceived as an exclusively feminine domain. Until that happens, volunteering for this sort of thing may be a liability for a woman who aspires to lead.

Fortunately, despite the many challenges of gender bias in the workplace, even in higher education, research administration is a profession that provides rich opportunities for career growth and a ladder to executive leadership for women. Assistants can become Coordinators. Specialists can become Managers. Directors can become Assistant Vice Presidents, and so on. The ability to move sideways, from pre- to post-award or from IRB to biosafety, means job changes can add breadth to your resume and not merely specialization. There also are numerous opportunities for movement from central administration to a department (or vice versa) and between universities. This is good news for women who aspire to executive leadership because, unlike many other professions, there are various pathways to increase responsibility.

Studies show that men routinely apply for jobs when they lack some of the required qualifications in the vacancy announcement, while women tend to hold back and apply only for those jobs for which they have 100% of the stated qualifications, because they do not believe they will be contenders (Mohr 2014). In this regard, we all can help create more diverse candidate pools by encouraging promising women to try for opportunities even when they doubt their own competitiveness, and by viewing a female colleague’s ambition as a positive and motivating attribute.

Self-belief and encouragement are not the only things a woman needs to advance to leadership. Often times advancing from supporting roles (also known as “pink collar” jobs) to executive roles requires more education. This is especially true at universities, where degrees are the coin of the realm. Fortunately, many of us work at schools with tuition benefits that allow the completion of a bachelor’s degree or the acquisition of a master’s or doctoral degree while on the job. This is not to say every woman in research administration needs to return to school in order to become a leader. However, additional education can be helpful for developing subject area expertise, acquiring and enhancing skill sets, expediting advancement, as well as for inspiring others to entrust you with more responsibility. To the extent office policies provide flexibility in work hours to take advantage of on-campus tuition benefits, this should be encouraged.

It is worth noting that degrees are not the only form of education or professional development that can be useful for women who want to lead. NCURA offers formal training in leadership that has been invaluable for my development as an executive. NCURA’s Executive Leadership Program (ELP) provides career coaching, feedback on effectiveness and style, and other helpful insights you can draw upon every day. It also provides a cohort of other emerging leaders, many of whom can become your most trusted
advisors and lifelong friends.

In addition to trusted colleagues at other universities, mentors and sponsors are essential. These relationships can be formal and assigned or may evolve organically. Since there are very few women in executive leadership roles, we must abandon the idea that mentors must look like or identify with the struggles of mentees. For example, my most effective advocates and role models have been mostly older men who opened doors that made it possible for me to prove I was capable, and I owe them a debt of gratitude.

If we are serious about developing the talent we already have in our offices to ensure that women will have equal opportunities to lead, there are steps we all should take to plug the leaky pipeline in research administration.

Encourage promising employees to say yes to new opportunities as much as possible, even when they do not feel 100% qualified. It may not be a new job title per se; it could just be serving on a committee or assuming a new task. Sometimes people need to be invited to take a path that will result in a new leadership role.

Check your own biases. When you walk into a room, you should not presume a man is leading the meeting or that a female employee is in charge of refreshments.

Do not treat family obligations as only a woman’s concern. Create family-friendly policies that support the ability of all employees—regardless of gender—to attend to the needs of their children, elderly parents, or sick loved ones.

Avoid pigeonholing female employees as the people who will take on all the emotional labor within the office. Ask a male employee to organize a birthday party or buy a farewell gift for a co-worker.

Broaden your circle. If your professional network consists mostly of people who look a lot like you, diversify it by intentionally including people with different life experiences.

Insist on deliberate inclusion when recruiting, hiring, and planning high-profile events. If your pool for a leadership vacancy or conference panel is all men, you have not looked hard enough.

Be open to the better idea—regardless of who thought of it. Pursue someone else’s better plan, even if it means changing your own mind about the best path forward. Then give them the credit they deserve.

“Avoid pigeonholing female employees as the people who will take on all the emotional labor within the office.”

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Suzanne M. Rivera, PhD, is the Vice President for Research and Technology Management at Case Western Reserve University. She is a long-time NCURA member, having served as an elected member of the Board, and appointed member of the Nominating & Leadership Development Committee of the Board, and Chair of the Education Scholarship Fund Task Force. She can be reached at suzanne.rivera@case.edu
We all know there are many ways to be bashed over the head in the world of research administration. As Director of Costing and Financial Compliance at the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR), I’ve experienced my share of head bashings – audit overreach, expensive compliance with new regulations, and of course, caps on Facilities & Administrative (F&A) cost reimbursement.

At my core I’m an F&A guy, so the most recent big bash over my head was in early Spring 2017 when the Trump Administration released its FY2018 Budget Request. The language below was included in the budget narrative:

The Budget also proposes to reduce reimbursement of grantee administrative and facilities costs, referred to as “indirect costs” … The Budget includes an indirect cost rate for NIH grants that will be capped at 10 percent of total research … [This] would also bring NIH’s reimbursement rate for indirect costs more in line with the reimbursement rate used by private foundations, such as the Gates Foundation …

Like clockwork, F&A comes under attack every few years, but this time it was particularly worrisome – the Administration seemed determined. The good news is the research community is an amazing community of experts and advocates who are poised to move into “fire-drill mode” quickly. Over the course of a year, COGR, other higher education associations, research universities, and nonprofit research organizations worked together to write letters, meet with and educate congressional leaders, support testimony on Capitol Hill, provide expertise on legislation (e.g., SEC. 224 of the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations bill), develop new and strong ally-ships (e.g., with nonprofit funders and foundations), and effectively do everything and anything to defeat the imposition of what would have been a research-debilitating F&A cap.

We won, disaster was averted, and cautious optimism reigned that the F&A issue was resolved (for a few years, at least!) So, how would we fill the time? Answer? Easy! Write a Book! And 30,000 words later in April 2019, COGR released what has amounted to a “Treatise” on all things F&A.

The official title of the COGR paper is “Excellence in Research: The Funding Model, F&A Reimbursement, and Why the System Works.” The title is intentional and accurate. While the F&A calculation and reimbursement process may be complex, the foundation of the system has withstood the test of time and is remarkably efficient and effective. As we say in the paper:

Support of the research funding model, which includes fair reimbursement of F&A costs, is a critical part of the research ecosystem and contributes to the incredible and continuous advance of science. An appreciation of the role of fair reimbursement of F&A costs and the critical role of the federal budget in supporting F&A cost reimbursement must be a priority of research policy in the United States.
A key premise behind the paper was to memorialize issues raised concerning the role of F&A cost reimbursement, state the facts (with myths debunked), and at the same time, provide the community with a user-friendly resource designed to answer both the most basic and the most technical questions around F&A cost reimbursement.

The stated goal of the paper is: “To provide a basis for productive discussion so that research funding debates no longer are diverted by nonproductive disagreements about limitations on F&A cost reimbursement and misunderstandings about what is covered in the F&A cost rate.” In short, when a policymaker, faculty member, or other entity questions the legitimacy of F&A cost reimbursement, the hope is “Excellence in Research” can be a ready-available resource to answer those questions around F&A – and most importantly, change the trajectory of the conversation from potentially contentious to calm and clear.

In the 10 chapters, plus appendices, COGR covers topics such as the basics of F&A cost rates, the oversight and audit landscape, the 26 percent administrative cap and its relationship to administrative burden, and institutional policy challenges inherent to F&A cost reimbursement. Notably, the final three chapters – 8, 9, and 10 – set the stage for “what’s next” by raising the attributes of the current system (Chapter 8), citing the pros and cons of alternatives to the current system (Chapter 9), and providing COGR’s five recommendations (see below) to enhance the current system (Chapter 10):

1. Better Language and More Transparency. Incorporating both into policy documents, campus communications, and other media can contribute to better communication across all stakeholders.

2. More Flexibility in Direct Charging. Allowing this flexibility can result in a more equitable allocation of costs and a more fair reimbursement process.

3. Meaningful Reduction in Regulatory Burden. Doing so could result in new efficiencies, and ultimately reduce the cost of compliance at research institutions.

4. Leverage the Uniform Guidance. Building upon this platform can further enhance grants administration reform, as well as improvements specific to F&A cost reimbursement.

5. Convene F&A Roundtables with Key Stakeholders. These forums can offer the opportunity to address the nuanced technical issues of F&A cost reimbursement, as well innovative practices and opportunities to improve the system.6

Still, it does not end with the five recommendations. F&A cost reimbursement will come under scrutiny again. Hence, will a sequel to “Excellence in Research” be necessary? Not likely. “Excellence in Research” was written to stand the test of time and be available to the community as a long-standing resource. Bits and pieces can be excerpted from the paper and used to address the specific issues at hand. The COGR E-Library, referenced in the paper, is a permanent resource with many documents and other communications related to F&A topics. Also, the paper effectively explores almost every nook and cranny associated with F&A cost reimbursement. And, finally, the paper makes a compelling case in favor of how a reliable F&A cost reimbursement policy is critical to the continued success of the research enterprise of the United States.

Yes, F&A will come under scrutiny again. But this contributor to the paper says “No, a sequel will not be forthcoming.” When the inevitable next F&A crisis transpires, “Excellence in Research” will be ready to be a responsive resource for our community. In fact, even in the year 2050 when the 20th F&A crisis of the century emerges, I might suggest that “Excellence in Research” will remain a helpful resource to the research community!

“Excellence in Research” (Full Text and Executive Summary)8 is available at www.cogr.edu COGR also has published hard-bound copies that can be ordered at cost. The paper was completed through the active and dedicated efforts of COGR leadership, staff, committees, and at-large volunteers from throughout the research community. Contributors are recognized on the first three pages of the paper, and a special “Thank You!” goes out to all of those who were involved in this project.

