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Back Cover
ON THE COVER: “Ecosystem” is a word coined in 1935 (according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary) to capture the idea that all living things interact and share an environment. The word has become a common term in business, research, and other interconnected systems, and our authors have composed an excellent collection of articles to represent the ecosystem theme in this issue of NCURA Magazine.

Kacey Strickland’s article “Lessons from Nature” compares natural ecosystems with university research ecosystems, concluding that university research could benefit from adopting principles of a natural ecosystem. Alice Wysocki and Janine Bereuter, in “Research Administration in Europe,” use examples from ETH Zurich for developing an efficient, sustainable ecosystem that supports all involved stakeholders. With good humor, Nicolas Schulthess and Luca Wacker offer an “Encomium of Research Administration,” a review of the complex interactions among researchers and research administrators (the Jack of all trades). Merriam-Webster assists once again: the definition of encomium is “glowing and warmly enthusiastic praise.”

Gavyn Clasemann-Ryan and Csilla Csaplár argue that building and cultivating strategic relationships is key for a healthy ecosystem. “Taking a Collaborative Approach to Pre-Award Grants Management Software Selection” discusses how developing relationships improves decision-making and implementation processes.

Other articles explore issues affecting our ecosystem: Mary Duarte Millsaps addresses the trending issue of foreign influence concerns with guidance for risk mitigation. Kyle Everard provides tips to prepare for your next audit. A timely crowd-sourced article on the federal shutdown offers guidance to administrators for anticipating and managing the effects of a partial or full shutdown. “The Science is Not Enough” encourages us to consider approaches to align institutional research strategy with supportive administrative operations.

Don’t miss the “FDP Update.” The Federal Demonstration Partnership – its own ecosystem involving federal partners and university faculty and administrators – describes continuing and planned projects to increase efficiency and effectiveness and reduce administrative burdens associated with research grants and contracts. As the authors explore various aspects of university research ecosystems and the internal and external factors that affect them, a question emerges: Is “research ecosystem” just the latest, greatest lingo, or a valuable enduring concept? My hope is that as we daily confront complexities and interactions, we keep in mind the context of an ecosystem to help us make sense of the many interconnections among ecosystem players and our roles as research administrators.

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The theme of this issue is “The Research Ecosystem.” How appropriate that a scientific term now be applied to research administration (as well as the business world) and incorporate each of us as members of that ecosystem. The Research Ecosystem incorporates all aspects of our roles, interactions and collaborations across the spectrum but the key to a strong ecosystem is the goods and services of value that are provided. This is where NCURA truly shines.

In reading the January 2019 Campus Liaison Newsletter (as I serve as my institution’s liaison) I was struck by the tagline “See what the world’s first and largest association for research administrators has to offer.” Looking through the e-mail I was truly impressed to see the breadth and depth of NCURA’s offerings for the individual member (webinars, meetings, online publications, etc.) and it got me thinking about many of the great things being done to advance NCURA’s mission that may often go unnoticed but are equally important (and help to strengthen the ecosystem) so I wanted to take this time to share some of these activities.

In November 2018, NCURA fulfilled its MOU with the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education, when three members (Jeremy Miner, Maria Palazuelos, and Suzanne Rivera) traveled to Havana, Cuba to provide a workshop about the profession of Research Administration to an audience of Cuban faculty, government officials and administrators. The workshop was conducted in Spanish and the attendees were very engaged in the discussions and quite intrigued to learn about the profession (as Cuba does not currently have a similar structure). Jeremy, Maria and Suzanne shared their thoughts on this experience in the January/February NCURA Magazine, so if you did not get a chance to read the article, I recommend doing so.

During its January 2019 meeting, the NCURA Executive Committee began a discussion on the future, the profession and NCURA that was further expounded upon during the NCURA Board of Directors Meeting in February 2019 as the Board reviewed NCURA’s Strategic Plan and discussed potential strategies and goals for the organization. Additional details related to some of the discussion’s outcomes are shared in this issue’s Board Update and much of the work of NCURA’s committees and task forces throughout the year will touch on this as well.

Following the conclusion of the February 2019 NCURA Board of Directors Meeting, NCURA provided free training to research administrators in Puerto Rico through the facilitation of four traveling workshops. Board members, who were also NCURA traveling faculty, volunteered their time to teach, and NCURA professional staff volunteered their time to handle on-site logistics. The workshops were well attended and very well received. It was a great opportunity to support our colleagues and members in Puerto Rico as they continue to address the economic challenges caused by Hurricane Maria. I would also like to share one discussion I had with an attendee. We had many non-research administration attendees at the workshops (including faculty, program/center directors, upper administration, etc.) who actively participated during the one and a half-day workshops. At the end of the SPA II workshop, I had one of these attendees approach me to thank us for taking the time to be there. While I expressed my hope that she was able to take something away from the workshop, she shared that, while she had always appreciated the support she has as a faculty member from her administrators, she was not aware of the complexity that research administrators deal with on a daily basis and the workshop provided her with a new level of appreciation. This conversation truly resonated with me and made me proud to be a research administrator! Please see the article on page 20 for additional details regarding NCURA’s visit to Puerto Rico.

I am pleased to be able to say that NCURA does not rest on its laurels...
One of my favorite quotes is attributed to Chief Seattle and it is about the interconnectedness of all things. It is just a few lines from a long speech he gave in 1854, but the version you see on t-shirts and bumper stickers says:

*Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.*

It is a beautiful sentiment that eloquently sums up the idea of ecology. Disappointingly, in doing research for this article, I discovered that Chief Seattle never said it. It was written by a screenwriter in the early 70’s for a movie called *Home* (Scull, 2000). Does that make it any less relevant? That is for you to decide, but I choose to think not.

As a bit of a science nerd, I think ecosystems are beautiful, almost magical things. Magical in the sense that they encompass numerous components that all come together to create something unique. The different species in an area combine to make populations, collectively called a community, which in combination with the non-living factors of the area, make up an ecosystem.

The area of an ecosystem is not defined so it can be as large as the Amazon rain forest or as small as a square inch of skin on your hand. It all depends on the interest of the scientist and how much you want to zoom in or zoom out. The term ecosystem and the concepts it encompasses are very fluid and translatable.

The adaptability of ecosystem concepts are exactly why, I believe, it has become a metaphor for many different industries lately: business ecosystem, digital ecosystem, innovation ecosystem, startup ecosystem, and something near and dear to our hearts – research ecosystem. I admit, it is really catchy.

I hope that if we are going to adopt the term ecosystem to describe the research enterprise, then we give it some real significance. I don’t want to see this phrase become another slogan that gets tossed around because it sounds so “cutting edge” until it finally becomes an overused buzzword that has no real meaning.

If we are to use the lessons from ecosystem management and apply them to research, then let’s take a look at the things an ecosystem needs to keep it healthy and thriving and see if there are analogies that we can learn from. I dusted off my old college Biology textbook and did a little research. Natural ecosystems need energy, diversity, cooperation, and adaptability to be sustainable.

While it’s not possible to take these four ingredients and create the perfect research ecosystem, they can serve as a roadmap for developing more robust research ecosystems.

Let’s first define a research ecosystem. A university’s research ecosystem encompasses many stakeholders and offices. There are interactions between researchers, collaborators, administrators, and regulators. The non-living factors include layers of policies and regulations. The combination of which all influence the health and productivity of the system.

Any ecosystem needs energy; without energy it will starve. In nature, energy from the sun is captured by plants, the plants then serve as a food source for organisms, which then serve as food for larger species. Similarly, I think the energy for a research ecosystem comes from the top down for the energy cycle to start. The higher levels of university administration must put resources/energy into the system to generate growth.

For example, at Mississippi State University, one college invested a little over $20K for 100 faculty to attend a one-day grant writing seminar. Seventeen of those faculty then received intensive
one-on-one training in grant writing over an 8-month period at a cost of $60K. Within 24 months post-seminar, these 17 faculty submitted 29 proposals valued at $13.9 million to nationally competitive programs at NIH, NSF, and USDA-NIFA, of which 13 (44.8%) were funded at a total of $4.4 million (Mississippi State University, 2018). These awards will then produce indirect cost recovery (i.e., F&A return) that can be invested back into the system.

Having a wider, more diverse, range of resources will help an ecosystem recover from famine, drought, disease, or even extinction of a certain species. In our research ecosystem, we must also have diversity in ideas, collaborations, and expertise. When federal earmarks ended in 2011, it was a wake-up call for many universities, Mississippi State included. Nothing demonstrated better the importance of diversity to the survival of a research ecosystem!

Natural ecosystems must cooperate with their surroundings and respect the environmental conditions including any limiting factors. Research ecosystems must also utilize cooperation as collaborative research grows and we rely on others to supplement any limiting factors that our university may have. Additionally, each component of our university’s ecosystem must cooperate. If we believe that one component of the ecosystem (most likely our component) is the most important, then the entire system will start to wither.

“NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS NEED ENERGY, DIVERSITY, COOPERATION, AND ADAPTABILITY TO BE SUSTAINABLE.”

Evolution in nature happens through natural selection. These gradual changes help the organisms adapt to changes in the environment. Change can happen much more rapidly in the research world which underlines the importance of having diversity and cooperation already in place so that we can take advantage of opportunities for new resources and buffer the loss of others. An energized, diverse, and cooperative research ecosystem will certainly be more adaptable.

I won’t go so far as to say that a research ecosystem that operates under the same principles of a natural ecosystem (i.e., energy, diversity, cooperation, and adaptability) will be perfect, but it will be more likely to fulfill one of the fundamental goals of research: discovery. Whether that discovery leads to a better process, a new medicine, or an increased understanding of a discipline, they are the cornerstone of a great university. And great universities are the cornerstone of a great society!

References:
Mississippi State University, Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine, Executive Summary 2016-2017 Grant Writers’ Seminars and Workshop Post Seminar Evaluations, unpublished memorandum, November 12, 2018.

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Ecosystems, whether biological or manmade, consist of a unique set of actors and interactions, each evolving in their own respective ways. These unique actors each have their own role to play, and bring their own perspectives of the ecosystem and fellow actors. As a result, the dynamic interactions and perspectives among the actors in an ecosystem create opportunities to employ strategic management of these relationships. This strategic management ensures effective use of the often-scarce resources in ecosystems, as well as its long-term viability. We know from business models that strategic management is the management of an organization’s resources to achieve its goals and objectives. Although this principle seems straightforward, it can be challenging to apply the concept effectively in the context of emotional intelligence of those trying to manage in a strategic way. In the research administration ecosystem, it is crucial that any actors responsible for its vitality have the ability to monitor their own emotions and those of other ecosystem participants, to be able to discriminate among them, and then to use that information to guide their thinking and actions. Without this ability, it is difficult to build, maintain, or restore the relationships among the various actors in the ecosystem.

Building new relationships in the research administration ecosystem is not as difficult as one may think. Whether it be through myriad volunteer and networking opportunities at the regional and national level with NCURA, establishing opportunities for in-person discussions or serving on committees at one’s home institution, or through other mechanisms at the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) or Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC), the possibilities to create ecosystem bonds are seemingly limitless. These relationships are forged through initial collaborations, and then they can strengthen the ecosystem and provide a starting point when there is a need for buy-in on new initiatives or policies that impact the various participants within the ecosystem. This can assist in grassroots efforts to communicate or create best practices, standardize institutional activities and norms, and connect peers across units and institutions who may be facing similar challenges. Organizational leaders are largely responsible for relationship management, and should also consider developing strategic partnerships with peers in similar or cross-functional units. Opening a working dialogue in non-negotiation or non-urgent circumstances can pave the way for reasonable discussion when tensions or pressures may be higher.

Leaders and key players in maintaining the health of an ecosystem need to be as concerned about maintaining relationships as they are with building new ones. Individuals bring their own experiences and views of their ecosystem, which impact the ways in which they interact with both it and other members. In navigating this, leaders need to become adept at understanding the needs of ecosystem members. While some relationships may need little or no tending, others may require a great deal of attention. Well-established relationships with highly functioning communication patterns and timing may not need as much care and feeding, nor may relationships where the interaction, support needed, or political leverage involved is minimal. However, in fostering relationships with high-risk or high-visibility outcomes, or those where the actors may not understand each other’s needs or priorities, leaders need to adequately consider the unique perspectives, experiences, and inherent ever-changing dynamics of an ecosystem. It is prudent to routinely evaluate the health of critical partnerships, including those within your unit, across campus, or with external funding or collaborative partners, and ensure that friction points are identified and promptly addressed. Many partnerships rely on clear, consistent communication to succeed, and this is especially imperative in a maintenance phase. Interpersonal friction or
misalignment can create challenges when trying to determine a collective course of action. Such challenges, if not managed well, can lead to strained or broken relationships.

Mending broken fences can be the most difficult relational challenge in the ecosystem. Often strained relationships stem from lack of understanding, lack of listening, unbalanced political clout, or negative interpersonal dynamics. One option to restore adversarial relationships is to look for opportunities to leverage existing positive relationships where individuals may have connections. Many leaders effectuate and emphasize operational and personal networks, but they often underutilize the critical element of strategic networks (Ibarra, Herminia and Hunter, 2007). Strategic networks can help get the right people (and potentially their resources and expertise) to the discussion or negotiation. Assuming everyone is amenable to discussing the situation, the most important component is active listening. The ability to listen to the other party in an open-minded way creates an opportunity to get to the root of the issues causing the strain. One outcome of this conversation could be that the other party doesn’t have access to resources, or the right resources, to meet their deliverables. It is quite possible you, your team, or other collaborators have the available resources to help the other organization meet both your needs and theirs. This would go a long way to help with restoring the strained relationship.

Likewise, the priorities of your organization may not quite align with the other party, and the pressures we put on each other may jeopardize our ability to step back and ensure that each party can accomplish its goals. Relationship building and mending can often be seen as an ongoing negotiation and compromise of priority-setting and achievement, that is, in each party must seek to understand the other’s capacity, understanding, and challenges of the other. Often we are so mired in the metrics, morale and staffing challenges, deadlines, and other pressures that we immediately face that we neglect the ecosystem-level view of what we do.

In any relationship or ecosystem, the dynamic interplay between people and organizations creates many opportunities for leadership in any sector, and specifically in research administration, to use the principles of strategic management to navigate these complex relationships. The cultivation, maintenance, and restoration of these relationships is at the core of ensuring that the research ecosystem remains viable and sustainable.

