CHANGES

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- Interviewing & Training Remotely
- Four Reasons Why Your Publication Term Really Matters
- Setting SMARTER Self Care Goals for 2021

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Changes

In This Issue: This issue focuses on preparing and responding to wanted and unwanted change driven by external forces. When the Editors of the magazine met in the Fall of 2019 to plan for 2020, who would have thought that we would be embracing so much change. We were all impacted by a sudden change when most of us were forced to move our work environments into our homes. We have worked remotely while maintaining the same standards of service to our faculty and researchers.

This issue begins with an article from our PUI community, “Change and Progress: One OSP’s Experience with Growth Mindset,” written by Christine Bravo of William Paterson University. NCURA members can likely identify with the concept of “growth mindset,” which is being willing to develop processes through dedication and intentional effort. We have some of the most resilient people in our profession.

Additionally, Stephanie Morgan of Dartmouth College, shares “Proposals are Up, Staffing is Down: Interviewing & Training Remotely,” in which she describes Dartmouth’s process of remotely interviewing, hiring, and training. Spoiler alert: it takes more time and planning. “Capitalizing on Opportunities that come with Forced Changes,” written by Raed Habayeb of Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and NCURA’s Middle East contributing editor, shares that administrative processes must retain a degree of flexibility and nimbleness to cope with changes. He describes how dependence on virtual communication technology put some countries with damaged or underdeveloped infrastructures at a disadvantage. He also describes how travel restrictions affected their ability to recruit talent from overseas.

As we start a new year it’s important to read and ruminite on “Setting SMARTER Self Care Goals for 2021 Reflecting on 2020,” in which Jennifer Shambrook offers so much for us to think about as we start a new year. Did you know that you are more likely to achieve your goals if you write them down? We should also set a goal to do one thing every day to contribute to good health. This issue is timely as we have all been through Changes and enter a year of Changes. 

Robyn Remotigue, MPPA, CRA, is Co-Editor for NCURA Magazine. She serves as Director, Office of Research Services, in the School of Public Health at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth. Robyn is a former member of the Board of Directors, a peer reviewer for NCURA and traveling workshop faculty member for SPA II. She can be reached at robyn.remotigue@unthsc.edu

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Seniors and Retirees: It’s time to consider Medicare Part B premium and enrollment penalties again. With the program’s increasing costs, you should examine whether you want to be included in the program or not. You may also want to consider switching to a Medicare Advantage plan. If you’re planning to move, make sure you understand how your Medicare coverage will be affected. You may need to enroll in a new plan in the new location.

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Rosemary Madnick, NCURA President

Ring in the New Year for 2021 is a cause for celebration and gratefulness realizing we got through last year. COVID-19 created a unique climate where change not only converged at once but also suddenly. The result was unprecedented change across geographies, institutions, businesses, and many other areas affecting us professionally and personally.

We stepped up and helped confront this extraordinary situation. We met head-on with the challenges, the changes and looked for opportunities that gave us hope and courage for the future not knowing what it would look like.

We unlocked our ability to be versatile, strong and transformative even in the most difficult of situations. We navigated change by adopting new technologies, implementing new processes and procedures, and planning for limited capabilities and resources all while working in a virtual environment. With 2020 behind us, we will continue to lead forward and be effective.

As I embark on a new year as President, I will continue to support the efforts of diversity, inclusion, and equity within the association. I will continue to work on NCURA’s goals contained within the strategic plan, including developing and supporting opportunities for emerging, mid-career, senior leadership, and emeritus members. Lastly, I want to continue with expanding our volunteer and engagement opportunities.

This year, we will continue offering progressive professional development and innovative learning environments on relevant topics to our membership.

This year, we will continue offering progressive professional development and innovative learning environments on relevant topics to our membership.

The Co-Chairs (FRA: Sinnammon Tierney and Tim Schailey; PRA: Angela Wishon and Roger Wareham) and their program committees have been working hard to deliver a cutting-edge virtual program.

In 2021, I wish you peace, health, prosperity, success and all the joy your heart can hold.

In gratitude,

Rosemary Madnick is the 2021 NCURA President and serves as Executive Director, Office of Grants and Contracts Administration at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She can be reached at rmadnick@alaska.edu
Putting an ‘I’ into Change Management

By Rebecca Atkinson

Navigating change was a phenomenon for many industries prior to early Spring 2020. Navigating change during COVID-19 has become a new phenomenon all its own. A simple Google search “Navigating change during COVID-19” yields 615,000,000 results. The first two pages of these results showcase change management information for leaders, employees, managing resources, impacts on children, and wellbeing, among others. The list goes on. The common theme from just this quick search, however, is clearly people first.

When managing change the most critical and challenging aspect lies with people. Individuals have varying strengths and talents specific to their job responsibilities which creates a variety of work styles. Thus, when change is introduced in a work environment, the management of individuals becomes just as much of the equation as the actual change proposed. Change management firm Prosci (n.d.) describes change management as “a discipline to guide and support individuals to adopt change.”

Change may be physical, emotional, psychological, or operational, and for many people change is hard and uncomfortable. Human nature is to resist change despite being quite adaptable to it (Prosci, n.d.) Implementing change can be stressful because of threatening norms of practice and psychological safety. Clinical psychologist Justin Ross (2020) explains that psychological safety requires predictability and control. Clinical research professionals daily work is built around predictability and control. A protocol outlines each step that is required to implement a trial or study. Furthermore, the study start-up process has numerous regulatory requirements and approvals. Therefore, predictability and control for research administration and implementation have been threatened by the on-going pandemic. Ross (2020) suggests however, when faced with change, individuals are presented with an opportunity to improve the manner in which they operate.

Pandemic or no pandemic, change management relies on people, processes, and technology. The onset of COVID placed a bigger lens on operations and forced many organizations to face down change management. This was especially experienced in research as administrators began to work remotely and research visits shifted from in-person to telehealth or were put on hold altogether. Joan Versaggi (2020), VP of Consulting for Advarra, cites three essential elements for change management that are valuable for clinical research administration.

First, it is critical to maintain communication. Prior to change implementation, it is important to identify all the stakeholders who have a segmented impact from the change. Constant communication will allow those individuals to consider the impact of the change on their operations and workload. Thus, stakeholders impacted can control how the change will manifest in their own work. Versaggi (2020) suggests establishing a communications plan that clearly articulates the elements of change on the various stakeholders. The plan should outline the impetus for change, responsibilities for executing the proposed change, desired outcomes of the change, and how stakeholders can provide feedback on the change, both while being implemented and post-implementation.

Next, change champions, those leading the change, should unpack the process or procedure that requires change. To fully understand a process or procedure, teams can break down the processes into the various phases, steps, or tasks and ensure those introducing a change recognize all the details of the current process. Then considering today’s context, determine if the change needs to be permanent or short term. For example, with the impacts of COVID-19, is the process change a relatively short-term need for social distancing? Or is the process change permanent. Versaggi (2020) suggests documenting processes, both old and newly changed, in operating manuals or training materials which can be shared broadly with those impacted.