Endnotes
2 See May 24, 2017 Oral Testimony of James Luther, Duke University, to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucdE5 6ycPK4 See October 24, 2017 Written Testimony of Dr. Kelvin K. Droegemeier, to the House Appropriations Sub-Committee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies: www.cogr.edu/sites/default/files/Droegemeier%20Full% 20Written%20Testimony%20FINAL.pdf
3 See the link below (page 107) of the House-passed FY2020 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations (LHHS) bill - May, 2019: “None of the funds appropriated in this or prior Acts or otherwise made available to the Department of Health and Human Services or to any department or agency may be used to develop or implement a modified approach to such provisions, or to intentionally or substantially expand the fiscal effect of the approval of such deviations from negotiated rates beyond the proportional effect of such approvals in such quarter.” While the FY2020 Appropriations LHHS bill has not been signed into law at the time of this writing, this language has been included in the past two LHHS Appropriations bills and should continue to be included. https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/FY2020%20LHHS %20Sub%20Markup%20Draft.pdf
5 Ibid, page 10
6 Ibid, pages 7-8
7 See: www.cogr.edu/fa-and-cost-research
8 See: www.cogr.edu/excellence-research-funding-model-fa-reimbursement-and- why-system-works-0

David Kennedy is the Vice President and Director of Costing Policy at the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR). David’s responsibilities encompass monitoring all federal financial and costing policies that affect research. He has worked on F&A related issues for over 25 years. He can be reached at DKennedy@cogr.edu
Understanding Diversity: Research Study Design and Operationalization

THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR

By Saiqa Anne Qureshi and Jaime Petrasek

There has been criticism of research that have not been tested on a wide range of populations. Homogeneity in research testing has resulted in a wide range of suboptimal interventions such as medication that is almost exclusively tested on men, yet has unintended side effects on women, or emergency planning during natural disasters that assumes an ability to evacuate more than 250 miles away.

As these research studies do occur within a university or research center, it is vital that research administration as a profession train members to think about the diversity of the community that might be affected by a study and consider ways to engage to support a more optimal intervention.

In considering the diversity of a population, it is important to consider key demographic characteristics like age, race, gender, or sexual orientation as well as marital status, socioeconomic status (sometimes defined via income and/or highest level of education), geographic access (urban, suburban, rural), language, nation of origin, religious affiliation, disability, housing and food security, and care giving responsibilities.

Both the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) serve rich and diverse communities as public institutions with large medical centers and missions to conduct research, support teaching, and provide medical care.

Both the VCU School of Social Work and teams within the UCSF OB GYN RS (Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences) department, use Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is loosely defined as research that seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. It is based on a principle of collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships.

Several OB GYN RS research teams at UCSF engage with a range of communities, and the post-award research administration team has been a leader at UCSF to support the research. UCSF has a centralized purchasing system that also includes a mechanism to order gift cards, however the options there are very limited in terms of participating vendors. In one case a study sought to work with refugee communities and identified the Hmong. They recruited a clinical research coordinator (CRC) who spoke Hmong and translated materials into the Hmong, Lao and Thai languages, however, the barrier of providing meaningful compensation remained. The team was able to work with a local Hmong grocery store and provide a purchase order to fund gift cards. The creativity of the research administration team to look beyond the gift cards available and to think about the women in that community and where they shopped to provide a solution that provided valuable compensation to them is testament to the commitment of UCSF to put the patient at the center of all work, “research with us, not on us.”

Several other research initiatives in OB GYN RS at UCSF also successfully overcame barriers to research participation. Several studies sought to engage with a more diverse community to better understand the impact of pre-term birth and gestational intervention. To engage with broader communities, one study provided compensation in the form of cash, rather than a cash equivalent (normally gift cards), and gained an exception by demonstrating that there was no cash equivalent that could be utilized by the community in question. The research administrator worked with the CRCs to ensure that those participants who reached the IRS 1099 limit of $600 were given the opportunity to complete a 1099, but this was not used in the participant recruitment phase as a barrier to participation and less than 10% of study participants needed to complete a 1099, by the end of the year.

Another initiative regularly convened the community, particularly in two groups: a community advisory board and a training program for community members to understand research. For both programs, a stipend was paid, and for both groups, cash barriers to entry were paid (and appropriate 1099 action was taken as needed) to support access to the meeting venue for public transportation, private hire (taxi or Uber/Lyft), or parking and bridge toll, that allowed participants to choose what was best for them on the day and did not require that they choose in advance or wait for reimbursement. An additional child care stipend was paid and food was provided that met the UCSF nutritional guidelines, was culturally sensitive to dietary needs, and considered the need to provide food for children and other relatives who might accompany invited attendees. Research administrators in OB GYN RS worked within the systems at UCSF to process stipends, manage sizable cash boxes (including audit), add community caterers to the procurement system, and clearly articulate the difference between the initial RSVP list and the actual attendance garnering a large food order.

“Research administrators working hand in hand with PIs and research teams can support research design that engages a wide community.”
The VCU School of Social Work has faced similar challenges and opportunities in their work with marginally housed and homeless youth. Principal Investigators (PI) in the school are involved in research that depends heavily on the lived experiences of the youth directly involved in the project, so the PI and research administration staff wanted to ensure that the youth were compensated for their time devoted to the project. Central offices at the University explicitly prohibit cash payments to anyone other than research subjects, regardless of housing status. The PI and the research administrator worked together to document the challenges this policy posed, as well as the University revenue loss, which was a direct result of numerous checks lost in the mail and multiple check re-issues. Participants did not have fixed housing and as their addresses changed with some frequency, they struggled to get their check, or they saw the lack of a fixed address as a barrier to participation. Once the PI and research administrator were able to demonstrate the negative impact the policy had on the University, the central offices were open to working with the PI and research administrator to come up with a plan that better served the youth while maintaining compliance. Together, the research administrator and the PI were able to open a petty cash account to pay the youth, and they kept spreadsheets and W-9s as receipts (audited monthly). This led to the PI and research administrator working solidly as a team to ensure broad participation. The youth were paid in a timely manner and in the least invasive fashion possible, and there was a positive feeling of working together despite initial challenges. At the end of the year, the PI and research administrator worked together to document payments over the $600 threshold so that the central office would send tax forms to the youth. The team made sure that the most up-to-date addresses were on file, and then were able to work directly with one contact in the central office to rush the forms, to minimize the impact of issues with changing mailing addresses. Ultimately, only one tax form had to be reissued due to a change in mailing address (typically when working with marginally housed or homeless participants). This close team work and collective creative thinking and planning enabled the project to run more smoothly and led to a positive relationship between the PI and research administrators.

Research administrators working hand in hand with PIs and research teams can support research design that engages a wide community. As research studies of a broad nature occur within a university or research center, it is vital that research administration as a professional field, train members to think about the diversity of the community that might be affected by a study and ways to engage that diverse community to support more optimal interventions.

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Saïqa Anne Qureshi, PhD, MBA. Is the Contracts and Grants Accounting manager for UCSF, managing the Line of Credit and Collections teams. She has more than 10 years of research management experience in both the United States and Europe, and is a sought-after speaker, trainer, editor, and writer. She can be reached at SaqanQureshi@ucsf.edu

Jaime Petrasek serves as the Director of Research Administration for the VCU School of Social Work. She has been working in the field for nearly 15 years and has experience in the central office and within the University Health System. She is a founding member of the VCU Monroe Park Campus Research Administrators Group, co-chair of the NCTRA Region III R3RAMP program, and a noted speaker and trainer. She can be reached at petrasekjl@vcu.edu

NOTABLE PRACTICES

Research Administration Pipelines

N CURA Peer Reviewers conduct reviews at organizations across the United States. Finding, retaining, and promoting research administrators is an important component of managing a research enterprise. Staff turnover and unfilled positions can be crippling to organizations. Some institutions in rural locations have even more difficulty in finding and keeping talent. Below are some notable practices to develop and maintain a talent pipeline:

- Have clear job descriptions for research administrators. Ensure job descriptions of research administrators, titles, and salaries are reviewed regularly.
- Consider succession planning for key research administration positions. Ensure that institutional resources and structure are sufficient to accommodate temporary vacancies. Do not wait until people resign to plan for a change in the pipeline!
- Ensure all staff are cross-trained and trained for both the jobs they have and the jobs they may want in the future. Investing in the staff to ensure they are well equipped to do their jobs will assist in employee retention.
- Develop career pathways for research administrators. Think about how a position may change and grow over time.
- In areas without many trained research administrators, hire for transferable skills and develop training plans for entry-level positions. You may consider working with a local Workforce Investment Boards to learn about the talent and skills in your region.
- Staff are drawn to and stay at healthy organizations. Pay attention to your organization’s culture. Listen to staff and be willing to change.

Kris A. Monahan, PhD, is the Immediate Past 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.

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The Office of Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin is always looking for new ways to communicate and collaborate with faculty and staff. Our office is made up of ten* individual units, and staff members can become frustrated by answering the same questions over and over or redirecting inquiries simply because many on campus don’t know who we are or what we do. As a group that’s heavily reliant on written and digital one-way communications such as email, newsletters, or web content, we can never be sure that our outgoing messages are received. We are often told someone did not know about an important process change or regulatory update regardless of how many times and how many methods through which it was shared. Over time, this one-way communication can be perceived as impersonal—or worse—have a negative impact on our customer service. Research can be intimidating and sometimes being pointed to a website just isn’t what people want. They want an educated expert to answer their questions. We needed a true forum to show our faces, meet our customers, and people want. They want an educated expert to answer their questions.

In 2019, we designed and implemented a new program for the purposes of education, communication, and networking called Research Ambassadors. The program is intended to build a community that understands basic regulatory procedures, navigates complex or layered resources, and stays informed of updates and improvements. Within the Office of Research, a team of representatives from each of our ten units work together as a Knowledge Group to present information, answer questions, and administratively support the program. The Ambassadors are the boots-on-the-ground of research administration within their respective departments. Ideally the cohort includes representation from all departments. Ambassadors liaise with their teams by bringing their comments, questions, and ideas to our forum, and in turn taking back tips, news, resources, and everything else we can give them to distill and disseminate.

To get started, we established our Knowledge Group and documented our plan to gain leadership buy-in. The program required a modest budget for meeting refreshments. We then opened the application to all staff who actively supported research operations on campus. The application asked general questions to gauge the individual’s experience and interest in a variety of topics that fall under the purview of our office, including grants management, human and animal research approvals, safety, compliance, and lab management. We received an impressive number of submissions, however assuming future growth, we wanted to start the program with a manageable group of 25. Applicants were vetted by their departmental administrator to participate in the program, and those who were not selected were to be advanced to a future cycle. We kicked off the group with Basic Training Session, which consisted of mini-presentations from each of our ten units, a networking lunch, and campus tour. Ambassadors also received a welcome packet, which included a signed certificate of membership and “Research Ambassador” badge tag so that they could share their role.