References:

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“Promoting Sustainability in Research Administration”

Love local. Buy local. Go local.

The Go Local movement sparked a continuing craze focusing on improving and investing in the local ecosystem, economy, and community. Through local investment, the movement promotes a person’s incidence of involvement, understanding in local issues, and overall quality of engagement. The theory is someone buying eggs from the farmers market cares about how the eggs are brought to the market, how the eggs are produced, where the eggs are produced, how that affects their neighborhood or city, how the money from sale gets injected into their local economy, and how they can help to continue and improve this cycle. Someone buying eggs from a corporate supplier generally cares about individual money savings, ease, and convenience.

These microcosms of local business engagement translate to the complex environment of university research administration. The field of research administration encompasses a landscape of myriad tasks, actors, participants, and information.

Federal, state, city – System, university, department – Leaders, PIs, and administrators.

Each of these represent a hierarchy, a system, and an interrelated ecosystem to manage and work between, with, and around. With all of these actors it becomes increasingly important to foster local resources in engaging and fertilizing these interrelated actors through professional training, networking, and resource exchange.

Engage departmental and central offices in training by creating a university-wide professional organization. Tend to the knowledge base and creativity of research administrators in all fields by creating a network contact list. Allow administrators from all walks to lean on one another, from those most senior in the field to those with freshest eyes. Encourage resource exchange between colleagues through centralized data repositories – cloud storage, wiki resources, or even a Facebook group. If your university is a party of one, reach out to your close in-location institutions as well as peer institutions in size and commonality. More often than not, they know exactly what you’re going through. Contact your NCURA region associates – source the local, the relevant, and the common ground of those closest to you and reap the benefits of global knowledge from a network of collaborators who have local wisdom and need your shared input and perspective.
THE RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM: Full or Partial FEDERAL SHUTDOWN

Before, during, and after a shutdown, you are likely to be tasked with a number of items along the research administration lifecycle. The most important of these tasks will be regular communication and updates. This article is intended for use as a resource to help provide guidance to manage related to a shutdown, and is not meant to be exhaustive.

BEFORE A SHUTDOWN
- Know the other parts of your institution that may be involved, including department research administrators, sponsored projects, federal relations, financial services, compliance, and others. A shutdown often involves coordinated efforts.
- In anticipation of federal systems being down, download application information (as needed), agency shutdown contingency plans (see link below), and other needed files.
- Drawdown funds on federal awards, as allowed. Federal payment sites may go down during the shutdown.
- Anticipate decision support needs for leadership, including:
  - Number of active federal and sub-federal agreements
  - Employees paid on federal and sub-federal agreements
  - Number of active subawards on federal and sub-federal agreements
  - Postdocs or other trainees paid directly by a federal sponsor
  - Cash position and available balances on federal and sub-federal agreements
- Determine how you will track items on hold for agency action during the shutdown, so you can follow up after the government opens.

DURING THE SHUTDOWN
- Monitor agency websites and systems, to the extent they are available. Communication with the federal agencies may not be possible.
- Update the research community through your institution’s channels: websites, listservs, etc.
- Share agency communications with relevant staff at your institution.
- Stay in touch with your institution’s federal relations staff.

AFTER THE SHUTDOWN
Be aware that once a shutdown ends, it will take time for agencies to return to normal operations. During the course of a shutdown, a great deal of work accumulates, including applications awaiting assignment, agreements in negotiation at the time of the shutdown, approval requests submitted during the shutdown, and resolving system issues that occurred. A little patience and understanding for our federal colleagues will go a long way!

As of this writing, the partial Federal shutdown that began in December 2018 ended with the government reopening for three weeks to continue budget negotiations. This information was sourced by input from NCURA Collaborate Community and from various University/Organization and Federal agency websites. Many thanks to everyone who works to keep this information updated!

FEDERAL LINKS:
OMB list of Agency Contingency Plans
www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-for-agencies/agency-contingency-plans

Frequently Asked Questions
TIPS FOR THE RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION LIFECYCLE

Proposals
Follow deadlines for applications as submission systems/methods are available; deadlines are unlikely to change.
New Federal Funding opportunities may not be posted.
Systems may be available, but help desk staff may not.
Applications may not be reviewed until the shutdown ends.

Awards
Advise PIs on existing awards that work can continue if obligated funds are available, unless otherwise notified by the agency.
New awards, continuations, renewals, extensions, prior approval requests, and supplements will not be issued.
Federal contracts in your negotiating queue will be on hold.
Research projects may be on hold if they require access to federal sites and/or personnel.

Postaward/Reporting
Monitor federal agency payment sites; drawdown funds as allowed to protect institutional cash position.
Monitor balances and advise researchers to prioritize expenditures.
Remind staff of principles of cost allowability and institutional/Uniform Guidance policies on cost transfers.
Communicate with subrecipients on status of agreements and payments
Submit reports (technical/progress, financial, patent, equipment, etc.) as required, contingent on system availability.
Keep track of sponsor approval requests (NCE, budget approval, etc.) that need to take place after the shutdown.

Other
Conferences, review panels, and other meetings may be cancelled.
Shutdown may affect Federal Register process, including postings and comment periods.
Track follow up needs if e-Verify is down.
Monitor federal sites that may impact your collaborators, like SAM.gov

Compliance
IRB, IACUC, OOI: Activities that require approval from a federal agency may be delayed.
Export Control: While the BIS and DDTC may be open in a limited capacity, you may experience wait times for licenses.
FDA: some items (Emergency INDs and amendments) will continue to be reviewed, but there may be a delay.

Interested in writing for the Research Management Review?

The Co-Editors of Research Management Review (RMR) would like to invite authors to submit article proposals. The online journal publishes a wide variety of scholarly articles intended to advance the profession of research administration. Authors can submit manuscripts on diverse topics.

For more information visit...

www.ncura.edu/Publications/ResearchManagementReview.aspx
Leadership can be broken down into four basic styles. The **Directing** style focuses communication on goal achievement. The leader tells the group what to do and how to do it. The **Coaching** style combines goal achievement and the needs of the individual/group. The leader encourages the group and asks for their input, but still maintains the final decision making authority. The **Supportive** style relies on supportive behaviors (listening, praising, and requesting feedback) to bring out the skills needed to accomplish the objective from the participants/group. The **Delegating** style implies that the leader is not involved in the planning, operational details, timing or execution. He/she provides resources (people, money and time) and instills confidence for group so it can reach the stated objective.

The team (a.k.a., the “followers”) will consist of individuals who possess a wide range of abilities and motivations. Generally speaking, there are five distinct categories of followers. The “sheep” are individuals with very little initiative. They will await direction before taking any action. The next set are those that perform a standard set of tasks, but can’t think outside the box thus change is very difficult for them to accept (“yes men”). The team might also include competent workers who can think independently, but are not dedicated to the team (“alienated”). When provided with a new opportunity or project, they turn it down. The “survivors” handle change well, provide good feedback and get along well with everyone. The final category contains the followers that maintain solid skill sets, provide quality feedback and approach issues/projects with positive attitudes. These are your “go to” people.

Successful leaders often maintain several key traits that allow them to be effective. Leaders must have the intelligence to comprehend the issue/task and then simplify the problem so that everyone can understand it. Inevitably, something often goes wrong during a project and that’s when the leader’s maturity and patience should arise. He/she does not hit the “panic button,” but rather steps back to evaluate the situation and considers alternatives and new options to keep the project moving forward. Throughout
the project the leader must project positive energy and inspire confidence in the group’s skills to get the job done.

From time to time we also encounter unsuccessful leaders. These individuals will often focus excessively on short-term issues and lose sight of the big picture. They fail to appreciate the work and contributions of others. The needs and wants of the team are ignored because everything is about the leader. The team ends up not performing well because it lacks trust in the leader or does not perceive there is any personal value in belonging to the team.

Leadership can be difficult. In most cases, there is a level of anxiety within the team. This condition can be expressed in a simple formula: Anxiety = Uncertainty + Powerlessness. The objective of the leader is to reduce this anxiety to a manageable level by building trust among the followers. Trust must flow both ways between the leader and the group. The leader should promote and support the open communication of ideas, concerns, and concepts. He/she should let everyone know what their role is and what is expected of them.

The leader is powerless to act without followers. He/she points the team in the right direction so they can pursue a particular goal or object. An effective leader will adapt their leadership style (directing, coaching, supporting, delegating) after evaluating the skills, abilities and maturity level of the individuals within the team in order to keep the group moving forward. Successfully accomplishing the goal always involves active participation and communication between the leader and the team. Successful leaders recognize and celebrate achievement as a group effort.

This series of articles is based on NCURA’s senior level workshop in research administration, The Practical Side of Leadership. The nationally recognized workshop faculty will present articles throughout the year on leadership theory/practice focusing on the practical aspects of leadership within research administration. The next offering of the workshop will be in the fall. For further details visit www.ncura.edu/travelingworkshops/SeniorLevel.aspx

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- The Role of Research Administration
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www.ncura.edu/PublicationsStore.aspx
The word ecosystem is not only a term known from biology, but it also appears in business and academic environments. A research ecosystem consists of different stakeholders inside and outside the academic setting. On the one hand, there are stakeholders outside the educational and research establishment such as funding agencies, donors, and collaborators as well as the public. Internally, stakeholders range from researchers to administrative departments, for example, Finance and Controlling, Human Resources, IT and Procurement. If you take one of them out or one player gets stronger than the other does, the whole system changes its balance. Therefore, the research ecosystem is in constant transformation.

What does a university need to build up a research ecosystem driven by efficiency, and what resources support sustainability? The most important point is a highly functional and robust network between the different players within the system as well as a supportive environment. To provide an efficient balance of academic and administrative requirements, one must not only know a variety of different regulations set up by multiple funding agencies, but also understand the host institutions’ policies. From that point of view, universities should focus on developing professional interactions within service offices, for example, Grants Offices, Human Resources, as well as teaching and research facilities. A combination of generalists and specialists is needed for a successful outcome in an academic and administrative manner.

How do we at ETH Zurich support the researchers and make sure to transfer the latest
know-how? Since our field of activity lies in the administrative department, we provide financial reporting services to the principal investigators of research grants funded by third parties. By having centralized knowledge of financial policies and regulations, we contribute to a smooth administrative run of the project. In order to gain a well-founded knowledge we continuously educate ourselves by studying policies and regulations as well as attending workshops. Additionally, we exchange our experiences with other universities and settle questions with auditors. Even though revisions are often seen as an unnecessary burden, we can learn the most from them. Review and revisions provide an important base to constantly improve our processes. It is essential that all participants communicate and operate in a way that results in symbiosis.

Being involved right at the start of the project, we share our expertise through financial kick-off meetings. These customized meetings give a deep insight in a variety of administrative aspects to strategize on how to meet the guidelines of the funding agency. Information is also continuously accessible and distributed through different channels, such as via a webpage and newsletters. Additionally, workshops and trainings are held throughout the year. Through these offered services, all supporting parties have the chance to broaden their knowledge of processes and internal guidelines as well as requirements of third-party funded research grants. As a result, these described interactions consolidate in a service of high value for researchers since principal investigators have the possibility to concentrate fully on achieving their research interests within the action tasks. Finally, the funding agencies benefit as well by receiving financial and scientific reports of high quality.

A research environment needs not only ambitious researchers to succeed, but also well-educated and highly motivated administrative staff in order to handle the intricacy of regulations. A facility should provide a workspace that is not only functional, but also determined by individual responsibility, respect, and equality. These are the basic requirements that inspire people to go beyond the well-known paths and achieve extraordinary solutions and results. To quote ETH Zurich’s former president Lino Guzella “A good university doesn’t just teach knowledge, but the ability to think.”

Sharing of knowledge is necessary because of the complexity of the environment. This is why close interactions with different supporting teams within the university are key. Communication and collaboration outside the host institution are also mandatory in order to stay competitive. Therefore, frequent networking that not only considers various interests but also creates room for discussions is needed. This creative space is crucial to deepen knowledge while different experiences are exchanged and at the end, all stakeholders benefit from this kind of collaboration.

To sum up, it takes a lot to build a research ecosystem that supports all involved stakeholders. One important requirement is a workspace that bears motivated and innovative scientists next to other skilled staff from a variety of fields. The goal of the administrative employee is to unburden the scientists and to support them so they can realize their full potential as researchers in their fields of interest. The faculty should provide an environment that synergizes different demands and identities needs while continuously reviewing the process and results to improve itself. As a result, all players work towards enhancing the functionality of the ecosystem.

A research environment needs not only ambitious researchers to succeed, but also well-educated and highly motivated administrative staff...

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Surviving an Audit: FIVE Helpful Tips

By Kyle Everard

So, you’ve been contacted about an audit or review of activities at your institution. Don’t panic! Beyond not panicking, here are five useful tips to help you be well prepared for your next audit.

1. Assign an Audit Liaison
Assigning a liaison for the audit is important to help the audit go as smoothly as possible. However, if your organization is audited frequently, you may want to designate somebody in your central grants office to be the liaison on all audits. This can be more efficient than having a different liaison for each audit. Staff will appreciate not being pulled from their main duties as often. Additionally, consolidating audit expertise in one person will result in a more experienced audit professional handling the audit-related tasks.
2. Schedule a Pre-audit Conference and Interim Meetings
Before the audit officially begins, you will want to gather the key people that will be needed for the upcoming audit. These staff members should be present at the entrance conference with the auditors (or teleconference if they are not going to physically be on site). At this entrance conference, you will want to find out the:

- scope of the audit
- requesting agency or sponsor
- timeframe of activity they are auditing
- timeline of when the audit will be completed
- deliverables or reports the auditors will be completing
- how audit findings will be handled.

Specifically, regarding the deliverables, reports, and audit findings, you will want to make sure your staff are allotted time to review these items before they are made official and released. Potential findings should ideally be discussed during the course of the audit. You will want to get official updates on the progress of the audit at interim meetings at which these types of items can be discussed.

