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Trending…the term is exciting to some, makes others shudder with fear. Do we jump on every trend and immediately revamp our operations or wait for the trend to be a little more proven before we embrace it? Those are the very questions that contributors to this issue of NCURA Magazine are exploring.

The use of metrics and trends continues to be at the forefront of many research administration conversations and is the focus of several articles in this issue. While we often treat faculty workload conversations as trending, the FDP article reminds us it is a trend we have been tracking since at least 2005. Lisa Mosley, Jeremy Forsberg and David Ngo describe alternatives to effort reporting that were presented at the Cohort for Efficiencies in Research Administration (CERA) meeting late last year. The alternatives are in response to changes in Uniform Guidance.

Although the focus of Pei-Lin Shi’s article is on PUIs, her admonition that one size doesn’t fit all in research administration is good advice for us all. Amanda Humphrey and Stephanie Scott’s article provides a “slow down” option to reduce over-reaction to changes in regulations.

NCURA’s growing world-wide reach is also featured in this issue. There were two impactful NCURA visits recently. A delegation was invited to participate in a research administration symposium in Beijing during the 120th anniversary of Peking University. Three of our members made a return visit to Cuba in November at the invitation of the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education where they presented, in Spanish, the fundamentals workshop.

NCURA continues to embrace diversity and inclusion in both our organization and our profession. Beginning with this issue, the members of the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion will contribute a column to focus on the issue. In celebration of NCURA’s 60th anniversary we’ve gone into the NCURA photo archives and will feature an oldie but a goodie from years past. We hope you’ll enjoy those looks back.

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Tony Ventimiglia, NCURA President

I am starting my first column as NCURA’s president with a confession – I do not consider myself a great trendsetter or social media guru. However, I do love Facebook and occasionally read a few tweets, but Instagram, Snapchat, creating hashtags, and any number of other options in the social media arena are lost on me (much to the chagrin of my family and more tech-savvy friends). Having said that, I embrace and am fully in support of people pursuing whatever tools they utilize to get information to the world. This is even more important in today’s society where the tendency toward generating intense “buzz” in short periods of time drives the “importance” of a topic (i.e., trending).

As NCURA’s reputation continues to grow internationally, we need to assess progress in our communication strategies and membership engagement. Are we, as an organization, utilizing all the tools available to us to “get the word out?” Are NCURA members aware of the various pathways available to get involved? There have been great strides made in this area over the years. Outreach and leadership development are priorities for 2019 as we explore new ways to advance the goals reflected in NCURA’s 2025 Strategic Plan.

So, let’s get the word out about our upcoming 2019 Financial Research Administration (FRA) and Pre-Award Research Administration (PRA) conferences being held in Las Vegas, Nevada (FRA: March 11th-12th and PRA: March 14th-15th, with a joint workshop day on March 13th). Registration is open, and the Mirage Hotel is ready to host NCURA, so, join us for excellent professional development opportunities and networking with colleagues and friends. I look forward to seeing you there!

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
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Before I entered the research administration world, a supervisor of mine encouraged members of the team I was on to participate in new and trending opportunities, such as ideas, procedures, or committees. I believe she was right on with that. Following her advice throughout my career has helped me be a part of, and at the forefront of positive change, but also allows for my voice (and my team) to help guide the outcome of the implementation of changes. Similarly, I was given the opportunity to learn a trending policy or system and then be the teacher. To take advantage of this opportunity for professional development you must be open to change, and have the capacity for change, at the time of what’s trending.

The next trending item is not always going to be the best. It may seem shiny and the best idea yet at the same time, there may be bugs to be worked out, unhappy users who may need additional support or encouragement as implementation takes place. I have been part of a few implementations of new institution-wide grant management systems as well as on a smaller scale of an internally-built tracking system. I experienced the feeling of excitement for the new toy, only to get stopped by road blocks, outputs providing errors or not working properly, and fixes (alterations/edits) needing to be made to correct those items. On a positive note, as part of working group committees, I have assisted in compiling and presenting guides for the trending topic at hand. And, being part of a beta testing group on multiple new topics, systems, policies and/or procedures to be rolled out has allowed me to experience what’s trending and help with institutional implementation while helping train others.

Following and accepting what is trending does not mean you have to make any changes at that time or at all. It may not fit your needs as a research administrator, or may not be within the capacity of your institution to invest in the trendiest thing. What’s trending may be great for some and may be the best thing now, but when it all comes down to business, it’s all for the same reason, research administration.

Something trending could be as simple as an idea you had to help simplify your workday or process for yourself. You share it with a co-worker who likes what you show them and they mirror your idea or makes their own adaptation. This may ultimately lead to a change in a procedure, which results in the role or task being completed. You may have a “trending” idea, but haven’t realized it yet. These types of ideas are just another indication of how important collaborations are between research administrators across all institutions. We all have ways to complete tasks for our PIs, but there may be a practice from another institution that cuts out one or more steps to still get to the same end result, making a work day more efficient.

I want to leave you with a charge to take a look at your institution, your department, your team and see what trending items have been implemented lately. How involved were you in determining how to implement that change? Get involved, join a committee, post a message within NCURA Collaborate or other organizations’ collaboration webpages and see how many connections, responses, feedback and/or advice you may get. In some cases, depending on your experience or role, you may be able to provide responses, feedback and advice to newer research administrators. Our director came in and told us to empower ourselves on a daily basis to be successful in our roles. I am now empowering you to be part of the change, and share your best practices and ideas. Become “trending” yourself!

"Be part of the change, and share your best practices and ideas."

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From Floodlight to Spotlight

Transitioning from a Central Office to a Department Administration Model

By Amy Raubenolt

W

alk outside your office and ask a question about a proposal submission deadline. Turn a corner and walk into a colleague’s office to discuss if a charge is allowable. Roll your chair into the next cubicle and ask for the name of the person in the IRB office. While waiting for coffee, people are chatting about going to the upcoming NCURA conference. In your weekly team meeting, someone makes a joke about a recent glitch in the grant system. Everyone laughs. You’re all speaking the same language.

I started my career in research administration in a central office model of sponsored projects with the Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. I worked in pre- and post-award for a group of researchers, and then for the department in subrecipient grants and contracts. The department was a collection of offices and cubicles; we met as teams and as a department to discuss changes in guidance, training, and department issues, and we had a shared vocabulary and understanding. After five years, I took a new position at The Ohio State University and moved to a department research administrator model. Everything was different. It went from being part of a flood light of research administration to being responsible for my own spotlight of knowledge, training, and self-trust.

There are some clear benefits to the central office model. Answers are often easy to find, and typically, you can afford to be choosy about who you ask. If your department maintains a shared drive for resources and training materials, you have an abundance of institutional knowledge and documents you can review. It is a bounty when everyone speaks the same language. You grow fluent in the shorthand slang of research administration and discussions ignite like synapses, quickly conveying information that everyone grasps. Conclusions come quickly, discussions move fast. As an added benefit, you promptly learn about changes coming to the industry and can easily metabolize how they impact your workload. Teams share and discuss training, access to webinars, and new information. Learning contributes to that shared vocabulary and that shared understanding.

When I moved from that central office model to a department research administrator, there were challenges. I could no longer rely on my colleagues to let me know about any changes in federal guidance. I needed to find my own training opportunities and justify them to my manager. I needed to advocate for my development and for the value to the department in me staying current with my industry. When I had questions about fabricated equipment and award allocation between different departments, I had to email or call strangers at the institution to introduce myself and ask if they knew anything about that topic and could offer help on it. Sometimes I got a little help, but a lot of the time, I had to figure it out for myself. I missed a deadline to request fee waivers on tuition for a proposal because I just could not wrap my arms around the university process and I couldn’t find help.

In this new position, how I self-identified had to change. I was no longer the one piloting ideas or building teams to work on a project; I was the sole source of information for grant management in my department, pre- and post-award. The buck stopped with me. Grant management processes and best practices were my own. That was a little lonely and sometimes a little daunting. My first month on the job our staff was talking about how they campaign for votes on best Christmas sweater. Someone asked if lobbying was allowed; I piped up to joke that lobbying isn’t allowed if they are using federal grant funds. There was an awkward pause and a raised eyebrow and then the conversation turned. In that moment, I realized that no one in my department spoke the language of grant management. I have since fallen into a better rhythm with the department administrator model of research administration, and I can see there are some attractive benefits. It is a great fit for me. I have always been independent and this style of work, which favors independence, suits me. In this model of work, I am master of my own time, projects, and processes. I investigate university processes, gather information, and create my own answers. I draft processes, revise them as needed, and move forward swiftly. I don’t need to wait for a committee of agreement or weeks of testing a process and gathering group feedback. I create, test, adapt, move forward. I enjoy the strong ownership of the work. I know that I am the sole source of information. There is no one to provide a competing narrative or response to a question. This is helping me build relationships of trust with my researchers and with department staff.

I have also always been a proactive independent learner, but in this model, it is imperative. Since I know that my professional development is
up to me. I have sought out online and in-person trainings at the university; I closely read my NCURA and other professional publications, and I have reached out to others in my role across the university to establish a group to meet quarterly and learn from each other. I’ve registered for the NCURA Midwest conference in Chicago and a conference on export controls in San Diego in the spring. I have grown as an active learner since I need to take more control and ownership of my education as a research professional. I have truly enjoyed that aspect of this transition to my new role.

If you are considering a transition like mine, I would like to offer four tips.

**Trust yourself.** Remember, even if no one on your team speaks your language, you still speak it. You are still a subject matter expert. Trust your own knowledge base. In preparing to move to your new role, gather a collection of templates or process documents you’ve developed. Create your own knowledge file. Sometimes just knowing how you worded an email about a complex topic or having a form to collect proposal data on reserve is a comfort.

**Find your people.** There are research administrators in different pockets in every institution you just have to find them. Even if they don’t do exactly what you do, you will have common ground. Invite them for coffee. Get to know them a little. Learn their areas of expertise. They will be a great resource when you feel stuck and they will be able to commiserate with you when the going gets tough. You need allies and compatriots in your field and so you need to reach out and find your people, wherever they are located. I also recommend joining an NCURA committee or getting involved with your local professional group. You will find your people there, too.

**Be proactive about learning.** Seek out trainings, webinars, read NCURA emails and NCURA Magazine. Get on a listserv or two. Mark time in your calendar once a month for two hours of professional development: reading, webinar, attending a training. Sign up for a conference.

**Build sustainable systems and processes.** The temptation will be strong to be less rigorous when naming your files, mapping your processes, documenting your systems, and maintaining consistency. It is just you, after all and you know where it all is. Why do you need to do all that? You should continue to adhere to rigorous organizational systems and practices because you are planning for your legacy. Make it easy for those who come after you to follow your logic, pick up where you left off, and know what was happening with any proposal, project, or file. Be transparent about what you do and why you do it that way. Consistency is one of the greatest gifts we can leave to those who come next. Share your processes and best practices with others. When you establish and document best practices you ensure that the work you support in research administration continues without too much of a hitch. Consistency in organizational practice is the grace note of our professional lives.

Both models of research administration offer advantages and unique challenges. If you enjoy a strong sense of independence, can be proactive about building community and professional development, and trust your own subject matter expertise, then the move to the department administrator model of research administration might be a great fit for you.

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**Walk the Talk**

As research administrators we spend our lives supporting the research that is ever evolving and developing technology at breakneck speed. In recent years, such innovation and discovery has included fitness trackers and health apps which were a part of a global market size of $3.8 trillion in US dollars for the wellness industry in 2015 (Global Wellness Institute). Yet over this same period, research by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention noted that Americans spend half their day sitting (Usery, Fulton, & Galuska, 2018). Dr. James Levine, director of the Mayo Clinic/Arizona State University Obesity Solutions Initiative, notes that “[s]itting is more dangerous than smoking, kills more people than HIV and is more treacherous than parachuting. We are sitting ourselves to death” (2014). Research administrators spend most of the day at a desk where we are processing grants, protocols, or financial transactions. We rely upon email and phone calls to handle most of the communication with research teams which are located in separate buildings across campus, town, or even around the world. The use of in-person meetings seems to be more limited than in the past as we strive to be more efficient with our time and space as campus conference space is reduced.

How can we break this cycle and still ensure we give optimal support to our research community? One trend that is growing is the walking meeting. While the use of walking meetings is nothing new or innovative, it has become a lost form. Walking while instructing can be traced back to Aristotle who often held class while strolling with his students (Gross, 2013). Other “thinkers” known to walk include Sigmund Freud and Steve Jobs. With the use of a walking meeting, research administrators could reduce stress and health risks of inactivity while improving productivity and increasing focus and energy.

The next time you need to talk with a researcher about changes to a project or provide an update on contract negotiations, pick up tennis shoes rather than the phone and head out for a stroll. Topics that don’t require formal presentations or can be efficiently discussed in 15 to 20 minutes are great for a stroll. While a walking meeting won’t be able to replace all the meetings and calls research administrators have in a given day, it can be a good way to engage your colleagues and interact with the research teams you support.

**Reference:**


Recently when I was talking to one of my former colleagues at another institution, he asked me what is going on at work, and what is trendy in a large health care institution. We discussed trends in research administration, in particular the pre-award office. He is from a predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI), and I am at a large, comprehensive cancer treatment and research center. Through our discussion, we found that trends grow in response to field demands and cultural change. We also agreed that pre-award trends are not one-size-fits-all, though all institutions have one thing in common—the need to submit more proposals with fewer resources.

In a blog post on the history of research administration, Holly Zink cites Daniel Ray Lehne Campbell’s description of the four stages of research administration: the Expansion Period (1940-1960), the Transition Period (1960-1980), the Para-Professional Period (1980-1990), and the current one, the Independent Professional Period (cited in Zink, 2018). Throughout the advancement of the profession, we have seen a very common theme—the advancement comes hand in hand with the development of the research trends and the institutional culture it represents.

For example, during the Transition Period, the research administration profession grew in response to the increasing administrative and regulatory burden placed on researchers. With cultural change and increased compliance demands, pre-award research administration has taken on additional tasks such as reviewing to determine whether an application is in compliance with the federal and state regulations on human subjects and animal welfare.

As research and funding proposals continue to grow in volume and complexity, so does the research administration profession. In 2008, the world experienced the Great Recession. It did not just impact the financial sector, it also impacted scientific research and the lives of ordinary people. Data from the National Science Board show that since 2008, funding from the federal government for research has slowed down considerably; therefore, applications to get funds have become more competitive, and researchers are trying all means to get funds for their research. Many faculty have been asked to cover a higher percentage of their salary through research grants or clinical trials. Under these kinds of circumstances, higher education institutions are becoming more creative to meet the cultural change and demands.

To meet the challenge of fewer resources, the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB), a small PUI, became more creative, doing more with far fewer people and less financial resources. Similar to other PUIs, they did not have money to buy an electronic research administration system to support on-going research. Instead, they followed the trend of growing their own systems, and created the on-line electronic Proposal Transmittal Form (PTF) for internal use with the help of a graduate research assistant so that faculty and staff could route the application for approval from anywhere as needed. This greatly reduced the burden on faculty, and of supporting staff, if there were any. The successful creation of the PTF is just one example of the many approaches that PUIs are developing to relieve the administrative burden on researchers and create more flexibility for faculty—doing more with less. In 2015, UTB and the University of Texas Pan American merged into one university. The new university is called The University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). As the culture and
demands change, so the pre-award office changes how it supports faculty with research and scholarship. UTRGV now uses Cayuse, a commercially built grant tracking system, as their system for application submission and tracking.

At MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC), we are a large health care entity that submits large volumes of applications to different funding agencies. We have implemented Click (a grant application and award tracking system, now called the Huron Research Suite) to submit applications and track our history of proposals, making our large volume of submissions a lot easier. We also have research administration infrastructure for both pre-award and post-award functions at the department level. Despite the electronic grant system and research administration infrastructure, we are still under the same high-pressure climate that is similar to other research institutions—doing more with fewer resources. The trend here seems to be toward more personal support. At MDACC’s Office of Sponsored Programs, we initiated the following changes to meet the demands: First we started a new concierge service to assist department staff or faculty to package their applications accurately and quickly. The department staff meets one-on-one with the grant specialist and presents a funding opportunity in their faculty’s area of interest. The grant specialist assists them with any questions about the application, the ins and outs of the particular funding opportunity, compliance considerations, and the budget, so that the whole application is off to a good start.