Following the session, participants’ email addresses were added to our Ambassadors listserv so that we could all exchange questions, queries and tips in between meetings. Ambassadors were also added to a resource SharePoint site. The site includes presentations, contact lists, and a forum of information exchanged in the listserv. Additionally, we promoted the group to campus and published their names on our intranet site. With Basic Training complete, Ambassadors are thereafter invited to topical bi-monthly sessions. These meetings cover quick news and announcements, presentations, guest speakers, and discussions.

Since we started in March, we have conducted Basic Training for a second cycle of Ambassadors, totaling our cohort to 38. We intend to keep the count at or below 50 Ambassadors so that we can really get to know the group and encourage them to be contacts for each other. In this regard, we have eliminated the application process and are requesting that departments nominate an individual if and when they are a good fit for the program. We are also developing a web-based version of our Basic Training in the institutional Learning Management System so that we can add or rotate members on demand. Although the title of Ambassador is exclusive to staff, we have a small group of faculty who have expressed an interest in receiving our meeting agendas to be able to attend ad hoc when time and topic permit.

New programs do take time to settle in and gain traction, but we are optimistic about the quality of our program, the engagement of our group, and the potential benefits we expect to see. We are encouraged by the positive response we’ve received so far!


AshLeigh Sanchez, MA, is a Communications Specialist for the Office of Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin. She has managed office communications for several years, and supports special programs including Research Ambassadors. She can be reached at asanchez@mcw.edu
Please join us and your fellow colleagues from around the globe in San Juan, Puerto Rico for the 21st Annual Financial Research Administration Conference, themed "Perseverance through Determination."

How does this fit into the NCURA culture and what we do? Research administrators need determination to make it through the small tasks, and perseverance to achieve success for those longer tasks. The FRA conference will help you with both. There are eight different tracks that will provide something for everyone. The tracks include Accounting & Finance, Departmental, Federal, Financial Compliance, Global, Human Capital, Medical/Clinical and Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions. Whether you are determined to stick with one track or persevere through the entire conference, your choices are plentiful. The FRA program track leaders have been working diligently to put together a program for everyone.

The conference will kick off with a discussion panel of experts representing multiple universities in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. The keynote presentation is titled: "Preparing for Disaster: Lessons Learned from Hurricanes Irma and Maria". Hurricane Irma struck the US Virgin Islands in September 2017, leaving a swath of destruction and devastation. Less than two weeks later Hurricane Maria pounded the island of Puerto Rico. The panel will discuss how the hurricanes impacted their universities, what they have done to recover and areas they continue to work. The people of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands are living the conference theme of Perseverance through Determination as they continue to rebuild.

In the aftermath of a disaster people often ask what can I do to help. Many NCURA members supported relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. We can now continue to support the region by bringing tourism back to the island. Not only will you receive a wealth of knowledge from the sessions, you will be helping the region recover by attending the conference, staying in the local hotels, dining at local restaurants and hopefully finding time to enjoy the beaches, history and culture of San Juan.

According to the San Juan visitor’s website, Old San Juan “San Juan Antiguo”, is one of the most culturally rich places in the world with added allures of a tropical Caribbean island. Puerto Rico is where old world elegance and modern Caribbean meet to create the most exciting destination in the Caribbean. San Juan offers a wide variety of tourist attractions from a tropical escape with pristine sandy beaches to century old forts, museums, charming plazas and excellent shopping and restaurants.

As you can see, the conference provides educational options for everyone – from the senior research administrator to the newest kid on the block. It’s rare that one has the opportunity to do well and to do good at one event. The 21st Annual Financial Research Administration Conference is that event. The Conference will be held March 2 & 3, 2020 with a combined workshop day on Wednesday, March 4 in partnership with the Pre-Award Research Administration (PRA) Conference (March 5 & 6, 2020). We hope to see you there.

Conference co-chairs,

Ben Prince     Shannon Sutton
University of Massachusetts Medical School     Western Illinois University

#NCURAFRA
The Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) is conducting a new survey! Led by the FDP’s Open Government: Research Administration Data Subcommittee, this survey of federal agency payment systems and associated business processes involves a deep dive into the five largest federal government payment management systems (ACMS, ASAP, G5, GRRS & PMS). A Letter of Credit (LOC) Draw Working Group was formed and a survey developed to gather a robust set of detailed data on the system usability, business processes and the effort related to executing the process across FDP member institutions. The survey was made available to FDP members in August 2019 and may be made more broadly available at a later date. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has been actively involved in this activity and co-chairs the LOC Working Group. FDP plans to share the results of this survey with all FDP federal members, as well as Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Office of Science and Technology Policy, and others. The survey results and report will be published on the FDP webpage and we hope to publish an article summarizing our findings. This survey is just one example of the type of work that FDP hopes to pursue through collaboration with OMB in its implementation of the President’s Management Agenda (PMA). This is also just one of the most recent activities that FDP is undertaking to support open government overall.

FDP’s historical role with Open Government efforts
The FDP is proud of the long-standing collaboration it has enjoyed with US federal agencies on key federal government initiatives, regulation changes and opportunities for streamlining and reducing research administrative burden. Whether it has involved Research Terms and Conditions, ARRA reporting requirements, FFATA, DATA Act, or Uniform Guidance, FDP has played a vital role in representing the national research community’s needs. A common theme to this set of initiatives and activities is open, standardized, and transparent research administrative data shared between the federal agencies, research institutions and the public, in supporting Open Government.

ARRA – Transparency expands beyond FFATA
With the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), FDP assembled a working group to partner with key agency officials related to the important new reporting requirements that accompanied the stimulus funding. Working directly with federal agencies developing the ARRA reporting requirements, FDP was able to have a seat at the table and a voice in how the requirements were developed. Once the ARRA reporting period came to a close, this working group gathered significant data from FDP member institutions related to the time and effort required to meet the ARRA requirements. This report was shared with federal agencies and cited as a valuable means of learning about the impact of the enhanced reporting and transparency requirements on grantee institutions. Prior to ARRA, the FDP had become acquainted with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006, therefore post-ARRA, it was well understood that the era of openness and transparency was now fully upon us.

The FDP Open Government Subcommittee - Establishing a consistent dialogue
The ARRA Working Group transitioned to become the Open Government Subcommittee – an acknowledgement of the more permanent nature of this topic area – and was enhanced to address the ongoing efforts around standardization, harmonization, and transparency. The FDP Open Government Subcommittee collaborated with federal agencies through the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board (RATB) and the Grants Reporting Information Project (GRIP) pilot. The GRIP pilot focused on determining if the federal government could handle centralized financial reporting, similar to ARRA reporting, from all federal assistance recipients. In conjunction with the FDP’s electronic Research Administration (eRA) Committee, several FDP member institutions submitted data through web forms and bulk data files. GRIP was a proof of concept for how a pilot demonstration can be successful in creating a live automated grants management process between institutions and agencies and through which feedback can be collected. More information about the findings of this initiative can be found at: http://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/pgasite/documents/webpage/pga_081187.pdf
The DATA Act and FDP

The next evolution in federal government data transparency came in the form of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act) of 2014 and required the federal government to transform its spending information into open data. The DATA Act worked from the original FFATA reporting requirements while furthering government transparency through the availability of data. In partnership again with the FDP’s eRA Committee, the Open Government Subcommittee facilitated DATA Act awareness through its submission as a bill and through its pilot and feedback efforts. FDP was specifically involved in the DATA Act Section 5 pilot, collaborating in key areas such as a standard agency Notice of Award, Common Data Element Repository (CDER) Library, Consolidate Federal Financial Report (FFR), Single Audit and Learn Grants. Additional information can be found at: https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/asfr/data-act-program-management-office/section-5-grants-pilot/index.html#test-models

Work on the DATA Act was reported to Congress in 2016 and included recommendations for future steps. Several federal agency reviews were conducted and reports issued related to the feasibility of the DATA Act recommendations. However, strong momentum was created during the DATA Act pilots, including the will and support to take the next steps.

The President’s Management Agenda (PMA) – Current day, government-wide initiatives

Most recently, data standards and transparency found themselves included in the 2018 PMA, a long-term vision for modernizing the federal government in several key areas and with 14 Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goals. CAP Goal 8, Results-Oriented Accountability for Grants, sets out to “maximize the value of grant funding by applying risk-based, data-driven framework that balances compliance requirements with demonstrating successful results for the American taxpayer.” The OMB serves in a leadership role with CAP Goal 8 as well as all grants related areas in the other 13 CAP goals. An Executive Steering Committee is the overarching governing body for a government-wide work group on grants and reports to the Chief Financial Officers Council. Since the PMA was released, FDP has participated in dialogues with OMB related to how FDP could best partner with and support agencies in relation to the grants strategic goals. Via its Open Government Subcommittee, FDP has been participating in and exploring a variety of areas including: data standards, grants for blockchain studies and potential pilots, and providing OMB and other federal agencies more detailed and specific information related to the administrate workload associated with the wide variety of systems that support the grantee/recipent community. It is via the collaboration between the OMB Grants Team and FDP that the LOC Initiative and Survey originated and we expect additional similar initiatives going forward.

FDP/OMB PMA Working Group – Focused approach for the future

This FDP/OMB collaborative Working Group will provide a designated “space” for the research institution grantee community to have ongoing dialogue and conduct activities related to the PMA CAP Goal #8 Strategic Objectives:

1. Standardize the Grants Management Business Process & Data
2. Build Shared IT Infrastructure
3. Manage Risk
4. Achieve Program Goals and Objectives

Examples of potential activities that could be conducted by this group include:

• Develop detailed surveys to collect specific sets of process related information/data and recommend best, standardized practices or systems (e.g. LOC Draw Survey);
• Provide insight from the FDP community on identifying/recommending effective performance practices that can help shift from reporting on compliance to demonstrating performance;
• Initiate focus groups to strategize about how to solve particular challenges;
• Provide feedback on draft proposals;
• Suggest innovative approaches to solving challenges in the grants and research administrative area, via whitepapers, data analysis, reports & recommendations.