3. Prepare for Interviews
If the auditors set up face-to-face or teleconference interviews to go over your procedures or specific transactions, you may want to have employees present from multiple levels of your organization. For a university, this would include department staff related to the specific questions being asked, division or deans’ level representatives, and a central grants office representative. As far as how to approach interviews, just answer the questions the auditor asks and avoid providing extraneous information. Auditors will ask follow-up questions if they need to. In addition, do not be afraid to ask for clarification from the auditor or tell them you don’t know about a process and need to talk to someone else within the organization for more information.

4. Keep Things Organized
When auditors send their sample of transactions to test, add a column to their testing spreadsheet for notes to the auditor. In this column, you can write in details to explain how the transactions furthered the research of the grant. The auditors can then respond with their own questions in the column to the right of that. Keeping the back and forth responses in one spreadsheet will help keep things organized and avoid general confusion and repeat questions.

Speaking of repeat questions, how fun is it to answer the same question for the 50th time? Not very! Since auditors tend to ask a lot of the same questions from audit to audit, you may want to store a bank of responses to common questions such as how your indirect costs or fringe benefits are calculated. These are the types of questions that most auditors will ask.

In summary, remember that auditors are people who are just trying to get their jobs done in a timely manner. Professionalism, coordination, and organization will contribute to a smooth experience for everyone!

Kyle Everard is a CPA and he earned his accounting degree from UW-Whitewater. Before joining UW-Madison as an Audit Coordinator/Post-Award Accountant in 2017, he spent 9 years at the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau doing financial and compliance audits. He can be reached at kyle.everard@rsp.wisc.edu

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Welcome to our second year of the column where Executive Committee members will inform the membership of key issues discussed during the Board of Directors (“Board”) meetings.

Our first Board meeting this year was held February 16-17, 2019 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. When Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico and the surrounding islands in 2017, NCURA knew that: (1) we would not be able to hold our 2018 FRA and PRA conferences as planned and (2) we would return in 2020. As a way to demonstrate our commitment to Puerto Rico and show our members around the world the changes that have taken place during the rebuilding of San Juan, NCURA chose to gather in this location for the Board meeting, nearly one year prior to the 2020 FRA and PRA conferences.

From the beginning, we have been in communication with our colleagues at Puerto Rico’s Convention and Visitors’ Bureau, Discover Puerto Rico, and they are most willing to help us show how prepared San Juan is for our members and our 2020 conference attendees. The Board devoted a few hours to local exploration, collecting videos and photos inviting members to come to San Juan for FRA/PRA in 2020. The videos will be used throughout the year.

Other highlights include the following:

- The Board reviewed NCURA’s Envisioned Future for 2025, which was originally developed by the Board in 2015 and included detailed goals, objectives, and strategies that would help NCURA reach the 2025 vision within 10 years. Each year, the Board reviews these in order to assess where we are now and what may need to be modified based on competing priorities and initiatives our organization encounters.

- A designated humanitarian fund was approved to allow NCURA to deploy member volunteers to areas affected by disaster and in need of rebuilding research administration infrastructure through training or other professional development. The fund is intended for groups of research administrators at one or more institutions in the same geographic area that have experienced the impact of a disaster.

- The Board approved this year’s candidate slate provided by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee (N&LD Committee) for the Vice President/President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer-Elect, and At-Large Board Member positions.

Upon the conclusion of the Board meeting, NCURA offered Puerto Rican institutions four workshops provided by Board members who are also NCURA traveling workshop faculty. Please see the article NCURA Teaches in Puerto Rico (page 20) that further highlights these workshops.

In order to be as transparent and available to our membership on an ongoing basis, we encourage our members to reach out to NCURA’s Executive Committee and/or Board of Directors with any questions or concerns at any time.

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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.
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Occasionally I ask myself about the deeper relevance of research administration. David Graeber encourages us to ask ourselves this question from time to time (Graeber, 2018). In fact, reading blogs talking about generational behavior, I learned that roughly everybody 10 years older or younger than me actually does this. We, the authors, take this moment in this article to applaud you, the research administrators.

Last December, together with a senior researcher, I gave a presentation to the research community on data management and research integrity. The researchers clearly viewed this “legal stuff” as “boring but crucial.” This response might lead you to think that we research administrators are dependent on the researchers. Where there is no research, there is no research administration; we move in their shadows. We are not conducting the fancy research ourselves, and we are not receiving the big funding. Sometimes you might even feel mistaken for someone’s assistant.

Instead, you might consider this researcher/research administrator relationship as a kind of symbiosis that defines the collaboration between scientists and research administrators. We acknowledge that the scientist could possibly survive without the research administrator, but for a definition of “research ecosystem” in my standard search engine, within 45 seconds 102 million results are returned for my attention. After a numerically, not at all representative, examination of the results, I notice that there is no serious and accepted definition of a research ecosystem, although you may find some attempts to draw parallels between biological ecosystems and the research ecosystem.

In both ecosystems, a network of interactions and feedback loops at different levels occur between the protagonists, keeping the system more or less stable, buffering the impact of single incidents (Robert May & Angela McLean, 2007).
Additionally, in both systems there are factors that cannot be controlled (abiotic factors), and to which the entire system has to adapt in order to survive. An example of this is when new regulations are imposed by an agency; we have to modify our procedures and processes. Consequently, taking the research administrator out of the system would cause serious costs to the system, as it would have to re-adjust in order to remain stable or avoid collapsing entirely.

Let us start with the following questions: What makes a research institution successful? How does the system survive and flourish? We need excellent brains at our institution with the freedom to develop and follow up on their ideas, for which they need financial support. How does the research administrator's contribution to these factors make the researchers and their projects prosper?

**Project Planning**

Successful researchers must disseminate the results of their research in the form of publications and intellectual property. Therefore, they need funding to support that research. Institutions that rely mainly on external funds to operate or private companies that depend on research and innovation may not have the financial means for costly research. Researchers must compete for research funds from external sources. Screening hundreds of funding sources and understanding the kinds of research they support requires time and expertise. An investigator who devoted time to first develop the necessary expertise and then conduct the searches would get lost in the regulations and policies and have little time left to investigate anything else. So, what can the researcher do? Ask the research administrator, who diligently searches the most rewarding fruits within the vast jungle of opportunities, while carefully avoiding the forbidden ones.

**Ethics, health and safety**

We know that once potential sponsors have been identified, whether the sources are taxpayers' money, private companies or charitable foundations, those sponsors do not want to appear on a newspaper front page headline in a negative way. Somebody needs to make sure that regulations of the funding agencies and national laws are followed. Scientists may gather data with little effort and are sometimes not fully aware of the sensitivity of the collected data. We, the research administrators, follow and advise our investigators from the research idea throughout the whole project cycle. As we try to shelter them from pillory, we protect our institutions and ultimately the funders.

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"What makes a research institution successful? How does the system survive and flourish?"

**Write Proposal**

Patrons with unlimited financial sources for serious research just for their own entertainment have become extremely rare nowadays and perhaps are only found in Silicon Valley (and thankfully, in our times they are bound by some ethical rules and legislation). Research is fun, and fortunate are those who make a living out of having fun. However, nobody funds research just for the sake of fun. Sponsors expect sustainable objectives and long-term goals that have societal impact. Where does the researcher turn for help connecting the dots and bringing fun into the bigger context? Happily, the system offers a good environment for research administrators to provide suggestions for how society can benefit from a research project. Like 100-year-old turtles, they can fall back on accumulated experience of decades reviewing innumerable proposals swimming by some of which survive and others that perish.

**Contract negotiation**

Research funding can result from successful competitive project submissions for external funding or royalties generated through cooperative research agreements. Depending on the funding source as well as the collaborators, contract negotiation may or may not be a smooth process. In any case, having a signed contract is essential to laying out the ground rules for how we must work together. Is there a collaborator trying to seize ownership of everything, potentially not delivering, or notorious for delaying? The research administrator's oversight and negotiation skills may ensure that long standing global relationships between institutions continue.

**Finance**

Consider a researcher who just received a million dollar grant to implement a project over the next several months and wants to purchase a new sofa for the office? How does the researcher know if this is an allowable expense on the grant? Reimbursing funds because the spending was not allowable does not always build trust with the funders. We doubt that any investigator has ever read the Uniform Guidance or the H2020 Grant Agreement, and indeed they are not the most exciting pieces of literature. The researcher can rely on the research administrator, who understands the regulations and can advise the researcher before buying the sofa.

**Monitoring and controls**

Finally, the researcher has some amazing results and is ready to publish, but publishing the results might trigger some new legislation from which a spin-off company will profit. Should the researcher acknowledge the sponsor? Does the researcher really need to share the fame with the young PhD who actually collected all the data, day and night, and now wants to publish them on this new platform? Before taking any steps, it is imperative that the researcher check with somebody on how to proceed, but who?

As research administrators, though not always asked, we have something to say on almost every single step throughout the life cycle of third-party funded research projects. Like biological ecosystems, the research ecosystem, with the interaction of humans, technologies and different cultures, is very complex. Research administrators oversee this web of interactions and processes vigilantly, and help the researchers to steer safely through it. ♥

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**References**


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Luca Wacker moved from Switzerland to Barcelona where he is a Program Manager at IFCO – The Institute of Photonic Sciences in Barcelona. He is responsible for research compliance and development with focus on US funding. He drafts policies and regulations, develops systems for internal controls and award management through the whole cycle. He can be reached at luca.wacker@unibas.ch

Nicolas Schulthess moved from Switzerland to Barcelona where he is a Research Advisor and Manager in the Grants Office of the University of Basel in Basel, Switzerland. He advises researchers and is responsible for national and international pre- and post award management, with a focus on EU and NIH in international funding. He can be reached at nicolas.schulthess@ifco.eu
NCURA’s March 2018 FRA and PRA Conferences made an abrupt change in venue when Puerto Rico was hit with a devastating hurricane called Maria in October of the previous year. Calls to the contracted hotels in San Juan told NCURA’s professional staff that the city would not recover in time for the co-located conferences. A decision was then made to cancel contracts, locate another venue that could accommodate a week-long conference for over 1,200 attendees, and commit to returning in 2020.

Since that time, we have all seen photos and read news stories about the long and arduous process of rebuilding, along with the occasional good news piece.

To see first-hand how San Juan has recovered, and to photograph and video tape the changes for our membership to see, NCURA’s Board of Directors traveled there in February to hold its winter meeting. Beyond the desire to see in-person and document the changes, the Board wanted to show its commitment to our colleagues there, and to Puerto Rico.

During a routine planning call between NCURA’s President, Tony Ventimiglia and Executive Director, Kathleen Larmett, they realized that almost half of the Board were also NCURA traveling workshop faculty, and an idea surfaced that they knew would show an even greater commitment to Puerto Rico and its research administration community — and one that was in line with NCURA’s mission of providing education and training. After asking the Board’s members who are NCURA traveling workshop faculty if any would accept a volunteer teaching position following their meeting in San Juan, and receiving nine immediate and positive responses, a message was sent to members in Puerto Rico, asking for an institution to host NCURA workshops that would be presented at no-cost. Again, there was a swift and positive response.

On February 19 and 20, what started out as an opportunity for NCURA’s Board of Directors to show its support of Puerto Rico, turned into something much larger when NCURA hosted four free workshops for over 200 colleagues at the Universidad Ana G. Méndez — Gurabo.

Thank you to NCURA’s wonderful members and staff who volunteered their time to teach and produce this program. And a huge thank you to our colleagues in Puerto Rico. We will return!
The workshop was very interesting and the information was up-to-date...I was able to develop new skills that I know I will use in my work.”

“I sincerely appreciate your support of offering these workshops in Puerto Rico. These workshops are of utmost relevance by maximizing the contribution of the University of Puerto Rico to develop the future workforce of research and education of Puerto Rico. Thank you NCURA!”

“I liked the part where I did networking with other peers that have the same job as me.”

“W orkshop Faculty

Departmental Research Administration Workshop
Glenda Bullock, Washington University in St. Louis
Sinnamon Tierney, Boston University

Financial Research Administration Workshop
Anne Albinak, Johns Hopkins University
Rashonda Harris, Emory University

Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
Tricia Callahan, Colorado State University
Rosemary Madnick, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Level II: Sponsored Projects Administration Workshop
Robyn Remotigue, University of North Texas Health Science Center
Tony Ventimiglia, Auburn University

It was a great opportunity to have a deeper understanding of the challenges we face as research administrators and gain insight and knowledge as we share our experiences.”
Research Administration in Asia Pacific

Development of Research Administration to Enhance Research Excellence  By Shaofeng Fan

Since its foundation in 1898, Peking University (PKU) has led scientific innovation in China with its many research breakthroughs. With an academic tradition emphasizing freedom of thought and the integration of different ideas, PKU has built an international reputation for its research excellence.

In the last 20 years, with the goal to become a world-class university, major reforms have occurred at PKU. The annual competitive research funding has increased substantially with total expenditures at $573 million for calendar year 2018 compared to the prior year’s $477 million. The Office of Scientific Research (OSR), under the leadership of the President, is committed to providing high-quality research management and administration support to the PKU community. OSR helps researchers at PKU apply for and manage funding to ensure compliance with relevant regulations.

Support for Development of Faculty Members
OSR works closely with department research administrators to host various sessions on different topics. Faculty members, especially new faculty, are invited to introduce their research areas and funding priorities. Our team has two critical areas of responsibility. On one side, the team tries to determine available funding opportunities that match faculty’s research needs and priorities. On the other side, our team provides guidelines, templates, and tools for typical proposal elements. During our engagements with faculty, we also provide advice on developing relationships with sponsors and building connections with previous PKU award winners.

In 2018, we offered a national Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) Distinguished Young Scholars workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to alert eligible faculty about the program and provide advice to the enable submissions. Following the workshop, we offered one-on-one support to attendees and other eligible applicants. Still further, we held meetings to provide sample proposals and support to develop broader impacts. Sixteen PKU faculty members were awarded NSFC National Distinguished Young Scholars, while 200 scientists were awarded nationwide.

Boost Communication between Administrators
In order to be compliant with the ever-changing policies and regulations of the funding agencies, OSR holds various training activities for department research administrators. Moreover, in 2015 OSR established the PKU Research Management Program, which was designed for department research administrators; the intent was to encourage them to conduct in-depth thinking on research management and administration. In October 2018, OSR organized a meeting to review the applications for the program with more than 60 research administrators as participants. The applicants were requested to present their proposals to both the review experts and the participants. In the past three years, the program has funded 42 administrators from different departments. The program also serves as a good platform for communication between administrators and has achieved good results.