Finally, take advantage of technology to enable improvements and changes to the operation. Consider how the technology can positively impact an individual service unit or be utilized across the enterprise to improve efficiencies. Identify technological tools which streamline workflows, automate tasks, and are accessible by stakeholders engaged in operational processes. For example, with remote work, research administrators may incorporate electronic signature software to execute agreements or contracts; or administrators may explore e-binders to document and track study records and data collection. The technology exists, from clinical trial management systems to web-based project management tools, to create more efficient workflows.

The most valuable asset of an organization is its people; which also makes it the most challenging aspect of managing change. Change disrupts routine behavior and can create uncertainty. No matter the onset of change, either sudden or strategically selected, by focusing on fundamentals of change management, administrators can create psychological safety through controlled and predictable action steps.

References

Rebecca Atkinson, PhD, serves as Strategic Research Project Director at Prisma Health. Rebecca’s role facilitates infrastructure projects to support health research start-up processes and expedite communications among the health system and its partners to create efficient operations. She can be reached at Rebecca.Atkinson@prismahealth.org

“When managing change the most critical and challenging aspects lies with people.”
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Four institutions who have recently embarked on the journey to implement a SaaS solution in their institutions share below their experiences, including their decision-making process, implementation process and lessons learned.

**Children’s Mercy Hospital, Kansas City, Missouri**
Children’s Mercy began the SaaS journey for our research systems four years ago when we restructured our relationship with our vendor. We decided to migrate our existing IRB, COI and limited grants applications to the SaaS model and add further modules – Agreements, Safety, full Grants and IACUC. We have made SaaS a priority for other system selections; most recently in our choice of Clinical Conductor as our clinical trial management system.

Our priorities in these decision-making processes were efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The burden of supporting on site, highly customized, systems had become significant and prevented growth in other priority areas. Users were often frustrated with issues that required investigation and resolution by in-house software developers.

We emphasized a high level of user engagement in the design of the systems, employed project management best practices and utilized rigorous user acceptance testing. Through close partnering with our vendors we have hit a high level of on time, on budget delivery and a
high level of user satisfaction. The integration between modules in a SaaS context is much smoother than in a self-hosted environment. Post go-live support is provided by CMH employees who triage and resolve basic issues and interface with the vendors to address complex issues. This ensures that our users communicate with a support specialist who knows our organization and workflows.

As we have progressed through this process, the users have become more willing to part with customizations and accept “out of the box” functionality. We have clearly benefited from an approach that shifted the focus from in-house software developers supporting vendor provided platforms to project managers, business analysts and support specialists. Notably, the software developers remain employed and work on custom development projects for researchers and complex system integration projects, work that requires their unique qualifications.

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, Arkansas

In 2008, our institution made the decision to replace our homegrown proposal review and approval system with a commercial product. We chose a company that could provide us with the latest, highly-customizable technology, a most important consideration to our campus at the time. While this product met our needs, the customized nature of our system meant that we were limited on being able to take advantage of product updates. Our decision to move to SaaS was made after evaluating the needs of our campus, the IT resources available, and, of course, our financial circumstances. Our institution’s leadership, committed to supporting our research mission, agreed to invest in the SaaS product for our current products – COI and Grants – and also to add Agreements, Animal Ops, IACUC, and Biosafety modules.

We then began our implementation project by developing an executive committee and a faculty/business committee. Sub-committees of Subject Matter Experts reviewed our business practices, and their recommendations were brought back to the full committees. The Director of our Office of Research Information Systems (ORIS) worked tirelessly with the grants and COI stakeholders to implement the system. Presentations regarding the “new” product were made to faculty and administrators and communication sent out through campus announcements.

Several hiccups — a cyberattack that wiped out a server dedicated to our switchover, difficulties with data conversion, and staffing transitions — delayed our implementation by several months. We also had extremely limited training resources. These setbacks, all within the context of the pandemic, were not sufficient to shut us down. Our Agreements, Grants, and COI SaaS project went live in October 2020.

The launch went fairly smoothly. As with any change, the transition was easier for some of our stakeholders than for others. Concerns were expressed about the need for more training and communication. In addition, we were required for a short time to work out of our old system to complete some pending tasks, while entering new proposals and awards in our new system. One month into the transition, things are still developing.

“...business practices have to be re-assessed and revised.”
beginning to run more smoothly.

We learned a lot during the Grants and COI transition. The process reinforced for us that business practices have to be re-assessed and revised. Our campus recognized that more resources were needed to successfully implement such a large and vital system. We were recently approved to add another employee to the ORIS to provide high-level support to our stakeholders on campus.

University of Miami, Florida
Our institution had a long history of buying and installing software as the business needs required it. As a result of the business units driving the technology, we often purchase software, heavily customize to meet the unique needs of the business unit, and/or not leverage the application to its fullest extent. Our first foray into a SaaS-type model was with the implementation of our ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system. This, unfortunately, had its shortcomings and was widely seen as poorly implemented. When we embarked upon replacing our pre-award system, we evaluated pros and cons of the options and decided SaaS would best fit our needs, given the relatively low resource requirements from IT. Our IT budgets were limited, and we didn’t have the resources or personnel to develop and maintain the software adequately. So, while the costs for SaaS were greater, when factoring in hardware and personnel, it made sense for us to go in that direction, despite the difficulties with our ERP implementation.

We began our project to replace our existing pre-award system and invested heavily in its success. We dedicated a full-time project manager, as well as dedicated resources from our central office. The biggest impact we made, however, was in dedicating a resource from our training area, to aid in change management and communication. The impact this had on the success of the system cannot be overstated. We launched the system in April 2020, amidst the pandemic, having switched all of our training to virtual, and did so on time and on budget.

Following our launch, we dedicated resources to support the application within our central sponsored office. Doing so allowed the users of the system an opportunity to call someone, with grants knowledge, to get support, rather than be assisted by more technical people with no grants experience. Additionally, we had drop-in labs for people to come ask questions of the central sponsored office staff, as well as twice-daily training offerings, all via Zoom. The one area where we would have liked to spend more time was in transforming our existing business processes. Transforming business processes can be done only after understanding how the software works,

but it is one area where we often had challenges. Training, communication and change management, having been made a core part of the implementation, are strategies we would absolutely repeat.

Princeton University
In summer 2018, the Office of Research and Project Administration (ORPA) at Princeton University began the process replacing its open-source, consortium-supported, 20-year-old enterprise system supporting proposal development, proposal submission, and proposal management. Of course, replacing an enterprise-level system that supports the transacting and reporting of hundreds of millions of dollars is nontrivial. Additionally, the electronic research administration (ERA) market is a niche market that has been slow to mature and has cycled through various service delivery models over the last 20 years (i.e., homegrown vs. vendor-supplied; open source vs. closed source; consortium-driven product development vs. vendor-driven product development; on-premises vs. SaaS deployment).