Where are we today?

As introduced at the beginning of this article, the FDP Open Government Subcommittee is currently conducting a survey designed to quantify the workload entailed in drawing funds from five LOC payment systems. The survey asks for information about each system on its availability, ease of use and understanding, time needed to prepare for payment, time to submit payment requests, time between submission and approval of payment requests, and time to reconcile payments to the recipients’ accounting system. It also asks for information about institutionally developed tools to make these processes easier, which could lead to publishable best practices for recipient institutions. Finally, there are questions asking about suggestions for improvement across different federal LOC payment systems. If your institution is an FDP member and you are interested in participating, please reach out to the Open Government Subcommittee co-chairs. You can find their emails and other information about OG:RAD on the FDP web page here: http://thefdp.org/default/committees/research-administration/open-government.

The path to research administration related open government with standardized processes, data elements and data transparency overall has not been a simple, straightforward or quick one. The players, approaches, legislation, regulations and requirements may change, but FDP continues to stay the course in this vital area and find willing collaborators among the federal government agencies. FDP recognizes this area as foundational to improved and streamlined business processes and reducing administrative burden for us all.

Lynette Arias is an Assistant Vice Provost, Office of Research, University of Washington. With more than 20 years of experience in pre- and post-award leadership, her current position concentrates on national and university initiatives focused on reducing administrative burden and research regulatory reform. She can be reached at ariasl@uw.edu

Stephanie Endy is the Associate Vice President for Research, Office of Research and Technology Management, Case Western Reserve University, which oversees pre- and post-award services, research compliance and IT support of research applications. She can be reached at stephanie.endy@case.edu

Richard Fenger is a co-chair and tech rep on the FDP’s Open Government Research Administration Data Subcommittee where we look to surface data centric challenges and opportunities for the FDP community. At the University of Washington, Richard is the Chief Data Strategist for the Office of Research Information Services. He can be reached at rfenger@uw.edu

Avinash Tembulkar is an Information Technology Manager at the National Science Foundation. He can be reached at atembulk@nsf.gov
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A new base year is upon us and it is time to start thinking about preparing our next Facilities and Administrative ("F&A") rate proposal. The outcome of this upcoming F&A proposal will identify the new rates which can be applied during the next rate agreement period. Furthermore, the expenditures and activities during this upcoming base year will be used as a representation of future spends to be reimbursed on by project sponsors. 2 CFR Part 200 – also known as Uniform Guidance ("UG") – dictates how these costs should be captured and provides guidance on allocations to identify support costs down to the benefiting activities. One question you may be asking is, “Do we need to conduct a space survey?”

To answer this question, we must first understand the available allocation methodologies and how using a space metric might be more accurate to allocate costs. There are numerous methodologies, the most basic being a cost-based statistic. The concept is that each dollar of direct activity requires the same amount of support regardless of activity. While it can be argued that this may be an accurate representation of most administrative related activities, facility-related costs often do not follow these conventions.

When thinking about facilities-related costs, one such example is the cost of a building. Using a cost basis may no longer be the most accurate metric to capture who/what benefited from the space. From a campus perspective, just because a specific function spent more money during the fiscal year does not mean that they used more space compared to a different function. Take a lab assigned to a Principal Investigator (PI) for the use of research: the physical area of that room does not suddenly increase when a new sponsored project has been awarded. The room area stays the same, but research density may increase. By learning about each individual room, we can start to understand how the whole building is used from an activity perspective, rather than based on expenditures. This principle can be expanded to include the entire campus, which provides us enough data to use space as the metric to allocate facilities-related costs ranging from the room level for equipment all the way to a campus wide statistic to allocate costs such as campus police.

Conceptually, using space as a metric to allocate costs is straight forward, but to apply this methodology requires additional steps. The first is an updated inventory of all space to be used for the rate proposal development. Often the responsibility of maintaining the space inventory falls upon one of the facility’s departments. Key attributes to identify consist of: Building, Room Number, Room Type, Square Footage, and Department. Consider including additional attributes containing relevant data. The next step is to decide how space will be functionalized. In the past, it was customary to survey all rooms on campus. This entailed identifying space usage for each room as well as documentation supporting the claim of Organized Research in the form of the PIs, Projects, and Occupants of the space.

Recently, a commonly acceptable methodology known as the Alternative Space Survey has gained popularity. In my experience, it provides similar outcomes as a full survey by only surveying a select population of space on campus and leveraging other statistics to functionalize non-survey space. The approach dictates that the population of rooms to be surveyed can be identified to only include specific room types and departments. Departments selected should represent a large enough population of the research enterprise to accurately represent activity happening on campus. Documentation is still needed to support surveyed rooms with Organized Research. Single-function spaces such as classrooms, lecture halls, and food service areas are directly assigned to a single function, and all remaining non-surveyed spaces are functionalized based on a departmental salary or full time equivalent (“FTE”) statistic. Once a methodology has been decided, the final step is to conduct the survey and review the results.
A Voluntary Transition to Electronic Files

In anticipation of an eRA implementation set to take place in the near future, my four-person pre-award office decided to make the shift towards electronic file retention through the use of the portfolio feature within Adobe DC. Concerns about switching from paper to electronic files in tandem with a new system arose, so the team wanted to be proactive. The thought process was that because we will already be familiar with creating and utilizing e-files when the system rolls out, we will not have to adjust several office practices at once. In switching to electronic files now, we can better serve our faculty later on down the road because we have already worked through a change and are comfortable with our records retention process.

For our electronic files, we use the portfolio feature within Adobe DC. The portfolio feature allows us to retain files in their native formats, while the portfolio is ultimately saved as a PDF on our shared network. We can also edit and save files directly within the portfolio, as well as extract them out of the portfolio to spaces on our computers. Since utilizing electronic files, my office has been more efficient. Our standard filing architecture within the portfolios has made it easier to locate specific documents within a file as opposed to searching through the masses of paper in the old days. In addition, misplaced files are virtually non-existent as a simple search can be performed on the computer to find the location of the file. This small change has saved me so much time and frustration, and has allowed me to focus more of my attention on assisting faculty with their proposal development and submission.

If you are able, I highly recommend the switch to electronic files, in whatever capacity works best for your office. Having proposal documentation available at a moment’s notice helps when receiving an unexpected phone call from an inquisitive PI and also allows for an easier search for other proposals submitted to the same sponsor for reference.

Making the change to electronic files before it is mandatory has allowed my office the flexibility to refine and tune our processes to meet business needs, setting us up for future success. In addition, the team is now more confident with the idea of transitioning to an eRA system in the future because of our switch to electronic files in the present.

The scope associated with the decision to conduct a space survey will heavily rely on your institution’s resources and available timeline. There is no “best” way to conduct a space survey, but finding the one that suits your institution will increase the chances of a successful survey. A few questions to ask in preparation for the survey:

Who will participate? This process can be disruptive to the campus, as it requires participation from all areas: central administration that may be championing the endeavor, department administrators who may be charged to gather the data for their department, fund managers who may be asked to share their knowledge of which funds support the activities, PIs or lab managers who may be able to quantify what activities happen in each room, and everyone else in-between. Not every department will have the same resources or institutional knowledge, so it is important to play to the strengths of each department and leverage their discretion as to whom they may want to include in the conversation.

“Gaining a better understanding of space usage on your campus will greatly benefit your ability to analyze the cost of research at your institution.”

How will you capture the results? Identifying the survey tool largely depends on existing institution resources and a bit of creativity. Some institutions choose to perform a paper survey. Others might distribute similar documents but in electronic form and ask for the completed surveys to be returned by email. If an existing survey tool is available, you might consider if it can be modified to capture additional data needed for the purpose of the space survey. Lastly, some have chosen to use third-party tools specifically designed for the space survey purpose. Regardless of the method chosen to capture the results, training will be required to familiarize all participants with the space function definitions and support structures in place to assist them in populating their survey accurately.

When should the survey occur? The results of the space survey should represent the activities of the base year. Performing the survey too early in a base year will mean new PIs, projects, and occupants will not be represented. Waiting too long after a base year ends adds the element of time, which may affect the accuracy of the participants’ recollections of what activities happened in a prior fiscal year. Other timing issues to consider could be other fiscal year end responsibilities, summer vacation plans, holidays, and additional workload attributed to the start of a new semester.

‘Do we need to conduct a space survey?’ Consider your available space data, resources, and project timeline. Whether or not your next F&A proposal includes a space survey, it is important to understand that the F&A rate is a mechanism designed to reimburse institutions for expenses incurred on behalf of sponsored awards. Gaining a better understanding of space usage on campus will greatly benefit your ability to analyze the cost of research at your institution.

The results of the space survey should greatly benefit your ability to analyze the cost of research at your institution.

Lorain Welch is a Grants Specialist in the Office of Sponsored Programs at James Madison University. She can be reached at welchlk@jmu.edu

Eric Wang is a Manager in Huron Consulting Group’s Higher Education Practice and an expert in F&A rate development, space surveys, and Product Manager for Huron’s efacs (electronic facilities & administrative cost system) and efacs Space Survey tools. Eric can be reached at ewang@huronconsultinggroup.com
THANKS TO OUR OUTGOING VOLUNTEER LEADERS!

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

Thank you to the following volunteers, who are completing their service terms in 2019:

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

If you are interested in becoming more involved with your professional association, visit NCURA’s Volunteer Central to learn more about available volunteer opportunities. Please contact Maggie McCool, Volunteer and Meetings Associate, for more information at mccoel@ncura.edu or by calling 202-466-3894.

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

By Joseph Gindhart

Effective goals should contain a measurable result. You have to be able to measure the goal, so that you can be totally clear if you have achieved it or not. Measurable goals can go a long way toward refining what exactly it is that you want to accomplish. People play differently when someone is keeping score. A team member will normally feel accountable to the boss, but when the scorekeeping begins, the team will often feel accountable to each other. The individuals will be motivated not to disappoint the other members of the team, thus strengthening the bonds of the team.