It is worth mentioning that in October 2018, OSR successfully held the International Research Administration Symposium jointly with NCURA at PKU campus. More than 80 research administration experts, international and domestic, attended the symposium. Through a combination of lectures, case studies, and a discussion of best practices, this two-day symposium provided an in-depth look at related issues about research administration. This not only served as a venue for forming research collaborations and partnerships but also enabled research administrators to develop their professional networks.

Implementation for a New Electronic Administration System
To support the rapid growth in both academics and research at PKU, OSR began the implementation for a new electronic research administration system named as Research Administration Information System (RAIS) at the end of 2017. However, the road to get to this point has been long. During the planning phase, the end users, including faculty members, department deans, and administrators, were involved from the start as they could provide the most valuable feedback. It took several months to identify the requirements of all stakeholders. During the process of technical implementation, the end users still were kept apprised of the progress. RAIS is implemented to track the various stages of the research project lifecycle from initial proposal to award closeout and will be the institutional system of record for sponsored projects. It is featured to help automate and streamline research administration on campus, and provides data and information to support management of sponsored research projects. RAIS is scheduled be officially online in March 2019.

Shaofeng Fan, PhD, is the chief of division for Overseas Projects, OSR, at Peking University, China. She has worked as a research administrator for 12 years at Peking University. She can be reached at fsf@pku.edu.cn

By Shaofeng Fan
The NCURA Education Scholarship Fund Select Committee had an exciting year in 2018 - issuing the first scholarships! The second call for applications was released in the Fall of 2018 and one applicant was selected as the recipient of a scholarship for the Spring 2019 semester. Tammy Pratt from Clarkson University is the latest recipient of the $2,500 scholarship. Tammy is pursuing a Master’s Degree in Research Administration from the University of Central Florida and is expected to graduate in December of 2019.

You might be thinking to yourself - I’m interested in pursuing a Master’s Degree in Research Administration and $2,500 would really help me out! How do I apply for a scholarship?

The requirements for the scholarship are:

- The applicant must be enrolled in a master’s degree program in research administration or with a concentration in research administration.
- The applicant must be an NCURA member in good standing for at least one year at the time of the application submission, and must remain a member throughout the duration of the scholarship award use.
- Applicants must submit a complete application (complete the application form and attach all supporting documentation)
- Scholarship awards must be used within twelve (12) months from notification of award.
- Recipients must provide proof of completion and receipt of academic credit within six months after completion; otherwise, the funds must be returned to NCURA.

The application process is relatively quick and painless! Applicants must provide the following information:

- Does your employer have a tuition grant, remission, or reimbursement program for staff? If yes, explain what support is available. Include amount per year, duration, and conditions of use.
- At which University are you enrolled?
- University contact information for payment remission (Name, Email, Phone)
- In what degree program are you enrolled (e.g. MS in RA)?

And provide the following attachments:

- Proof of enrollment
- Current resume (up to two pages) that also includes NCURA past and current involvement
- Statement as to why you are seeking a degree in research administration and the importance of the scholarship for your career (500-1000 words).

Members of the Education Scholarship Fund Select Committee review and score the applications – reviewing the applicant’s personal statement, record of past and current NCURA involvement, and access to employer-based educational support. The Committee recommends selected applicants to the NCURA Board of Directors for confirmation.

More information about the application process can be found in the FAQs located at www.ncura.edu/esfapply

If you are interested in pursuing a Master’s Degree in Research Administration there are currently several programs to choose from.

Online programs include:

- University of Central Florida - Master of Research Administration
- Central Michigan University - Master of Science in Administration - Research Administration
- City University of New York (CUNY) - Master of Science in Research Administration and Compliance
- Johns Hopkins University - Master of Science in Research Administration
- Emmanuel College currently offers a Master of Science in Management with specialization in Research Administration in either a face-to-face or online program.

If you have further questions about the Education Scholarship Fund feel free to contact the Education Scholarship Select Committee chair Jill Frankenfield at jfranken@umd.edu.

The Select Committee is looking forward to another successful year of issuing scholarships! Keep an eye out for the next call for applications – coming in April!
As research administrators, we naturally want to do whatever we can to most effectively and efficiently support the important research happening at our institutions. A strong, focused research administration is critical to an institution’s ability to implement and maximize its research strategy. But sometimes, it can feel like endless rounds of meaningless review and “dead-end” back-and-forth conversations are missing the point. How do we make sure that day-to-day operational support (i.e., people, processes, and technology) is aligned with the institution’s long-term research goals so research administrators are able to focus on the most critical activities to move our institutions forward?

A Structured Approach to Aligning Research Operations

Maximizing an institution’s research strategy through operational optimization does not happen by accident. Rather, this coordination requires a thoughtful and dedicated approach embraced by key stakeholders across the research enterprise. Consider the below proposed model for operationalizing research strategy in three phases:

Phase 1: Establish objectives and desired impact

First, the institution must formalize and communicate a research strategy and vision so the entirety of the academy is working toward the same strategic objectives. Research strategy is commonly owned by a chief research officer, and it should take into consideration environmental and industry impacts, institutional strengths and challenges, and stakeholder feedback from principal investigators (PIs), central and departmental research administrators, and other support groups involved in research activities. Research strategy should be aligned with the institution’s overall strategic aims and include insight and buy-in from executive level leadership.

While research administration departments may not “own” an institution’s research strategy, asking the right questions can enable these groups to gain an understanding of strategy, objectives, and expectations and therefore better align their operating philosophies to that of the overall organization. A research strategy may vary as to level of detail, formality, and communication from institution to institution, so it is critical research administrators are “in the know” and always considering how to best support achieving the institution’s goals. It is easy to get off track when dealing with the myriad compliance requirements and perceived process constraints, so understanding the “why” and not just the “how” will ultimately enable you to be a more successful research administrator.

You might be surprised to learn that at some institutions a documented research strategy exists but isn’t widely circulated or socialized among research administration functions. Don’t let this be your institution!

A strong research strategy might include elements such as:

- High-level vision for the institution.
- Specific research aims including growth goals, funding targets by sponsor and objectives by scientific field or academic area.
- Roadmap to enable change including time horizons and action steps.
- Statement of commitment by the institution to support the established vision, including investments and incentives to match objectives.
- Defined risk tolerance for achieving objectives.

Phase 2: Define structure, roles, and investments

Phase 3: Implement and perform monitoring
Phase 1: Critical Questions for Research Administrators

- Does the institution have a defined, documented research strategy?
- Has the research strategy been formalized into actionable plans with owners, defined expectations, and time-based outcomes?
- How are identified strategic objectives communicated and supported by leadership? What communications occur to PIs, research administrators, and to the university community as a whole on strategy?
- What elements of the research strategy may directly or indirectly impact research operations?
- Are leaders empowered to make choices and have they agreed upon a common vision of risk tolerance?

Phase 2: Define structure, roles, and investments

Of course, defining strategic objectives does not guarantee the institution’s ability to achieve those objectives. Once the institutional research strategy is set, decisions and investments must be aligned with that strategy to enable future success. Specifically:

- Establish a leadership structure and reporting mechanism that focuses on enabling growth in target areas and sustainment in others. For example, an institution looking to grow industry sponsored funding may want to establish a vice president of industry relations reporting to the chief research officer.
- Evaluate ways to enhance alignment between the objectives and goals of the academic and research missions to embrace institutional strengths in both elements; there may be opportunities for organizational and governance changes that will enable the institution to achieve goals more quickly and sustainably. For example, an institution whose nursing school has a strong academic program and reputation may want to establish an infrastructure within that school to build upon those strengths and obtain, or increase, research funding in nursing.
- Clearly and consistently define and document the research roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities across schools and departments, including those of PIs, other researchers, decentralized research support personnel, and central administration, including the roles of school- and center-level leadership in supporting research objectives.
- Create and implement a process to track, monitor, and evaluate performance. Research objectives can be translated into performance goals at all levels of research administration and achievement of those goals can impact annual evaluations and potentially have promotion and/or remuneration impacts.
- Define and document updated policies and procedures to fit an updated structure, accountabilities, and institutional risk tolerance. For example, an institution looking to increase collaboration with industry groups might allow for alternate forms of award budgets that better align with corporate expectations and maximize sponsor funding revenues.
- Evaluate the design and controls of key processes, including how the controls will be impacted by operational and strategic changes, and what impacts to processes can have in terms of efficiency and compliance.
- Create and communicate an institutional research investments and incentives program providing seed funding, equipment and laboratory space, and start-up packages in targeted areas for growth. For example, an institution looking to enhance its cancer research funding might invest in a strategic partnership with a local cancer center or provide start-up packages to new faculty with innovative cancer research aims.
- Identify and communicate research administration and infrastructure investments, including investments into research administration tools (e.g., PI dashboards, training modules or more streamlined pre- and post-award management systems) or incentives for research staff (e.g., funding for conference attendance).

Phase 2: Critical Questions for Research Administrators

- What are the offices and departments responsible for research administration? How do changes related to research strategy impact the reporting and oversight structure?
- What areas are identified as new or critical to research objectives, and do you have appropriate staff assigned to those areas? For example, a new multidisciplinary center might require the hiring of an experienced administrator assigned to that center.
- How are strategic objectives translated into performance expectations for research administration leadership? How can these objectives be further defined and assigned at each layer of administration?
- How does the documented risk tolerance flow into research administration processes and controls?
- What processes are critical to the research mission? Do certain processes add (or detract) value for researchers to achieve the defined strategic aims?
- Does the design promote effective and efficient support and align well with the university’s research strategy and culture?
- What research infrastructure investments are being made or should be considered? How can research administrators maximize the impact of these investments to achieve greater efficiency or provide additional support?
- How do shifts in organizational structure, staffing, systems or processes impact institutional support groups such as human resources, procurement or the business office?

Phase 3: Implement and perform monitoring

Develop and report on a long-term achievement assessment and monitoring program, incorporating both external factors such as sponsor funding levels, macroeconomic trends, and internal factors as measured by metrics, surveys, and other monitoring techniques. Periodically, make well-informed updates to the research strategy and operations based on the outcomes of monitoring activities. Specifically:

- Define leadership and stakeholder committees and meetings, who will be responsible for guiding and monitoring the strategy and making associated operational updates as needed.
- Consider training and education needs to inform and guide employees on assigned responsibilities and tasks through shifting priorities.
- Define and utilize metrics to measure achievement, determine successes and identify challenges. Metrics may include such items
While research administration departments may not “own” an institution’s research strategy, asking the right questions can enable these groups to gain an understanding of strategy, objectives, and expectations.

Phase 3: Critical Questions for Research Administrators

- How is research administration incorporated as a stakeholder for implementation and performance monitoring?
- How can research administration support ongoing monitoring and analysis efforts?
- Can key award lifecycle processes accommodate projected future research growth?
- Does the present suite of research systems and tools meet the current and anticipated needs of the research community over time?
- How can the challenges and needs noted by stakeholders be incorporated into periodic updates to research operations?

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Institutions may invest significant time and resources in fully defining research strategy and operations in Phases 1 and 2 above, and then ultimately fail in achieving their strategic objectives due to a lack of course correction informed by Phase 3 activities. Successful research institutions implement a defined approach to identify and proactively address changes in the research environment.

Consider the following industry trends and potential ways an institution may choose to react in order to maximize opportunities in a shifting environment.

Potential institutional impact

- Invest in systems and tools to assist with data analytics and offer increased training around how to run reports to allow for data driven decision-making
- Consider mechanisms to communicate scientific findings to the greater community more quickly or utilizing more interactive formats
- Provide financial support for methods to obtain real-time data (e.g., purchasing tablets)
- Enable partnerships with industry leaders in big data and data analytics to enhance scientific findings and gain access to data sets without having to build expertise in-house
- Establish a defined protocol to prioritize and spending of maximum sponsor funds (e.g., flexible indirect cost structures)
- Explore partnerships in fields where significant expertise may be housed outside academia (e.g., artificial intelligence)
- Perform surveys, time studies or other operations in Phases 1 and 2 above, and then ultimately fail in achieving their strategic objectives due to a lack of course correction informed by Phase 3 activities. Successful research institutions implement a defined approach to identify and proactively address changes in the research environment.

Consider the following industry trends and potential ways an institution may choose to react in order to maximize opportunities in a shifting environment.

Potential institutional impact

- Offer research incentives for multidisciplinary collaboration (e.g., greater indirect cost return)
- Provide tailored research administration support from personnel with experience supporting multidisciplinary teams
- Encourage the understanding and communication of scientific successes, focus areas, and disciplinary cultures (e.g., multidisciplinary task forces, research days)
- Provide monitoring/reporting tools (e.g., dashboards) to ease collaboration across departments
- Benchmark policies, practices and staffing against both peer and aspirational institutions
- Perform surveys, time studies or other detailed review in targeted operational areas deemed critical to strategic success in order to identify potential updates to processes or systems

Maximizing an institution’s research strategy through operational optimization does not happen by accident.

Summary

Research administration is a critical element to the success of any institution’s research strategy. By implementing a thoughtful, inclusive, and defined approach to operationalizing research strategy, an institution can empower its research administrators to serve as a thoughtful partner in the achievement of its strategic research objectives. The world of science evolves daily, but a prepared and informed institution can maximize its success by communicating clear strategic aims; implementing aligned operational choices in people, processes and technology; and diligently monitoring and adjusting to environmental and institutional changes.

Potential institutional impact

- Gain skillsets to support identifying opportunities and developing proposals for sponsors other than federal agencies
- Develop proactive communication strategies (e.g., task forces) on “hot topics” with industry and state and local governmental representatives
- Allow increased flexibility for compliance with institutional policy to enable the receipt and spending of maximum sponsor funds (e.g., flexible indirect cost structures)
- Enable partnerships with industry leaders in big data and data analytics to enhance scientific findings to the greater community

Potential institutional impact

- Assign personnel to track and communicate federal sponsor trends and aims
- Establish a defined protocol to prioritize and evaluate the strategic impact of rapid changes in the scientific environment to enable a nimble yet well-informed response (e.g., evaluative factors for hiring researchers in emerging fields to ensure alignment with your overall strategy)
- Review environmental metrics on a regular basis to assess appropriate staffing levels
- Develop a “worst-case scenario” plan in the event funding decreases significantly in an area in which you have heavily invested

Potential institutional impact

- Establish a defined process to assess and address new or emerging compliance requirements
- Review internal metrics on the status of achievement of strategic objectives to identify barriers to success; these areas may benefit from streamlined processes or increased support

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The need for equal acceptance has always existed, but now - finally - it’s receiving the recognition it needs. We, as leaders in the education community, must recognize the gaps in acceptance that still exist in order to fully embrace these ideals. As leaders, it is important for us to get involved in leading new initiatives that promote competency, integrity, and an environment with vision in the workplace. As leaders in research administration, we should play a vital role in the development of ecosystems where diversity is valued, instead of simply tolerated.