Another initiative at MD Anderson targets faculty research interests. Our Associate Director meets with faculty to learn about their science and research initiatives. With the information from faculty, he then researches funding agencies to find a slate of funding opportunities for them. This saves faculty time and energy and increases the success rate of their applications.

In addition to these initiatives, our pre-award office changed its personnel structure—hiring entry-level people to review simple applications, such as sub-award applications or progress reports. This frees up more seasoned grant administrators to focus on more complex and difficult applications, such as large program grants or cooperative agreements.

In conclusion, while all institutes must contend with the “doing more with less” trend, we do not think there is a one-size-fits all solution. As we support more research with fewer resources, we have to be creative, energized, and above all efficient. As the above examples illustrate, the best pre-award research administration adapts to its own institutional culture and research demands. ◾

References:

Pei-Lin Shi, MA, CRA, is a grant administrator in the Office of Sponsored Programs at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center. She has been a research administrator and NCURA member for over 17 years. Besides working, she loves nature and reading. She can be reached at pshi1@mdanderson.org
In early February of 2018, Congress reached a deal to raise the discretionary spending caps by three percent in FY 2019, the fiscal year starting October 1. This laid the groundwork for a solid year for science funding, but also ran counter to White House preferences to vastly reduce spending. According to documents posted to the White House website, the Trump Administration’s FY 2019 budget — due only days after Congress reached its spending deal — was going to be at least as difficult for research as their previous request. Apparently, cuts on the order of 20 or 30 percent were envisioned for agencies like the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation.

But the spending deal complicated those plans, and instead the White House scrambled at the 11th hour to add tens of billions back into their budget, including extra spending for NIH, NSF, the Department of Energy, and others. At the same time, many proposals to cut or terminate research programs in environmental science, manufacturing, and energy technology remained in place.

Amid these cuts, what were the priorities? Advanced computing and AI remained of major interest with increases recommended at DARPA, the Energy Department, and elsewhere. Space exploration also remained a priority, with a proposal to build a new lunar orbiting platform. Other focus areas included quantum science, cybersecurity, and opioid-related research.

Many of these have been funded by Congress, which moved at its fastest pace in over 20 years to get five (out of twelve) spending bills completed on time. Overall, this year’s science appropriations look very different to what the White House had in mind, as was the case last year (see figure for a comparison).

**Department of Defense** basic research was increased by eight percent across military branches. DARPA received a twelve percent increase, roughly as requested; the National Defense Education Program received a large plus-up; and appropriators added about $1 billion for peer-reviewed DOD-funded biomedical research.

The **National Institutes of Health** had another good year with a $2 billion increase, with every institute receiving an increase of roughly three percent at least. Alzheimer’s research remains a major Congressional priority with a $425 million increase to $2.3 billion total. The Cancer Moonshot, antibiotic resistance research, and the BRAIN Initiative were also boosted, and legislators added $1.3 billion for opioids-related research. The final deal also rejected Administration proposals to reduce and restrict NIH salary caps.

The **Department of Energy**’s basic science programs saw moderate increases for research and construction, with the advanced computing program a particular winner. Appropriators again saved the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) from elimination while granting
the White House request to establish a new energy grid cybersecurity and recovery office. Other technology R&D programs in nuclear, fossil energy, and renewables were protected from large cuts.

Elsewhere, Veterans Affairs biomedical research received an eight percent increase, and appropriators established a $50 million fund for infectious disease rapid response at CDC.

However, at the time of this writing, several other agencies remain shut down as legislators and the White House continue to seek a compromise over funding for a Mexican border wall. Based on what the House and Senate appropriations committees have done so far, many of these science programs would see solid funding years if final appropriations can be delivered:

- NSF has received increases of four to five percent in both the House and Senate.
- NASA has also received moderate increases, with legislators in both chambers supportive of the Administration’s lunar exploration activities, while protecting NASA’s education office from elimination. House appropriators are particularly interested in securing another large increase for NASA’s planetary science program.
- Intramural and extramural USDA programs would also get moderate increases in both chambers, and extensive lab closures would be prevented.
- Both chambers have so far saved NOAA’s Sea Grant program from termination, but have other differences to sort out, including a House proposal to eliminate NOAA climate research grants.
- The House would also cut EPA science and technology programs, versus flat funding in the Senate.

Current AAAS estimates suggest basic science might see an increase on the order of four or five percent overall. But this depends on resolution of the border wall issue and a final appropriation for these remaining agencies.

Once FY 2019 spending is settled, legislators will attempt to reach one more deal to avoid a titanic spending crunch next fiscal year, when the caps are scheduled to drop by ten percent. But a coming trillion-dollar deficit may complicate things and challenge Congress’s political will.

Matt Hourihan is Director of the R&D Budget and Policy Program for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), where he is a regular source of information and analyses on past, present, and future science budgets for policymakers and the science community. He has served in this position since 2011. He can be reached at mhouriha@aaas.org
As research administrators, we are responsible for gathering and reporting data about the achievements of our research community. Typically our data collection efforts focus on submitted proposals, award dollars, and research expenditures. Often we find ourselves in the less comfortable position of singling out relatively high-achieving areas and noting which areas of the university are “less productive.”

Even when it comes to divvying out internal awards, our Darwinian nature tends to focus on winners. This process, although intended to spur competitive fervor on our campuses, often has the unintended consequence of breeding jealousy and frustration within the research community.

A key challenge for research administrators is to celebrate research accomplishments and further cultivate a community of scholars without undermining the very energy we’re seeking to promote.

Developing an International Research Survey
At the University of Idaho, a land-grant public research university located in the farmlands of northern Idaho, researchers can feel somewhat isolated, despite the fact that our campus is only ten miles from Washington State University. We often find ourselves looking for ways to bolster the sense of community, excitement about accomplishments, and a feeling of connectedness to the world.

We have long had an inkling, through anecdotal sources, that our researchers are quite globally oriented and engaged in world-wide scholarly projects. Although we found the anecdotes inspiring, we wanted a more data-driven analysis of the institution’s global reach.

In 2018, we initiated an International Research Survey as a way of gathering data about the institution's international impact through research. Although our university’s International Programs Office has a standard process for researchers traveling abroad to submit data on their activities, it is mainly focused on risk management and compliance issues. We wanted to collect information that would be used to foster ongoing and new collaborations and celebrate partnerships.

Vice President Nelson recruited Professor Scott Slovic to serve as a Faculty Fellow, responsible for gathering specific information about research activities and developing ways to use this information to catalyze new excitement about international research at the university.

We took pains in distributing the International Research Survey to communicate that our purpose with this project is to capture the extent of the university’s global reach through research and creative activities and to celebrate these achievements.

Reaching Out to Colleagues and Developing a Database
Our ten survey questions focus on current and upcoming research activities, as we are particularly interested in gathering data about what’s happening right now. We have included an abbreviated version of the questionnaire, and we encourage colleagues to adapt and use this template on their own campuses.

In August 2018, we distributed the survey to the university’s deans, department chairs, and directors of research centers and institutes, asking that it be sent to all faculty members at the university. By the end of August, 54 colleagues had responded. After resending the survey document in September, 15 additional responses have come in.

We immediately noticed that the results confirmed that the University of Idaho has researchers actively engaged in projects throughout the world from Tasmania to Finland. Respondents routinely ask to see the results of our study, eager to know about other international work their colleagues are doing. The enthusiastic response to our survey has inspired us to develop several spinoff projects, even as we continue to collect completed questionnaires and prepare a report on the data we’ve collected. We are excited about the initial response rate and we anticipate a flood of additional completed surveys as a result of the spinoffs.

Spinoffs from the Survey
In the fall of 2017, the VPR and the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) developed the new Short and Sweet (SAS) Talks series to showcase research at the university. At this event, 8-10 researchers, representing various ranks and disciplines, offer brief,
rapid-fire presentations about their exciting work—twenty slides, each on screen for twenty seconds. Each talk lasts less than 7 minutes. The first two SAS events were extremely popular, drawing standing-room-only crowds and audiences that included the university’s president and provost. For the third SAS gathering in December 2018, we have drawn from the international survey responses to organize a “Global Reach SAS Event,” featuring 9 researchers working in fields ranging from political psychology in India to spiral-horned antelope and elephant conservation in Mozambique. We intend this to be a celebration of the university’s international research activities and anticipate that the SAS talks and our various reports will inspire additional colleagues to seek to have their international work recognized in similar ways.

We are preparing a summary report, including a narrative describing the particular findings of the survey. We are using various high-tech visualization tools to highlight the impressiveness of Idaho’s global reach. One of these is a mapping tool that emphasizes at a glance the fact that researchers based in Moscow, Idaho, an academic outpost of some 25,000 residents, are connected to hundreds of locations (and thousands of academic colleagues) throughout the world. A second visualization tool, a cord diagram, links each identified researcher to various research fields and locations in the world where that person is currently conducting, presenting, or publishing research. These data will be organized in a way that can focus on a specific person, department, or college at the university.

Who Will Use this Information and Where We Go from Here
Senior university administrators, deans, and department chairs will be able to share the online database of international research to describe the significance of the institution’s global research activity and associated activities to the state board of higher education, donors, and other important audiences.

In our office, we will use data collected about research projects and interests to organize informal “coffee conversations” among colleagues, bringing together agronomists, economists, and literary critics who study climate change and nutritionists, sociologists, and English-as-Second-Language specialists who work with refugee communities. Other groups will bring together colleagues from diverse disciplines who have demonstrated particular interest in central Europe, Latin America, China, and other locations throughout the world.

These informal gatherings will be occasions to celebrate our breadth of ongoing international research and to enhance the excitement within our community of scholars. Although this research administration project is ongoing, we have already discerned a very positive impact. We intend to continue collecting data and updating our reports periodically. If our responsibility as research administrators includes “capturing and catalyzing” the global reach of our institution’s research and creative activities, this type of survey, combined with spinoffs such as the SAS Talks and the collegial conversations, is a valuable example of how we can fulfill this mission.

“A key challenge for research administrators is to celebrate research accomplishment and further cultivate a community of scholars...”

Abbreviated International Research Survey Questionnaire; full survey is available from the authors upon request
1. Do you have any current research projects (including collaborations) taking place outside of the United States?
2-7. List international presentations, publications, current grants, etc. (with additional detail requested for each survey question).
8. Do you speak (or do research in) any languages other than English?
9. List any international research awards (such as Fulbrights) you’ve had during your career.
10. What ongoing “international research” are you engaged in that may not be represented by the questions above?

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NCURA's International Fellowship Program, now in its tenth year, was developed to increase global research collaboration by providing a method of knowledge exchange between research administrators around the world. To date, the program has granted fellowships to 54 NCURA members and has helped reduce and lower the barriers to international research collaboration.

As doors open, connections are made. NCURA member Shaofeng Fan, Division Chief for Overseas Projects, Office of Scientific Research at Peking University (PKU), and recipient of an NCURA International Fellowship in 2017, connected with NCURA's Global Department that same year, and plans were made for NCURA to travel to Beijing, China in 2018 to present a global workshop during the 120th Anniversary of Peking University.

The NCURA-PKU Research Administration Symposium was held on October 16 – 18, 2018, which over 90 research administrators attended from throughout China. Following opening remarks by Qihuang Gong, Vice President of Research at Peking University, and Georgette Sakamoto, 2018 NCURA President, the workshop began with a session on Supporting the Science: Research Administrative Best Practices.

The lead presenters were NCURA members Dave Richardson, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Ara Tahmssian, Chief Compliance Officer, Office of the Vice Provost for Research, Harvard University, with additional speakers interspersed throughout the program to highlight global research collaboration. NCURA member Agatha Keller, representing ETH Zurich, spoke on The Importance of International Research Collaboration and Science Diplomacy.

NCURA Executive Director, Kathleen Larmett, presented a session on NCURA and the Importance of a Professional Association for Research Administrators, during which she encouraged the audience to form their own association. Day 1 was moderated by Dr. Huiling Duan, Deputy Dean at the College of Engineering at Peking University, and Day 2 was moderated by Claire Chen, Manager of NCURA Global, who along with Shaofeng and the PKU's Office of Scientific Research, was responsible for the development of this program.

This symposium was truly a platform for sharing best practices in research administration no matter where you come from. Dave Richardson described his teaching and learning experience after the symposium as, “an honor to serve as a member of the NCURA delegation participating and presenting at the inaugural NCURA – Peking University Research Administration Symposium. The opportunity to share best practices in research administration reinforced we are more alike than different regardless of where we call home for we often face the same challenges in the administration of sponsored research. I appreciated the opportunity to share and learn from our Chinese colleagues.”

When asked about his experience attending the symposium, Dr. Chun Liu, Deputy Director of the Division of Science and Technology at Tongji University, said, “during this perfect workshop of international research collaboration, the outstanding international research management flowchart was offered to be learned, enormous international research resources were shared, and the solution for technology transfer in international research was put forward to be recognized. I do think we can all learn from these resources provided by this workshop which will be of...
“Peking University was so pleased to jointly host this fantastic symposium with NCURA. Through a combination of lectures, case studies, and a discussion of best practices, this two-day symposium has provided an in-depth look at related issues about research administration, which not only serve as venues for forming research collaborations and partnerships but also enabling research administrators to develop their processional networks.” — Shaofeng Fan

tremendous assistance in improving the quality of the research management system in Tongji University.”

While in China, NCURA’s delegation had the opportunity to visit several institutions in Beijing, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and they traveled to Shanghai, where they met with representatives from Fudan University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, and Tongji University. Describing his experience in China, Ara Tahmassian commented,

“as a member of the NCURA delegation, I was honored to be part of a group that exemplifies the importance of science and diplomacy. The Peking University Research Administration Symposium was an excellent illustration of how professional research administrators who face similar issues – regardless of their location or sources of funding – can come together, share their experiences, learn from each other, and develop relationships that enriches all and advances collaborations.”
Research development roles at predominantly undergraduate institutions (PUIs) are becoming more common as smaller institutions respond to a declining sponsored funding environment. As resources are limited at most PUIs, pre-award professionals at these institutions are observed taking on additional research development roles under the research administration umbrella. Success in growing competitive initiatives for institutional commitment and administrative capacity, including faculty and student research growth, consortium development, regional engagement, and public-private partnerships, along with roles in co-curricular development and formal assessment of these initiatives, requires these institutions to be creative with limited resources in order to realize effective, efficient, high-impact and competitive outcomes. Creative approaches to building administrative capacity and regional engagement are being explored through research development, and as these roles are introduced at the PUI, responsiveness is necessary for new demands in resources and management models to grow sponsored funding competitiveness.

Administrative capacity. The perception of administrative capacity has been found to influence the distribution of sponsored funding among institutions, thus presenting challenges for smaller institutions and their disproportionate staffing and resources when compared to larger research institutions. In their article, *Taken for Granted? Managing for Social Equity in Grant Programs*, Collins and Gerber (2008) address their study of social equity performance through indirect governance, specifically in the administration of grant programs. Social equity performance by the distribution of grant funding to meet social needs has experienced scrutiny as underserved populations and regions tend to receive less grant funding than regions that possess higher administrative capacity (Collins & Gerber, 2008). Achieving an equitable—not just equal—proportionate funding base at the PUI is a challenge for research administrators and institutional support models. Research development trends at the PUI are a direct response in seeking and advancing equity in administrative capacity by making a deliberate attempt to qualify the institution for increased competitiveness.

Research development and regional engagement. Historically, the university has held autonomy with respect to its roles in teaching and research. While this notion has largely been supported in the past by government funding mechanisms, it is now experiencing a decrease in such funds. State and federal entities are exerting pressure on the university to evaluate its role in society and to grow partnerships with its external communities, introducing a third role as regional engagement for economic development. These challenges require PUIs to creatively respond to new roles within its internal and external structures, specifically in response to regional engagement, and thus research development’s role in advancing public-private partnerships in research and service for local economic development and impact.