Once the goals have been clarified, the final step is determining the “readiness” level of the team. The leader must consider the amount of confidence, commitment and motivation demonstrated by the group, and compare that to task ahead (e.g., “the teams’ willingness”). Additionally, the level of knowledge, experience and skills that the team members currently maintain must also be evaluated (e.g., “the team’s ability”). The leader should consider adding/replacing team members as necessary to bring the group up to a sufficient readiness level.

If you want to achieve a goal you’ve never achieved before, you have to do things that you never done before. At the end of the goal defining process, the leader should affirm the following statements and launch the team towards the goal:

• Is the goal clear and concise?
• Do we have the right people on the team?
• Is the time frame realistic?
• Can we measure the progress towards the goal?
• Is team “ready” to execute?

This series of articles is based on NCURA’s senior level workshop in research administration, The Practical Side of Leadership. For more information on the workshop visit www.ncura.edu/travelingworkshops/SeniorLevel.aspx

Workshop Faculty

Joe Gindhart, Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Sponsored Projects, Washington University in St. Louis
Gunta Liders, Associate Vice President for Research Administration, University of Rochester
Kim Moreland, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research & Sponsored Programs, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Kerry Peluso, Assistant Vice President for Research Administration & Finance, Florida State University
Pamela Webb, Associate Vice President for Research Administration, University of Minnesota

Leadership can sometimes be an uphill struggle full of obstacles and roadblocks. These negative issues and/or people often cycle into and out of our day to day activities, providing the leader with a constant number of challenges to overcome. An effective leader should be able to transform a complex situation into small pieces and then prioritize and apply the available resources. He/she can be a simplifier who offers a solution or pathway that everyone can understand. How does one provide quality feedback/options that will keep the team moving forward and making progress? Work with the team to establish realistic goals.

Goals paint the picture of what success looks like, so teams should develop both strategic and operational goals:

Strategic goals focus on developing the approach we need to take to achieve the goal (“What needs to be planned to get us to where we want to go?”). These goals are typically geared toward the long-term (two to four years), and are often less tangible but still very important. During the development process, it’s crucial to understand the other strategic goals associated with your business unit. You want to make sure that your goals are congruent with mission/vision of the related groups (division, department, college and university).

Operational goals are specific to the daily tasks and requirements of running a business (“What do we have to do to reach the goal with the desired results?”). These goals are concentrated on improving internal processes and performance. While operational goals are shorter in term (weeks, months, quarters), the leader should ensure that they align with the strategic goals that have already been established.

For a plan to work, it must address three crucial elements: “Who will do What by When.” The “Who” could include existing members of your team, or you may need to reach out to other departments/units to bring in the right resources. Expanding the team’s business network and using new communications tools is often a positive ancillary to the goal setting process. The “What” should be both specific and attainable. The leader needs to clarify for the team how important the goal is and why they are working toward it. At the same time, he/she needs to weigh the effort, time and resources needed to reach the goal against the list of other current priorities and obligations. There’s no point in setting goals that are out of your control. The goal should also contain a description of “When” it should be completed, otherwise it will become a task that constantly gets put off. Deadlines are what switch people into action. The leader should also consider breaking up the overall timeline into smaller, more manageable increments. The due date should also be re-evaluated from time to time to determine if adjustment is warranted but moving the date too far into the future may dilute its sense of importance.
NSF Fundamentals
This workshop provides a primary basis of understanding of proposals to and awards from the National Science Foundation (NSF). It is perfect for someone new to Research Administration, as well as for research administrators seeking to expand their knowledge of federal funding agencies. The curriculum provides an overview of the policies and procedures essential to preparing successful proposals to and managing grant awards from NSF.

Financial Research Compliance
This workshop provides an in-depth look at financial compliance issues through a combination of lecture, case studies, review of federal audit reports, and a discussion of best practices. Participants will be able to apply the principles of the Uniform Guidance that govern federally sponsored agreements to work at their home institutions, including costing at the Pre-Award and Post-Award stage.

NIH Fundamentals
This workshop provides a primary basis of understanding of proposals to and awards from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The presenters will walk you through the whole grants process and give you an overview of key resources and websites you will need to be successful from proposal development through Post-Award administration.

Rules and Regulations: Where Does It Say We Have To Do That?
This workshop examines a variety of regulations that impact the day-to-day management of federal awards with the goal of helping participants answer these questions, and to better understand where regulations end and institutional policies begin.

Check out the latest issue of NCURA’s Online Scholarly Journal
Research Management Review

Volume 23, Number 1

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Patrick Okonji, Olatokunbo Christopher Okiki, Idowu Adeola Ibijoke, and Babajide I. Alo, University of Lagos

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Michael Freuss, West Texas A&M University; Kimberly Eck, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Mary Fechner, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; and Loren Walker, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Department-Centered Research Administration: Building a General Research Administrative Support Program
Holly Zink, Children’s Mercy Hospital

Growing Research Funding in Emerging and Developed Programs at Research Universities
Katherine G. Hutton, Florida Atlantic University

www.ncura.edu/Publications/ResearchManagementReview.aspx
Bienvenio a Puerto Rico

NCURA is heading to the Caribbean! Save the Date for NCURA’s 14th Annual Pre-Award Research Administration (PRA) Conference to be held on March 5-6, 2020 in tropical San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Island of Enchantment, at the Puerto Rico Convention Center.

The theme of the meeting, Sustaining Research ... Together! inspires us to meet the challenges and embrace opportunities to sustain research excellence in our institutions.

To discuss the issue of sustainability is to discuss Puerto Rico’s future. The community is working to build an infrastructure with more long-term viability -- modernizing its energy grid, reconnecting communications and Internet access, bringing tourism back to the island, and many others. Driving home the importance of sustainability and supporting native talent and trade throughout Puerto Rico, small, local businesses are proliferating, as a wave of island entrepreneurs have invested in new hotels, boutiques, and restaurants. A booming art scene is generating galleries while art festivals are supporting Puerto Rican artists.

Biologists have discovered new research opportunities, such as examining how reefs recover from natural disasters, and how the remaining shallow water corals dissipate wave impact during hurricanes and other storms. Eighty percent of the island’s honeybees perished during the storm. With the support of a grant through the National Science Foundation, a team of researchers are investigating whether there have been genetic changes in those insects that survived the storm.

The keys to sustainability are leadership, strength through partnerships, community involvement, diversified funding and in-kind support, solving problems the community cares about, producing tangible results, and providing added value to community effort. To sustain research together, we need to think, plan, and act differently.

THINK DIFFERENTLY When we aim to sustain our work, we try to assure that it will be supported and maintained long enough to meet the goals. It’s not just the sustainability of the organization but the sustainability of the work that needs to be accomplished over the long haul. Sessions within the Sponsored Research Administration, Research Development, Medical/Clinical and Global tracks may help expand your current horizons and get you thinking creatively towards sustainable pursuits. Sessions such as:

• Anywhere in the Cycle: Tangible Tools to Maximize Effectiveness in Managing Sponsored Projects
• A Strategic Approach to Secure Research Funding: Process Tips for Administrative Leaders and Staff
• The Essentials of Diversity & Inclusion, Leaving a Global Footprint on Science

PLAN DIFFERENTLY Planning for sustainability involves outlining where we hope to be and how we intend to get there. Before we can begin planning for sustainability, we need to ask ourselves how are we organized?
Sustaining Research... Together

WORKSHOP DAY     MARCH 4, 2020
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SAN JUAN
PUERTO RICO

Do we have the resources? What are the obstacles and challenges and how do we solve them? The Senior Leadership and Management and Career Development tracks are full of sessions to help you assess where you are professionally and develop strategies and skills to take your career to the next level. Sessions including:

• Changing the Game: Reimagining the Pre-Award Process for Growth at a Traditional Teaching Institution
• Women Leaders in Research Administration: Breaking the Glass Ceiling

ACT DIFFERENTLY If we’re to solve complex problems to sustain the research enterprise, we need to explore inter-relationships, perspectives and boundaries – we need to work together! Consider attending sessions within the Departmental Research Administration, Compliance, or PUI track to get you thinking about collaborating and building on the strengths of those around you. Sessions such as:

• Pre- and Post-Award Administrator Interactions: Can’t We All Just Get Along?
• Research Compliance and Research Administrators: Friends or Frenemies; Working Together to Develop Key Strategies for Increased Research Capacity
• Be Your Own Parade and Gain Attention on Campus for Your Small and Mighty Important Office

Of course, the conference will include the sustainably popular federal updates from NIH, NSF and OMB as well as a number of sessions specific to federal funding.

NCURA’s commitment to diversity and inclusion is being highlighted throughout the sessions. PRA2020 will feature many new faces to the NCURA presentation platform as well as inter-institutional collaborative proposals that will sustain your desire for broad perspectives on complex issues. Additionally, PRA2020 will be offering a session presented in Spanish as well as sessions like:

• From X to Z: Managing the Addition of Gen Z to Research Administration
• Decipher “Communication” in a Diverse Workplace

WHAT ABOUT FUN? WHY ELSE WOULD YOU COME TO PR?

Puerto Rico has a remarkable range of geological, biological, and habitat diversity, including a rain forest, a dry forest, mangroves, karst formations, three bioluminescent bays, and one of the largest underground cave systems in the world. Mona, one of the five islands in the Puerto Rican archipelago, has been called the “Galapagos of the Caribbean,” and approximately 75 miles offshore is the Puerto Rico Trench, recognized by the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as the deepest part of the Atlantic Ocean.

“Espíritu puertorriqueño” or Puerto Rican Spirit means one that is strong, resilient and ever joyful. Come to PRA in Puerto Rico and renew, recharge, have fun and reconnect! We look forward to welcoming you.

Co-Chairs, PRA 2020,

Anthony Beckman
University of Rochester

Gai Doran
Yale University
The Role of University-Enterprise Co-Constructed Scientific Research Center in Technology Transfer

By Jian Chen

Technology transfer and popularization is an important part of science and technology and also the key to promoting regional economic development. As the vital technical support, the university is an indispensable headstream of technology transfer. In recent years, the Chinese government has focused more and more on promoting a proper technology transfer system in the university and introduced a number of related policies, which facilitated the development of proper technology transfer in Chinese universities. According to the “2018 Annual Report on the Technology Transfer of China,” in 2017, the number of technology transfers from 2,766 universities and research institutions accounted for 35% of the total number of technology transfers in China (Ministry of Science and Technology of China, 2019). In particular, all the contract amount, average contract amount and the number of contracts of technology transfer significantly increased compared to last year (Figure 1).