Cultural diversity in the workplace exists where differences are accepted and embraced, including traditions, ideals, and or beliefs of employees based on race, age, background, values, or gender. An ecosystem, for our purposes in research administration, is the goal: a community where one can feel like an important and valued member, part of a team. This is a place where happy, helpful and others-minded people come to work to make a positive difference in each other’s lives.

An article written in the Harvard Business Review indicates that millennial employees want to be proud of the organization they work for. They want to work for a successful, high-performing company and for leaders with a blend of competence, integrity and vision (Plau, 2016). An examination of multiple studies (Maznevski, 1994) suggests that diversity can enhance the overall performance of a group.

To accomplish this, a leader must inspire a shared vision before they enlist others for a common plan. A leader may have to pioneer an idea that is not in their comfort zone and take risks, so they must challenge the process and adopt change. We, as leaders, must recognize contributions from members, encourage collaboration and team spirit, and show that we care for individuals. People tend to follow the person and then the plan (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

We can all agree that developing a culturally diverse ecosystem will not only lead to a more positive work environment, but, by valuing different viewpoints, it opens the door to more creativity in the workplace, which will lead to more productivity. It is important to note that when employees feel appreciated, they give more, they work harder and better, and they do their best. It is also important to maintain an environment of respect and appreciation, since an atmosphere that promotes a positive environment brings less stress to employees. When we care for other people, it will promote loyalty and trust between leadership and staff.

References:

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Spreading the Word Like...wildfire

By Jared Littman and Martin Williams

A university’s research ecosystem encompasses multiple offices and stakeholders, interactions among sponsors and collaborators, and the faculty, students and staff in labs and studios. As with any ecosystem, these parts work together to nourish and support one another in order to be productive and to be strong. It is vital to promote the importance and value of each of these elements effectively within and beyond the ecosystem. Since there are many communication channels and tools that are readily identifiable and available, the challenge is finding the right fuels—be they impressions, themes or words shared consistently—to energize and spread the message and to give it the necessary spark to spread like wildfire!

Ask yourself these four questions: What is the fire that you want to spread? What are the goals for how intensely you want it to burn? What are the tools you have to feed it? How can you use them effectively? The answers to the first two...
questions come from your university’s leadership: Increase research ten-fold! Each part of the ecosystem then needs to find tools that are right for them, and then use them effectively. The following are a few common tools that a research and sponsored programs office can use in creative ways to spread the word.

**Website:** A user-friendly website that is easy on the eye can do more than inform the community of the services you provide. It is the foundation for improving your part of the research ecosystem. Easy access to information may mean that it is more effectively accessed. But is that enough? What are underlying messages of the website? Is the tone of the site encouraging? Are images related to research and other projects that external funding supports? Are vignettes of success and impact obviously placed? When you are designing or updating your website, think about whether the words and the messages will light a fire or spark its spread.

**Leadership’s Voice:** When leaders speak, everyone listens. Ask the Provost’s Office to distribute your monthly electronic newsletter. The newsletter can share results of proposed and awarded grant activity as well as intellectual property updates and all the other incredible services that your office provides. The Provost’s Office can also influence what is promoted and shared as main stories on the university website. The celebration of a high-impact grant that was recently received should promote the accomplishment but also stoke the fire by inspiring readers.

**Research Days:** There should be opportunities for faculty and students to showcase their work throughout the year. Poster sessions that are heavily promoted and well attended are a wonderful way to support research. They can convey what your office provides to the university community to feed a living and growing research ecosystem. They can build friendships and feed aspirations. Establishing prominence for highly impactful and excellent research will inspire both presenters and audience to feed their own fires.

**Expert Voices:** Providing opportunities for inspirational speakers reinforces and strengthens the ecosystem and is a less commonly used fire builder. An expert can be someone within the community who has done something exceptional; it can be someone coming in to share their successes (like a visiting professor), or it can be someone offering opportunities and insights (like a program officer). Whoever is speaking, the goal is to make the fire burn hot and bright. Think strategically, use your existing resources creatively and find new ones that faculty will be drawn to. Offer consistent messages of encouragement and potential. Stoke the fire whenever you can. Then let it spread like wildfire.

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For those in research administration, it would be hard to avoid the subject of foreign influence at universities. This trending topic has been in the news consistently from the moment FBI director Christopher Wray testified before a Senate committee on the intelligence threat posed to American universities by foreign students and scholars in February 2018. Since that time, it has been the subject of multiple congressional hearings, federal and non-federal advisory groups (ACD Working Group on Foreign Influences on Research Integrity, 2019), news articles and proposed and passed legislation (House Bill 5515, 2018). The letter dated August 20, 2018 from the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on this topic, as it relates to NIH funded biomedical research and the peer review process, prompted a great deal of discussion within the academic community (Collins, 2018). The federal concern is that certain foreign students, scholars, and sponsors pose a real threat to university research, especially federally funded research. One challenge for the academic community and research administrators is how to resolve this security concern with the value that foreign students, scholars and sponsors bring to the U.S. research ecosystem through international collaboration and endeavors. For decades, foreign students and researchers have been a vital part of that ecosystem and contributed greatly to the U.S. scientific advancements. It is not by accident that since 2000, 38% of the American Nobel Prize winners in chemistry, medicine and physics have been foreign born (Anderson, 2017). So how do universities address this real and present concern while preserving a healthy campus environment for all of our students, scholars and employees, both foreign and domestic?

The first step, which most universities have already taken, is to recognize that this threat is real. Foreign governments are using non-traditional actors to leverage access to the U.S. research ecosystem to achieve economic advantage for themselves (Nakashima, 2018). While this does not mean that all foreign students and employees, even foreign students and employees from specific countries, are a part of that activity. However, we cannot ignore the risk that some may pose within our campus communities.

What comes next will depend greatly on your university, but recommended “next steps” include the following:

- Review your university’s policies related to reportable outside activities, conflict of interest, conflict of commitment requirements and intellectual property stewardship. Are they robust enough to meet the federal agencies’ policies in these areas? Those federal policies are intended to ensure that conflicts that might influence a researcher to engage in behavior that could put federally funded research at risk are identified and managed. Having your policies aligned with the federal policies will help your university address and mitigate that risk.

“There is no simple answer to countering the risk of inappropriate foreign influence on U.S. research.”

- After reviewing your own policies against the federal requirements, consider the best ways to inform your campus community of these policies to ensure compliance. As is often the case with regulatory affairs, the research community may need to be advised of policies on a regular basis or multiple times to ensure everyone is not only aware of, but understands the policies. For new faculty, post-doctoral associates, and graduate students, both foreign and domestic, introduce the policies early in their academic careers. Also, remind them of the policies at critical times, such as with proposal submissions or requests for sabbatical leaves, especially those involving international travel. Clear and transparent communications that are easy to understand and follow, especially for foreign research members who may not speak English as a first language, will promote improved compliance. Setting the expectations and explaining the consequences to researchers and the university leaders will also promote greater accountability.

- Review your university procedures for identifying export controlled or security sensitive research. Robust proposal or contract reviews can identify these types of research projects. Are those procedures clear and effective? Are departmental and central research administrators aware of...
these procedures and adept at executing them? It is critical that research administrators understand both the risks and the policies in place to address issues related to this class of research projects.

- Review your research ecosystem and identify departments and labs most likely to conduct the research at highest risk for being compromised. Remember that often times the target of the security concerns are activities involving innovative STEM research, both commercial and defense-related. Once identified, develop broad awareness programs for personnel within these departments and labs, which include domestic and foreign personnel, students, and faculty. It should also likely address all types of research and not just those engaged in export controlled or security sensitive research.

- Raise awareness and where necessary, educate departmental leaders on the risks and how they can escalate concerns within your institution.

- Determine if your university has a single office focused on research information assurance. If this is a decentralized process or shared among several offices, consider how your institution could assign that responsibility to one or coordinate across the many. Internal audit, office of legal counsel, research integrity office, and the export control office are all offices that may serve that purpose. Consider what works best for your campus.

- Finally, consider framing the discussions through the lens of research integrity and focus on the activity that might constitute misconduct rather than citizenship or ethnicity.

There is no simple answer to countering the risk of inappropriate foreign influence on U.S. research. Nor do any two universities operate the same. The same complexity and independence that makes the U.S. research ecosystem so innovative is also what makes it more difficult to protect. Transparency and clear expectations of research integrity will ensure your institution complies with federal requirements and national security.

References:

Mary Duarte Millsaps is Research Information Assurance Officer at Purdue University. She is a member of the NCURA Global Working Group. She oversees the compliance programs at Purdue related to the security of research information that, either due to federal law or contractual obligation, is subject to greater controls. She can be reached at millsaps@purdue.edu
In a competitive market for experienced research administrators, institutions and managers need to be focusing on staffing levels to prevent unanticipated vacancies, provide business continuity and prevent staff burnout. When sponsors review and award research grants, they are investing in the institution and expecting that the awardee will be able to fulfill all the scientific, administrative, financial and compliance tasks associated with the work. It is incumbent upon the leadership to determine how many people are needed to do the research administration work, how to invest in the training to ensure the jobs are done correctly, how to create strategies to reduce unanticipated vacancies, how to grow and retain excellent research administrators, how to stay competitive in market compensation which can draw our senior staff away, and how to attract new talent with a proven track record of success.

The most valuable assets to any research operation are well trained, highly invested, highly motivated and compliant research administrators.


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INTRODUCTION
In the spring of 2018 while working as a Senior Research Administrator in the Office of Sponsored Programs at Boston University, I was approached by the University of Raparin, a public Kurdish university in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI), to provide assistance with grant applications. In June 2018 my wife and I were flown there to meet with university administrators and faculty and I was offered a job to come and launch a new Office of Grants and Scholarships. Having lived in the Middle East before I was thrilled to be offered a position where my skills as a research administrator could be used to help this fledgling university expand their grants capacity. In September 2018 we moved to the city of Rania in northwest KRI near the Iranian border.

The University of Raparin was founded in 2010 by the Ministry of Higher Education and has more than 5,000 students on two campuses in Rania and Qaladze. Both campuses are located on spacious plots of land and surrounded by picturesque mountains and nearby Lake Dukan. It has five faculties: Basic Education, Education, Humanities, Sciences and Nursing. The major medium of instruction is Kurdish, except for five departments where English is required. The faculty are primarily Kurdish, but there are also several Iranian professors and eight native English teachers from the U.S., the UK and South Africa.

My primary goal since arrival has been to assess the needs of the university and to assist faculty and staff to apply for grants from sponsors in Iraq, the Middle East, Europe and North America. I have met with the university president, faculty deans and heads of departments and asked them to tell me where they want their university, faculty and department to be in five years and what they need to reach that goal. As I met with them, I began discovering the culture and ecosystem of the university and the many strengths they have, but also the growing challenges that many of them face.

Strengths
Our university is a relatively young university and therefore lithe and capable of making changes. I liken it to a small speedboat that can change direction quickly, while older universities in the region are like ocean liners and are unable to maneuver as quickly.

The new Office of Grants and Scholarship is dedicated to helping connect the university with funding opportunities locally and internationally. I have encountered amazing support from the university president, deans, department heads and faculty. They are all eager to receive grants for their research, facilities, equipment and professional development. We also have students who are intelligent, motivated and have a higher English language proficiency than many other students in KRI.

The university has an Office of International Relations that coordinates all interactions with anyone outside of the university, including sponsors and funding agencies. Our university has received a few small grants to help with some infrastructure needs, such as opening a career development center to help students find internships during their undergraduate studies and jobs afterwards. The most significant grant has come from the European Union with the goal of internationalizing our university with funding for website development and training seminars to help the university navigate collaboration with European partner universities. We are currently in the process of implementing the Bologna process which will create semesters and opportunities for our students to study abroad.

CHALLENGES

Physical
The physical infrastructure in Kurdistan has its challenges with constant electrical outages and limited access to the internet. Even as I write this article I do not have electricity, heat or the internet in my university office. Access to computers, printers and basic supplies can provide a challenge to the research enterprise.

Internal Factors
The university is centrally structured around the president’s office and most faculty or staff have direct access to the president. Kurdish society is very relational and one’s connection to a person or political organization helps you not only obtain a job, but also assists you in completing everyday work tasks. Many interactions are based on the patronage system and as an outsider it can be challenging to understand certain operating standing procedures or the perceived lack thereof. There is a definite need for more coordination between departments and central offices such as International Relations, Finance, Legal and the Office of Grants and Scholarships.

External Factors
There is a famous quote that “The Kurds have no friends but the mountains.” Throughout their long history the Kurds have had a complicated relationship with their neighbors in Iran, Turkey, Syria, and even Bagdad. They have faced major challenges and obstacles but are incredibly resilient. Kurdish faculty work in an “academic island,” or in our case, an “academic desert.” Their undergraduate degrees are from mostly public, and some private, Kurdish universities, where they have little interaction with faculty or students from other countries. A handful have been able to travel
to Europe or Asia for graduate degrees and have returned to teach in local universities. Though the Kurds live in an autonomous region, they are still considered Iraqi citizens and are often cut off from cutting-edge research and opportunities due to travel restrictions. Many are unable to obtain visas to attend international conferences or receive much-needed training.

The KRI has experienced major financial crises in the past five years and desperately need regional and international funding. I have discovered that some international organizations will not fund projects in Iraq, and specifically some will not fund Kurdish universities or institutions. This has been challenging as we search for funding opportunities for our university.

Moving forward
Many universities in the region face these same challenges. My goal has been to find smaller grant opportunities and help walk my faculty through the grant proposal process. We have officially registered our university with the European Union, as well as with the federal U.S. government (a three-month process). I am also training two staff members from each faculty to become grants coordinators and have already found them to be invaluable colleagues. Each day we take steps toward more grant searches, proposal submissions and waiting for responses from sponsors.