Formal preparation for the replacement of the legacy system began with ORPA-led focus groups on campus comprised of staff and faculty regarding the system, as well as desired attributes of a successor system. In fall of 2018, ORPA developed and issued an RFP for the successor system. While a number of vendors responded to the RFP, in winter 2018, the team tasked with selecting a replacement system down-selected the potential vendors to a few. The project team then invited these vendors to campus to provide demos both to the project team, as well as to the Princeton research community. In these sessions, the functional and IT-related requirements of the successor system were rigorously reviewed. Two vendors were then chosen to offer sandbox environments to the Princeton research community, as well as be tested via the University’s User Experience Office (UXO). In the end, a SaaS offering emerged as clearly the best ERA solution for Princeton, for several reasons:

- The vendor was clearly invested in the SaaS solution; just because a vendor offers a SaaS solution may not mean they are fully committed to the model, or believe it is the future of their product.
- After extensive business process mapping to capture current state operations, Princeton was able to “prove up” that our functional requirements aligned closely with the out-of-the-box SaaS product.
- The SaaS offering was the best overall solution for Princeton from the standpoint of minimizing costs and risks associated with enterprise-level system customizations.
- Princeton was comfortable with the SaaS model of product development in which the University would work with its peers through a user community to ensure the system continues to meet its business needs over time.
WE ARE GOING “VIRTUAL” FOR THE 15TH ANNUAL PRE-AWARD RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION (PRA) CONFERENCE AND WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US!

Our theme “STRONGER TOGETHER” reflects how our profession positively responds to challenges, how our members are always willing to share their knowledge and perspectives, and how we value the diversity of our membership to promote equity and inclusion.

Our program committee has done an outstanding job planning offerings that go beyond mere training or professional development sessions. We focused on an engaging agenda to strengthen competencies and knowledge for individual members while jointly reflecting the strength of our profession and association.

ENGAGING WITH EACH OTHER
While distance will keep us physically apart, you will finish with a sense of community, camaraderie and that we are, indeed, stronger together. With networking events and sessions designed with integrated chats and live question and answer sessions, you will have the opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the globe and to customize your own sessions. Whether you are looking to implement best practices, restore your well-being, make a change to your career path, or continue to expand your knowledge in a core area, TOGETHER we have it covered.

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER
Our diverse program covers all areas of Research Administration with Federal, Research Development, Medical/Clinical and Global tracks designed with members in mind whether they are new to the profession or a seasoned veteran or from a large academic medical center or a PUI. Grant development, management and research compliance topics will remind you that you are not alone in the quest to stay abreast of our constantly changing research administration landscape.

INSPIRING EACH OTHER
Our keynote address will be delivered by one of our own NCURA members who many of you will know as she has been a key champion for advancing leaders within our profession. Dr. Suzanne Rivera recently became the 17th President of Macalester College and in doing so she is the first woman and first Latinx person in the college’s history. Dr. Rivera is sure to inspire you to explore and develop your career path or those around you by strengthening your skills and learning from others.

We can’t wait to come together and strengthen our professional networks to support our local and global research endeavors with PRA 2021!

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One OSP’s Experience with Growth MINDSET

By Christine Bravo

How many times have you heard — or even read in this magazine — that “change happens” and you need to be prepared for change so you can guide it? William Paterson University’s (Wayne, NJ) Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) was already going through a long season of change before COVID-19. While there is no single, specific way to manage multiple types of change at once, we kept an open mind and were willing to adapt, which helped us to learn, grow, survive, and strengthen.

The OSP was fortunate that the university was committed to focusing this year’s professional development on the concept of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). “Growth mindset” is being willing to develop basic processes through dedication and intentional effort. As we learned about growth mindset, we realized we were already applying, and learning from, this perspective. These four changes and the lessons we learned are examples of how having a growth mindset enables resiliency.

Change 1: Leadership. A new associate provost, president, and provost all started at William Paterson University within the last three years, following a series of leaders who did not recognize the broad value of sponsored research and projects at predominantly undergraduate institutions. The new administration encouraged strategic planning for growth and set goals, supported new policies and procedures, and enabled us to hire new full time staff in research development and post-award project support. These senior leaders were still learning the job when everything shut down; in fact, one had only worked in the office for a few weeks before we shifted to full time remote work. (Lesson: Leaders are partners.)

Change 2: Consultants. We began working with a national proposal development firm in 2019. Working with them taught us new approaches to proposal development, including different ways to help our applicants develop their ideas, organize the structure of applications, and communicate and share files with our applicants. (Lesson: Identify and apply best practices.)

Change 3: Virtual Workspaces. When we started to work remotely, we ensured that our level of customer service was maintained. We learned how to use new programs to communicate with each other and our applicants and awardees. We found that simply greeting each other via chat with a daily “Good morning!” and “Have a good evening!” helps us feel connected even though we are not passing each other in the office on a regular basis. (Lesson: Keep it personal.)

Change 4: Institutional Data. Another notable change implemented by the new president was the revamping of the university’s freshman experience in fall 2019. This new freshman experience provided information about academic and personal/familial situations that the university did not have before, and this information is now used in applications. Accessing this and other information more effectively also helped us build a new relationship with the restructured Office of Institutional Effectiveness. (Lesson: Everything is related.)

How We Are Getting Through: A Growth Mindset. All of these changes, both at the institution and within OSP, would not have been accomplished without a growth mindset. It helped us as individuals and as a team. One way to support and encourage growth mindset is to take advantage of professional development opportunities that involve everyone on a team.

For example, our whole staff of five attended the virtual NCURA Annual Meeting and talked about what we learned afterward. If not for the pandemic, we may not otherwise have had the opportunity to participate due to budget and travel constraints.

Overall, the outcome of the last couple of years is that we have been learning to adapt and to be resilient. We know that we will continue to encounter changes. We take the time to reflect on the changes, both those that are planned and those that just happen, to see what they mean and how they improve us. We have learned that being flexible, ready, and willing to adapt and embrace change makes us stronger and more effective.

Change and Progress

Reference
NCURA's Newest PDF Resource

Topics include:
- Developing a business continuity plan (BCP)
- Key business processes continuation strategies
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Proposals are Up, Staffing is Down: 
Interviewing & Training Remotely

By Stephanie Morgan

As pre-award managers, we could never have anticipated an immediate shut down of in-person work at the office when we embarked on our hiring and training process for two entry-level positions. At the time our campus first prohibited non-essential in-person work, the first of our new team members had been physically present at the office for only two weeks! Not only that, but she was hired on our medical school team, which experienced increased proposal submissions due to funding opportunities for COVID-19 and budget cuts across our institution. The unwanted change to remote work, coupled with an increased workload, forced our team to quickly reassess our hiring and training plan to accommodate this unprecedented situation.

Concurrent with onboarding our first entry-level hire, we were beginning the interview process for our second open position. Unlike with our first open position, for which interviews took place in-person, candidates for our second open position would need to be interviewed remotely. Candidates would not be able to visit the office, meet us in person, or observe how we operate. It felt strange to consider this “alternate universe” of interviewing. Most concerning was the fact that we would not be able to assess our candidates in person. We were accustomed to evaluating candidates face-to-face to determine how well they would fit with our team. How would we do this remotely? Ultimately, we adapted our hiring process to assess a candidate’s fit with our team using an introductory phone call with no video and an observational interviewing strategy to accommodate the constraints of the two-dimensional video format for the full interview.