In policies issued by the Chinese government, instituting the university-enterprise co-constructed scientific research center (U-ECRC) has made significant contributions to the technology transfer. In the 1990s, in order to promote the transformation of science and technology achievement, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) of China took the lead in proposing and implementing the National Engineering Research Center (NERC) project. The purpose for the NERC is to guide universities, research institutions or enterprises that have advantages in certain fields as the leading unit to constitute a coalition with other relevant institutions, which can form a holistic methodology of technology transfer and promote the proper technology transfer system in China.

By the end of 2016, 360 NERCs had been built in 30 provinces across China, and the fields were distributed in 15 key areas of national economy, such as advanced manufacturing, materials, energy, transportation, etc. According to the “2016 Annual Report of National Engineering Research Center,” there were 14,127 invention patents applied by the NERCs, an annual increase of 61.65%; 8240 invention patents were granted with an increase of 74.5%, and 14,340 achievements were transferred (Ministry of Science and Technology of China, 2019). NERCs have become the vital technology transfer platform in various industries, especially for universities. With the platform between enterprises and universities, the generation and transformation of science and technology achievements in universities has been effectively promoted.

The operation of NERC

The operation mode of NERC is relatively open. NERCs led by universities usually adopt a relatively independent operation mode (Figure 2). The start-up funding of NERCs is usually invested by the state appropriation, bank loan, or competent authority (or supporting units). After the completion of the construction, the operation of NERCs should be self-sufficient. The MoST would periodically evaluate the NERCs and provide partial post-subsidy support.

The advantages of NERCs in the technology transfer for universities

NERCs can make full use of the university research resources and make up for the shortcomings of the enterprises. Due to the advantages of comprehensive disciplines, concentrated talents, and open information, the NERCs could develop STEM-focused research with a multidisciplinary approach, which would utilize the strength of universities and enhance the independent innovation capabilities of enterprises.

NERCs act as an “interface” between universities and enterprises and a “channel” for the industrialization of achievements in universities. As a

Figure 1. The contract amount, average contract amount, number of contracts of technology transfer in China (2017-2018)

Figure 2. The commonly used operation mode of NERCs led by universities
typical industry-university-research cooperation model, CNERCs integrate research, development, production, and market into one entity. In universities, there are plenty of excellent scientific research infrastructures and optimal supporting conditions, which can continuously generate new achievements and become the source of technology transfer. Meanwhile enterprises have outstanding engineering development capabilities and self-contained pilot plant test systems, as well as specialized finance, law, and technology transfer management teams. These can quickly transform basic scientific research into applied science and help CNERCs continuously achieve high performance of technology transfer. Furthermore, CNERCs have become one of the key incubators of high-tech companies with the advantages of both universities and enterprises. In 2016, there were 175 companies incubating from the CNERCs, including 130 limited liability companies, 26 joint-stock companies, and 19 other forms of companies.

“CNERCs have become one of the key incubators of high-tech companies with the advantages of both universities and enterprises.”

CNERCs are conducive to the training of talents in the whole chain of technology transfer. Universities are specialized in academic education, application technology training, and research skills training, which can continuously convey young talents to become entrepreneurs. Companies continue to recruit professional technology transfer managers and consultants who understand both the technology and market. This kind of comprehensive talent team not only effectively protect and promote the technology transfer in the university, but also cultivate a group of first-class senior technical management talents across China.

Thoughts on further promoting the technology transfer by UECC

Although the number of patent grants and conversions in the university keeps increasing year after year, the conversion rate of patents is still low. The conversion rate of science and technology patents in Chinese universities is only 2%. There are still many inadequacies in the operation and conversion of patents in the university, leading to the loss of science and technology achievements. Some suggestions are listed below to promote technology transfer in the university by means of UECC:

1) Owing to the scanty knowledge of intellectual property protection, many patent claims written by researchers in university are inadequate. These patents cannot protect the achievements sufficiently, resulting in the inability to convert. Universities should allow enterprises to go deep into the universities by UECCs, which can help enterprises evaluate the sci-tech achievements earlier and provide professional protection guidance before the patent application. In this way, universities can effectively compensate for the loss caused by the lack of a specialized intellectual property evaluation team.

2) There is a shortage of technology transfer management and service talents in universities. Among the 2,766 universities and research institutions in the “2018 Annual Report on Science and Technology Achievements Transformation,” only 9.5% of the organizations have set up a specialized technology transfer office (Ministry of Science and Technology of China, 2019). The technology transfer affairs in the organizations without a technology transfer office are usually hosted by the scientific research office, which lacks expertise. UECC can help universities in setting up a specialized technology transfer office and establishing a specialized service team. Normally, the talent mobility trend in UECC is mostly unidirectional, which universities cultivate and convey technical talents to enterprises. UECCs and the universities should encourage management and service talents of technology transfer in enterprises to flow to universities, especially those inter-disciplinary talents who are specialized in technology transfer and also knowledgeable in law, finance or marketing.

3) UECCs need to enhance international cooperation. With the improvement of intellectual property protection systems in CNERCs, UECCs will be able to attract more and more non-Chinese enterprises to collaborate. These foreign enterprises have jointly built R&D platforms to connect with other CNERC members and they can share the technology transfer results in return. The participation of international enterprises also can promote the standardization of intellectual property protection systems in CNERCs, which will result in a win-win situation for both parties.

4) As a pipeline for technology transfer in the university, the construction of UECCs should be propagated and popularized. In particular, local governments should formulate relevant policies to encourage and guide universities and enterprises to form alliances by using CNERC as a role model. Moreover, universities should attach more importance to the development of UECCs and make more preferential policies and support, which can help UECCs play a better role in technology transfer.

Conclusion

The technology transfer process in universities requires the coordination of governments, universities, and enterprises to make great efforts together. UECCs can effectively combine all stakeholders to participate in a common platform and establish a structured process for transferring technology through licensing and spinouts. UECCs will play an increasingly important role in technology transfer and create an integrated ecosystem for a proper technology transfer system in China. However, to continue to improve the technology transfer in China, there are still policies need to be refined, systems to be improved, and mechanisms to be evaluated.

References


Jian Chen, PhD, is a research administrator at Peking University in Beijing, China. He works in the Division for Institutional Affairs, Office of Scientific Research. Jian can be reached at jch@pku.edu.cn
Research administration is not a widely known profession to the general public, or sometimes even within a university. In that light, it’s no wonder so many research administrators enter the field with virtually no prior experience (Roberts, 2005). While formal and informal mentoring occurs within the profession, a recent internship experience at University of North Georgia (UNG) has led us to believe that we can be more intentional in educating students about the field and training the next generation’s workforce.

In the summer of 2018, Amber Tyner, a junior English major concentrating in Writing and Publication, came to the Grants & Contracts Administration (GCA) office at UNG to complete an internship for her degree. Pre-award Grant Specialists Chris Jackson and Kelly Millsaps served as her supervisors during the (unpaid) internship. Amber was able to join GCA for a second summer (2019) as a (paid) part-time employee.

As Amber started her final semester of college, we all got together to talk about our experiences as first-time mentors and mentee and to evaluate the efficacy of an undergraduate internship in research administration.

**EXPECTATIONS**

**Kelly:** So, Amber, I’m a little embarrassed to admit I had no idea what I was committing to when you came to our office. My role has never been one that directly supported students and I had never mentored anyone. What were your expectations coming into this internship?

**Amber:** Going in, I wanted to be a grant writer, specifically for a nonprofit. Honestly, I had never heard of the grants and contracts office until another staff member I knew at UNG mentioned it to me. I was expecting to have more experience with the writing. I assumed that was your job—to write grants for the university and bring in money. Once the internship got started, however, I realized that’s not exactly the case. I did get experience writing a couple drafts, but I really became aware of how a grant writer could also be seen in more of an administrative role.

**Chris:** I was a little apprehensive after first meeting you, Amber, because I knew what you would end up doing wouldn’t be exactly grant writing. We sometimes help write proposals, but our main role is submitting proposals and making sure they are the best they can be. Knowing now what we do on a day-to-day basis, what attracts you to being a research administrator, and what isn’t as attractive?

**Amber:** I like the fact that you have a relationship with the PIs, and that you’re able to sit down with them from the very beginning, and guide them throughout the process. And especially at a university, you’re contributing to that institution and helping it grow. I will say doing the funding opportunity searches are not as fun, but it is necessary. And some of the paperwork that goes into it isn’t so attractive.

**ACTIVITIES**

**Kelly:** One of the difficulties I had was balancing the internship as a learning experience while still being productive. I had to learn how to not duplicate effort for the sake of learning, like having you read a RFP that I would have to read anyway. And I felt bad about the marathon funding searches. Did you feel like you were contributing?

**Amber:** I never felt like I was doing something that wouldn’t help. Almost every time you gave me a RFP, I would create a checklist or read through a PI’s proposal to ensure it responded effectively. And when I read reviewer comments, I got to actually edit the resubmission proposal on my own. Even with the extensive funding searches, I got to look for real opportunities that would help faculty. There were times I just read past grants or watched webinars, but I knew that knowledge would be helpful for my future work.
Chris: Since you did such a great job the first summer, I wanted to give you more responsibility the second time around while still having it be an internship-like experience. I guess I was subconsciously trying to be a better mentor. You also had the opportunity to learn from our post-award team. Did it feel like a different experience?

Amber: I felt like the second summer was more focused on what I wanted to do to prepare for a career, and I didn’t feel like I was being watched over. I had my own space and could work at my own pace, and I appreciated that. Both summers were about learning, but this summer felt a little bit different—more meaningful. You asked me what I wanted practice with or felt would help me for my next job, and then assigned tasks accordingly. I appreciated getting more experience with budgets, reviewing proposals, and learning how to submit everything. I was more involved in the office the second summer and really took on the role of a grant specialist, and also learned what goes into managing a grant after it’s awarded.