I have tried to describe the ecosystem of my university, as well as the greater ecosystem of Kurdistan. Unfortunately due to regional political and ethnic conflicts, the Kurds have felt very isolated from Iraq and the greater Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole. It is vital that we connect with our colleagues and institutions in the MENA region. My goal is to model my Kurdish colleagues’ sense of hope and resilience in the coming years.

Clifford Gardner is the Director of the Office of Grants and Scholarships at the University of Raparin in the Kurdish Region of Iraq. He has over eighteen years of research administration experience at Harvard University, TGren, MGH and Boston University.

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Several factors contribute to deciding to replace an old ERA system. Technological advances in user interfaces, cloud storage, and customer support can quickly make an existing system appear obsolete. Sponsor requirements and organizational priorities may place additional demands on your current systems that simply cannot be met without improving your ERA platform. Herein, I will share key takeaways from my experiences with our ERA selections. I will discuss how an idea that originated in Pre-Award grew to encompass other functional areas, and how our sponsored research administration team is better because of it.

Broaden Your Horizons
Depending on the structure of your sponsored programs office, your Pre-Award team may or may not have frequent interactions with other functional areas within the department. Research administration has a tendency to create silos. Selecting and implementing a new ERA system is a great opportunity to break these silos by giving individuals insight into other functional areas with which they are not accustomed to interacting. Our approach to selecting an ERA system was formulated in maximizing value across the organization. This isn’t just good stewardship with institutional resources; it’s also your chance to bridge gaps and improve the entire customer experience.

Think broadly. Envision the entire award lifecycle, beginning with funding opportunity identification and proposal development, and ending with post-award financial management at your organization. A reliable system-to-system submission platform is a great resource and can drastically streamline your submission process. However, think beyond the submission and ask strategic questions. Who touches the proposal and at what stage? Once awarded, what are the departments and who are the individuals responsible for managing the award throughout its lifecycle? What key compliance areas are necessary to monitor? How do you want to report on this award? These important questions will help shape the needs of your ERA system. These questions will also identify key stakeholders who should be involved in the process.

In each of our selection processes, we identified core team members who represented the various touch-points of a proposal and award, as well as compliance committee members and faculty constituents. Multiple points of perspective are crucial. What may not appear to be important at Pre-Award may have significant downstream impact to Post-Award, or vice-versa. A product that makes data capture seamless and less prone to error at the Pre-Award stage is critical for this very reason.

Depending on the size and culture of your organization, some subtle persuasion to acquire core team members may be necessary, particularly from busy faculty or committee chairs. You’ll want to frame the opportunity in a way that clearly reflects the benefits for each individual once the ERA system is implemented. For faculty, this could be ease of use or less time spent by their department administrators troubleshooting proposals. For central office administrators, it could mean less time rejecting erroneous applications. For senior management, this could mean more robust reporting and analytical capability. Remember: the easiest way to get your child to willingly join you on a trip to the grocery store is to remind them there’s candy by the cash registers. Focus on shared rewards to gain participation in the process.

"Acknowledge that this process is a marathon, not a sprint."

One Step Back, Two Steps Forward
During core team member meetings, we spent hours documenting current process. This may sound counterintuitive because your process is likely to change when you get a new ERA system, but it is valuable for several reasons. First, this process provides a granular outline of your current processes across the full spectrum of an award. This is an area of intense discovery, as it will almost certainly reveal areas of redundancy or choke points that were unknown prior to the exercise. Secondly, it provides core team members with visibility into the entire lifecycle, thus expanding their individual view of the process and creating a collective, holistic view of the entire process. Lastly, it identifies areas of potential risk. Sole responsibility and single points of failure are common pitfalls of traditional research administration models. Organizational process may not evolve as quickly as external regulations and requirements change. This discovery process will identify outdated and faulty processes and bring them to the forefront. Though this process is tedious, it will be effort well spent when it is time to move forward.
As Is/To Be
The process above will delineate your current — “as is” — process. Next, you will frame out your new — “to be” — process. We distilled our notes from initial core team meetings into visual process flow documents. Using these as guides, we created our ideal “to be” process by classifying features and functions into “must haves,” “should haves,” “could haves,” and “won’t haves.” This method is critical for maintaining objectivity. It’s easy to form a bias toward a vendor if you’ve developed rapport with the sales rep or heard that a particular vendor has a rock-solid Pre-Award module that would really make your life easier. This prioritization technique ensures that vendors are selected based on universally agreed upon criteria. Think big picture: what solution satisfies the most needs in the entire process? This should drive your decisions.

Be Optimistic Yet Realistic
You may start to feel frustrated early in the ERA selection and implementation process. It’s important to be realistic when you’re estimating your timeline and implementation schedule as the steps above can take months to accomplish. Form a business partnership with the IT representatives who will be working on the project. Contact legal about any preliminary work you can do to expedite contract negotiation. Engage gatekeepers who will ultimately steer the negotiation and implementation. By doing so, you’ll be able to formulate a realistic timeframe that you can then relay to your core team and your staff. Being aggressive is okay, but do not put yourself or the department in a position where you’ve lost credibility during the process should it overrun deadlines.

We are a smaller, agile organization with the ability to move quickly. Despite these tactical advantages, the process still took far longer than we initially anticipated. Acknowledge that this process is a marathon, not a sprint. The worst possible outcome is a poor implementation of a potentially good product. That is poor stewardship of organizational time and resources. Do not lose sight of the finish line, and never sacrifice quality for speed, even if your staff and stakeholders are pressuring you. Nobody will remember how long selection and implementation took if you deliver a home run at go-live time.

Common Theme
A recurring theme throughout this article is collaboration. While my time in research administration has primarily been in Pre-Award, the multi-stage process of selecting an ERA system provided me the opportunity to collaborate with various individuals across many different functional areas of our organization. During the discovery process, the core team was able to see across traditional boundaries and recognize where current processes could be improved and where individual teams could provide large benefit to other areas by making small adjustments. This strengthened our sponsored research department and built a collaborative network with colleagues throughout the organization. ERA systems are hefty capital investments. However, in any business, human capital is the most precious asset. The relationships you forge with colleagues and business partners during this process will prove to be more valuable than any software system.

Navigate the complex roads of sponsored projects with Baker Tilly

Baker Tilly is a full-service accounting and advisory firm serving over 400 higher education and research institutions nationwide. Our dedicated practitioners give you access to the industry’s best thinking to help you achieve your research strategy, manage risks and successfully administer sponsored projects.

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Achieving project aims, meeting sponsor expectations and making the world a better place are the goals. However, the ever-growing list of regulations, restrictions and unfunded mandates facing higher education and research institutions can be daunting to navigate. But we can help.
A trend in the conduct of clinical trials is a heightened apprehension on the part of the pharmaceutical sponsor about research being done with biological samples. The concern arises when a clinical trial participant contributes his or her samples for research separate from the trial and these samples contain the pharmaceutical product being tested in the trial. The pharmaceutical company sponsoring the clinical trial will likely not participate in the other research project that involves the sample. Historically the clinical trial agreements allowed samples collected pursuant to the clinical trial protocol for use only in that specific trial. This, in turn, allowed participants to participate in the clinical trial while still contributing his or her samples to other research projects. It is under this paradigm that bio-banks were created.

Recently there has been a shift in the approach by pharmaceutical sponsors. Terms in the clinical trial agreement seek to connect the biological samples to the participant rather than the trial, so that all samples collected from a participant while on a clinical trial would be under the control of the pharmaceutical sponsor. Pharmaceutical sponsors seek terms within the clinical trial agreements in one of three ways: (a) an overall prohibition on collecting samples from trial participants for research projects that are separate and different from the clinical trial protocol unless approved by the trial sponsor; (b) a mandate that all samples collected from trial participants for future research projects be de-identified; or (c) intellectual property rights are granted to the pharmaceutical sponsor for the samples which may impact research projects separate from the trial.

All three of these options pose ethical and logistical issues. If a pharmaceutical sponsor is permitted to approve the separate sample collections from a research participant, one of the key ethical principles of the National Cancer Institute’s Best Practices for Biospecimen Resources, to ensure the autonomy of human research participants be respected, will have been violated (National Cancer Institute, 2016).

If a patient joins a clinical trial and contributes his or her biological samples separately from the trial with the limitation that the samples be de-identified, then the utility of said sample for future research purposes has been greatly reduced. In this context de-identified follows the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act’s (HIPAA) definition. Most research protocols involving biological samples rely upon the participant’s personal health information to be associated with the samples. Appropriate models of biospecimen resource sustainability emphasize accessibility to biospecimens and data and sustainability of the biospecimen resource (National Cancer Institute, 2016). If a large amount of the samples were de-identified, the sustainability would be called into question for that repository. Further, it would be logistically difficult to ensure that every sample collected from a trial participant would be de-identified. Consider the robust process that would need to be implemented to ensure samples collected for diagnostic purposes or as part of clinical care where the patient has consented for any remaining or unused amount to be used for research purposes are de-identified when they are “banked” for research purposes. It is common for bio-banks to operate in a way that all samples are coded, the code is connected to the patient file, and an “honest broker” holds the key to the coded data. However HIPAA considers this identifiable data since the “honest broker” has the key. As such, this would not meet the clinical trial terms requiring de-identification.

“One of the key ethical principles of the National Cancer Institute’s Best Practices for Biospecimen Resources to ensure the autonomy of the human research participants be respected.”

The third option is granting the company IP rights. Pharmaceutical sponsors will typically request an upfront non-exclusive royalty free commercial license to intellectual property generated from the use of the samples which relate to the pharmaceutical product that was being tested in the trial. Begin by considering whether it’s appropriate to grant commercial rights to intellectual property to the pharmaceutical sponsor in the samples collected because of the prior clinical trial. Additionally, consider what processes will be needed to ensure that the research protocols using these samples do not have conflicting intellectual property obligations or to connect intellectual property generated by your organization to the samples used. While the likelihood is low that intellectual property will arise from the use of samples that would pose limitations on the pharmaceutical company’s ability or freedom to operate, agreeing to pay for a commercial license may be a solution in a “worst-case scenario.”

Any of these solutions result in a reduction in the number of samples that can freely be used in research, and as an organization that conducts many clinical trials, this can quickly pollute the sample pool. Even more importantly, these solutions reduce the patient’s ability to control the use of his or her biological samples. It can also be bad for science. The recommended solution is to not re-invent the wheel and stick to the historical approach of limiting use of biological samples collected pursuant to a clinical trial protocol for use in that trial. | March/April 2019

References:

Istvan Fekete, Assistant Director of Contracts Management at The University of Chicago, is responsible for all research related contracts for the university’s over $500M in external research funding. His contact information is ifekete@uchicago.edu
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.

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With an NCURA Peer Review, you will receive a comprehensive report with recommendations specific to your institution, all from experienced research administrators. An NCURA Peer Review provides outside perspective and validation to your operations.

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The Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP), in existence since 1986, incorporates the expertise of faculty, administrators and federal personnel with a focus on improving quality, efficiency, effectiveness of the federal investment in research and development, and ultimately reducing administrative and regulatory faculty burden associated with research. The FDP meeting of January 24-25, 2019 provided an overview of current and future projects as the organization develops goals for moving into Phase VII of the organization. Current and future goals were provided by FDP's six programmatic committees: Faculty, eRA, Research Administration, Finance/Audit/Costing, Research Compliance, and Emerging Research Institutions.

The Faculty Committee used two sessions to develop their strategic planning for Phase VII of FDP. Significant discussion focused on the 2018 faculty workload survey, which was completed, and its early findings were reported. This third iteration of the survey suggests that, compared to the 2005 and 2012 surveys, faculty are spending even greater amounts of time on administrative tasks not associated with research. Further analyses of this body of work will help support the understanding of faculty work-life balance and satisfaction, as well as identify areas for quality and efficiency improvements. In addition, the faculty administrator collaboration team (FACT) continues to explore the varieties of research administration-faculty relationships and structures among FDP member organizations.

The Research Administration Committee continues work with the Subawards and Expanded Clearinghouse Subcommittees but is also exploring connections between subcommittee activities. This effort includes, for example, making use of the clearinghouse profile data to prepopulate subaward templates. The recently revived Open Government: Research Administration Data Subcommittee hosted a session with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services devoted to understanding and using blockchain distributed ledger technology in grants administration. Other areas that Open Government focuses on consist of federal data standards, data related legislation and projects to help inform key federal agencies about the overall data related burden of research organizations, such as in the area of cash draws. Two other subcommittees, the Contracts Subcommittee and the Research Terms and Conditions Subcommittee continue to seek efficiencies and provide oversight of administrative activities.

The Electronic Research Administration (eRA) Committee works to streamline the Grants Life-Cycle by using standards-based electronic systems as well as explore the use of technology for FDP committees. This year the committee has continued working on the Federal Agency Matrix, Expanded Clearinghouse Application Program Interface, and Grants.gov Joint Application Design (JAD). The JAD team is currently working on usability, enhancements and pilot testing of mobile applications (search for opportunities, check submission status) and provides input into the ongoing evolution of the Workspace/Transformation project.

...faculty are spending even greater amounts of time on administrative tasks not associated with research.
“The emphasis is on harmonization of requirements across federal agencies.”

The Finance/Audit/Costing Committee is exploring new Federal initiatives and regulations to reduce administrative burden for faculty, staff and federal partners. Last year saw significant progress in the procurement micro-purchase threshold which was raised from $3,500 to $10,000. Single Institutional Review Board (sIRB) direct and indirect charging, DHHS payment management system, and costing aspects of rigor and reproducibility, research integrity, and public data access are being examined. The cost and burden of foreign influence on research integrity is an emerging focus area for 2019.

The Research Compliance Committee has a wide range of activities reviewing new and existing administrative requirements from federal agencies. The emphasis is on harmonization of requirements across federal agencies. Current activities include review of organization conflict of interest language from institutions, the Data Transfer and Use Agreement (DTUA) template project, the Compliance Unit Standard Procedure (CUSP) sharing site for animal procedures for use in animal protocols, discussing subaward animal care memoranda of understanding with a goal of developing a standard template, piloting an IRB Wizard to identify exempt human subject research protocols automatically, and partnering with SMART (Streamlined, Multisite, Accelerated Resources for Trials) to enhance the use of the SMART IRB Reliance Agreement.