The university’s responsiveness to new demands of societal responsibility requires new kinds of resources and new management models to make dynamic contributions for a more diverse client population. The new pressure for regional engagement and public-private partnerships challenges the higher education management structure to creatively evolve for responsiveness to regional development responsibilities (Chatterton & Goddard, 2000). It reveals the mutual dependency of resources that are needed in today’s regional economy, and it helps boost the prestige that the university looks to grow for its economic stability. Implications for institutional management are identified by the changing landscape of the role of the university and its funding base, directly influencing the role of research administration in the university and its move toward research development.

This new role of regional engagement is not one that stands alone, but instead integrates with existing university roles and resources for teaching and research. The actual linking of teaching and research between the university and the region is responsible for formulating the engagement in which institutions are now being evaluated by the government, policy...
makers, and other stakeholders. This engagement allows the university accountability and demonstration of its relevance to society, as well as the contribution of knowledge transfer as a general community function (Jongbloed, Enders & Salerno, 2008). According to Brewer, Gates and Goldman (2008), universities in their quest for prestige and competitiveness in the higher education market are relying more on industrial partners for contracts and licensing in order to subsidize research activities that are no longer supported by the state government funds.

Research development’s role in the PUI for cultivation of research and technology partnerships has economic benefits for multiple constituencies involved. Public-private partnerships between the university and the regional sector are establishing knowledge transfer by the prestige and established institutional resources that universities can provide through faculty expertise, incubators, research centers, economic development offices, and intellectual property services, all of which integrate with the university’s established research and teaching infrastructure supported through research development and administration.

Trends and recognition. To stay relevant to research growth, and in recognition of limited resources, research development roles at PUIs are emerging from pre-award offices, often leveraging the role on top of the research administrator’s initial responsibilities. The research administrator stays on top of federal guidance and university compliance, thereby providing a natural pathway for expertise in negotiating new methods of research partnerships, collaborations, and funding. The resources of the research office are assets for research development, and when effectively utilized, can prove to be a catalyst for expansion in administrative capacity and regional engagement. It is important that administration continues to support proper professional development for these roles to stay abreast of funding and creative trends, as well as a commitment that these roles are integrated with other departments on campus to grow relationships and networking both internal and external to campus. In the PUIs’ attempt to achieve an equitable funding base for research growth and support, the creative trends of research development at these institutions can provide the necessary capacity to qualify the institution for better competitiveness.

References:

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If your research has been commercialized in some way, then you may be asked to evidence the economic benefits arising from your work. Economic claims are harder to evidence than you might think, because many companies are nervous about sharing commercially-sensitive data. But this doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try. In this article, I’ve suggested a few things that might get you something useful.

1. Go in person to your “warmest” contact with a specific data request (e.g., turnover, profit or savings related to the specific product or service that arose from your research). If you don’t ask, you won’t get. Rather than pitching your request out of the blue via email, ask to meet up to find out where they are at and if there’s anything you can do to help them, and offer to bring a short summary of some of the latest research in the field. You are more likely to get a reply and a meeting if you offer something of value to them first. In the context of a meeting in which you have added value, you are more likely to get a positive reception to your data request. Crucially, even if you get a “no”, if you are face-to-face with the person, you can quickly move to your plan B so that you don’t leave empty handed. This is much harder to do if you have received a clear “no” via email, and less likely to work via email.

2. Offer redaction and anonymization. A number of levels of anonymization and redaction (2014 December 12. Retrieved from www.ref.ac.uk/2014/about/guidance/datamanagement/confidentialimpactcasestudies) were available in REF2014 (the UK’s Research Excellence Framework) and are expected to be available in REF2021, providing some reassurance to companies that want to help, but don’t want to take the risk that the data becomes public. However, for some companies, such reassurances are not enough, and they will not take the chance that something goes wrong and the data gets into the wrong hands.

3. Move to persuasion if it looks like you are going to get a “no.” This is more likely to work for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and small businesses than large corporations, but it may still be worth trying (GlaxoSmithKline have highlighted their role in REF2014...
4. Ask for proxies. If you can’t get access to any of the data you need, then go prepared to ask for proxies that you could use instead. What information might provide those evaluating your impact with a sense of the significance of economic impacts? If you are working with a large company, can you get global figures for turnover that indicate the significance of the company you are working with? What proportion of this is attributable to the product or service linked to your research? Is this their flagship product representing more than half their revenue or something much smaller? If you can’t find out what proportion of their turnover comes from that product or service, can you find out if it is in their top sellers (top three, top five?), and what proportion of their turnover comes from those top sellers in aggregate? What is their market share in a specific marketplace and how many products do they sell into that market in addition to the one based on your research? If you know the size of the market and their market share, you can get a sense of the size of your contribution. The answers you get from a conversation like this are necessarily estimates, but you will be able to communicate the order of magnitude and give readers an overall sense of the significance of your impact. To evidence this, you would need a testimonial on letter headed paper. If they will not do this, ask if you can name them as the source of the information for someone else to be able to corroborate the evidence in the future. If they won’t even do this, then at least you have the information, which you can now communicate, even if it is weaker than you would like. Better than nothing. But there’s still one final option.

5. Ask their customers. If you can’t get data from the company itself, see if you can get them to tell you who some of their customers are (even better, who is their biggest customer, if they are selling business to business) for the product or service based on your research. The customer may be willing to tell you how much they spend on the product or service, and if you know that they are the company’s largest customer, then you have the basis for an estimate that would tell you something about the scale of your economic impact. Alternatively, if you can discover a more representative customer who is willing to tell you how much they spend, you may be able to couple that with information or estimates about the number of customers to get a feel for the scale of the economic impact. Bear in mind that these estimates will be commercially sensitive and you will want to ensure these are redacted if you want to retain a good relationship with the company. If these customers can’t give you information about how much they spend, they may tell you how much money the product or service saves them, or the other benefits they get from it, such as improving the health, safety or wellbeing of their staff in measurable ways, or reductions in their environmental impact. Even if you can’t get estimates of the number of other customers, you can use this one customer as an example of the breadth of impact felt by customers using the product or service based on your research.

Evaluating economic impacts is not only challenging – it can get you into trouble. Companies who fear your evaluation may compromise their interests may sue you or your university. Always take advice from your Business Development Manager, and, if possible, get them to accompany you to high profile meetings to make sure you don’t take unnecessary risks.

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I am director of sponsored programs and received my review from my boss, the vice president for research. He told me that I am not good at giving feedback. Honestly, I am not great at giving feedback. It’s a real struggle. Suggestions?

M any leaders struggle providing feedback to their employees. The reasons vary. Let’s focus on two. Some leaders wish to avoid conflict that may occur if someone hears a message that is not pleasing to them. Let’s call this type of leader “Too Nice.” Others may genuinely miss seeing and experiencing work behaviors and actions that need feedback. Let’s call this type of leader “Oblivious.”

Let’s focus on the “Too Nice” leader. I recommend Fierce Conversations, a book by Susan Scott, to anyone who struggles with having clear conversations, especially regarding employee feedback. Scott speaks of the importance of clarity and the responsibility of leaders to share information that will help an employee improve their work and to gain footing in an organization. (I have a client who has told me that 2019 will be her “Year of Clarity.”) Scott also advises bosses against providing feedback “between two pillows” such as starting a feedback conversation with a compliment and ending it with a compliment. The person receiving the feedback will likely miss it between the soft and kind words. She also recommends not waiting for long periods of time before noting the behavior, or hearing about it, and providing feedback to the person.

There is no general script for providing feedback that matches every leader’s style. But here is a general roadmap. Aim for two broad objectives: Clarity and Dignity.

I recommend to clients that they think of the feedback they wish to give to someone. Let’s say that an employee has a communication style that is abrupt with people and that you interrupt them. This first step is about clarity. What is the message you want the employee to receive? What is its essence? What is the truth you need to convey? Perhaps the message is: “I need for you to stop being abrupt with people and to stop interrupting them.”

It is not: “I really value your work and want to thank you for the great things you do, like the grant proposal you sent out last week at the last minute. I notice that you sometimes don’t let people finish their thoughts before you offer yours. Again, thanks so much for all you do. Have a great weekend.”

**Aim for two broad objectives:**

**Clarity and Dignity.**

The second step is about dignity. As you reflect on giving someone feedback, are you planning to act compassionately and respectfully? Are you going about giving feedback in a way that does not ascribe bad intent or motives to the person? Will you be meeting with them privately to give feedback? You are not planning to shame the employee?

So, with both clarity and dignity in mind, have the conversation. Start by asking the employee a question: “Do you have some time now to talk? I want to offer you some feedback.” If the employee is busy or can’t do it then, then set a time that day…don’t let it linger and stick with you and the employee overnight or longer. Giving feedback in a timely manner is part of dignity.

When you meet, start calmly, with an even and empathetic tone: “I need to share some feedback with you. I have noticed (or heard) that you have a tendency to be abrupt with people and that you interrupt others frequently. (Give some examples if you have them.) I don’t know why this occurs, but it is something that I need for you to address and stop doing. Have you ever noticed this, and have you observed how others react to you when you do this?”

The employee will likely be surprised and defensive. Let them express their views for a bit. You may learn something more about them, more about the context and culture of your office and organization. Listen to them with compassion. But, get back to the point. Return to clarity.

“What will you do to improve your communication style?” You want some tangible ideas and thoughts from the employee. If they don’t offer any, then brainstorm with them. You ask the employee to start, and then you offer ideas, and go back and forth. Ideas: Take a few long breaths before speaking. Think of others with compassion, kindness, etc. Assure yourself that you will have an opportunity to speak.

Ask the employee what they will commit to do and when they will start. “What are you going to do and when will you start?” Give them autonomy and control over addressing their behavior. This is part of dignity.

Finally, “When can we get back together to discuss how this is going?” You want the employee to have a sense of accountability, as well as knowledge that you are supportive and “with them” as they address this behavior.

This column is not a panacea for all matters related to feedback. I hope you feel inspired to try or adapt this technique, read Susan Scott’s book, and develop your own style of giving feedback with clarity and dignity. When will you and your boss get back together to discuss what you are doing to improve this part of your leadership performance? Set a day and time.
As a technologically savvy user, I’m willing to explore and discover how to use new and updated applications, but many who use our proposal management system aren’t so savvy, don’t have time, or perhaps are only occasional users of the system. Imagine their distress when a system upgrade is announced. There are many concerns and considerations for system upgrades. This article focuses on two key ways to reduce the stress and distress levels of our end users: communication and training.

At the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), we have upgraded our system twice: from Coeus to Kuali Coeus, and recently to Kuali Research. Each time, along with added and enhanced features, the user interface (look and feel) changed significantly.

Communication
It is essential to communicate with campus users throughout the process, from the time the decision is made to upgrade through and past the cutover to the new system. We gave reports at multiple meetings for different audiences—research administrators, faculty, deans—though the messages to each group were much the same. When do we expect to go live with the new system? Do the testers like it? When will training begin? What are some of the improvements? If there is an irritant in the current product, will the new one resolve it? Will all the data migrate to the new version? If not, how can older data be accessed when needed?

Beginning about six weeks prior to going live, we communicated about system downtime required for the data migration and system configurations. In our case, both the old and new system were down for a full week, so any proposals due during that time were routed for approvals via email and submitted via sponsor systems.

As the go live date grew close, we began posting helpful tips and resources on the sponsored programs website, and initiated user training.

Training and Resources
UMB designs its in-person training for proposal creators, and provides online resources for other faculty, administrators, reviewers, and approvers who use the system. At UMB, the majority of proposals are created in Kuali Research by department research administrators. Some faculty create their own proposal records, but most are only involved with uploading attachments (program narratives), reviewing, and electronically signing their proposals.

Hands on, in-person training for proposal creation in Kuali Research is held in computer labs using our “sandbox” instance of the software. The trainers are Sponsored Programs Administration staff who follow a detailed training plan including instructions, screenshots and examples. Key to the success of these trainings is that we have at least two trainers in the room: one is at the front with the computer leading the training, and the other is roaming the room to make sure that everyone is literally on the same page.

An advantage to doing training live in the sandbox instance, rather than using pre-recorded modules or other options, is that existing users can sign in as themselves and see familiar data. Perhaps more importantly, we are able to add, correct, and update information as we continue training, testing, and learning about the software.

Beginning about a month before the go-live date for the system upgrade, we held trainings for existing users. In these classes, after a quick orientation to the Welcome screen menus, the users entered an entire proposal from start to finish. Trainers omitted detail about features that were the same as in the prior version, and pointed out enhancements and improvements over the old system (we called them “gifts” or “presents”).

Training for existing users continued for a few weeks after go-live, and we then transitioned to trainings in the computer lab for new users. At UMB, this training is mandatory for any research administrator with a
“proposal creator” role in Kuali Research. Predictably, some existing users sign up as well, and we do not prevent anyone from taking the training multiple times. For these classes, we set up a generic “Trainee” user profile in the sandbox instance. The training plan is more detailed and takes longer; we don’t assume any prior knowledge of the system.

At go-live, we posted online resources to the sponsored programs administration website. The first postings contained information we knew everyone would need:

- Detailed, downloadable guides for proposal and budget data entry
- Specific instructions for proposals involving human subjects
- Instructions for obtaining the Principal Investigator’s electronic signature and for Chairs and Deans to approve proposals (both of which had changed from the prior version)
- A guide to navigating and searching

In the months since we migrated to the new version, we’ve added more resources in response to user questions. We also had a wealth of information on our website supporting the prior software version, all of which needed to be reviewed and updated or replaced. We still need to develop a more robust online resource for “viewers” who need to search for records and understand where to find information in the proposal, award, or subaward record.

More Communication

While the upgrade went pretty smoothly, we responded to many user questions in the first two or three weeks after go-live. UMB has a “help” email specific to Kuali Research that is distributed to seven key information technology and sponsored programs responders. Sponsored Programs Administration proposal teams shared frequently asked questions so that responses could be shared with the campus via email and/or website. In addition, we presented “reminders” at routine research administrator meetings about key changes (such as electronic signature and approval) and available trainings.

We now focus communications on keeping each other updated in Sponsored Programs Administration about routine software updates that are pushed out, and about how to resolve validation errors and warnings. The “new” software has become familiar once again.

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Data is the strongest analytical tool available to an organization. It can be analyzed to drive decision-making and utilized to improve performance. Organizations with robust clinical research portfolios rely heavily on data and recognize the importance of harnessing the power of data analytics. These organizations are learning to leverage today’s smart informatic technology and effectively use data analytics to create discovery platforms, which are used to make academic content more readily available through electronic systems so it can be shared with organizations and their collaborating partners. This allows information to become more transparent and, in turn, fosters a culture of innovation.

Data analytics is the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. When an organization encourages discovery through data analytics, it empowers its workforce to work smarter. Thus, the workforce culture evolves into one that is heavily dependent on data—that is, it becomes a data-driven culture. Many methods exist to convert data into meaningful measures or metrics that can be used to improve operational efficiencies and create new strategies for the next generation of clinical trials (trials). The challenge facing many organizations is recognizing the power that lies within their own data and determining which metrics are meaningful or useful for day-to-day decision-making.

Organizations can leverage data analytics from terminated trials to make various decisions about their clinical research portfolio. They can identify trends regarding the proper financial management of trials and use the data on payment terms and on-time payment trends to decide whether to work with particular trial sponsors.

In this article, we provide some suggestions for developing metrics to help an organization become savvier as it operationalizes resources, develops strategies, and mitigates the financial risks associated with its clinical research portfolio. We also identify important metrics that can help sustain and grow a profitable clinical research program.

Key metrics to track and trend are as follows:

- **Annual total number of trials submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB):** To help better forecast workforce capacity, examine the number of trials submitted to the IRB each year. Pare this number down to the number of trials that require a Medicare Coverage Analysis (MCA). That total will enable an organization to validate and plan for the staffing needs dedicated to creating the MCA document. The significance of performing this data analysis is twofold:
  - First, organizations can evaluate whether current staffing plans are sufficient to meet the organization’s goals for trial activation time. By comparing the length of time necessary for MCA preparation in relation to the activation of a trial, the organization can determine if the activation of a trial was delayed due to the time required for the MCA document preparation. These metrics assist in the review of MCA staffing resources and efficiencies.
  - Second, the data results enable the organization to develop a high-level overview of the number of trials that represent research clinical care for its patient population.