Kelly: Was there anything you felt was not helpful at all in your learning experience?

Amber: I felt most of the work was valuable, but some not as much as others. I liked reading over grants that had been funded in the past, but after one or two, it wasn’t very helpful. I would have rather practiced responding to the RFP myself instead of continuing to read a successful proposal.

EVALUATION

Kelly: As far as giving you feedback goes, I stressed out a few times and asked Chris, “How do I say this without sounding critical?!” Because you were doing a great job! And I was worried about being discouraging when I corrected something. I tried to approach critiques by giving you context, but my feedback wasn’t really structured. Would you have preferred a different method?

Amber: I always appreciated any feedback. I liked that you pointed out what I did correctly and then what you would have done differently. Seeing examples of comments and edits you personally sent to PIs on their proposals was very helpful and gave me a guideline for how I should approach my own reviews. However, I would have appreciated if you were more direct with things I did incorrectly. If my work was “wrong,” I wanted to know specifics, very much like how a professor grades an assignment for class. I learn best when I receive specific constructive criticism, and think any intern would want the same thing since we’re trying to prepare ourselves for a job.

FUTURE PLANS

Kelly: Would you say that you are now more open to a job in research administration versus strictly grant writing?

Amber: Well, I’m definitely open to either now. I would still love to work for a non-profit one day and actually write grants, but now that I see this side of the table, it’s really an interesting job.

Chris: I would be shocked if a student has research administration as a career goal. Part of the reason we’re creating a regular internship now is to say “Hey! There’s this job over here you don’t know about!”

Amber: I think a lot of people don’t know about it. I was entering my senior year in college and wasn’t aware that it’s a career. If you brought another intern in, I would talk about what aspect of the job they are most interested in and tailor activities that specifically meet those needs. But also give them a varied experience. If I had just been given grant writing work, I wouldn’t have seen what all research administration is. Give them a little taste of everything.

With minimal adjustments to our workload, we mentors were able to provide an invaluable experience to a student entering the workforce. In turn, a student opened the eyes of two research administrators and showed how you don’t have to be a manager to be a mentor. We’re all responsible for the future of research administration, so let’s get to work.

References


Kelly Millsaps, Grant Specialist at the University of North Georgia, started her career in research administration in 2013. Kelly’s job duties encompass all things pre-award, as well as helping to foster the growth of the research community at UNG. She can be reached at kelly.millsaps@ung.edu

Chris Jackson, MPA, Grant Specialist at the University of North Georgia, supports faculty and staff with grant proposal preparation and submission, conducts grant training, and assists with application and review processes for internal university awards. Chris can be reached at christopher.jackson@ung.edu

Amber L. Tyner is a student at the University of North Georgia who is majoring in English with a concentration in Writing and Publication. After she graduates in Fall 2019, she plans to pursue a career in grant writing or research administration for a university, nonprofit, or similar field. She can be reached at amber-tyner@comcast.net

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Happy Holidays! I wanted to take a moment to review the preceding twelve months to not only recap highlights, but also provide updates on initiatives that will shape the Region heading into the new year.

First and foremost, our joint Regional Meeting with Region VIII was an unqualified success. The Westin Jersey City Newport proved a perfect venue for the conference, both in terms of its facilities and its proximity to Manhattan. Our free workshops saw more than a hundred attendees spend the afternoon receiving hands-on training from experts in their field, and, in general, our session offerings were among the most diverse in memory. And our pirate-themed dinner cruise of New York Harbor availed registrants to close-up views of the Statue of Liberty and Brooklyn Bridge, among other points of interest. Thank You to the program committee, and especially to Adam Greenberg and Sandy Collier, the meeting’s Chair and Co-Chair, respectively, for their stellar efforts over the last year.

The Regional Meeting also saw several noteworthy announcements. Tim Schailey, from Thomas Jefferson University, was the deserving recipient of the 2019 Region II Distinguished Service Award. Additionally, the results from this year’s elections for 2020 Officer positions were revealed:

- Chair-Elect: Catherine Parker (George Washington University)
- Treasurer-Elect: Gabriela Anglon (Weill Cornell Medical College)
- Secretary: Danielle Brown (University of Maryland, Baltimore)

Congratulations to all!

Besides preparing for the Regional Meeting, the Steering Committee was also working to further improve the membership experience. These activities included:

- Amending the Region II Bylaws and Administrative Policies to be more transparent with the membership regarding expectations and obligations for officers, committee chairs, and volunteers alike.
- Distributing and data-mining member surveys at both the Annual and Regional Meetings regarding current Region activities, with the goal of addressing areas for improvement in the coming year.
- Taking steps to form a Diversity & Inclusion Subcommittee.
- Establishing a system for the Regional Meeting whereby the location will rotate among the six non-DC states.

Region II accomplished a great many things in 2019 due to the efforts of numerous volunteers, and I encourage everyone to get involved. I am honored to have served as your Chair and look forward to the continued success of the Region in 2020 under the able stewardship of Katie McKeon. Happy New Year!

Charles Bartunek, JD, is Chair of Region II, and is the Director of Collaborative and Corporate Research Contracts at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. He may be reached at bartunekc@email.chop.edu
Happy Holidays from Region III!

As the new year approaches we’d like to take the time to recognize all of our wonderful volunteers who made 2019 a success. Our executive and standing committee members are crucial to keeping the Region III Flamingos flocking together, and they couldn’t do it without the numerous volunteers helping to run our regional conference and creating an effortless and fun experience at the annual meeting. Thank you to everyone who lent their skills, time, and advice to make this year a success in the Southeast! If you’re a member of Region III and would like to get involved, just visit http://ncuraregioniii.com/volunteer and let us know!

This year also welcomed the second cohort of Region III’s Research Administration Mentoring Program (R3RAMP). This initiative provides opportunities for selected members of Region III to gain career-enhancing skills and experiences that build upon the knowledge of current and emerging leaders in the field of Research Administration. We’re excited to see what great things our eight new R3RAMP mentor-mentee teams will do!

Region III is looking forward to thawing out this coming Spring by teaming up with Region IV to host a joint Spring Meeting at Tradewinds Island Resort in St. Pete Beach, FL. We’ll be exploring the theme “Expanding the Circle: One Profession, Diverse Perspectives” by celebrating the diverse people, institution types, skill sets, and experiences that come together to advance research administration as a profession. Our program committee is working hard to put together an exciting array of workshops, concurrent sessions, and discussion groups. See you in St. Pete Beach April 25-29, 2020!

We’d also like to recognize our hard-working members who shared that they reached milestones in their education and professional development this year by earning the following degrees and certifications:

- CGFM: Carla McClendon (Florida State University)
- CPRA: Annemarie Delgado (Elizabeth City State University)
- CRA: Melanie Eberhart (Duke University), Carolyn Grider (University of Florida), Xiaowen Ma (Emory University), Brian Miller (Emory University)
- MBA: Sandy Ahne (University of Central Arkansas)
- MRA: Brittany Henderson (The University of Tennessee at Martin)
- Ph.D. in Educational Leadership: Hagan Walker (Clemson University)

As always, you can keep up with Region III by visiting our website at www.ncuraregioniii.com, signing up for the monthly newsletters, joining the Region III Members Collaborate community, and following us on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). See you in 2020!

Emily Devereux is the Chair of Region III and serves as Executive Director, Research & Technology Transfer at Arkansas State University. She can be reached at edevereux@astate.edu

I can barely believe that 2019 is nearly over! I hope everyone in the Mid-America Region is enjoying this lovely winter season – but if you aren’t a fan of winter, don’t despair! Join us at the 2020 Region III/ Region IV Joint Spring Meeting happening at the Tradewinds Grand Island Resort in St. Pete Beach, Florida. In April, we will explore the theme “Expanding the Circle: One Profession, Diverse Perspectives” by celebrating the diverse people, institutions, skill sets, and experiences coming together to advance research administration as a profession. We are so excited to offer this combined regional meeting, look forward to continuing our partnership, and are planning a fantastic experience for both region’s members in 2020!

Thinking about attending the Region IV Spring Meeting or the National Annual Meeting? Then consider applying for a travel award!

Regional/National Travel Award — ($1,500/$2,000) to support travel to the Region IV Spring Meeting and the Annual National Meeting.

John Philippis Travel Award — ($1,500) Mentoring Our Own (MOO) mentees are encouraged to apply for travel support to the Region IV meeting.

In this season of giving, I encourage you to think about Region IV members who give tirelessly of themselves to help move the Region as well as the field of research administration forward. Specific awards are:

- Distinguished Service Award… for those who have shown continuing and long-term contributions to NCURA Region IV and research administration.
- Kevin Reed Outstanding New Professional Award… for those who have demonstrated willingness to offer their abilities, time, commitment, and enthusiasm to NCURA Region IV.
- Meritorious Contributions Award… for those who have developed and implemented an innovative program which significantly enhanced the research atmosphere on a campus - can include team or office efforts, as well as those of a single individual.
- Special Merit and Distinction… for contributions to NCURA Region IV that are above and beyond “business as usual,” inclusive of unique and invaluable contribution to the vitality and enduring legacy of the organization.

Region IV is also soliciting nominations for the following board positions. You can nominate someone or self-nominate. Position descriptions are posted on the Region’s website. Current and past board members are also happy to talk with you about their experiences. Nominations are due in early January.

- Chair-Elect
- Secretary
- Treasurer-Elect
- At-large Member (2)

We will intentionally consider NCURA’s Statement on Diversity and Inclusion when putting together a slate of candidates. Please send inquiries to Bonniejean Zitske, Nominations Committee Chair, at bzitske@rsp.wisc.edu.

Nicolle Nichols is Chair of Region IV and the Research Administrator for the Computational Biology and Medical Oncology Sections of the Department of Internal Medicine at Washington University in St. Louis. She can be reached at n.nichols@wustl.edu
Region V is pleased to announce that planning for the new Mustang Mentoring Program is in full swing under the leadership of Committee Chair, Robyn Remotigue (UNT Health Science Center). The program is expected to launch in early 2020 and will feature great opportunities for experienced research administrators to mentor junior research administrators in our region. We also expect to have some special benefits for individuals who participate in the program beyond those received from the mentorship relationship. Thank you to Robyn and her committee members, Elizabeth Garcia (Our Lady of the Lake University), Jill Griffith (UT MD Anderson Cancer Center), and Courtney Swaney (The University of Texas at Austin), for their hard work.