The purpose of our initial phone call was to be transparent about our daily life in pre-award, which requires managing proposal deadlines and prioritizing work in a shifting landscape of competing demands. We were honest about the stress. We were also honest about the supportive environment that we would provide. Offering this information before an official interview meant that candidates could consider their interest in the position after knowing more about the reality of the job. One unanticipated benefit of the preliminary call was that candidates had more specific questions about the work and structure of the team during their interviews. The questions were very insightful for us, as they demonstrated how candidates processed the information we provided and how they reflected and related this to thinking about being hired into the role. Fortunately for us, our introductory phone calls did not deter our top candidates.

Regarding the interview content, relatively little changed for the remote format as our hiring goals were the same and maintaining interview consistency paramount. We spent less time describing our office structure and the daily work of the position as we discussed most of that in our introductory phone call. We had more time to focus on questions like how candidates handled difficult situations in the past or how they managed their time or organized their work to meet deadlines. In terms of interview questions, the only update we made was to include a question about a candidate’s current experience working remotely and what was working well for them or what structure they had developed to transition successfully to remote work. In addition, we shared our experiences in making adjustments as we were all dealing with the same situation. It was a bit awkward, although not surprising given the circumstances, to admit as managers that we had never conducted training remotely but that this would nevertheless be our new hire’s experience. Providing room for a dialogue about learning styles, along with our thoughts about how this could be successfully implemented gave both parties important information. Our candidates could observe how we approach rapid, unexpected changes, as managers, and we received insight into how candidates dealt with unexpected changes in their working environment.

Despite not having the benefit of experiencing the in-person “vibe” or the “feeling” one has when interacting face-to-face with a candidate, we decided that we would do our best under the circumstances to assess ‘fit’ with intentional observation. Therefore, we structured our process to include observation of non-verbal communication during the video interview. Fortunately, non-verbal communication, such as body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions, can be observed on a video call. We took turns asking our standard questions and those who were not talking observed non-verbal cues while we all listened to the verbal responses of the candidates. No remote process could fully replace the benefits of learning about someone from in-person interaction; however, this practice worked well and assured us that we could gather important information about team fit despite interviewing via a video feed. (I would like to note for the record that we did not evaluate our candidate’s pets’ behavior because, let’s face it, who can actually control dog[s] or cat[s] when they want their person’s attention?)

After our new team members were hired, our next task was to address onboarding remotely. Although the training content remained the same and the format of delivery narrowed to remote methods only, conducting
training remotely has meant adjustments in planning and implementation at the management level. It has required the development of an incremental approach to introduce subject matter in a way that does not overwhelm, while balancing the fact that our proposal submissions have increased and we need our new staff to help us manage that work. For example, have you ever had the experience of explaining a “simple” business practice to a new colleague and, in the process of answering their good questions (one of the reasons that they were hired of course!), digressed on tangents to include every tributary of the river that is your topic? In an occupation where providing the response, “it depends,” provides 100% accuracy in answering questions, you can see where I’m going. How do you take the vast body of knowledge needed for our work and break it down into manageable pieces that can be delivered remotely? Our answer has been to work together as managers to discuss and debate the best ways to train while also getting the work of pre-award done on a daily basis. We leverage what work we can for training opportunities, which often means planning ahead and developing or enhancing current training materials. This process requires constant communication and flexibility to adjust to the shifting landscape of competing.

What have we learned thus far? Simply put, training remotely takes more time and planning due to the limitations of remote working, which lacks the “osmosis” of the in-person office experience. Our office has learned that, although we have successfully transitioned to remote work, it is not where we want to stay. Our experience has been that we are able to address complex issues, including training, more efficiently when we are able to meet in person. Communication has been the most important aspect of managing our unexpected hiring process changes, both internal and external. Discussing the unforeseen circumstances and how they were impacting recruitment was integral to planning a process that both addressed the changes and maintained our integrity and goals. In addition, our direct communication with our candidates demonstrated our leadership style by offering transparency into how we were managing the unexpected changes. As the new year unfolds, no doubt there will be more unexpected changes and, along with research administrators everywhere, we will continue communicating and planning to address them with agility.

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Life is not predictable; changes occur everywhere and can fall upon us at any time. Projects are not predictable either; the larger they are, the more unpredictable they are, even in calm times. And yet, we have to manage our projects in calm and in rough times. We try to apply change management techniques.

In this publication we discuss an international project, the plans and changes that affected it particularly during Covid-19. Sudden changes have a huge impact on us, our projects, our work and our society. We compare the traditional approaches and models of change management and compare them with the real world. Lessons learned for future projects are derived.

**Definition of Change and its Management**

Change Management is the continuous adaptation of strategies and structures to changing frame conditions. Table 1 shows change types in these categories: predictability and impact size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Type</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Predictability-driven</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Planned</td>
<td>Consciously, adapts to actual frame conditions</td>
<td>Reorganisation, Institutional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unplanned</td>
<td>Not consciously, during daily work</td>
<td>Organisational learning, Life cycles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact-driven</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- First-Order Change</td>
<td>Continuous and small changes</td>
<td>Continuous Improvement Process (CIP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Second-Order Change</td>
<td>Discontinuous and radical</td>
<td>Organisation breaks apart, falls out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Types of Changes (Gourmelon, 2011)
The project has been running now for one year and the frame conditions have been tough nearly right from the beginning. Many changes occurred, and most of them were unplanned, sudden and disruptive. We responded with planned, small step-by-step changes. Table 2 compiles the changes we have encountered so far. As we see from the table, four of the five unplanned changes occurred due to COVID-19, a Force Majeure, and the impact and damage was medium to large.

Due to COVID-19, three planned changes had to be implemented: designing hygiene concepts, the shift to online training and working from home. The impact here was from medium to large, and the damage size was medium. Some other planned changes were date changes and competing projects also resulting in date and process changes. Their impact and damage was small, and the changes were adapted within the project life cycle without problems.