- **Number of sponsor-initiated trials versus number of investigator-initiated trials versus number of federally sponsored trials:** A comparison of the number of these different classifications of trials spotlights the existing research program’s mix. Each type of sponsor has various funding expectations. Federally sponsored and investigator-sponsored trials tend to have lower funding levels, whereas industry sponsors (e.g., pharmaceutical companies) will provide higher funding. Without external funding to fully cover the study expenses, the financial risk increases as the organization will have to use more of its own resources to support the trial. Monitoring the complement of sponsored trials helps ensure that the organization maintains its desired mix of trials and guides associated financial strategies that support research.

- **Number of trials by therapeutic area:** Evaluation of this metric can help determine whether the portfolio is aligned with an organization’s patient population. A clinical research program whose trials have difficulty enrolling due to a low patient population for the trial’s therapeutic area have a negative impact on revenue. Additionally, costs for studies that involve certain therapeutic areas will be higher than trials that involve other therapeutic areas. This metric coupled with a review of the average cost per participant metric will shed light on the profitability associated with its trial portfolio.
• **Average cost per participant:** The average cost per participant is derived by dividing the total cost of conducting the trial by the number of enrolled participants, regardless of whether those participants completed the entire study. The resulting data yields more than just the expense associated with the trial; it can also point to a type of a trial that may be extremely costly to conduct and that had difficulties enrolling participants.

• **Average cost to start trial:** Administrative costs associated with activating a trial can be far greater than expected if the organization doesn’t review the average cost to start a trial. Armed with this information, the organization may recognize the need to examine operational resources supporting activation and look for ways to increase efficiencies with the goal of cost reduction.

• **Average time from trial submission to activation:** One of the most significant metrics for an organization hoping to attract external sponsors with scientifically valuable trials is the speed with which a Principal Investigator (PI) can activate the trial for new participant enrollment. The longer it takes to open a trial, the costlier the study becomes because participants cannot enroll and the milestone payments from enrollment and clinical events are not received. The impact on an organization’s clinical research portfolio is even more significant in the long term. Historical activation trends are among the most critical of a sponsor’s assessments when determining the feasibility of sponsoring a trial with a particular organization.

• **Average time to first participant on trial:** This data point represents the time it takes for the first study participant to enroll in the trial. This measure is significant because it reflects the PI’s ability to recruit and select trials that work for the organization’s patient population. It is also important for some of the same reasons that the average time from trial submission to activation metric is important: delay in enrollment is costly and sends a negative message about the PI’s commitment to a clinical study.

• **Insurance denials per trial:** Data results from this metric will require further investigation should there be a higher denial rate than expected. Any one or more of the following elements associated with the trial may have contributed to increased denials:
  1. **Accuracy of the MCA:** If the denials data demonstrates a trend over time for a particular disease and/or procedure, then the organization should carefully evaluate the determinations denoted on the MCA. Information gained from this evaluation will assist with future MCA developments on the next selection of trials.
  2. **Accuracy of the ordering specifications:** Understanding the intent of ordering the item or service helps downstream workflow, which enables more accurate and appropriate processing. If frequent errors are discovered due to how an item or service was ordered, the organization can correct those errors.

The challenge facing many organizations is recognizing the power that lies within their own data.

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NOTABLE PRACTICES

Using Metrics and Trends

NCURA has standards and a review program for effective sponsored programs and regulatory and research compliance operations at both the unit and central levels. One important area of focus in these reviews is examining the institutional management of research administration data.

Peer reviews look at whether institutions have accurate and accessible data on sponsored programs activity and management and how they are maintained. They examine the types of data covered. Peer reviewers have found that the most effective institutions collect and evaluate data related to efficiency and research management metrics, such as submissions, awards, and turnaround times. Effective operations ensure that data is collected regarding institutional actions, such as F&A waivers, sponsor requirements, and personnel training.

The most effective operations examine trends in activity over time and have processes in place to track and report these measures. Peer reviewers also find that the most effective operations are those that collect data, but also present the data and trends in ways that are easily understood by investigators.

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

3. Medical documentation accuracy: Insurance reimbursements rely heavily on supporting accurate medical documentation. In clinical research care, the need for accurate documentation becomes critical because insurance is reluctant to reimburse for research-related procedures.

4. Trial therapeutic area: Trials for certain disease categories have higher expenses than those for other therapeutic areas. A more in-depth examination of the types of insurance denials in a given disease category for a particular item or service will help the PI and the organization determine the financial feasibility of conducting similar trials in the future.

- Average revenue collected per sponsor: This data can provide organizations with targeted collection capabilities related to a particular sponsor. It can help organizations decide to continue or discontinue business with that sponsor.
- Profit and loss per trial: The profit and loss (and residual funds) data can provide valuable information about the strength of organization’s trial portfolio, but it also may indicate a weakness in operational activities supporting clinical research. For example, budgets and contracts alone may be insufficient to capture the true costs of the study.

Evaluating the actual cost of conducting clinical research at any organization is a complicated endeavor. Multiple metrics must be taken into consideration. It is often challenging for a healthcare system to distinguish between medical care expenses and research medical care expenses, because a participant will often incur both while participating in a trial. Committing to an investment in data analytics and then using it as a resource will allow an organization to make the informed strategic decisions necessary for a successful clinical research portfolio.

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NOTABLE PRACTICES

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

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

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Professionals in research administration come together in NCURA to support the advancement of research.
The Uniform Guidance (UG) is old news – it became effective December 26, 2014 – that is more than 4 years ago! But, unlike the cutting-edge science that happens in the labs of universities, research institutes, and clinical settings, the pace of change for institutional administration of research can happen at a geological one. Adapting to change can take time to contemplate, resources to accomplish, and naturally raises the presumed risk to do so. However, the UG did change our regulatory requirements for Compensation Compliance and the changes made by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) were intentional. The lack of institutional adaptation to maintain the status-quo from the now outdated regulations can be a risk in and of itself.

The Cohort for Efficiencies in Research Administration (CERA) recently hosted a workshop in Nashville, Tenn., to focus on compensation compliance under the UG. This workshop had presentations from institutions that have implemented Alternatives to Effort-Reporting, the Federal Demonstration Partnership’s (FDP) Pilot Payroll Certification, and from the Department of Health and Human Studies’ (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG), as well as participants from Single Audit and Industry Service provider experts. Outcomes and lessons learned from this workshop can be summarized as follows:

- Acknowledged that total Work Activities = 100% Institutional Base Salary (IBS).
- The allocation of IBS is a reflection of work activities performed and its value.
- Allowable work activities are defined in UG section 200.430. These are tangible items that have documented evidence of their performance – not the time it takes to perform them.
- The concept of “time” or “effort” in the context of time is not explicit or inferred in 200.430.
- Institutions generally do not have policies that require the tracking or documentation of faculty or administrative time or hours worked. The documentation evidence to support time as a basis for allocating IBS is therefore limited and possibly erroneous. Documentation for work activities performed is evident in progress reports and may be included in faculty annual reviews as well. Documentation of these activities is similar to the allowable activities described in 200.430.

### Summary of Benefits - Presented by Schools Who Have Already Transitioned to an Alternative to Effort

- **UTD**
  - University of Texas Dallas
  - Reduced certifications per year from 2026 to 430
  - Improved faculty burden, easier for faculty to complete
  - Audit results: the organization has a formal system to track time and effort of employees associated with the grant. Overall, university policies and procedures regarding time and effort reporting meet the requirements of Uniform Guidance and are functioning as intended; however, opportunities exist to ensure improved timeliness and appropriate reviewer access.

- **MTU**
  - University of Texas at Arlington
  - Reduced certifications per year from 6700 to 620
  - Improved % certifications not returned on time from 55% to 0%
  - Audit results: determined controls were adequate, return rates improved considerably, interviews confirmed less administrative burden and turn around time to complete was decreased
  - Completed OIG audit without findings
  - Completed OCR desk audit of revised DS2

- **UTA**
  - University of Texas at Arlington
  - Increased faculty understanding of the process and what they are reviewing.
  - Department staff are utilizing monthly reports – better, more robust information than previously available
  - Fewer resources required to centrally oversee the process

- **UK**
  - University of Kentucky
  - Reduced certifications per year from 11,500 to 1,800
  - Improved communication between faculty, department and central admin
  - True reduction in administrative burden for faculty.
  - Large reduction in overall certifications by moving from an individual certification to a project certification.
  - Improved controls are in place which increases visibility in other systems and process improvements.

- **CSU**
  - Colorado State University
  - Reduced total quarterly certifications from 2,700 to less than 1,700
  - Reduced faculty burden (less time spent, easier to do)
  - Improved internal controls
  - Reduced administrative burden in monitoring/notifying

### Alternatives to Effort Cohort Workshop, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2018

cohortresearch.com
Institutions that implemented an alternative to effort reporting shared metrics that demonstrated significant reductions in administrative and faculty burden for their after-the-fact review process.

Institutions that implemented an alternative to effort reporting consistently shared an increase in faculty understanding and integrity to the allocation of IBS as work activities performed over the nebulous concept of “effort” in the context of time.

The list above are examples of adaptations to the regulations not just of institutional practice themselves. Eventually prior history and practices to outdated regulations will be forgotten. This will take time, but there is a solid rationale to adapt and there are many advantages to do so.

What has changed about Compensation Compliance?

Effort Reporting has long been identified as one of the most burdensome activities for both faculty and institutions (FDP Faculty Burden Survey 2005 and 2012; National Science Board Report National Academies of Science and was specifically called out in the preamble of the UG). The UG eliminated the examples that were previously included in OMB Circular A-21 of how to meet the after-the-fact review requirement of estimated salary charges on federal awards. Instead, the UG emphasizes its focus on the system of internal controls and performance-based outcomes. The UG includes the words ‘internal controls’ more than 170 times. To fully understand the significance of this, one must remember that those words were not a focus in Circular A-21. The UG implies adherence to the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) standards and the General Accounting Office’s (GAO) Green Book as guidance institutions should follow. This is new to institutions of higher education, and yet, we are already seeing firms that perform Single Audits and OIGs making COSO, the Green Book, and internal controls a focus of their reviews. This was a primary focus of HHS-OIG presentation at the Council of Governmental Relations (COGR) meeting in June 2018, and also highlighted in their presentation on Enterprise Risk Management that was presented at the CERA workshop on compensation compliance. This approach will most likely involve faculty interviews to gauge their understanding and comprehension of their role in fulfilling the internal control processes.

The UG also recognizes that institutions of higher education have additional flexibilities for setting policies and its internal controls to meet the cost principles, defining IBS, and for the standards of documenting personnel expenses (UG 200.430(h)).

These changes have the potential to make a significant impact on how institutions approach compensation compliance. Even though the examples included in A-21 were only examples, many institutions adopted them as required to meet the compliance requirements. So much so, they mostly became the industry standards we know today. However, with the elimination of the examples and the restructure and rewording of the regulations, the door has been opened for institutions to make changes that could reduce administrative and faculty burden while strengthening the integrity of their internal controls.

CERA developed an Internal Control Framework (ICF) for Compensation Compliance that is based on COSO principles and is mapped to UG 200.430. Of the 24 compensation controls (system, allocation, payroll review, enforcement, administrative, compliance monitoring and education/training), the after-the-fact review control (whether effort reporting or an alternative methodology) is just one of those controls.

Below are some examples of what an alternative could be:

- PI performing project confirmation(s) to IBS allocations of individuals charged to the project are reasonably accurate based on their work activities performed. This is an alternative to individuals certifying their own effort.
- Basis of allocation is on work activities performed and the value of IBS (where the allocation is a percent of total work activities performed).

### REDUCTION OF BURDEN FROM ALTERNATIVES TO EFFORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UTD</th>
<th>MTU</th>
<th>CSU</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of certifications before ATE</td>
<td>2026/year</td>
<td>6700/year</td>
<td>2,700/quarter</td>
<td>11,500/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of certifications after ATE</td>
<td>430/year</td>
<td>620/year</td>
<td>&lt;1,700/quarter</td>
<td>1,800/year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Reduction of faculty burden? Less time to complete and more understanding? Yes Yes Yes Yes
- Faculty approval of ATE? Yes Yes Yes Yes
- Improved overall internal controls? Yes Yes Yes Yes

Alternatives to Effort Cohort Workshop, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2018
performed) vs. % effort in the context of time. Charges do not exceed proportionate share vs. accounting of time (which often may not be charged or is not a commitment of mandatory cost share that must be accounted for). This recognizes that the amount charged cannot exceed the value of work activities performed, vs. an exact accounting. In essence, this is recognition and reconfirmation of not needing to account for Voluntary Uncommitted Cost Sharing.

- **Project based review cycle vs. institutionally defined.** Aligned with a progress report of work activities performed and financial reporting of the project. This increases the faculty understanding and integrity of the allocations of IBS made relative to work activities performed benefitting the project.

Several institutions have taken advantage of the opportunity that was introduced in the UG to implement an alternative to effort reporting. Many have adapted a similar model as those implemented by the FDP Pilot Schools; or, they have implemented Huron’s Employee Compensation Compliance (ECC – formally known as ECRT) system that can accommodate alternative methodologies, including project-based payroll confirmation or a hybrid of methodologies. The schools that have transitioned have reported a reduction in burden, but most importantly, faculty have a much better understanding of what they are reviewing and confirming which contributes significantly to the integrity of the entire process and compliance objective.

**What hasn’t changed about Compensation Compliance?** Fundamentally, there is still a disconnect between a faculty member’s reality of how they utilize their time to perform work activities and how institutions try to interpret the regulations as it relates to compensation compliance. Institutions are still trying to track faculty ‘time’ spent on different activities even though faculty are not hourly employees, often are not required to track the absence of time, or the totality of their time. Their letters of appointment often outline they are hired to perform research, teaching, and services and the work activities necessary to accomplish them – regardless and indifferent to the time it takes to perform them. This disconnect between the reality that faculty activities are ‘inextricably intermingled’ (as recognized in UG 200.430(i)(x)) and an institution’s policy/process to try and track ‘time’ spent on various faculty activities (normally teaching, research and service) creates a disparate understanding that cannot be effectively reconciled to satisfactory resolution for a faculty member or their institution, and subsequently the audit community. This is not to say time cannot be a basis for the allocation of IBS, just that careful consideration by the institution must be made for the documented evidence of it (when time tracking is not required by their policy), how faculty understand the integrity of it when it is intermingled, and the math issues it generates when project budgets or faculty salary drawn from a project is finite and their time as well as work activities performed will and often does exceed that budget limitation in their reality.

If you were going to evaluate impact and effectiveness of outcomes based upon performance and the evidence of work activities performed, where is the sponsor getting the most bang for their buck? Should the value of work activities performed and outcomes be halved because they worked more hours, are more productive and more efficient?

**HOW TIME DILUTES VALUE OF WORK ACTIVITY**

![Graph showing time vs. value of work activity](image)

**AVERAGE TIME SPENT COMPOSING ONE E-MAIL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professors</th>
<th>Grad Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 seconds</td>
<td>1.3 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Piled Higher and Deeper” by Jorge Cham

![Comic by Jorge Cham](image)
The same work activity is performed and it is relative to the individual – not the time to accomplish it. The pay to the individual by the institution is the same for all work activities performed not the time or volume of the work activities performed.

Institutions, the audit community, and the federal agencies are stuck in the familiar; the way it has always been done, the mindset of trying to validate ‘you got what you paid for and you paid for what you got’ by focusing on ‘proving’ how much time was spent on an activity. For faculty, this can be a fundamentally-flawed methodology as faculty are not hourly employees, the time they spend on any activity cannot really be ‘proven’ without the untangling of the intermingled work activities faculty perform. Simply put, the UG doesn’t require this level of ‘time’ tracking. In fact, it acknowledges that not only do institutions not have to track time, it is almost impossible to do so for faculty as their responsibilities are inextricably intermingled and that level of precision is “not expected or required” (UG 200.430(i)(x)).