The Emerging Research Institution (ERI) Committee serves to facilitate ERI representation in FDP demonstrations, committees and workgroups and broaden knowledge about ERIs to non-ERI members and federal agency partners. This committee is seeking federal agency partners to participate in ERI sessions to increase mutual knowledge regarding agency practices and ERI challenges and questions.

The intensive two-day meeting has administrators, faculty and federal personnel looking forward to Phase VII of FDP. While the goal is to reduce faculty burden, it is clear the work of FDP is far reaching, broad in scope, enhances investments in research, and improves efficiency and effectiveness in research administration.

Jennifer Taylor, PhD, MBA, is Assistant Vice Provost for Research and Innovation and a Research Professor at the University of Arkansas. Jennifer also serves on the Board of the FDP and is Co-Chair of the Communications Committee for FDP. She has been a senior research administrator for over 15 years and a member of NCURA during that time. She can be reached at taylorj@uark.edu

Laura McCabe, PhD, is a Professor in the Department of Physiology and Department of Radiology at Michigan State University (MSU). Laura is the Co-Chair of the Communications Committee for the FDP and can be reached at mccabe1@msu.edu

NOTABLE PRACTICES

How to Assess and Cultivate Your Research Ecosystem

In our pursuit to create knowledge, explore possibilities, and educate students, universities must critically assess our “research ecosystem.” The ecosystem is not limited to pre award, post award, research integrity and compliance. Rather, a robust research ecosystem considers the university as a whole and requires sound research efforts, priorities, programs, policies, infrastructure and facilities. NCURA Peer Reviewers have observed that many universities have notable practices in this area. For example, among other things, effective universities often:

1. Have a Strategic Plan which is effectively communicated throughout the organization and identifies successes, priorities and plans to grow the research enterprise.
2. Engage stakeholders – leadership, academic, central and departmental personnel – to meet, discuss, prevent and resolve research issues.
3. Frequent assessment, automation and streamlining sessions to ensure the organization is working smarter and improving processing times.
4. Invest in research administration infrastructure, facilities, equipment and core services to aid in the success of the researchers.
5. Assess and align research administration staffing to meet the growing needs of the research enterprise.
6. Develop and invest in training programs to meet research administration staff’s professional development needs.
7. Regularly review policies and procedures to ensure transparency and compliance across the university.

Jill Frazier Tincher, MBA, CRA, is a member of the Select Committee on Peer Review. She has participated in peer reviews and has more than 23 years of research administration experience, spanning pre-award, post-award, central and departmental, and education and training. She is the Executive Director of Pre-Award at The University of Miami.

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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IN 2019, the NCURA Global Fellowship Program will be celebrating its 10th anniversary. Within the next decade, the program will become one of the largest global initiatives supporting collaboration within the research administration community. The fellowships are joint initiatives between NCURA and its sister organizations to train research administrators, reduce barriers to global research administration and create joint administrative frameworks to facilitate global research collaboration. There is an ever-increasing amount of global research collaboration, and these fellowships aim to cultivate a pool of individuals with the ability to interpret a multitude of various sponsor requirements and provide their institutions with administrative compliance expertise on an international scale — from application submission through financial reporting and closeout.

The program, which was conceived in 2007 and launched in 2009, came about while Kathleen Larmett, NCURA executive director, and Denise Wallen, current vice president of NCURA, attended the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA) conference in Warsaw, Poland. “We discussed how great the opportunity for U.S. research administrators to connect with their European counterparts was and how beneficial it would be to have a formal reciprocal program in place between NCURA and EARMA,” said Larmett.

Larmett and Wallen, along with a specialized taskforce, designed a pilot program which was then shared with EARMA. After receiving interest from the NCURA Board of Directors and EARMA and approval of more than 75% NCURA members, a beta call was launched in 2008. In 2009, the first EARMA members came to the United States, and in 2011, NCURA’s board approved travel funds for NCURA Fellows. In 2013, NCURA began fellowship exchanges with the Southern African Research & Innovation Management Association (SARIMA), and in 2015, a formal alliance between the NCURA and the Australasia Research Management Society (ARMS) was formed. The fellowship program continues to grow in 2018, with the newest partnership program with NCURA’s German sister organization Netzwerk für Forschungs - und Transfermanagement! e.V. (FORTRAMA).

The program has grown tremendously over the last several years. “We only had a few host institutions in the beginning, but our host institutions list has grown substantially over the last five years. This is mainly due to the assistance from NCURA staff who have been able to dedicate their time to the program as well as assistance from the Select Committee on Global Affairs (SCGA)” said Larmett. She continued, “the program has done exactly what it intended to do by connecting research administrators globally, not only increasing their network but also giving them the opportunity to go elsewhere and learn about university research management practices, policies and regulations in another country.” Denise Wallen added, “the NCURA Global Fellowship Program has blossomed and matured since its inception ten years ago. We are fortunate to now have a cohort of fellows that bring their rich experiences back to their institutions, the profession and NCURA.”

The fellowship program provides an opportunity for research administrators to travel to another country’s research organization and to immerse themselves in a program of mutual learning and knowledge exchange. “It is an extraordinary opportunity for NCURA members to spend two
weeks experiencing how another institution in a different culture supports its research enterprise” said Gai Doran, chair of the SOGA. Doran continued, “As chair of the SOGA, I highly encourage NCURA members to apply. Successful applicants show clear commitment to NCURA and the profession – through their presentations at NCURA conferences, publications in NCURA Magazine, and a history of volunteering for the organization. In their statements of interest, they describe how their fellowship experiences will benefit not only themselves and their institutions, but the organization as a whole. If preparing for a future application, I’d recommend reaching out to your regions for opportunities to volunteer and attending one of the Global Fellowship information sessions at either FRA/PRA or the Annual Meeting.”

Additionally, the fellowships offer host institutions greater exposure in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. “University of California San Francisco has been honored to serve as a host institution for NCURA Global fellows for the last few years from Australia, Finland and Spain. Hosting has also given our Office of Sponsored Research greater exposure and interest in international research administration. Two of our staff have also been selected as Global Fellows (Australia and Switzerland), and we hope to continue to play a key role in fostering these professional development opportunities in the future” stated Eunice Chang of the UCSF.

“There are many benefits in hosting a fellow: making new connections, broadening our international collaborations, sharing research administration practices and approaches, and sharing what we have in common and what makes each organization unique. It challenges us to aspire to new and exciting skills and projects in our workplaces. The NCURA Fellowship program is an important enabler for the growth of research administration as a global profession,” commented Bryony Wakefield of the University of Melbourne. Wakefield continued, “There is nothing quite as inspiring as spending an extended period learning from colleagues at institutions outside our own. It can teach us to think differently, explore alternative approaches to common issues and inspire us to implement new ideas.”

Over the past decade, NCURA has sent more than 50 Fellows to 17 different countries, including China, South Africa, Poland, Switzerland, Italy, and Australia. NCURA will support up to $2,000 in travel costs, and Fellows are expected to pass on their experiences and knowledge of how research administration management operates at their institution, to identify best practices and the local knowledge of their host institutions, and to respect all appropriate organizational rules and cultural practices. This year, NCURA would like to extend an invitation to past and current Fellows to a special celebration at the NCURA Annual Meeting taking place in Washington, D.C. in August. We invite you to come celebrate this milestone of the program while exchanging and learning of new opportunities in the field of international collaboration as well as opportunities to support research together.

For more information on the Fellowship Program please visit www.ncura.edu/Global/NCURA FellowshipProgram.aspx
Charles Bartunek is now Director of Collaborative and Corporate Research Contracts at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

Vivian Holmes is now Assistant Dean for Research Administration, School of Public Health at Boston University.

Mario Medina is now the Senior Associate Director in the Office of Research Administration at East Carolina University.

Kris Monahan is now the Director of Sponsored Projects and Research Compliance at Providence College.

Nikki Turner is now the Associate Director of Research Accounting at University of Arkansas.

Jeanne Viviani is now the Director of Research Development at Florida Atlantic University.

Do you have a milestone to share? Email schiffman@ncura.edu

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**NCURA**

**Member Milestones**

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**ON-DEMAND WORKSHOPS**

**NSF Fundamentals**
This workshop provides a primary basis of understanding of proposals to and awards from the National Science Foundation (NSF). It is perfect for someone new to Research Administration, as well as for research administrators seeking to expand their knowledge of federal funding agencies. The curriculum provides an overview of the policies and procedures essential to preparing successful proposals to and managing grant awards from NSF.

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**财务研究合规**

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

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

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**LEARN MORE**

onlinelearning.ncura.edu
Have you ever thought about how many different offices you interact with as a research administrator? If not, take a minute to think about your typical day. Who do you support? Who provides you with the information you need? Our connections integrate us with other operations at our institutions and create a research administration ecosystem.

Research administration touches most administrative aspects of an institution. We asked our training experts to identify some of these key connections and the value of collaborative training and sharing perspectives in the research lifecycle. Below are some examples of engagement opportunities for enhanced symbiosis.

There are obvious strong connections to accounting and finance operations, but think about how your office interacts with your business, travel, and procurement offices. Working together on policy updates and trainings will support compliance with Federal regulations and demonstrate our partnership to campus. Ask to be part of committees looking at new software implementation for financial tasks, or development of new policies around things like Pcards, to trouble-shoot potential issues for sponsored projects accounting.

A firm understanding of how people are paid on your campus, whether they be faculty, postdocs, students, participants, or consultants, is critical during budget preparation and award administration. Working with appropriate units such as Human Resources, Student Payroll, and Procurement to understand and communicate practices may help to avoid delays in hiring and paying the personnel key to successful project outcomes.

Some might say that rules are our ecosystem’s water and regulations, our air. They support our framework; our practices and tasks are built to meet these requirements and seek them out daily for additional guidance. Sponsored projects offices frequently collaborate with their general counsel and internal audit department for interpretations and recommendations for best practice. Engage experts from these offices to join training initiatives and reinforce your mission.

When building learning opportunities for staff we cannot forget about compliance. Trainers have an important role in building a culture of compliance in research administration and can best do so by bringing compliance personnel into the room during training program development. By working together to identify challenges while also sharing successes, we can identify and train to best practices that are unique to our own institution’s compliance culture.

And let’s not forget our faculty. Research administration thrives on active and creative faculty who are additionally part of their own ecosystems. For our ecosystem, it is critical to understand the many aspects of the life of a faculty member. Forecasting project effort would be difficult to navigate without an understanding of faculty appointments, sabbatical rules and teaching loads. In training sessions, work with colleges and institutes, Chairs and Deans, to understand their parameters and create comprehensive resources.

There are many connections at our institutions, and we are all dependent upon one another to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Strengthen these connections through well-planned collaborations and a genuine desire to help each other. Remember, we are all in this together!
So much to say but so little room to fit it all: Region I began 2019 with the first Research Administration Discussion Group (RADG) in February. Thanks to the Curriculum Committee for organizing this great meeting! The webcast and panel discussion on “Research Finance Compliance” was informative and touched on regulatory climate, and specific areas of compliance risk highlighting best practices. Thank you, John Sholhead (NSF Cash Management) and Panelists: Sue Horton, Heather Dominey, Missy Downs, and Alex Tran for your expertise, sharing and time! RADGs are not only an important part of Region I member’s professional development, but also a great chance to network.

As you read this article, we will be accepting nominations for the Region I Recognition Awards. Please nominate your colleagues or consider a self-nomination. We have many talented and generous volunteers, let’s recognize them for their contributions. For more information on the awards, eligibility, and nominating/selection procedures, visit the website: https://ncuraregioni.org/award-descriptions-nominations-and-deadlines.html

Welcome the 2019 Executive Shadow participants Kiku Ichihara of Amherst College and Rosaleah Brown Gresham of MIT. The competitive program selects individuals who desire to learn more about regional leadership and provides the opportunity to shadow the advisory committee and learn the roles of elected officers and ad hoc committee initiatives ongoing. Congratulations to you both and thank you to your mentors.

Spring is just around the corner; the program committee is finalizing the meeting logistics. Look out for the final program and announcements on volunteer opportunities. You won’t want to miss the “Back to Basics: Practical Solutions” Meeting. The Westin Portland Maine Harborview — the perfect place to experience New England charm. Meeting questions can be emailed to: springmeeting@ncuraregioni.org

In other news: We have retired Guidebook and will move to a mobile app for meetings, “Eventpedia” as Mr. Tran would say: “Same, Same but Different.” The Region has adopted a code of conduct now appended to the administrative policies. All committee volunteers and elected officials are bound to the code. The Awards Committee implemented changes too: Three specific policies. All committee volunteers and elected officials are bound to the code. The Awards Committee implemented changes too: Three specific policies. All committee volunteers and elected officials are bound to the code. The Awards Committee implemented changes too: Three specific policies. All committee volunteers and elected officials are bound to the code. The Awards Committee implemented changes too: Three specific policies. All committee volunteers and elected officials are bound to the code. The Awards Committee implemented changes too: Three specific policies. All committee volunteers and elected officials are bound to the code. The Awards Committee implemented changes too: Three specific policies. All committee volunteers and elected officials are bound to the code.

More information is available on the PDC webpage. If you have any questions, or if you would like to bring a workshop to your area, please contact David Schultz at schuld7@rpi.edu. As a reminder, all host institutions receive.

Meanwhile, Region II’s Professional Development Committee continues to develop and provide regional training opportunities for our membership. Our PDC offers a variety of half and full-day workshops, with new classes soon to be added. More information is available on the PDC webpage. If you have any questions, or if you would like to bring a workshop to your area, please contact David Schultz at schuld7@rpi.edu. As a reminder, all host institutions receive two free registrations!

Finally, if you’re looking to get involved in the Region, consider volunteering on behalf of your Subregion. From networking functions to our signature Chatterbox events, our Subregions provide professional development opportunities and offer members a chance to interact with and learn from their colleagues in a more local setting. Visit the Subregion webpage www.ncuraregionii.org/subregion for more, including contact information for your subregion leader. And if you’re looking to support the Region on a larger level, we soon will be accepting nominations for the positions of Chair-Elect/Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer-Elect/Treasurer. A description of each position is available on the Region II website, but feel free to reach out to Dennis Paffrath at dpaffrat@umaryland.edu with any questions.