### Table 2: Change categories of MOOC-4-All

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Name</th>
<th>Predictability driven</th>
<th>Impact driven</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Affected Players</th>
<th>Impact to project as a whole (small-medium-large-total)</th>
<th>Severity of damage (small-medium-large-fatal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner responsible severe accident</td>
<td>Unplanned</td>
<td>Second order</td>
<td>Car accident</td>
<td>Specific consortium partner + all partners</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corona Pandemic</td>
<td>Unplanned</td>
<td>Second order</td>
<td>Force Majeure</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical meetings cancelled due to COVID-19</td>
<td>Unplanned</td>
<td>Second order</td>
<td>Force Majeure</td>
<td>Single participants and groups</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel restrictions</td>
<td>Unplanned</td>
<td>Second order</td>
<td>Force Majeure</td>
<td>All partners and target groups</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People sick and in quarantine due to COVID-19</td>
<td>Unplanned</td>
<td>Second order</td>
<td>Force Majeure</td>
<td>Consortium partners</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New training concepts (hygiene concepts) due to COVID-19</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>First / second order</td>
<td>Force Majeure</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift to online teaching</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>First order</td>
<td>Force Majeure</td>
<td>All partners and target groups</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift to Home office</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>First order</td>
<td>Force Majeure</td>
<td>All partners and target groups</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliverable performance dates change due to competing projects</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>First order</td>
<td>Competing projects</td>
<td>Single participants and groups</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned dates change</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>First order</td>
<td>Single participants and groups</td>
<td>Single participants and groups</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff person leaves consortium</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>First order</td>
<td>Competing projects</td>
<td>Teams or partners</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOOC design process changes compared to proposal</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>First order</td>
<td>Lessons learned, reorganization of team</td>
<td>Consortium and partners</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: ERASMUS Changes: Planning and Change Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unplanned</th>
<th>Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Competing projects cause new date changes</td>
<td>• One important partner has severe accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• COVID-19</td>
<td>• COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical meetings cancelled</td>
<td>• Physical meetings cancelled due to Corona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Travel restrictions</td>
<td>• Travel restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constantly changing frame conditions on collaboration and training due</td>
<td>• Each national country, each federal Bundesland has own COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to new COVID-19 guidelines</td>
<td>guidelines; they are changing nearly every day causing chaos and a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high uncertainty among the citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Operational dates must be adapted to actual conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff persons change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shift to online trainings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shift to home office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• New hygiene concepts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**First order =**
Continuous and small changes

**Second order =**
Discontinuous and radical

---

**Figure 1: Changes in the ERASMUS Project, their Impact**

- **MOOC design changes due to lessons learned**
- **Staff person leaves consortium**
- **Planned dates shift**
- **Competing projects and date shifts**
- **Shift to Home office**
- **Shifts to online training**
- **Partner accident**
- **Corona Pandemic**
- **Physical meetings cancelled due to Corona**
- **Travel restrictions**
- **People corona sick and in quarantine**
- **Hygiene concepts**

Impact vs Damage:
0 = none - 5 = total
0 = none - 5 = fatal
Table 3 shows the occurring changes and the four categories. Six changes occur as first-order changes and mostly planned. One unplanned first-order change also occurs, but there are also six unplanned changes of second order (discontinuity and with vast impact) occurring in the ERASMUS project.

Figure 1 shows the changes in the Erasmus Project, the damage size and the impact. We see that COVID-19 was the major change with highest impact and damage. However, the changes following the pandemic could be planned; their impact and damage were high, but not fatal.

Other changes, mostly from routine frame conditions and lessons learned had small impact and damage and were well plannable.

How do people cope and behave with changes?
The 3-Step Model by Kurt Lewin (1947) is classical for a behaviour-oriented change concept and deals with the resistance to change. It shows three phases:

Unfreezing: preparation of the change, communication about the changes and involving the affected players. Support and time to deal with the change should be offered.

Change: Here the change is performed. It is supported by direct action taken by the leadership and by training the players. The change process is constantly monitored.

Refreezing: The new avenue has to be adapted, and the personnel must get “used” to the new process. It must be secured that the new process will be kept alive and will not fall back into old paths.

In the Erasmus Project Case the performance went radically down in the moving phase, and the deliverables and the communication stopped nearly altogether; this happened during the hot change period as of March 2020 until summer. Courses and meetings were cancelled, and online training and home office techniques were created very quickly. However, this did not work at the beginning; people did not have computers, software, or internet at home. For home schooling, kids were not provided with computers, tablets and additional equipment, and some kids had no room at home to do the home schooling. Parents had to work from home plus watch over the children, and they could not work on the project. The general commercial loss was very high in these countries and reached billions of Euros, while unemployment rose dramatically. Our project nearly came to a stop.

As of autumn 2020, the ERASMUS project had adapted the new status of work and, we are now on a higher working level with more expertise in distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Happened in Erasmus?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>Professional Project Management, clear responsibilities, structured processes, sufficient planning, and monitoring</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritisation and coordination of the measures and sub-projects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific planning and communication of first visible successes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Early and sufficient information</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem awareness for necessity of change in all hierarchy levels</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Show personal advantage of the change</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Management</td>
<td>Clear goals</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Show the long term organisation development planned</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visible commitment and engagement for the changes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance of proposed course of action by the affected persons</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Design</td>
<td>Adequate change speed</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
learning and training. We have designed online meeting processes along with online and hybrid learning. As a result, the crisis even gave us a push to reach our project targets faster. We probably would not be at this high technical and process status without being forced by the pandemic.

How did the people react to the changes and how did they behave?
Many partners simply went into hiding and the communication stopped. They were not yet ready for the change processes. They were waiting, skeptical and concerned. The coordinator and one partner tried to push things and promote the changes. The task for management was to convince the neutral and skeptical persons to become supporting or at least passive positive members.

Techniques used to deal with the change

- Early communication and involvement
- Allowing time for concerns and discussions
- Trainings for the new online techniques and software
- Project management
- Team development

The main reasons for resistance to change are not technical considerations but emotions. These emotions have to be taken seriously, and a lot of time was taken to discuss and to deal with these emotions. We took these emotions seriously and performed many bilateral or small group online meetings and talks. We showed the good ideas we had and encouraged the consortium partners to follow our ideas and to experiment with them.

We had a close contact to the EU National contact point, and we asked for advice and communicated our changes as early as possible.

Lessons learned
We cannot predict everything; there is a project-immanent risk of the unforeseen. However, by a structured approach technique on risk management and on potential changes — already in the project design phase — the majority of potential changes can be made visible at a very early stage. During the operational phases, strong project management, monitoring and effective communication can deal well with the potential changes.

But there are changes we can never foresee.

References
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March 12. It was our last full day at the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) headquarters in Washington, D.C. We were coming off the heels of our February meeting and looking ahead to what the continued focus on research security would bring in the Spring. We had been discussing COVID-19, somewhat peripherally, for a few weeks prior, but that second week in March changed everything for much of the country, and changed it at lightning speed. As one COGR working group member has so accurately mused, “who knew there could be anything that would actually unseat research security as the number one topic we’re all thinking about?” While we were thrown into 100% remote work like so many of you were also dealing with the need to provide guidance to your staff and faculty on the stream of federal agency guidance that came during those early weeks. To help our members navigate the rapidly-changing federal landscape, COGR quickly formed a working group to assess the situation, track agency guidance, communicate with OMB on flexibilities, provide survey reports to our membership on COVID research impact, and hosted several COVID webinars that were free and open to both COGR and non-COGR members.

Since the initial fog of those early days has lifted and most institutions have gone through at least one cycle of ramp down/ramp up, we stand looking at the impact of this continued public health emergency, and it’s clear we are in this for the long haul. While the broader impact on science is incalculable and will likely not be fully understood for years, COGR set out to help the research community wrap its arms around the financial impact to research created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to do it in a way that is measurable and explainable. Building on work initiated by Dr. Tanju Karanfil from Clemson University and Dr. Melur (Ram) Ramasubramanian from the University of Virginia, COGR leaders began to formalize what came to be known as the “Research Impact Metric” (RIM) Model—a model to estimate the research output loss and financial impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic downturn.