What happens next?

Some may be surprised to know that the origins of effort reporting date back to late 1950s, but faculty, institutions, and some federal agencies pushed back and emphasized the importance of focusing on performance-based measures of the project. As reported by Philip Boffey, the Bureau of the Budget (BOB) formed an interagency task force on “time-or-effort reporting” that included representatives from BOB, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, and the GAO in order to investigate the problem and propose solutions. The task force surveyed 357 officials and faculty at 21 universities and 30 government officials and found the academic community virtually unanimous in the belief that time-or-effort reporting was impossible to do in a meaningful way; it was burdensome, in that it took valuable professional time; and meaningless in its value (Science, Vol. 160, 1322-1324, 1968).

The battle was ‘lost’ in the late 1980s with the publication of A-21 revisions that included the examples of how institutions could comply with the after-the-fact review requirement. The UG has now brought us full circle, and institutions have the opportunity to adapt current policies and business processes that support research within a framework of internal controls that maintains compliance with the regulations. It should be noted that all four FDP Pilot institutions have continued with their alternative methods based on payroll allocations. And, since 2015, CERA is aware of 7 institutions who have transitioned to an alternative to effort reporting (1 has undergone and passed their single audit under UG), 11 institutions are using ECC for payroll/project confirmation or a hybrid of traditional effort reporting and payroll/project confirmation, and 4 institutions plan to go live with an alternative in the next several months. The Cohort for Alternatives to Effort Reporting has more than 120 member institutions – we expect to see the trend toward implementing an alternative methodology continue to grow. During a panel discussion at the CERA workshop, one of the questions posed to the single audit expert was, “Where do you see compensation compliance in the next five years?” While none of us have a crystal ball, he predicts there will be more of a focus on internal controls and systems and a greater emphasis to align dollars to performance outcomes (deliverables) of the project.

References:

OMB Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200
C OGR June 2018 Meetings and Reports: HHS & NSF Presentation and Moderator’s Notes:
www.cogr.edu/sites/default/files/OIG%20Panel%20Session%20Summary_FINAL_1N.pdf
Cohort for Efficiencies in Research Administration (CERA) is the next phase of the Cohort for Alternatives to Effort Reporting – seed funding to research the effectiveness of a Cohort model was provided by the NCURA Research 2015 Pilot Program. For more information visit https://cohortforresearch.com

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Then & Now

There has always been a fair amount of ambiguity regarding what constitutes participant support costs. Until addressed in Uniform Guidance, the National Science Foundation (NSF) had the most restrictive policy governing budgeting, expending, and reporting of these funds. Then, and now, participant support is intended to be used for direct costs paid to or on behalf of participants in connection with Federally-funded workshops, conferences, meetings, symposia, or training projects.

New Policies, Clearer Definitions

According to 2 CFR 200.75, participant support costs are direct costs for items such as stipends, subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (not employees) in connection with conferences or training projects. Probably the best distinction for determining what constitutes participant support, is what is not considered participant support: payments to employees, payments for conference speakers, incentive payments to human subjects, and costs for room rental fees, catering, supplies, etc. related to a sponsored conference or training project.

Awards With Participant Support

Types of projects that might request participant support costs include:

- Project with a participant portion, like a summer workshop;
- Awards for sponsored conferences, workshops, symposia or training projects; and
- NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU, www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5517) where the primary intent of the program is to provide an educational experience for the student.

Resources And Reminders

Still uncertain about participant support? Check out the Uniform Guidance, NSF guidance, and The University of Texas at Dallas decision tree regarding these costs:

- 2 CFR 200.75: www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=40c3f12f13cd0eb6085ba64ee0148a5eb3&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_175&rgn=div8
- University of Texas- Dallas, Research Assistant vs. Participant Cost vs. Subject Payments: www.utdallas.edu/research/docs/research_assistants_vs_participant_costs_vs_subject_payments

Remember that the information shared above is specific to NSF and to processes at the University of Texas at Dallas. These resources are meant to be guides, as there are a number of agencies which have a broader interpretation of what should, and should not, be counted as participant support.

As with all Federal programs, the Uniform Guidance is guidance to the Federal granting agencies. How each agency/program chooses to interpret and apply the Uniform Guidance may vary. Check your agency rules, program guidelines, and institutional policies and follow the order of precedence when making a determination.

Tricia L. Callahan, MA, CRA, is the Senior Research Education and Information Officer at Colorado State University (CSU), a graduate of NCURA’s Leadership Development Institute and the Executive Leadership Program (ELP). A 20-year member of NCURA, Tricia currently serves on the NCURA traveling workshop faculty for fundamentals and global initiatives. At CSU, Tricia oversees all training and education programs while assisting with pre-and post-award research administrative functions. She can be reached at Tricia.Callahan@colostate.edu
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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  
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The Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) has now completed its third Faculty Workload Survey. The survey included 111 of the 154 non-federal member institutions of the FDP, including universities and colleges as well as medical and research centers. Responses to the survey were provided by over 11,000 principal investigators of federally-funded projects. The goal of the survey was to determine researcher perceptions of the amount of time taken from active research by the various administrative and related requirements associated with federally-funded research, and in this way, have empirical evidence to inform efforts to help streamline the research process.

Previous surveys in both 2005 and 2012 revealed that faculty researchers estimated that approximately 42.3% of their research time was devoted to these research requirements. We were interested in 2018 to see whether this value had changed. It turns out, the value did change. In 2018, investigators estimated that they now spend an average of 44.3% of their time on requirements associated with their federally-funded projects — which is an uptick of 2%. Our initial review suggests that this increase is primarily associated with reporting requirements. As we delve deeper into the data, we hope to be able to reveal more about the possible sources of this increase.

Looking at predictors of reported time spent on research requirements, we find that large research universities, particularly private universities, tend to have below average rates of time spent, whereas less research intensive and non-doctoral institutions often yield researcher ratings that approach 50% of time taken from research by requirements. Time commitments also vary considerably across agencies. Investigators with funding from NASA or the National Science Foundation tend to report the lowest rates, whereas those funded by the Department of Education or USDA tend to report some of the highest rates. Having funding from more than one agency is also associated with elevated reports of time spent on requirements.

Turning to administrative and compliance requirements, we found, as we have in the past, that requirements associated with the use of animal subjects and human subjects are considered among the most time-consuming and most in need of change in order to reduce unnecessary burden. Clinical trials, project finances, and subcontract issues were also commonly identified as time-consuming areas with high priority need for change.

Over the next few months, we will continue to explore these results to provide a more detailed assessment of what has changed since the 2012 survey, and what steps might be most valuable toward reducing some of the most unnecessarily burdensome requirements. We are also planning to make available individualized institution reports to participating FDP member organizations. These will provide empirical data to assist local efforts to streamline the research process and will include comparison data from (anonymized) institutions of similar size, type, and research portfolio. These reports will contain ratings of time commitments and perceived priority for change across the various research-related general, financial, and compliance areas. They also will include summaries of ratings assessing perceived research climate within the university, institute, or center. In addition, the reports will summarize open-ended responses to requests for suggested changes and for views on the most and least helpful current practices regarding the institution’s administration of the research process. As always, the FDP maintains its focus on enabling researchers, and the administrators who support those researchers, to produce the highest quality research in the most streamlined environment possible. The latest Faculty Workload Survey will inform the FDP’s efforts by providing empirically-based input from researchers themselves. We want to thank all of those who have helped make this latest survey a success, and we look forward to bringing you additional information as we learn more from these data.

...FDP maintains its focus on enabling researchers, and the administrators who support those researchers...

Sandra L. Schneider, Ph.D., is a Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Associate Chair in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Florida. She has formerly served as Vice Chair of the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) and as Division Director of the Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences at the National Science Foundation. In addition to being principal investigator on the 2012 and 2018 FDP Faculty Workload Surveys, Dr. Schneider conducts research on motivational and cognitive processes in judgment and decision making. She can be reached at sandra@usf.edu
Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (OIST) was established in 2011, but to prepare for the opening of the graduate university, the OIST Promotion Corporation was established in 2005. Since then, many researchers and research staff from Japan and other countries have joined OIST. In 2005, as soon as the first research units joined OIST, a secretary was assigned to each unit. The secretaries worked in tandem with faculty to setup the research labs and established the administration and operation procedures for the research labs at OIST. The position of a secretary is now called a Research Unit Administrator (RUA) at OIST.

Scientists working in an isolated forest
OIST is now known as a unique international university in Japan. The main campus is in Onna village and is located on top of a hill overlooking the East China Sea. As of September 2018, there are 44 research unit administrators (RUA)s, 59 research units and 440 research unit staff; of these, 237 are from overseas working on campus on outstanding/advanced research projects. Because of its location, the institute is physically isolated and due to the language barrier, it makes non-Japanese speaking staff even more isolated while working at this Japanese institute. Because of the working environment, the RUA’s position has served as a vital link between research staff and university office, vendors, and the local community to be the first contact and to find the most efficient ways and means to communicate and support the research staff, so that they can focus on their research.
I would like to introduce some of our works and how we serve as an interface or communication hub (the first contact person) within the university office and local community.

**International working environment in non-English speaking country, Japan**

In a recent survey conducted by some RUAs regarding the “Administrative Support Needs and Workload of Researchers,” one of the questions was about common obstacles for non-Japanese speaking research staff when they work at Japanese universities/research institutes. Results show that 42% of non-Japanese speaking research staff feel that language and communication are obstacles to work at Japanese universities/research institutes and 14% feel cultural barriers, e.g., communicating with Japanese vendors in English. Japanese vendors who come to OIST can usually speak English well enough to communicate, but to avoid misunderstanding, some vendors report to RUAs about what they discussed with PIs or the research staff, and we make sure both are on the same page.

**Ease their frustration**

From the same survey, regarding possible obstructions, 23% of research staff answered that they feel Japanese laws and rules are a hindrance to them. The survey included the following question: “Which rules and regulations do you NOT understand well?” Of the respondents, about 54% selected procurement rules, 43% travel rules, 35% employment regulations, and 30.5% grant rules. Well, to be honest, they are all critical rules, which we would like all research staff to understand, but we do not want them to spend their time searching through rules every time they travel for a conference, or directly ask questions to the OIST travel expense team in administration. It would be frustrating and very time consuming for both research staff and the travel expense team if over 400 research staff contact them directly. So, to reduce frustration for both parties, we remain as the main contact between them, and for most questions posed by the research staff, we already know the answers, and if not, we can look them up very quickly without disturbing the travel expense team.

**Purchase from overseas vendors**

One of the tasks that some of us engage in is trading with overseas vendors. Roughly 21 – 25% of vendors that OIST uses are located overseas. In 2017, we purchased research materials, such as equipment and reagents, from 1,612 vendors located outside Japan as described in the following places and by number: North America (834); Europe (526); Asia, except Japan (176); Oceania (66); South America (7); and Africa (3). This is because many faculty and research staff are from overseas and they are already familiar with the products, or sometimes they want to try new products from overseas because their collaborators or former colleagues suggested or recommended them for their research projects. They may be able to find something equivalent to these products in Japan, but instead of talking to Japanese vendors and trying to find the products, which may or may not work as they expected, it is less stressful to purchase them from overseas for research staff. There may be additional work to the regular purchasing process and there are also some tricky and sneaky vendors but because RUAs handle entire process, they do not worry about those small things. Also, it is much safer for RUAs to handle the process. For example, in one case we ordered chemicals from an overseas company. When the company was about to dispatch the shipment, they informed us that they did not have a permit to export the particular chemical, so to save the cost for the permit and time for us they were going to write a different chemical name on the documentation for the shipment. It was my responsibility to stop the shipment and explain to the PI the reason. They were not happy, but I could not take the risk that may put the research staff in trouble. It may not be a big deal for the
vendor’s country, but I want research staff and vendors to understand that this is not acceptable by any means in Japan.

Importing research samples
Another job task that some of us handle is importing and exporting research biological and chemical samples. This is always a very sensitive task to deal with and requires extra special attention. We gather information from research staff, find and contact a carrier that can take the sample, and then contact Occupational Health and Safety Section in case we need to inform any relevant ministries and agencies. This involves the laws and regulations of two countries, customs clearance, animal or plant quarantines, as well as international laws, regulations, and agreements. We dispatch a dry shipper from/to Japan with liquid nitrogen. Dry shipper is an IATA approved container to carry liquid nitrogen, but it is not a container airport staff and carriers see every day, especially at small airports like Okinawa. A role of RUA in this situation is to provide all the information to the airports, which the dry shipper pass through. It prevents frightening airport staff, holding the container at customs, and opening the container. Temperature control during transportation of some research samples is critical and we make sure it arrives in the lab safely. Preparation of importing and exporting research samples is time consuming, but it is better to be extra safe than sorry.

At last, but at not least
Since OIST started in 2005, RUAs have undergone various transformations in response to the rapid expansion and reorganization of OIST, yet we do not have clear job descriptions and they vary from one RUA to another, depending on the specific research unit. But, one thing all RUAs have in common is to be the communication hub for research unit members and the university administration, as well as vendors, collaborators, and others who work with us.

Working in Japan may not be easy for people from overseas, but OIST needs to be an exception, because we are aiming to create a successful international working environment. We are still a growing university and in FY 2022, we hope to have 100 research units. As the university grows, we will need to keep evolving within the university to be able to support and provide the research staff with the best research environment possible.

Hitomi Shinzato is a Research Unit Administrator currently working with Bioinspired Soft Matter Unit and Nucleic Acid Chemistry and Engineering Unit at OIST. Currently, she is also working on earning a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Management at University of Maryland University College. She joined OIST in 2010 and as a research unit administrator and since then she worked with Mathematical Biology Unit, Ecology and Evolution Unit, and Biodiversity and Biocomplexity Unit and worked as a secretariat for the Japanese Neural Networks Society. She can be reached at hitomi.shinzato@oist.jp

References:
Two years in the making, NCURA and the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education collaborated to deliver for the first time in Spanish, the traveling workshop, *Conceptos Fundamentales en Administración de Investigación*.

Suzanne Rivera, Maria Palazuelos, and Jeremy Miner presented the professional development training on November 27-29, 2018 at the University of Information Sciences, located outside of Havana, to 36 participants who represented 30 institutions of higher education in Cuba.

During workshop activities and discussions, it became clear that, though research administration as a profession in Cuba might be considered in a nascent stage, recognizable commonalities exist with U.S. universities. For instance, PIs often are overburdened with research, teaching, and service commitments, and proposals often come together right under the wire of a sponsor's deadline. Workshop faculty and participants could all relate to the “last-minute syndrome” so prevalent in research.

The comprehensive three-day workshop included basic concepts covering all aspects of the life-cycle of a research project: idea inception, proposal preparation, submission,
terms and conditions, negotiation, financial management, reporting, close out, audit, and ethical conduct in each stage. Workshop participants found the translation to Spanish of the term “administrador” – insufficient to represent the complexity and roles research administrators play in supporting the research enterprise.

Agreement existed that PIs can benefit from systematic structures and professional support offered by research administrators; relieving PIs of administrative burdens allows them more time to carry out research projects of national significance, such as designing plants to be more resistant to drought and engineering more efficient batteries to store renewable energy.

The foundation for the Fundamentals of Research Administration traveling workshop was forged in April 2016 when NCURA President Robert Andresen led a 30-person delegation of research administrators from across the United States to Cuba to explore opportunities for enhancing research collaboration between the two countries.

Six months later, in October 2016, senior leaders from NCURA and the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education formalized their relationship in Washington, DC, by signing a memorandum of understanding that identified areas for bilateral cooperation, including professional development training.

During the November 2018 workshop, there was strong interest from all levels – vice ministers, rectors, directors, professors, investigators, project managers, and technical specialists – to learn and embrace best research practices from around the world.

In the words of one participant: ¡Esto es magnífico! ¿Crees que podrías venir a mi universidad para ofrecer un taller similar? The Fundamentals messages clearly struck a positive cord with the participant, who wanted to host a similar workshop customized for faculty and staff at his university.