Chair-Elect Becky Castillo (UT MD Anderson Cancer Center) has this exciting message about our upcoming spring meeting:

Please mark your calendars for the Region V 2020 Spring Meeting, which will be held on April 26-29, 2020 in Fort Worth, Texas at the Hilton-Fort Worth. The theme, “Region V Roundup: Where the Best Begins,” is inspired by our host city’s history and culture and also by our Region’s mascot, the mighty Mustang. We’re busy planning the details of the meeting and could use all the help we can get. If you’re interested in being part of the program committee, please contact Becky at bcastillo@mdanderson.org.

Finally, as 2019 comes to a close, we want to recognize our outgoing board member, Michelle (Mickey) Stevenson (The University of Texas at San Antonio). Thank you for your service. We also want to welcome our incoming Treasurer-Elect, Vanessa Lopez (The University of Texas at Austin), and board member, Adrienne Blalack (University of Tulsa), who begin their terms of office on Jan. 1, 2020.

Katie Plum is Chair of Region V and serves as Director of Sponsored Projects at Angelo State University. She can be reached at katie.plum@angelo.edu

2019 has been full of great things for Region VI! Thanks to everyone who made the meeting in Seattle a success. The program committee, planning & logistics committee, presenters, on-site volunteers, and those helping from behind the scenes – we cannot run a regional meeting without you. Thanks to the attendees for participating in workshops, sessions, discussion groups, and networking events.

Congratulations to the Travel Award recipients for the Regional Meeting:

Kevin Loza: University of California, Santa Barbara
Allison Nguyen: California State University, Fullerton

At the Business Meeting on October 29, 2019, we announced the recipients of two Region VI recognition Awards.

The 2019 Meritorious Contribution award was made to the Ad Hoc Website Committee led by Kevin Stewart for the successful update of the regional website. The updated website includes a fresh look with improved navigation for users. In addition to Kevin (UC, Santa Barbara), the committee is comprised of Diana Vigil-Stevens (UC, Irvine), Erika Blossom (UC, Irvine), Laura Register (Stanford University), and Mara Rivet (University of Washington).

The 2019 Helen Carrier Distinguished Service Award went to NCURA Immediate Past President Georgette Sakimoto (University of Hawaii) for her significant and long-standing contributions as a leader within NCURA. Georgette’s has made an incredible impact on Region VI and the organization. On a personal note, Georgette mentioned that Helen Carrier was one of the first NCURA members she met at her very first meeting and that Helen inspired and encouraged her to get involved in the organization. What a lovely example of the positive influence our members have on one another!

With a new year around the corner, there is plenty for the Region to look forward to in 2020.

The Education & Professional Development Committee is finishing plans for a one-day Pre-award Basics Workshop to be held in early 2020 in Southern California, a brand new offering for the region.

Interested in getting involved with Region VI? Reach out to Volunteer Coordinator, Mich Pane (Stanford University) at michiko@stanford.edu to find an opportunity that matches your interests, skills, and availability.

It has been my distinct pleasure and honor to serve as your Regional Chair. Region VI is full of amazing research administrators, colleagues, and friends.

Amanda C. Snyder, MPA, is Region VI Chair and Associate Director in the Office of Sponsored Programs at the University of Washington. She can be reached at acs229@uw.edu
By the time this is published, the 2019 Region VI/VII meeting in Seattle, Washington will be in the books. However, as I write this, we are in the final preparation phase and it is coming up quickly. We have a wonderful set of volunteers that are helping with set-up, AV, tracks, member activities, etc. etc. It is so clear to me that regional meetings could not happen without the dedication and commitment of time that so many are willing to give.

We are also planning the Region VII strategic meeting for Sunday morning before the workshops begin. It is a time of growth for the region and we want to be thoughtful about the direction we head. One of the questions we have been asking ourselves is, ‘What is the purpose of the regions?’ In this age of instant communications across distances, how does a region stay relevant? How does a region with the large geographical footprint and small number of institutions like Region VII stay connected with members? How does that footprint play into our identity? How do we recognize members? What will we do to ensure we are enabling succession planning in a way that is both fun and meaningful? Should we look at other models for the regional meetings, such as a one-day meeting with low costs? More discussion groups? Regionals every 18 months rather than every 12 months? What best serves our particular demographics?

In the meantime, check out the Region VII website and newsletters at www.ncuraregionvii.org.

Diane Barrett is Chair of Region VII and serves as Director, Office of Sponsored Programs at Colorado State University. She can be reached at diane.barrett@colostate.edu

How the year has flown since I started as Chair for Region VIII. It has been an honor to be part of such an amazing region and testimony of the great work that NCURA does globally. With the support from my fellow Board members it has been a busy year and I would like to thank them:

Chair-Elect: Tadashi Sugihara (Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, Japan)
Treasurer: Nicholas Schulthess (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland)
Secretary: Stefania Grotti (Politecnico di Milano, Italy)
Volunteer Coordinator: Fadia Homeidan (American University of Beirut, Lebanon)
Past Chair: Julie Ward (University of New South Wales, Australia)

Our region has seen our membership expand to new countries with new members joining from Tanzania and the Republic of Korea.

It is great when we do have the opportunity to come together face to face and at this year’s annual conference, 61 of us made the journey to Washington, DC. Catching up with fellow Region VIII members, friends from other regions and new members, we stand out by our colorful lanyards (the envy of all the other regions!) and the clip-on koalas at our registration desk. Our social opportunities at the conference included the Monday night dinner (and dinner game) and the NetZone, where we joined with Region II. After the annual meeting, a group of us were fortunate to attend the NIH Workshop Day. The site visit and the presentations we had from NIH staff were outstanding.

I would like to thank Region II for their support with the NetZone at the annual meeting and for allowing us to have a joint meeting with them in October. Although we were a small contingent from abroad, Region II made us feel so welcomed. Many thanks to Charles Bartunek, Adam Greenberg, Sandy Collier from Region II and our own Julie Ward for organizing such a great conference. We even had a visit from a special guest on our cruise on the Hudson.

Now as I transition from Chair to Past-Chair, I want to welcome our new Board members and hope that Tadashi has a great year coming up like the one I had. Also don’t forget to become involved in our region and volunteer.

Bella Blaher is Chair of Region VIII and is the Senior International Grants Officer at the University of Melbourne in Australia. She can be reached at blaher@unimelb.edu.au
**Selfie versus Posie**

*By Will Ferguson*

If you lose sleep over the number of likes on your Instagram account, you might want to think twice before posting that selfie.

That’s the main takeaway from a new study in the Journal of Research in Personality by Washington State University psychologists.

The scientists conducted a novel experiment with hundreds of actual Instagram users to determine if there are certain types of self image posts that cause others to make snap judgements about the user’s personality. Their work shows that individuals who post a lot of selfies are almost uniformly viewed as less likeable, less successful, more insecure and less open to new experiences than individuals who share a greater number of posed photos taken by someone else. Basically, selfie versus posie.

“Even when two feeds had similar content, such as depictions of achievement or travel, feelings about the person who posted selfies were negative and feelings about the person who posted posies were positive,” said Chris Barry, WSU professor of psychology and lead author of the study. “It shows there are certain visual cues, independent of context, that elicit either a positive or negative response on social media.”

Barry began researching possible links between Instagram activity and personality traits around five years ago. At the time, the idea that people who take lots of selfies are probably narcissists was front and center in the pop culture world.

Barry decided to put the popular theory to the test. He conducted two studies investigating potential links between posting lots of selfies on Instagram and a narcissistic personality.

Somewhat surprisingly, the research was inconclusive.

“We just weren’t finding anything,” Barry said. “That got us thinking that while posts on social media might not be indicative of the poster’s personality, other people might think they are. So, we decided to design another study to investigate.”

**A novel experiment**

Barry, along with WSU psychology students and collaborators from the University of Southern Mississippi analyzed data from two groups of students for the study. The first group consisted of 30 undergraduates from a public university in the southern United States.

The participants were asked to complete a personality questionnaire and agreed to let the researchers use their 30 most recent Instagram posts for the experiment.

The posts were coded based on whether they were selfies or posies as well as what was depicted in each image, such as physical appearance, affiliation with others, events, activities or accomplishments.

The second group of students consisted of 119 undergraduates from a university in the northwestern United States. This group was asked to rate the Instagram profiles of the first group on 13 attributes such as self absorption, low self esteem, extraversion and success using only the images from those profiles.

Barry’s team then analyzed the data to determine if there were visual cues in the first group of students’ photos that elicited consistent personality ratings from the second group.

They found that the students who posted more posies were viewed as being relatively higher in self esteem, more adventurous, less lonely, more outgoing, more dependable, more successful and having the potential for being a good friend while the reverse was true for students with a greater number of selfies on their feed.

Personality ratings for selfies with a physical appearance theme, such as flexing in the mirror, were particularly negative, the researchers found.

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Other interesting findings from the study included that students in the first group who were rated by the second group as highly self absorbed tended to have more Instagram followers and followed more users.

The researchers also found the older the study participants in the second group were, the more they tended to rate profiles negatively in terms of success, consideration of others, openness to trying new things and likeability.

“One of the noteworthy things about this study is that none of these students knew each other or were aware of the Instagram patterns or number of followers of the people they were viewing,” Barry said.

The researchers have several theories to explain their results.

The generally positive reactions to posies may be due to the fact that the photos appear more natural, similar to how the observer would see the poster in real life.

Another explanation is that selfies were far less frequently posted than posies and seeing one could signal something strange or unusual about the poster.

“While there may be a variety of motives behind why people post self images to Instagram, how those photos are perceived appears to follow a more consistent pattern,” Barry said. “While the findings of this study are just a small piece of the puzzle, they may be important to keep in mind before you make that next post.”

**Source:**

https://news.wsu.edu/2019/08/20/selfie-versus-posie
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