As a result, COGR released “Research Impact Under COVID-19: Financial Crisis and the “Pandemic Normal” on August 25, 2020. The opening paragraph of the paper states our thesis: Research output has been severely impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, at home and abroad. The Research Impact Metric (RIM) Model is a novel tool that estimates the impact. The United States is the global leader in research—but as the financial impact to research approaches the tens of billions of dollars and our global leadership in research is threatened, national security and economic stability are jeopardized. What started as an acute occurrence has become a chronic crisis and will persist until an effective vaccine is widely available. As we learn to do research under the “Pandemic Normal,” a new commitment by federal leaders, research institutions, and other stakeholders is imperative.

The RIM Model, in measuring research output loss, attempts to quantify the impact on research that is due to not only ramping down on-campus research for a time, but also the inefficiencies created by the rise of this new Pandemic Normal. The core of the Research Impact Metric (RIM) model is illustrated below:
But why is this topic so important? In short, the financial crisis is real and severe. The RIM has shown that research output losses are between 20 and 40 percent at COGR institutions. The RIM takes into consideration challenges such as restricted access to research buildings and laboratories, social distancing within a laboratory, staggered shift scheduling, adjusting to continuously working with PPE when formerly unnecessary, and additional time and resources required to properly clean and sanitize equipment (some of that, by the way, is specialized. You cannot clean a highly sensitive microscopic lens with the same cleaner you would use to spray down the counters, for example). Additional challenges include temporary (and in some cases, permanent) loss of research personnel who display COVID symptoms or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID, disrupted supply chains, interruptions on conducting in-person human subjects research, disrupted animal colonies and cell lines – the list goes on.

Besides losses in research output, the RIM translates to financial disinvestment and shows impact to be hundreds of millions of dollars at individual institutions and a potential impact of tens of billions of dollars across the entire U.S. research enterprise. This is consistent with the May 7, 2020 testimony by Dr. Francis Collins before the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee hearing. Dr. Collins testified that the pandemic could result in $10 billion in lost NIH-funded research due to lost productivity (Mervis, 2020). The United States is also at risk of losing an entire cohort of graduate and post-doctoral students, which may disproportionately include researchers from underrepresented groups, specifically, minorities and women. Understanding this impact is paramount to communicating the impact effectively to Congress and federal agencies in an effort to help provide relief to agencies and institutions, maintain global competitiveness/technological leadership, and the economic leadership of the United States.

So what is the “Pandemic Normal?” Much has changed in 2020, and how we conduct and support research is no exception. With significant projected losses in research output and without both time extensions and funding supplements to recover the loss in research output, many research projects are likely to be unable to meet their original program goals and aims within their originally proposed budget. In its simplest terms, the scope of work pre-COVID promised on a $1M award will now require more than $1M to complete, and/or the scope of research promised to be delivered in one-year pre-COVID, may now require more than one year. In addition, institutional ramp down efforts (after the initial shutdown), ramp up efforts, and the possibility of future ramp up/ramp down efforts each result in additional new costs. Consequently, to operate effectively and efficiently under the “Pandemic Normal,” new measures such as redefining proposal and budgeting guidelines, eliminating overly-burdensome regulations, and related measures must be considered in partnership with leaders from the federal agencies and the research enterprise.

Reference

COGR is continuing to collect case studies on Research Impact and the RIM from our member institutions. Based on the data collected, COGR will provide an addendum to the paper, as appropriate. COGR is encouraging institutions to provide RIM case studies.

If your institution would like to contribute, please contact David Kennedy at dkennedy@cogr.edu.
A Summary of the ESF’s 2020

Adapt.
As 2020 unfolded and the nation and world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, NCURA’s Education Scholarship Fund (ESF) Select Committee experienced unique challenges of its own. Each year, the ESF provides two $2,500 scholarships in both the fall and spring semesters. Funds for the scholarships are typically raised through the fundraising efforts of the Committee. Recognizing that the beloved Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. remains the only fundraising event of the year (due to fundraising license requirements), we held out hope that AM62 would still be held in person. These hopes quickly diminished as required quarantines began across the globe. Once we received notice that the conference would be held virtually, we had to adapt and refocus our efforts.

Despite the inability to fundraise this year, the ESF Committee was still able to provide scholarships due to more than enough funding that was raised in previous years. We knew we needed to support our NCURA colleagues, now more than ever, in their pursuit for continuing education in research administration. Ensuring that these students and programs continued during a time of financial uncertainty was critically important and the NCURA Board agreed. Since we were no longer worried about being able to provide scholarships, we were able to shift our focus from fundraising to what the ESF is really all about: advancing the field of research administration through education. Additionally, the Committee focused our efforts on upholding NCURA’s Statement on Diversity and Inclusion by ensuring that all members have equal access to the funds provided by the scholarship fund. Although we could not raise funds, we knew we could raise awareness and change the way we completed other important activities of the ESF Select Committee.

Change.
As a committee, we changed. Behind the scenes, our monthly meetings quickly went from discussions about raffle tickets, prizes, and swag to articles about the ESF’s mission and history, rubrics, and blind reviews. We set out to write articles for the NCURA Magazine for consistent and strategic messaging about the work of the Committee and the select funds. We reviewed our existing scoring rubrics and identified ways to do more towards maintaining diversity and inclusion of both scholarship recipients and Committee members. We developed new rubrics and guidelines for internal review of scholarship and Committee membership applications. We may not have seen our scholarship fund grow in the last year, but we did see our Committee grow in many ways.

Grow.
One specific initiative that we put into practice was blind review of applications. Knowing we all hold both conscious and unconscious biases, we challenged ourselves to create a new method of review that offered a better opportunity for the most qualified candidates to shine through, “without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, social class, sexual orientation, ability, personality, functional experience, or background”. Through many discussions and the support of Latasha Johnson, we streamlined our internal review processes and created a process for blind review of both scholarship and new committee membership candidates. For our blind reviews, Latasha redacted information that might sway our scoring, such as names, titles, and affiliations before sending them to the committee for scoring. Instead of being unconsciously biased, the committee was able to focus on the quality of the candidate and their current or potential contributions to NCURA. We found this blind review streamlined our selection process by reducing the discussions needed to identify the winners; obvious winners for both processes were easily identified by the compiled scoring. These changes also taught us some valuable lessons that will stay with the committee and its members for years to come.

Learn.
We learned that even with rubrics and blind reviews, we all see candidates differently. Maybe something they said resonated with us. Maybe their excitement about the opportunity came through and that excited us. In either case, the highest quality candidates were selected. We also learned the importance of diversity within our own committee. This year, for the first time, we had a previous scholarship awardee on the committee. That inclusion brought a different point of view and provided such benefit to the work of the committee overall. We looked past our assumptions and were able to ask what the applicant expects and thinks. The benefit of this perspective was great.

With 2021 beginning, we look forward to more fundraising opportunities and an opportunity to further the work we began in 2020. We move forward as a stronger committee with a stronger focus. We’re proud of the progress we’ve made as a committee that can adapt, change, grow, and learn. With all the challenges presented by 2020, the ESF Select Fund committee experienced successes, still, due to our ability to change. 