Questions that arose during group discussion about institution-specific implementations of policies and regulations led to a spontaneous self-organized gathering of participants during the morning coffee break where they quickly moved from dreaming big to considering the logistics of organizing their own research administrator groups within the Cuban university system.

At the conclusion of the workshop, Aurora Fernández González, vice minister of the Ministry of Higher Education, extended warm thanks to all workshop faculty and participants, and invited consideration of future possibilities for continuing to develop research and research administration across the United States and Cuba.

This special event culminated with a captivating musical performance by a student violinist, an inspiring promotional video for the upcoming 500th foundation anniversary celebration of Havana, commemorative group photos, and a collegial luncheon. More than gracias – thank you – the spirit of participants was best captured by hasta pronto – see you again soon!

Jeremy T. Miner, MA, director of grants and contracts, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, is a seasoned second generation research administrator with two decades experience leading pre-award central offices in public and private higher education. He is currently a member of the NCURA Board of Directors and Traveling Faculty. He can be reached at minerjt@uwec.edu

Maria Palazuelos, PhD, director of research compliance, University of Delaware, develops, implements, and oversees policies and procedures pertaining to non-financial compliance and research integrity. She is a member of NCURA’s Select Committee on Global Affairs and has been appointed as its Vice-Chair for 2019. She can be reached at mariapj@udel.edu

Suzanne Rivera, PhD, is vice president for research and technology management at Case Western Reserve University. She took an active role in negotiating the memorandum of understanding between NCURA and the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education. In 2018, she received the Julia Jacobson Distinguished Service Award. She can be reached at suzanne.rivera@case.edu
Overreaction is common in our fast-paced world. Who hasn’t seen an email pop in, marked urgent and responded rapid fire without completely researching the issue? Alternatively, we overreact by freezing, trying to get something just right. Meanwhile, weeks go by and people are following up, wondering why that draft is taking so long. They are frustrated because they want a rapid response and you are frustrated that there is not enough time to consider all the issues.

We may act without completely exploring the issue, leading to errors or unintended consequences. By rushing, we risk mistakes or a misunderstanding that later requires retracting or reworking a previous assumption, which possibly leads to the erosion of trust. Conversely, the pressure to publish information quickly is real. If we fail to publish timely, someone else may get there first. Or, we may spend so long pondering, we make the issue larger than before we started.

Constant rework does not engender trust. In an administrator’s work, processing things completely (and hopefully quickly) the first time builds trust with the community. Rushing and having to rework may erode trust or questions may arise as to the process's effectiveness.

Alternatively, sometimes we overreact in the other direction, we work issues with endless conversation only to find that by the time we reach a conclusion, the landscape has shifted and our approach must be further revised. How do we find balance between rushing to reach a solution and a labyrinth of discussion with no solutions in sight?

Avoiding the pitfalls of overreaction is not just about creating a good business process, but also trusting that the logic is sound and the community is confident that all issues have been considered before changes are implemented with speed, clarity, and a minimal amount of revision or rework.

The many federal awarding agencies’ policy change announcements make it easy for research administrators to deliberate over implementing changes in institutional policies and procedures. They are deluged with a barrage of “interpretations” of implementation options from various media outlets, consulting firms, and professional organizations. This information overload makes it difficult for institutional leaders to stick to a path to implement change. Other times, institutional pressures to “get it done” may lead to panic, where decisions are made without sufficient thought as to the impact.
To make things more complex, federal award recipients must also assess the impact of policy change not only at their institution but also on subrecipients.

As the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) Subawards Subcommittee co-chairs, we hear from FDP members and non-members about the impact of federal policy changes on the issuance of subawards. We are asked how we will implement a policy change in the FDP subaward templates, which must be used by FDP member institutions when issuing subawards to one another, and are often the chosen templates for non-members.

We limit content changes to the templates as much as possible. Per the FDP Subaward Templates Content Change Requests Guidance Document, the templates’ purpose is to “reduce administrative burden by reducing the effort needed to create and/or review subaward agreements. Changes to the templates go through a rigorous vetting process by the FDP Subaward templates working group, on behalf of the membership. Therefore, changes are made infrequently, generally no more than annually.”

Policy changes with a narrower focus that must be flowed down to subrecipients may be easier to implement than broader policies or ambiguous flow down requirements. Such policy changes require FDP members to reach consensus before adding new terms or conditions into the templates.

We illustrate with a few examples. First, something relatively simple to implement: the Mexico City policy. The policy was originally announced in 1984, and then rescinded and reinstated several times. The policy was reinstated on January 23, 2017 by Presidential Memorandum and expanded “to implement a plan to extend the requirements of the reinstated Memorandum to global health assistance furnished by all departments or agencies,” including requiring nongovernmental organizations to certify compliance with the policy. Soon after the Presidential Memorandum’s release, FDP members queried if we planned to update the subaward templates.

Looking at two main factors, we acted quickly. First, the Presidential Memorandum was effective immediately, so it was critical to prepare implementation choices quickly. Second, while we hold firm on consensus of all new language between FDP member institutions, institutions have more latitude to amend the foreign subaward sample templates. Therefore, we felt it more in our purview to work with a small group of members to add a broad statement in Attachment 1, Certifications and Assurances, in the 2017 version of the FDP Foreign Research Subaward template as a way for pass-through entities (“PTE”) to immediately call out if the policy was applicable to the subrecipient. The PTE can then determine how to best flow-down the policy in accordance with any NOA specific terms, while ensuring subrecipients understood NIH’s CoC policy through subawards.

The policy states that PTEs are “responsible for ensuring that any subrecipient that receives funds to carry out part of the NIH award involving a copy of identifiable, sensitive information protected by a Certificate issued by this policy understand they are also subject to subsection 301(d) of the Public Health Service Act.” This clearly required incorporation in the FDP subaward templates. Members contacted us immediately to ask about the implementation.

The CoC policy change stirred a lot of discussion during FDP meetings. Some members received varying guidance from their General Counsel’s Offices or other institutional offices, e.g., IRB, on how to best ensure subrecipients understood NIH’s CoC policy through subawards.

No single option presented as the best choice. Based on members’ suggestions, we crafted two different CoC language options PTEs can pilot in the templates whenever human subjects data will be exchanged under the subaward. We are piloting the language before permanently incorporating new terms into the templates to give entities time to see what works best and offer revisions. The FDP’s goal is to reduce unnecessary administrative burden. This pilot will bring consensus on how to best flow-down the CoC policy.

Having institutions take a consistent approach reduces unnecessary burdens and negotiating time. As we tackle new policies, we seek balance between being expedient and getting buy in from the right experts. At the end of the day, it comes down to expertise, judgment and understanding your constituency and business operations. It is important to distinguish the true emergencies from our inured sense of needing an immediate response.

We seek balance between being expedient and getting buy in from the right experts.

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Stephanie F. Scott, MS, CRA, is the Director of Policy & Research Development at Columbia University. She has served on NCURA’s Professional Development Committee and is the Co-Chair of the FDP Subawards Subcommittee. She can be reached at stephanie.scott@columbia.edu
As we near the end of the second decade of the 21st century, it seems appropriate to start to consider what the 2020s will look like for the research administration workforce. By far and away, the most important and valuable resource we have in accomplishing our work is our human capital. We are entering an unprecedented era where there is certainty of having four and an opportunity for having five generational cohorts comprising our multigenerational workforce (Grensing-Pophal, 2018).

- **Traditionalists** born before 1946 will for the most part have retired but given life expectancy and the vibrancy of many of our seniors, don’t expect them to totally disappear. And for those who are still engaged, do not squander the opportunity this affords us.

- **Baby Boomers** born between 1946 and 1965 will continue to fill many roles if for no other reason that the sheer number of Boomers. If you buy into the argument made by some demographers that the Boomer generation should in fact be two distinctive generations, there is the potential for asserted we may have six generations in the workplace.

- **Generation X** or the Baby Bust generation born between 1966 and 1976 will occupy fewer positions if for no other reason than that fact that there just were not that many born during this brief era. Gen Xers were the first to challenge the structured work day and to value and demand work/life balance.

- **Generation Y** or Millennials born between 1977 and 1997 who reached adulthood around 2000 have already eclipsed Baby Boomers and Gen Xers in the workforce (Kane, 2018). Technology has developed at a rapid pace during their lifetime, although they probably don’t truly appreciate life before portable technology.

- **Generation Z**, those born after 1997, will be entering the workforce with new attitudes and ideals. They have never known a world without portable technology devices, social media and, thus, may very well prefer electronic communication to face-to-face or telephone.

Instead of focusing on the differences and challenges posed by the age gap, successful enterprises will focus and capitalize on the opportunities (Grensing-Pophal, 2018). This will require that we abandon stereotypical thinking about each cohort group: not all Boomers are Luddites and just because they are the generation that we assume prefers face-to-face communication, doesn’t mean they are better at it than younger generations.

So how will we recruit, engage and educate Generation Z employees who are beginning to enter the work force? Gen Zs are extremely entrepreneurial with 72% of Gen Zs aspiring to own their own company (Villa & Dorsey, 2017). Gen Zs are not necessarily sold on the value of a college degree and thus are only going to be lured if they see the concrete value in that investment of their time and money. We are already seeing the impact this
is having on our curriculum. More and more institutions have degree programs in entrepreneurship and innovation. And these are not graduate programs. Seventy-seven percent already earn money even though still in their teens (Villa & Dorsey, 2017) and 38% of those who plan to attend college intend to work while in school. This means we will have a great pool of student workers and that may be a pipeline for recruiting permanent employees.

But if we want to reach those potential student employees, it is not going to be through the normal mechanisms. Posting a job description on the university job board may not reach the best Gen Z candidates. Social media will become an increasingly important recruitment venue. All indications are that Gen Zs will have a strong work ethic marking them desirable employees, but they will place high value on working in a “fun environment” and flexibility in their work schedule. Position announcements must stress those aspects of these jobs.

While 97% of Millennials have expressed a need for flexibility in their work schedule, that is not just for the younger members of our workforce (Clarendon, 2018). Ninety-six percent of all workers want some flexibility in their work schedule (Dreyer, 2017). In Deloitte’s 2018 Millennials Survey, Millennials attributed greater productivity, engagement, performance and work satisfaction to flexibility in their work schedule (Clarendon, 2018). Don’t expect that to be any different for Gen Zs.

And there is plenty of science to back up the notion that a flexible workday will render greater productivity by allowing people to work when their internal time clock will make them most productive (Pink, 2018). According to Werk, a workplace flexibility consulting firm, rigid work schedules are a thing of the past. Werk has identified six structured flexibility types and research administration offices should be able to accommodate at least the first four of those listed below (Dreyer, 2017).

- Desk Plus Partially office bound
- Time Shift Unconventional hours
- MicroAgility Flexibility to shift hours on a day-to-day basis
- Part-time Part-time hours but with career potential
- Remote Working remotely on a full-time basis
- TravelLite For positions involving travel

Technology can enable our ability to shift to a more flexible workplace and work schedule. Most of our institutions are shifting to cloud-based systems that can be accessed securely from remote locations. Sixty-four percent of Millennials want employers to recognize how technology can change the workplace to accommodate their values. Without the burden of a paper-based work environment, accommodations become much more feasible. And considering all of the pressure for finding space for more desks on our campuses, the option of using Desk Plus where employees can share a desk makes this a very attractive option. Time shift might not work as easily for employees whose primary responsibility is review and submission of proposals which must meet specific time deadlines, but it could potentially be an option for other functions in our offices.

Clarendon stresses the advantages of efficiency-building technology as a means of enabling the shift to structured flexibility in the workplace (2018). Artificial intelligence and smarter systems such as blockchain smart contracts can change the way we process awards. This will be critically important as we are challenged to meet our growing demand for collaboration and industry partnerships. Imagine how task orders under master
agreements with industry and FDP subawards could be streamlined between collaborators using smart contracts enabled by blockchain technology. However, it is safe to say that the Gen Zs will not only embrace technology, they will demand that they have it and that it does much of the work they might consider mundane.

Because of their comfort with mobile devices, Gen Zs are digitally-entrenched (Villa & Dorsey, 2017). They will be much more likely to take training through online and non-traditional delivery modes and to access information via a mobile device. The same goes for training Gen Zs on research administration processes in our offices. They will be much more comfortable with using technology and will prefer to learn through doing and through online modes of training in snippets. Engaging and recruiting Gen Zs will come with its own set of challenges. Perhaps the most important thing to consider about Gen Zs is their passion for social change and the common good. This is where we have an edge in recruiting; research delivers that incentive. It will be imperative to ensure the work is relevant to the Gen Z workforce so they can engage in the research they are enabling.

Gen Zs have indicated exceptional self-awareness recognizing that communication and problem-solving skills are two of the most critically important and valuable skills needed by employers. And they are willing to work at building those skillsets (Maister, 2018). Considering the notion that we probably have another decade with the diversity of age groups in our workforce, by taking the time to know our employees, working to build structured yet flexible work schedules, and establishing mentoring programs where information can flow both ways, we can parlay this unique period of time into a jump start for the future of our profession.

Susan Wyatt Sedwick is a senior consulting associate with Attain LLC. She has over 25 years of research administration experience with a keen interest in developing research administration professionals. She can be reached at ssedwick@attain.com

References:
Welcome to our new column intended to highlight new or ongoing diversity and inclusion ideas or processes our organization, member institutions, or individual members have initiated. This column is the result of one of the multiple ideas proposed by the NCURA Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. The Task Force originated in 2017 by then-President Barbara Gray who envisioned the importance for NCURA to make a mindful, intentional effort to ensure our organization is committed to diversity and inclusion. The NCURA Statement on Diversity and Inclusion resulted from this initiative:

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

President Georgette Sakumoto's charge to the Task Force in 2018 was focused on developing an implementation plan for NCURA to adopt at the national level. Regional leaders provided valuable insights on the proposed plan during the regional leadership workshop in June 2018 and expressed an eagerness to adopt many of the ideas. The Board of Directors approved the plan in August 2018. Key highlights include the following:

- Incorporate NCURA’s Statement on Diversity and Inclusion into all calls for volunteer opportunities with a request that all committees and task forces consider diversity and inclusion in their member or nominee selections. Committee and task force chairs will report out to the Board of Directors the diversity and inclusion criteria that was considered in each selection.
- Expand the membership profile criteria to be more inclusive and enable NCURA to utilize data results to measure ourselves on an ongoing basis
- Feature focused sessions with a theme on diversity and inclusion in our national meetings
- Offer swag to attendees at national meetings to showcase NCURA’s commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Develop a volunteer matrix that provides the membership a more transparent summary of the organization’s wide range of volunteer opportunities, including a list of criteria such as “no travel required” for those members and institutions who have limited budgets, years of experience in research administration, and years as a NCURA member.

This matrix should be transparent and available to the full membership and easy to visualize and navigate, similar to a career ladder, so members understand where they can start getting involved in the beginning and transition to broader and higher-level opportunities.

- Continue the Task Force in 2019 to monitor progress on the implementation plan and create new ideas. Task Force activities may include focusing on the implementation plan rollout, benchmarking revised membership data, encouraging regional adoption, and continuing to develop new ways for the organization to adopt diversity and inclusion strategies for future years. NCURA’s President, Tony Ventimiglia, is committed to this effort.

Finally, many thanks to the 2018 Task Force members for the development of the plan:

- Ashley Alexander, American University
- Tolise Bailey, Johns Hopkins University
- Mario Medina, University of Texas Health Science Center, 2017 Task Force Chair
- Denise Moody, Harvard University, 2018 Task Force Chair
- Laneika Musalini, Tri-County Technical College, 2019 Task Force Chair
- Deborah Price, Baylor Scott & White Research Institute
- Ben Prince, University of Massachusetts Medical Center
- Samantha Westcott, California Institute of Technology

The new 2019 Task Force members will be monitoring and contributing this new column. We encourage everyone to submit their own diversity and inclusion ideas and recommendations for this column and/or for NCURA’s consideration to the new 2019 Task Force Chair, Laneika Musalini (lmusalin@tctc.edu).