Don’t forget to follow us on Facebook!

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

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 spring, Region IV! We hope to see you in Ohio at the end of April!
There is still time to register for the NCURA Region IV Spring meeting, which will be held April 28 – May 1, 2019 at the Sheraton Capitol Square in Columbus, Ohio. Visit www.ncuraregioniv.com for details.

The spring meeting is a great opportunity for professional development, networking, and fun! Meeting attendees will choose from a wide range of concurrent sessions during the two and a half days of regular conference scheduling on Monday through Wednesday, April 29 - May 1. Topics covered include pre-award, post-award, research compliance, effort reporting, and more. Optional special interest workshops will be held on Sunday, April 28.

This year, 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 neuroscience to musical training; she is also an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the University of San Francisco. Dr. Viskontas has more than 50 original papers and chapters 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.

We are also hosting the second annual NCURA Region IV Book Club, featuring: *Examining Tuskegee: The Infamous Syphilis Study and its Legacy* by Susan Reverby. As described on the back of the book: The forty-year “Tuskegee” Syphilis Study, which took place in and around Tuskegee, Alabama from the 1930s through the 1970s, has become a profound metaphor for medical racism, government malfeasance, and physician arrogance.

Susan M. Reverby’s *Examining Tuskegee* is a comprehensive analysis of the notorious study of untreated syphilis among African American men who were told by U.S. Public Health Service doctors that they were being treated, not just watched, for their late-stage syphilis. With rigorous clarity, Reverby investigates the study and the aftermath from multiple perspectives and illuminates the reasons for its continued power and resonance in our collective memory.

So visit your local library or hop over to Amazon and get yourself a copy of this incredible story. We hope to have a rich conversation around issues of medical access and oppression and how it relates to 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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**REGION III**  
Southeastern  
www.ncuraregioniii.com

**REGION IV**  
Mid-America  
www.ncuraregioniv.com

Region III’s 2019 Spring Meeting is just around the corner and we can’t wait to see our friends and colleagues at the Margaritaville Beach Resort in Hollywood Beach, FL May 4-8! Registration is open through the meeting dates, but attendees will want to secure their spot and reserve a room at the Margaritaville Beach Resort, home to eight restaurants and bars, a spa, and a surf simulator, before they’re all gone. More information about the meeting and location is available online at: ncuraregioniii.com/2019-spring-meeting.

All NCURA members are welcome to join us in the spirit of our meeting theme, “Collaboration: Creating Connections that Count.” Our keynote speaker will be America’s foremost beach expert, Dr. Stephen Leatherman of Florida International University, widely known as “Dr. Beach.” 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 under the new Senior Track, providing attendees with quality professional development opportunities.

We’d like to congratulate our Region III members who are on their way to becoming leaders at the national level:

**Rob Roy** (Georgia Institute of Technology) has been selected to the NCURA Financial Management Committee. His two-year term began January 1, 2019. Rob has served as the Region III Treasurer since 2017.

**Scott Niles** (Georgia Institute of Technology) was accepted into the 2019 NCURA Executive Leadership Program, held January through May this year. Scott has served as the Region III Secretary since 2018.

Congratulations, Rob and Scott! We know you’ll make Region III proud as you continue to share your expertise and contribute to NCURA’s success beyond the Southeast.

We want to challenge our members to follow their example and volunteer! Volunteering is a great way to make lasting connections with your fellow NCURA members, hone your skills and resume, and learn more about the organization and resources available to you. With the beginning-of-the-semester rush over and new fiscal year budgets on the horizon, spring is the perfect time to start planning out your NCURA activities. Start by visiting the Region III Volunteer page to learn more about how you can get involved: ncuraregioniii.com/volunteer.

We look forward to seeing everyone in May in Margaritaville, but until then, stay connected with us on the Region III Collaborate Community, our website, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook!

**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

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Regional Corner continued

“Houston, the Eagle has landed” — 50 years ago, astronaut Neil Armstrong uttered those unforgettable words from the surface of the moon, achieving the goal set by President Kennedy just eight years earlier. In celebration of reaching the 50th anniversary of that milestone—and the tremendous amount of collaborative research and development that went into accomplishing it—we invite you to join us at the Omni Houston Hotel on April 28 – May 1, 2019 for Region V 2019 Spring Meeting.

Thanks to the outstanding work of our Educational Program Subcommittee under the leadership of Chair Cory Davis (UT-Austin), we have a great program planned with the largest number of concurrent sessions and discussion groups ever offered at a Region V meeting. Session tracks include pre-award; post-award; human capital; contracts, industry, and tech development; compliance and regulation; and federal and sponsor updates. We have included sessions specifically targeting research administrators at predominantly undergraduate institutions, minority serving institutions, and health science/medical centers, in addition to those sessions more broadly applicable to all research administrators.

Workshops, which will take place on Wednesday, May 1, include a unique full-day workshop titled, “So you want to be an Astronaut: Lessons in Teamwork Learned from NASA Space Flight Missions,” focused on improving individual and team effectiveness under diverse conditions. This workshop features a simulation training that was developed to train flight controllers and astronauts to handle everything from mundane everyday operations to life threatening emergencies. Enrollment for this workshop is limited to 50, so be sure to reserve your space early.

We’ll also have exciting evening entertainment and networking activities, thanks to the work of the Membership and Entertainment Subcommittee and Chair Vanessa Lopez (UT-Austin). To ensure our local attendees may participate fully in the conference, we’ll start just a little later each morning and offer relaxation, networking, and storage areas for you to rest after the meeting, which we hope will help you avoid the worst of rush hour traffic.

Finally, I want to issue a special thanks to our Sponsorship Subcommittee and Chair Tribbie Grimm (Texas A&M), who have done a tremendous job in obtaining sponsorships to help us keep our meeting costs down for our members. We appreciate your hard work!

Full program details, including links to registration, hotel reservations, and much more are available on the Region V website:

www.ncuraregionv.com

We look forward to seeing you in Houston this April, where we’ll proudly announce, “Houston, the Research Administrators have Landed.”

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

Happy Spring, Region VI! I hope your 2019 has started off well and that you are ready to welcome the new season.

Spring kicked off in a big way with two major NCURA events in Region VI. The Financial Research Administration (FRA) and Pre-Award Research Administration (PRA) Conferences were held during the week of March 11th in exciting Las Vegas, Nevada. Region 6 was well represented for both conferences: on the program committees; as presenters for workshops, concurrent sessions, and discussion groups; and as attendees. Thank you to all who volunteered!

We are happy to announce that we were able to make two regional travel awards for first time attendees to the FRA/PRA Conferences:

Tapiana Wray, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Jassel Vanegas, University of California, San Francisco

Congratulations to both of you! I hope everyone who attended FRA and/or PRA enjoyed the many professional development and network opportunities in a dazzling location!

Speaking of conferences, we are in full planning mode with our Region 7 partners for the Region 6/7 Meeting in Seattle, WA from October 27 – 30, 2019. Workshop day is Sunday, October 27th. We are planning sessions and discussion groups in 5 Tracks (Contracting, Predominately Undergraduate Institutions (PUI)/Departmental, Human Capital/Organizational Development, Pre-Award, and Post-Award) and 2 half-tracks (Compliance and Updates). This year we are adding ignite sessions to the schedule. If you have attended the Annual Meeting, PRA, or FRA recently, you likely experienced these short, high-energy sessions that spark interest in a topic and get straight to the good stuff. We are excited to add them to the line-up for our regional meeting. Stay tuned for more meeting details in future months.

Something else to keep an eye out for is information about an updated Region 6 website. In 2018, the Region began this effort by evaluating our website needs and options. Much of the initial research and analysis is in hand. An ad hoc Region 6 Website Committee is working hard to get us ready to go live with a new website during the first half of 2019.

In addition, the committee will examine website management and maintenance needs to ensure easy and timely updates to web content. As it always has, we know this effort will require fabulous Region 6 volunteers. If you have an interest in helping with the website, we would love to hear from you! Please reach out to Mich Pane, Chair of the Membership & Volunteer Committee (michiko@stanford.edu) or me (acs229@uw.edu).

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
Region VII started the new year with an updated set of bylaws that reflect how our region is growing. For the first time, we will split the previous secretary/treasurer single position into two positions, and have implemented a 3-year treasurer rotation. This change is a direct reflection of the availability of more volunteers than we have had before, and we are thrilled to have this new capacity. We also voted to be able to put forward a single nominee to an elected position rather than having to have at least two nominees.

Best of all, we have adopted a new logo and mascot that we think reflects our particular region of the country. After much work by the ad hoc Communications Committee and then by popular vote, the jackalope far exceeded the other options and is our new mascot. Needless to say, our new regional candy is Raisenettes, for obvious reasons.

We have also been discussing a strategic plan. Unlike some regions, Region VII covers a vast area but has a smaller population. Many of our NCURA colleagues in the region come from PIs and are well over 200 miles from each other, making networking and educational opportunities a special challenge. We are implementing a communications network and looking at regional ‘hubs’ where there might be some concentration of higher education institutions.

In other news, we are hard at work with Region VI on what is already shaping up to be a fantastic regional meeting scheduled for October 27-30 in Seattle, Washington. We are excited about The Motif, the boutique hotel that is working with us and also happens to be only two blocks from Pikes Market, a major transportation hub, and more shopping than even our Hawaiian friends can manage.

We are also starting to work on our special activities for both the regional and the annual meeting. We haven’t planned far at this writing, but strongly suspect that cowboy/cowgirl boots, hats and perhaps bandanas will be part of the plan.

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

What an exciting year we have ahead for Region VIII members. Starting with FRA and PRA in Las Vegas from 11-15 March where we always have a good turn out from our region. Then there is the annual meeting (AM61), from 4-7 August. To add to this conference is the post conference site visit and workshop to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, MD. This year is more special as we will be joining forces with Region II for joint Fall meeting on 16-18 October in Jersey City, New Jersey (just a quick subway ride to New York City).

Currently we have 173 members from 41 countries from around the world. We have people from every continent on the planet (except Antarctica). How amazing is that! We have NCURA members who joined NCURA in 2006 even before Region VIII was established. Region VIII encompasses a large area and we have many challenges to overcome including language, time zones and different cultures and yet we are still able to enjoy and interact when we get together at conferences. Last summer at the AM60 Region VIII dinner, to break the ice and get to know each other we played a game. We provided everyone with a passport with questions that they had to fill in to be eligible for a prize. To answer these questions, you had to actual move around and talk to people. For example, one question was “Someone from a country that starts with S” so people would ask around and start conversations. Or, “Someone that you met today.” It was great fun and people exchanged details and have been in contact since. The winner of the prize was Cecilia Martinsson Björkdahl from Sweden. Congratulations Cecilia!

**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

Julie Ward, Cecilia Martinsson and Bella Blaher
Native American Study

St. Mary’s College of Maryland Professor of Anthropology Julia King was awarded a $240,000 grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to trace the history and development of the Rappahannock Indians in early American history (200-1850 AD) in collaboration with the Federally – recognized Rappahannock Tribe of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), and the Chesapeake Conservancy. The grant was one of 245 humanities projects from across the country awarded a combined $39.3 million from the NEH.

The anthropology department at St. Mary’s College first began studying the Rappahannock River Valley’s history in 2016 at the request of the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay office with funds administered by the Chesapeake Conservancy. The work was undertaken to provide interpretive support for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

Conventional wisdom has long held that the Rappahannock Indians moved to the north side of the Rappahannock River to escape the politically powerful Powhatan Indians in the York River Valley. Research by the St. Mary’s College team, however, suggests that ecological factors, including agricultural soils, marshlands, and clays suitable for pottery manufacture, and not political factors, better explain the Rappahannock’s decisions about where to settle. This discovery, which was made using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology, revealed the need for further archaeological study of the river valley. The NEH grant will allow this study on these tribal groups to continue.

Professor of Anthropology Julia King leads the research team, comprised of anthropology instructor Scott Strickland, an assistant archaeologist, and two archaeology technicians (St. Mary’s College undergraduate students) who will assist with field and laboratory work. They are joined by Chief G. Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe, who, along with tribal members, will assist with the field and laboratory work.

The continuing study will focus on the trajectories of movement into and within the Rappahannock valley, how the Rappahannock people used landscape and other forms of material culture to forge group and/or political identities between 200 and 1600 CE, and the reaction of the people living in the river valley to European contact and colonization.

“Thanks to the NEH grant, we will be able to start addressing some of the recommendations from the original study we conducted in 2016,” King said. “We hope to assemble a detailed culture history for the Rappahannock Indians in the river valley over the last 2,000 years, including archaeological collections-based analysis and a regional survey.”

Chief Richardson notes that her tribe’s oral history recalls the Powhatan as neighbors with whom they shared winter hunting grounds. “The Rappahannock’s history has been overlooked in almost every history book. We are grateful to the NEH for recognizing this serious gap in American history and providing the resources for us to address it.”

This research tracing the history and development of the Rappahannock indigenous cultural landscape is supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. NEH supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this press release, do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

St. Mary’s College of Maryland is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education through 2024-2025. St. Mary’s College, designated the Maryland state honors college in 1992, is ranked one of the best public liberal arts schools in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. Approximately 1,700 students attend the college, nestled on the St. Mary’s River in Southern Maryland.
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NCURA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NATIONAL TRAVELING WORKSHOPS

Contract Negotiation and Administration Workshop
May 29-31, 2019 ................................................................. Baltimore, MD

Departmental Research Administration Workshop
March 25-27, 2019 ................................................................. Portland, OR
May 29-31, 2019 ................................................................. Baltimore, MD

Financial Research Administration Workshop
May 29-31, 2019 ................................................................. Baltimore, MD

Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
March 25-27, 2019 ................................................................. Portland, OR
May 29-31, 2019 ................................................................. Baltimore, MD

Level II: Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
March 25-27, 2019 ................................................................. Baltimore, MD

NATIONAL CONFERENCES

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
• OIG Audits in the Federal Funded Research Environment
  March 21, 2019, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
• How to Deal with HIPPA Rules Under the Revised Common Rule
  April 9, 2019, 2:00-3:30 pm ET
• Organizational Conflict of Interest
  May 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

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