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Hiring discrimination is real and present in the workforce today. As a hiring manager, it is important to be aware of various types of discrimination that can surface during the hiring process. Managers must ensure that groups of people are not favored over others and that all are given an equitable opportunity to compete for the job available. In many cases, hiring decisions can be affected by unconscious biases that the reviewer is not even aware of. These unconscious biases, if left unchecked, can lead to hiring based on factors that do not have an effect on a candidate’s ability to carry out the role they’re being recruited for (Alexandra, 2018).

Unconscious bias is made up of a range of types, highlighted below:

- **Confirmation bias**: the tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one’s existing beliefs (Britannica, n.d.).
- **Affinity bias**: the unconscious tendency to gravitate toward people like ourselves in appearance, beliefs, and background (LeanIn.org, 2020).
- **Perception bias**: techniques are all types of short cuts that allow us to more quickly gain an understanding of a person, event, or situation. However, they also lead to only a partial, and possibly inaccurate impression, resulting in bias (Oxford Reference, 2020).
- **Halo effect**: when an initial positive judgment about a person unconsciously colors the perception of the individual as a whole (Psychology Today, 2020); or an error in reasoning in which an impression formed from a single trait or characteristic is allowed to influence multiple judgments or ratings of unrelated factors (Britannica, n.d.).
- **Horn effect**: refers to how a personality trait, behavior, or negative attitude obscures the rest of the positive characteristics of a person or group (Psychology Spot, 2020).

In many cases, the resume is the first interaction for applicants formally applying for an open position. An unconscious bias may lead to what is called “resume discrimination.” Resume discrimination is made up of many pieces, but foremost is name discrimination, as a proxy for race, ethnicity, nation of origin, and religion. This discrimination is found early in hiring, has been persistent, and has not abated with the advent of online mechanisms for hiring, as discussed in a series of studies. This happens because, fundamentally, humans are making the decision about who to hire.

**Name**

In 2004, the seminal work of Bertrand and Mullainathan established the field of “correspondence experiments,” and researched the level of racial discrimination in the United States labor market by randomly assigning identical résumés “black-sounding” or “white-sounding” names and monitoring the impact on contact for interviews from employers. The results of this first experiment were clear: white-sounding names received 50% more callbacks than those with black-sounding names, indicating that, all other things being equal, considerable racial discrimination exists in the American labor market (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004).

This study was followed by a number of others across the world, including Baert’s work in 2018 that compared a range of factors that contribute to hiring discrimination, including identifiers such as nation of origin, immigration background, gender, home address (as a proxy for class or social status) and sexual orientation. (Baert, 2018). Resume discrimination is not necessarily mitigated when moving to a hiring model using online social networks. Acquisti and Fong in 2015 updated the experiment, creating profiles for job candidates on popular social networks, manipulating information protected under U.S. laws, and submitting job applications.

“...UNCONSCIOUS BIASES, IF LEFT UNCHECKED, CAN LEAD TO HIRING BASED ON FACTORS THAT DO NOT HAVE AN EFFECT ON A CANDIDATE’S ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE ROLE THEY’RE BEING RECRUITED FOR.”
The results highlight the lasting behavioral influence of offline networks in the hiring process, despite online interactions becoming increasingly common. Acquisti and Fong found that candidates with Muslim sounding names were 13% less likely to receive an invitation to interview than those with Christian sounding ones. (Acquisti and Fong, 2015).

Name discrimination continues into the workplace, and Equity Labs considers the impact of intra-national discrimination that has migrated with immigrants to the United States. Their survey work in 2018 of Hindu Indian Caste discrimination, identified by last name, solely in the United States, shines a light on the discrimination that can be pervasive even after immigration. This is highlighted by a new lawsuit filed by California’s Department of Fair Employment and Housing in July 2020 against Cisco, alleging that an Indian-American engineer who identifies as a member of a lower caste, as identified by his last name, was expected to accept a lower status in his work team at Cisco, due to his lower caste status, by two other Indian-American engineers from a higher caste background.

The facts are clear, name discrimination is happening and at exceptionally high rates for specific ethnicities and religious groups. What does this mean for research administrators in institutions of higher education? How do we work with HR at our institutions; as well as our colleagues, to have a bias-free process for reviewing resumes and hiring?

Mitigation - What We Should All Do

LinkedIn added a feature in July 2020 to add an audio clip of the pronunciation of your name, to try to smooth the barriers with less common names in terms of pronunciation. Unusual names, for a variety of reasons, are less likely to receive a phone screening or initial interview, and some of this barrier might be based on hiring manager discomfort with mispronouncing the candidate’s name. By re-framing the audio clip as standard practice on LinkedIn, we can ensure managers are familiar with using that tool, and reducing that barrier to screening.

Mitigation in Hiring

Overall there needs to be increased awareness of discrimination: to teach all hiring managers about hiring bias to allow people to acknowledge when they’re doing it, and how they can alter their behavior so they no longer base their decisions on their biases.

In terms of practical steps:

1. Check language in ads — remove gendered- and age-focused language, including years of experience.
2. Blind the resume process — remove key identifying information. If you cannot blind the resume process, modify the order of the resume by changing the order of information on a resume so someone’s minority status, normally identified by their name, is not revealed until you have read the candidate’s other information. This will avoid “attention discrimination,” where hiring managers pay less attention to applicants with minority-sounding names (Bartoš, Bauer, Chytílova, and Mat jka, 2016).
3. Standardize the interview process — standardize the interview questions and the post-interview debrief so all assessors follow the same framework when assessing and ranking candidates.
4. Implement a collaborative hiring process — include as many different people with different backgrounds and worldviews as you can.
5. Don’t rely on intuition — intuition is based on assumptions, assumptions are biased, and comfort with those like us can be affinity bias.

References


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Considerations for Focusing on the F&A Future

OVID-19, campus shutdowns, shrinking budgets, and Facilities and Administration (F&A) rate extensions all require that administrators consider the investment in research and the impact on future years F&A rates. More than ever before, colleges and universities are planning for the next rate proposal and examining techniques to identify and optimize cost allocation to benefitting activities. For example, many institutions took advantage of the opportunity to defer F&A proposals based on FY20 until FY21. In this review, we quickly examine the considerations of four important initiatives starting with a diagnostic review to improve costing processes via a dry run exercise; the benefits of proper utility metering; updating capital asset depreciation expense; and the evolution of the library infrastructure.

Why Dry Runs are Important
Regardless of the base year or situation, all institutions can benefit from performing a dry run ahead of their next F&A base year submission. Dry runs allow institutions to diagnostically analyze the expenditure data, sponsored awards, facilities occupancy, capital spending, supporting systems, and human resources required to prepare the F&A cost proposal. The dry run is performed based on the pre-base year. The diagnostic review will render findings and conclusions directed towards ensuring compliance and optimizing F&A cost reimbursement.

Much of the data that is used in a F&A proposal has counterintuitive impacts on the calculated rates. For example, one may think that an increase in research expenditures will result in a higher calculated F&A rate. However, unless the indirect expenses associated with the research have increased at the same rate as the direct expenses, the calculated rate will likely be lower.