Denise Moody is the Senior Director of Research Compliance in Harvard University’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences Research Administration Services overseeing COI, export controls, IACUC, and research misconduct. She serves as NCURA’s Secretary, SPA II traveling workshop faculty, and a Peer Reviewer. She can be reached at denisemoody@fas.harvard.edu
About 6 years ago, I joined the University of Ghana as a Research Development Officer with little knowledge in proposal development. I am a member of the pre- and post-award team providing advice and professional support to the University of Ghana academic staff in pursuit of research funding. I operate from the Satellite office of the Office of Research, Innovation and Development based at the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research in the College of Humanities, promoting and supporting funding opportunities and applications, advising on policies and rules of funders, pricing and costing for applications, checking the terms of awards and supporting contract negotiations.

As with many jobs, my expertise has developed from the day-to-day operations on the job coupled with other professional development opportunities. In 2016, I was awarded a University Administration Support Program (UASP) Fellowship in Research Management in the United States, coordinated by the International Research Exchange Board (IREX) and supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The UASP Fellowship provided me with two weeks of intensive training and peer-to-peer learning in Washington, DC, followed by a four-week placement at Arizona State University. At the same time, I was introduced to and joined the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA).

I depend on NCURA to help me navigate the field of research management on the global level, bringing to the doorstep of my University international best practices. I particularly look forward to learning strategies and tools required for navigating and managing key pre-award processes and best practices, gaining a better understanding of institutional compliance and risk management, and enhancing my negotiation skills, among others. I aim to be able to anticipate the needs of faculty when it comes to their research activities and proactively provide services in a timely manner that will meet their needs. Ultimately, I look forward to leading a team of research support staff in the provision of highly effective research support services, enabling a successful delivery of a research strategy of a university, and NCURA will be the driving force behind this achievement.

Ghana’s research funds are less than one percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). One needs to understand the “language” of its donors or sponsors, particularly those from the United States, Asia and Europe. I consider it a necessity to better understand the federal landscape of these donors to be able to interpret their requirements and assist faculty to meet the best standards of international administrative compliance.

In 2018, I was awarded an NCURA National Conference Travel Award making it possible for me to attend my first NCURA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. I took advantage of a unique benefit NCURA offers first-time attendees at the...
Annual Meeting — the Mentor-Mentee program. Being matched with a mentor gave me a sense of belonging, and provided me with a better understanding of NCURA, particularly what to expect at the annual meeting. At AM60, I benefited from hearing from leading professionals and entrepreneurs in the industry — not to mention the great content that was delivered by well-prepared speakers. I was the only person attending from my country Ghana, and the warm reception by many of the participants, particularly NCURA staff, made me feel very important and at home. Because of guidance from my mentor, I fully enjoyed the four-day event having participated in many concurrent and discussion sessions on various aspects of the life cycle of grants. I particularly liked the discussion sessions that allowed many participants to share practices in their various universities. I was able to tap into some workable solutions that I have since implemented in my institution, bearing in mind diversity in institutional cultures. The meeting offered me the chance to catch up with colleagues from around the globe to discuss common challenges and understand differences, ask questions and find answers to some key issues regarding research administration. I see this as a continuing practice over the years, enabling me to learn new ideas and trends in research management and administration and ultimately being more effective and efficient at my work. I believe NCURA has opened the door for me to know what is happening in research management beyond the borders of my institution and country, giving me access to a world of resources that transcends my institution. Thus my association with NCURA will expose me to different points of view, help me see the bigger picture, learn new ideas and trends in research management and administration, and reflect on my specialties.

I look forward to gaining qualifications that will cement my career as a research administrator. For instance, at AM60 I received a certificate in Pre-award Research Administration by participating in both concurrent and discussion sessions of the Pre-award Track, such as Proactive Pre-Award Practices, Pre-Award Considerations for Successful Global Collaborations, and Best Friends: Pre- and Post-Award: How What Happens at Pre-Award Shapes the Post-Award Administration. My goal is to attain the Post-Award Research Administration Certificate and Global Research Administration Certificate by attending future meetings. This will validate my high level of expertise in the field of research administration, lead to added prestige and put me ahead of many of my contemporaries.

Most importantly, as an NCURA member, I will gain vital networking opportunities with industry players. My recent experience at AM60 demonstrated to me the networking potential of NCURA, and I expect to tap into this network to enhance the collaborative efforts of my institution and enhance my career path. Additionally, I hope to take advantage of NCURA’s rich educational programs, including access to online resources, workshops, conferences, issues of NCURA Magazine and Research Management Review, and guidance that otherwise has been scarce. I believe my experience and skills acquired through NCURA’s programs and community will serve me extremely well as a departmental research manager, providing pre- and post-award services for faculty within the College of Humanities.

Beatrice Sakyibea Biney-Nyamekye is a Research Development Officer at the University of Ghana, Ghana. She received a 2018 NCURA Travel Award and attended the 2018 Annual Meeting, AM60. Mrs. Biney-Nyamekye may be reached at bsbiney-nyamekye@ug.edu.gh
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“...
A unique look at how other institutions approach the same issues. Serves as a mechanism for thinking more broadly and more critically about the issues.

“...
My staff was really pleased with the opportunity we were able to provide, so a win-win for me. We will be integrating some ideas and resources we heard!

“...
Excellent workshop! I appreciated how the base fundamentals were stressed while also very importantly digging deeper into some great practical examples. Loved the presenters’ personalities!

“...
I really like how the information was worded in a clear manner that I could easily understand and comprehend.

All programs available on demand at https://onlinelearning.ncura.edu

* Available for immediate download with license to post on your institution’s internal site or system for continued staff education.
Is it Trending or Fading?

THE TRAINING PENDULUM

What’s new is old and new again or what’s old is new and old again. Training is a touchy topic for most organizations, especially when it comes to committing resources to begin the process. It’s the planning that tends to get off to a rocky start, because there was no framework put in place to map out the program’s training goals. If the program’s educational brand is not designed to sustain style changes to its content; it will lose its appeal, employees will stop using the product and the learning process will fade. NCURA knows that it is hard work to keep an educational brand trending, so we asked our trainers to look into their toolkits and provide some tips and techniques that will continue to help expand your educational program.

Colorado State University
Tricia Callahan
For most of us, time is of the essence. Therefore, provide training opportunities that can be accessed in the office, at home, or on the road. Expanding offerings to include training videos, on-line tutorials, and other microlearning opportunities that offer small bites and allow consumers to be in control of what they are learning and when.

Johns Hopkins University
Tolise Dailey
Host monthly learning sessions around your organization’s “statement of procedures.” Keeping research administrators up to date on the policy changes within their organization will add to their expertise, expand their knowledge base, and ensure that the research entity remains in compliance.

University of Oregon
Carrie Chesbro
The need for training is here to stay. What is fading are antiquated delivery methods that assume everyone enters the learning cycle at the same place. Replace “talk-at-them” sessions with participant-centered learning engagements. Participant-centered learning incorporates the following elements:
- Ask more than tell;
- A focus on job applicability;
- Surveys of attitudes about the topic being presented;
- Tests for a deeper level of understanding; and
- Inclusion of participant experience, allowing participants to share what they know about the topic.

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Melanie Hebl
Continuously obtain detailed evaluations from training session attendees and refine your programs to meet your training goals. If attendance or evaluation results start slipping, it’s time to consider changes to your programs. Incorporate different subject matter experts, different activities, and different training methods. Create direct lines of communication with your audience to remain relevant using a training listserv, social media page, and/or webpage. Doing so will increase visibility on campus and keep your audience up to date on opportunities and resources for growth and education.

In the ever changing world of research administration, our training programs have to remain fluid and flexible. Nothing you create will ever be “final” because processes change, policies change, and people change. Keep your programs relevant and in equilibrium by remaining up-to-date on the trends in research administration and current pedagogy.
Happy New Year Region I colleagues! I hope you all had a memorable and enjoyable holiday season.

The New Year is a time of transition. For Region I this means new Officers and Committee members assume their responsibilities and other Officers and Committee members’ cycle off. Thank you to our 2018 Region I Officers, Ad Hoc Chairs and Volunteers who made substantial contributions and gave generous amounts of time and talent to the region the past few years. It has been a pleasure partnering with you and I am grateful for your regional commitment!

Your 2019 Regional Officers include: Denise Rouleau (Immediate Past Chair), Louise Griffin (Chair-Elect), Suzanne Aranjo (Secretary), Jori Barabino (Treasurer), Laurel Cobban (Secretary-Elect), Sonya Siern (Treasurer-Elect) and Stacy Riseman (National Board Representative). The Advisory Board will include our elected officers and leaders from committees charged with curriculum (Eva Pasadas), governance nominations (Kris Monahan), awards (Nicholas Fisher), sponsorship (Patricia McNulty), professional development (Lisa Mosley) and volunteer/membership (Rachel Girardi). I am looking forward to working with these folks and their committees to continue offering you the members what you have come to depend on.

The new year committees are hard at work transitioning roles, setting programs in motion, securing educational offerings, updating websites, reviewing travel applications, preparing budgets and the like to continue the excellence of 2018. Look out for announcements on the web and in e-blasts as we move forward into the year and remember to mark your calendars for the Spring Meeting.

The Program Committee led by Louise Griffin (Chair Elect 2019) and Jill Mortali, is gearing up for our region’s annual meeting; “Back to Basics: Practical Solutions.” The site of this year’s meeting is the Westin Portland Maine Harborview – the perfect place to experience New England charm. The program will begin on Sunday, April 28th with a full day of separately registered workshops. Followed by a Welcome Reception and more than 50 informative, dynamic concurrent sessions, discussion groups, and panels between Monday, April 29th and Wednesday, May 1st. Be on the lookout for a call to participate in the highly successful “Innovative Exchange Suite” where you can share your practical solutions to research administrative challenges. If you are interested in learning more about the conference or about volunteering opportunities, please contact the Program Committee at springmeeting@ncuraregioni.org.

A special thanks to everyone who responded to our call for presentations!

Please email chair@ncuraregioni.org if you have suggestions on programming, networking, and professional development you would like to share.

Donna Smith is Chair of Region I and serves as a Senior Research Manager at Massachusetts General Hospital Research Institute. She can be reached at chair@ncuraregioni.org

Happy New Year, Region II! At the outset, I would like to thank our outgoing Officers for their yeoman efforts in 2018: Dennis Paffrath (Chair), Ady Villegas-Estrada (Treasurer), and Mary Louise Healy (Regionally Elected Member to the National Board). I also look forward to working with my fellow Officers in 2019 on behalf of the Region: Katie McKeon (Chair-Elect), Ted Fehskens (Treasurer), Lamar Oglesby (Treasurer-Elect), Bryan Cacciotti (Secretary), and Tim Schailey (Regionally Elected Member to the National Board).

We have set our sights on our 2019 meeting, which will be held October 16-18, 2019, at the Westin Jersey City Newport in Jersey City, New Jersey. In addition to the meeting being shifted to a Wednesday-Friday timeframe, we have several ideas that will provide enhanced opportunities for attendees. Most importantly, however, we are pleased to announce that our meeting will be a joint affair with Region VIII, NCURA’s International Region. Hotel and registration information will be released shortly, but, in the interim, if you are interested in volunteering as part of the Program Committee, please reach out to the Region II Program Chair, Adam Greenberg, at Adam.Greenberg@asrc.cuny.edu

Last year saw the formation of nine Subregions, created to facilitate professional development opportunities on a more local level for Region II members. The initial offerings have been a resounding success, and credit goes to each of the Subregion leaders for building up this initiative: Elliott Frank, Bella DiFranzo, Kris Wolff, Anita Mills, Missy Surovec, Aniko Nalevanko, Danielle Brown, Katie McKeon, and Catherine Parker. Be sure to visit the Subregion website (https://ncuraregionii.org/subregions) for a list of upcoming events.

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Finally, our Professional Development Committee had a busy 2018 under the direction of Rebecca Hussak. With our impressive faculty teaching multiple workshops throughout the Region. For more information on upcoming workshops, as well as a list of those that are offered, please visit the PDC website (https://ncuraregionii.org/pdc). If you are interested in hosting a workshop at your institution, please contact the new PDC Chair, David Schultz, at schulz7@rpi.edu.

Charles Bartunek is Chair of Region II and serves in the Division of Research at the University of Maryland, College Park. He can be reached at ctb@umd.edu
Region III is starting off the New Year with a big congratulations to our amazing members who have been appointed to positions at the national level! These tireless volunteers are what make NCURA great and Region III is proud to call them ours.

- Tanya Blackwell (Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta) was appointed as a member to the Educational Scholarship Fund Committee
- Abby Guillory (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) was appointed as a member to the Educational Scholarship Fund Committee
- Rashonda Harris (Emory University) was appointed to the Board of Directors
- Danielle McElwain (University of South Carolina) was appointed as a member to the Nominating & Leadership Development Committee
- Laneika Musalini (Tri-County Technical College) was invited to chair the NCURA Diversity & Inclusion Presidential Task Force for 2019
- David Smelser (University of Tennessee) was elected to the Board of Directors

Make it your new year’s resolution to volunteer in 2019! Whether as a committee member at the regional or national level, leading a dinner group, or manning the registration desk at our Spring Meeting, volunteers are what make NCURA the thriving organization it is today. Plus, there’s no better way to make new friends and forge paths as you advance your career in research administration. Visit Region III’s volunteer webpage to learn more! [http://ncuraregioniii.com/volunteer](http://ncuraregioniii.com/volunteer).

We are looking forward to the 2019 Spring Meeting in Hollywood Beach, FL. The Margaritaville Beach Resort will be hosting Region III May 4 – 8, 2019. All NCURA members are welcome to join us at the beach and be honorary flamingos! Registration is now open and meeting information is available on Region III’s website at [http://ncuraregioniii.com/2019-spring-meeting](http://ncuraregioniii.com/2019-spring-meeting). This meeting’s theme will be “Collaboration: Creating Connections that Count” and we’ve put together an exciting program that will cater to everyone from first-time attendees to seasoned research administrators. This includes more advanced level sessions, providing our incredible members with quality professional development opportunities right in their own region. We’ll be making several meeting announcements as we eagerly await the warm breezes and sunny skies:

- Don’t miss out on the Early Bird discount
- Apply for a Travel Award and help pay for the trip
- Sign up to volunteer and make the most of your attendance
- We look forward to seeing everyone in May, but until then, stay connected with us on the Region III Collaborate Community, our website, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook!

Happy New Year from NCURA Region IV! Many see the new year as a time for renewal and renewed commitment. I like to consider the new year as a time to celebrate what we do well, create space for improvements, and imagine the possibilities of what might be.

As research administrators, we have A LOT on our plate. We are a group of bright, busy, talented people supporting and contributing to research that is changing the world. We also have complex and fulfilling lives outside of our office. Perhaps your curiosity has lead you to an interesting hobby. Or possibly your quest for knowledge has prompted you to continue your education. Or maybe your inclination to take care of people sees you caring for a young family, or your parents, or both. For all of these reasons, it is important to invest in positive self-care – whatever that might mean to you. Read a book, go for a walk, snuggle your puppy, or invest in professional development. We’ve got you covered on that last one (although I might have some good book recommendations as well!). NCURA is here to support you and your search for quality and supportive professional development.

In fact, our Region IV Spring Meeting is right around the corner!

The 2019 Spring Meeting in Columbus, Ohio is a great opportunity for learning, networking, and fun! Topics covered include pre-award, post-award, research compliance, wellness, and more. Visit [https://ncuraregioniv.com/conferences](https://ncuraregioniv.com/conferences) for more information.

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Indre Viskontas, an opera singer and neuroscientist, who will give the Keynote Address. As a faculty member at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Dr. Viskontas is pioneering the application of neurosciences to musical training. Dr. Viskontas has more than 50 original papers related to the neural basis of memory and creativity, co-hosted a docuseries on the Oprah Winfrey Network, appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show, and is co-creator and host of the popular science podcast Inquiring Minds.

So, join us for an opportunity to celebrate your professional successes, create room for new strategies around compliance and service, and imagine your role in the ever-changing world of research administration!

**Bonniejean Zitske** is the Chair of Region IV and serves as the Assistant Director for Research Financial Services at the University of Wisconsin Madison. She can be reached at bzitske@rsp.wisc.edu

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**Justo Torres** is Chair of Region III and serves as Director, Office of Contracts and Grants at North Carolina State University. He can be reached at justo_torres@ncsu.edu
Happy New Year Region V!  
I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and are relaxed and ready for the Spring Semester. I am excited for what the new year will bring to our members. The officers have been working hard to implement new ideas, opportunities and events.

One of the events, I know I am excited about, will be the Region V 2019 Spring Meeting! Please plan to join us for this at the Omni Houston Hotel on April 28 – May 1, 2019. The meeting—titled, “Houston, the Research Administrators Have Landed”—will feature a wide range of concurrent sessions, discussion groups, and opportunities to network with and learn from your fellow research administrators. More information on the meeting, including the agenda, registration information, and sponsorship opportunities, can be found on the Region V Website: www.ncuraregionv.com. If you have questions about or recommendations for the meeting, please contact, Katie Plum, at katie.plum@angelo.edu.

Special thanks to the members of the program committee, who are evaluating proposals, securing sponsorships, and planning networking events to provide a great meeting experience. Those members are:
- **Gilliam Bautista**, University of Houston
- **Niki Bertrand**, Southwestern University
- **Mona Bisase**, Houston Methodist
- **Cory Blackwell**, Texas Tech University
- **Beth Cammarn**, University of Texas Medical Branch
- **Greg Chu**, University of Houston
- **Cory Davis**, University of Texas at Austin
- **Jeffrey Garza**, Texas A&M University – Kingsville
- **Lizette Gonzales**, Texas A&M University – Kingsville
- **Tribbie Grimm**, Texas A&M University
- **Margie Harper**, CHRISTUS Health
- **Anise Hawkins**, University of Texas at Austin
- **Susan Hurley**, Sam Houston State University
- **Liz Kogan**, University of Texas at Austin
- **Vanessa Lopez**, University of Texas at Austin
- **Diana Luna**, Texas A&M University – Kingsville
- **Francis Regalado**, Texas A&M University – Kingsville
- **Kate Solis**, St. Mary’s University
- **Angela Wishon**, Wishon Consulting

Also, please help me in welcoming in our new At-Large Officers (effective January 1st): **Tribbie Grimm**, Texas A&M University and **Adrienne Blalock**, The University of Tulsa. I would like to say, “Thank you!” to **Courtney Frazier Swaney**, University of Texas at Austin for her dedicated service to our region as Treasurer for the past 2 years. She has done a tremendous job keeping our finances up to date. She is being succeeded by **Roxanne Smith Parks**, Lamar University. Here’s to wishing everyone a great 2019!

Michael R. Castilleja is Chair of Region V and serves as Grants Accounting Manager at the University of the Incarnate Word. He can be reached at micasti2@uiwtx.edu

Happy New Year, Region VI! I am excited to be your Regional Chair and look forward to a wonderful 2019.

I would like to thank our outgoing 2018 Regional Officers: **Kevin Stewart** (University of California, Santa Barbara), Immediate Past Chair and **Angie Karchmer** (University of California, Irvine), Secretary. Their hard work helped to make 2018 a great year for Region VI. This year **Randi Wasik** (Washington State University) continues in her role as Treasurer and **Erika Blossom** (University of California, Irvine) moves into her role as Secretary. We also welcome newly elected officers **Vanessa Quiroz Hotz** (University of Washington) as Chair-Elect, **Krista Roznovsky** (Stanford University) as Secretary-Elect, and **Manilin Matau** (University of California, Irvine) as Treasurer-Elect to the Region’s 2019 Executive Committee.

Region VI is diverse, with members from a wide range of personal and professional backgrounds. We all benefit when diversity, in all its forms, is fostered and celebrated. Each of us brings something unique and special to the table, and we need that variety of ideas and contributions in order to excel together. Throughout the year there will be plenty of opportunities to bring your unique skillset to the regional table by getting involved in Region VI activities. From ad hoc working groups, to conference registration desks, to regional standing committees, we need your enthusiasm and participation to make 2019 a successful year. Please be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities, and reach out to **Michiko (Mich) Taniguchi Pane**, Region VI Membership and Volunteer Committee Chair, to get involved!

Please also keep an eye out for details about a NEW Pre-Award Basics Workshop that the Region VI Education & Professional Development Committee (E&PDC) is putting together. This one-day workshop will be held in Seattle in early 2019 and will be an ideal learning opportunity for those who are new to pre-award research administration. Stay tuned for more information very soon.

Looking ahead to later this year, Seattle will also be the site of our **Region VI & VII Meeting from October 27 – 30, 2019**. We will be meeting in beautiful downtown Seattle at the Motif Seattle hotel. The program and logistics committees are being formed to put together what promises to be another great regional meeting. Mark your calendars and plan to join us in Seattle this fall!

**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
Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a pleasant holiday season!

If you missed previous announcements, election results for Region VII are in! I am pleased to announce the elected officers for 2019-2020 in Region VII:

Chair-Elect: Ashley Stahle, Colorado State University

Ashley is a Senior Research Administrator, whose current responsibilities include negotiating awards and account administration, team management, and strategic initiatives designed to improve processes and communications within CSU’s multiple research administration communities. Ashley brings a breadth of experience, having worked in research administration since 2013 in both pre- and post-award, and having worked in both departmental research (Yale) and central research (Colorado State) administration. Ashley became a member of NCURA in 2015 and has served as the NCURA Region VII Member-At-Large during 2017 and 2018.

Member-At-Large: Natalie Buys, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Natalie has been a research administrator at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Department of Family Medicine for six years and has been an active NCURA member for five years. She has been the Volunteer Coordinator for Region VII for two years, served on the Program Committee for four years, and presented at three regional meetings.

Regionally-Elected Member of the National Board of Directors: Vicki Krell, Arizona State University

Vicki is the Assistant Director of Research Advancement at the Arizona State University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS). Prior to that, Vicki worked for the Office for Research and Sponsored Projects Administration for 20 years as a sponsored projects officer and supervisor. Vicki has over 30 years of experience in research and grants administration. Her most recent role with NCURA was as the co-chair of the 2018 PRA meeting that was held in Orlando, Florida in March 2018, and she is a co-leader for the Workshop track for the Annual Meeting 61 program. Vicki has held several positions with NCURA and has also co-presented numerous concurrent sessions and workshops.

Three terrific individuals remain on the leadership team to finish up their multi-year terms:

Chair: Diane Barrett, Colorado State University

Secretary/Treasurer: Jennifer Lawrence, University of Arizona

Member-At-Large: Joelina Peck, Arizona State University

The region is lucky to have such a talented slate of officers for 2019-2020! Please get involved with the “Region VII on the Move” focus under Diane and the rest of the team. To that end, you will soon be seeing a revised set of bylaws for your review and approval.

It was an honor to serve as the Region VII Chair in 2018 and I look forward to serving as the Immediate Past Chair during 2019.

Happy New Year! Even though I might only catch up with them once a year at the Annual Meeting, we pick up conversations as if it was only yesterday. I am so humbly to serve and lead our region over the next year with the wonderful support of the Region VIII Board:

Chair Elect: Tadashi Sugihara (Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, Japan)

Treasurer: Nicholas Schulthess (The Institute of Photonic Sciences, Spain)

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)

Many thanks to Siegfried Huemer (TU Wien, Austria) for his hard work and dedication as Treasurer of Region VIII for the last 2 years.

In this upcoming year we will planning a post AM61 conference workshop to NIH. This was such a great success in 2017 we will be offering the workshop again.

SAVE THE DATE 2019 NCURA Region II/VIII 2019 Fall (or Spring – depends on which hemisphere you live in!) Meeting (16-18 October).

There are so many opportunities to be involved in Region VIII, so I do hope you put your hand up to volunteer. I would like to thank all the volunteers that have been involved in our region and it is never too late to volunteer.

There are so many different ways you can volunteer. Opportunities such as:

• Website writer

• Regional Corner articles – NCURA Magazine

• NCURA Magazine articles

• Regional meeting & AM volunteers

• Local region ambassadors

We will be calling for volunteers throughout the year and if you are interested, please contact Fadia Homeidan, the Region VIII Volunteer Coordinator (fh01@aub.edu.lb), or myself (bblaher@unimelb.edu.au) for further information.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank our past-Chair, Julie Ward, for her leadership and steadfast commitment and dedication to Region VIII. She did an outstanding job as Chair in 2018.

It's going to be a great year and I look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming meetings.

Bella Blaher is the Chair of Region VIII and serves as the Project Manager of the SWARM Project, The University of Melbourne. She can be reached at bblaher@unimelb.edu.au

Diane Barrett, Colorado State University

Jennifer Lawrence, University of Arizona

Joelina Peck, Arizona State University

Ashley Stahle, Colorado State University

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Secretary/Treasurer: Jennifer Lawrence, University of Arizona

Member-At-Large: Joelina Peck, Arizona State University

The region is lucky to have such a talented slate of officers for 2019-2020! Please get involved with the “Region VII on the Move” focus under Diane and the rest of the team. To that end, you will soon be seeing a revised set of bylaws for your review and approval.

It was an honor to serve as the Region VII Chair in 2018 and I look forward to serving as the Immediate Past Chair during 2019.
NCURA | Member Milestones

**Eva Bjorndal** is now Head of Post-Award at King's College London.

**Melinda Cotton** has been promoted to Associate Vice President for Research Business Operations at University of Alabama at Birmingham.

**Sidney Johnston** is now Assistant Director, Grants & Sponsored Research at Stetson University.

**Roseann Luongo** is now Manager, Higher Education Practice of Huron Consulting Group.

**Dennis Paffrath** has been promoted to Associate Vice President, Research at University of Maryland, Baltimore.

**Angela Wishon** is now Vice President for Research Compliance at Prisma Health.

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Every week e-Xtra is sent to your inbox with timely and important information to help keep you up-to-date.

**Topics Include:**
- Policy/Regulation/Compliance News
- Agency News
- Funding News
- Global News
- Technology Transfer News
- e-Xtra Notable and Interesting News
- Fun, Chuckles, and Cool Research
Your NCURA AM61 co-chairs, David Mayo and Michelle Vazin, are hard at work building the program. The AM61 Program Committee met on November 30 to discuss and envision the program. This year’s theme is Building Towards the Future. Together. We know, as research administrators, how important it is to have access to timely and comprehensive information to support our professional development. We also appreciate the value of networking with our colleagues. This meeting will fulfill those needs.

Education offerings will include workshops, concurrent sessions, discussion groups, open forums and ignite sessions! There will be a track for those brand new to research administration, as well as programming for attendees of varying levels of experience – from beginning to advanced. And, we are very excited to bring you a track for those attendees at a senior institutional level. We are all committed to making this a memorable and valuable Annual Meeting. We look forward to seeing everyone in August 2019 in Washington, DC and hope you will be able to join us.

Registration will open in early April! Mark your calendars – it is time to start planning!
Denish Shah, director of the Social Media Intelligence Lab at Georgia State University talks about how social media insights are changing the way companies — even cities — operate.

You oversee the Social Media Intelligence Lab, which is part of the Institute for Insight at the Robinson College of Business. What kind of work is the lab doing?

Every day, there are millions and millions of conversations happening organically on social media platforms. There’s a popular practice called social listening, which is really just paying attention to what people are saying when they talk about your company. Our lab goes a step further by inferring trends and patterns from those conversations, and deriving meaningful insights. What are the dominant conversation topics? What are the sentiments around those topics? To what extent do these conversations impact or help predict other events?

Data on social media can be very messy. Our goal is to build smart algorithms and develop methodologies based on machine learning and other artificial intelligence techniques to extract relevant insights. These insights can inform the way brands address substantive issues — whether it’s dealing with a crisis, engaging with consumers or improving their reputation.

You’re also looking at the role personality plays in social media engagement. Can you explain?

A lot of brands have conversations with consumers on social media platforms like Twitter or Facebook. What we want to determine is: If you customize those conversations based on the personality, rather than traditional factors such as demographics, can a brand more meaningfully engage digital media users?

So brands might begin sounding more like the users they’re talking to?

Potentially. Rather than talking like robots, these days brands tend to infuse their social media presence with character and personality. But what if brands were to deviate away from their core personality to more closely match the personality of the end user? If a very formal brand — like CNN, for example — starts having a casual conversation with a Millennial and a more formal conversation with a Baby Boomer, could that lead to more engagement than having the same formal conversation with everyone?

How would you determine users’ personalities, though?

We’ve built an algorithm that can infer the personality traits of individuals based on how they communicate on social media: the kind of words they use, their patterns of communications. Brands could use that information to group consumers into different personality types. We’ve collected data from several top brands and found that, as of today, nobody is really varying their communications based on personality. So our next step would be to work with a brand and run field experiments to see how the practice plays out.

Traditionally, companies have focused intensely on profits. But you argue that the new focus should be customer well-being.

Customer lifetime value, or CLV, is a metric that basically looks at the total profit from the expected lifetime of a customer. Every firm works hard to maximize this metric. But we believe that maximizing CLV is not sustainable unless the firms are also improving the personal well-being of those consumers.

Why so?

Consumers are more information empowered than ever before. They don’t take what a brand is saying at face value. They do their own research and then they share that information with millions of other consumers on social media. Millennials especially are very concerned about whether the companies whose products they consume are doing more harm than good — and as a group, they represent the largest source of lifetime profits for a firm. If brands don’t wake up to this fact, in the long term it’s going to hit them pretty hard.

In fact, we are already seeing evidence of this backlash in the case of processed food. Soda consumption in the U.S. has declined in the last 12 consecutive years, and big-name brands selling processed foods continue to experience drops in sales each quarter.

Is there a standard way to measure consumers’ feelings about whether a brand makes them better off?

We’re actually working to quantify that right now. We started by asking consumers how different products and brands positively impact different dimensions of their well-being: Is it making you healthier, is it making you more productive, is it helping you save money? We have developed a new metric called CLIMB (Customer Life IMprovement from a Brand) to quantify the extent to which consumption of a brand is improving customers’ lives. The goal is to equate that score to financial performance of firms over time.

Right off the bat, we’re seeing extremely strong intrinsic loyalty towards brands that have a very high life-improvement score. That’s because consumers feel a deep sense of gratitude towards brands that help improve their lives.

Reprinted from Georgia State University Research Magazine, Fall 2018. See full interview at https://news.gsu.edu/research-magazine/fall2018/as-the-world-tweets
Find out why more than 2,700 research institutions are partnering with Western IRB (WIRB) to attract new clinical research funding to their organization and improve efficiencies in their clinical study processes.

Learn how a zero-cost partnership with WIRB can augment your resources and help expand your clinical research program:

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NCURA MAGAZINE

NCURA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NATIONAL TRAVELING WORKSHOPS
Departmental Research Administration Workshop
March 25-27, 2019 ...............................................................Portland, OR

Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
March 25-27, 2019 ...............................................................Portland, OR

Level II: Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
March 25-27, 2019 ...............................................................Portland, OR

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

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

Annual Meeting
August 4-7, 2019 ............................................................Washington, DC

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

WEBINARS
• General Data Protection Regulation
  January 31, 2019, 2:00-3:30 pm ET

• What a Departmental Administrator Needs to Know about Federal Contracts
  February 14, 2019, 2:00-3:30 pm ET

• OIG Audits from the OIG Perspective
  March 21, 2019, 2:00-3:30 pm ET

REGIONAL MEETINGS
Region I (New England)
April 28-May 1, 2019 .....................................................Portland, ME

Region II (Mid-Atlantic)/Region VIII (International)
October 16-18, 2019 ......................................................Jersey City, NJ

Region III (Southeastern)
May 4-8, 2019 .................................................................Hollywood Beach, FL

Region IV (Mid-America)
April 28-May 1, 2019 .....................................................Columbus, OH

Region V (Southwestern)
April 28-May 1, 2019 .....................................................Houston, TX

Region VI (Western)/VII (Rocky Mountain)
October 27-30, 2019 .....................................................Seattle, WA

DEADLINES FOR MARCH/APRIL 2019
Submission of Articles to Contributing Editors ........................................January 18, 2019
Submission of Advertisements .........................................................January 23, 2019

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