Looking at the data set is a low effort, high impact endeavor. More broadly, the following questions are examples of areas that should be assessed to complete the review:

- When was the space occupancy data last updated?
- When was a physical moveable equipment inventory performed?
- Are buildings componentized to accelerate depreciation expense?
- Are utility meters working correctly?
- Are utility meters installed at separate individual buildings?
- What is the trend of library expenses with growing digital services?
- Are our research expenditures higher or lower than the last submission?
- How much cost-sharing needs to go into our proposal?

The benefits of a dry run should help executives and administrators make informed decisions based on data analysis and answer questions like:

- What opportunities are available to ensure compliance and to optimize cost recovery that can be implemented before the close of the base year?
- Should we consider a multi-year rate extension?
- Do we have the human resources to dedicate to the preparation of the F&A proposal?
- How much consulting expertise do we require?
- Are the current costing systems (cost modeling system, space management, fixed assets) adequate to support the documentation required for the F&A proposal?

These questions above are meant to provoke insight and can be answered without exhaustive effort. If followed appropriately, making enhancements and corrections before the close of the base year should ensure the ideal recovery of indirect costs.

Understanding Your Utility Costs During Covid-19
The knee jerk reaction we have heard many times is that institutions are reluctant to prepare a F&A cost proposal because of the uncertainty of costs, including utilities. Most assume that utility costs are lower than normal in response to closures at the institution, but is that true?

Before we get to that, let us take a moment to understand the importance and relationship of F&A, utility costs, and metering. The Operations and Maintenance (O&M) cost pool represents the largest uncapped pool and can account for over fifteen points of the Facilities component of the F&A rate. Utility costs are normally the largest component of the O&M pool and are identified by building based on utility consumption meters.

A closer look at recent actual metered data has spotlighted some surprising results. Though we have seen decreases in utility usage and corresponding cost, we have also seen many instances of no change in utility usage (when taking into account degree-days) or even an increase in utility costs related to the age of building; increased airflow rates; older building control systems without the ability to address partial occupancy,
or longer ‘occupied’ periods as physical distancing requires occupancy to be spread out; etc. Campus wide, there can be significant variations in utility consumption on a building type basis such as research, medical, classroom, administrative, or housing.

A closer analysis of utility usage and cost using building metered consumption is an important step when considering how to approach your next F&A rate proposal. If you are not yet in your base year, now is a good time to do a review of your system and replace or service meters in need, so you can make an informed decision.

**Fixed Asset Depreciation Reporting Exigency**

How is your institution keeping pace so that it is prepared for quarterly and annual financial reporting, and the upcoming FY21 or FY22 base year F&A proposal? Fixed asset accounting is a comprehensive process to account for cost expenditures to purchase capital assets, ranging from land and buildings to various types of equipment. While most of the process is routine, we all have adapted with our teams working remotely during this pandemic. However, specific steps to meet federal reporting requirements common to research and healthcare have been interrupted since March.

While certain institutions only fell three months behind, other research institutions will not have their staff back on campus until January 2021, putting them nine months behind. The information gathered during the inventory, tagging, and reconciliation process feeds management reports, financial reports, and is ultimately required to meet Federal A-133 audit requirements. These required steps include affixing barcode tags to equipment and recording their room location so that management can rely on this information to properly assign depreciation expense to buildings, departments, principal investigators, and projects.

Beyond the regulatory requirements, the institution should consider building construction cost componentization in order to enhance depreciation related to new construction and renovation projects by identifying building, building services, and fixed equipment rather than capitalizing all project costs to one “standard” life. OMB Uniform Guidance indicates that research building components be depreciated on a building by building basis, understanding that institutional use varies based on the functional use and type of research activities, and the useful lives should be reviewed on a periodic basis.

We suggest beginning equipment inventory and building componentization studies early in the base year to accommodate a potentially longer timeline during the pandemic and the successful integration of the results into the accounting system and F&A proposal planning process.

**The Evolution of the Library Infrastructure**

Academic research libraries support their educational institutions’ missions to conduct research, including sponsored research. Colleges and universities have performed library cost analysis studies, typically employing user surveys, for at least thirty-five years to quantify the extent to which their libraries support sponsored research. The Library cost pool is uncapped and included in the Facilities component of the F&A rate. This has given institutions an incentive to measure the extent to which their academic libraries support sponsored research.

In the absence of a library cost analysis study the standard allocation methodology prescribes that library expenses shall be allocated to the institution’s major functions first on the basis of primary categories of users - including students, faculty, professional employees, and other users.
This year we have all experienced profound changes in our day to day work lives. While responding to the many challenges of COVID-19, our organization also launched a new enterprise resource planning system, Workday. After months of discovery, design, build, and testing, we found ourselves working remotely in the final stages of the project leading up to implementation.

For those tasked with bringing on a new system, these tips may help you increase efficiencies and be more effective:

- **Learn the language:** Each IT system has its own language. Early adopters will benefit from enhanced communication with implementation partners, swifter navigation within the system, and ease of referencing supporting materials. This jargon will soon become the institutional vernacular so better to go ahead and employ it.
- **Be open:** Change brings opportunity for process improvements. Take the time to understand what additional functionality exists and how you can take advantage. While this may seem like extra work, make the change work for you.
- **Involve stakeholders:** Communicate the change to those impacted. Gain their perspectives on the planned activities as discoveries may come from seeing the project from their viewpoint.
- **Be flexible:** Implementing a system may take months or years to accomplish. During this time, the organization continues to evolve which may alter the scope of the project. Be prepared to accommodate amended plans and adapt to the new needs.
- **Crosstrain:** Systems have multiple connection points across the organization. Focusing solely on a specific unit prohibits discoveries or generate the funding necessary to support productive programs.

Leading change affords an opportunity to inspire others and to make a difference in the state of things. While change brings stress and uncertainty, it also brings improvement and growth. Be the change agent that brings about a positive transformation in the workday.

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“If we do publish anything, it would be a joint publication with the company. And we certainly don’t want to publish anything that might be patentable, so why are we hung up on this term?”

“The company’s objection to the publication term is unacceptable. This is my work and my science. I’ll have the ability to publish or we’ll walk away.”

In our work with faculty, standing amid the interests of a sponsor, a faculty member, and our institutions, we may hear all kinds of statements about the relative importance of a publication term within a contract. We all know that the publication term is critical for the contracts we negotiate on behalf of our institutions. But what is it that makes these ubiquitous clauses so very important? Here are four reasons to take a bit of extra time when reviewing the publication term.

**The first reason why the publication term matters** is referenced in the “second PI statement above. Our faculty exist in a world where they must “Publish or Perish.” From the time they are graduate students until they are senior researchers with a cadre of graduate students of their own, an important (even if flawed) measure of productivity and success is the breadth of their publication curriculum vita (CV). Reviews have suggested that publications are utilized as a criterion for promotion decisions (Abbott et al., 2010) and likely impact a faculty member’s ability to secure external research funding (Rawat & Meena, 2014). Retaining the right to publish ensures that faculty have the ability to highlight their current research, demonstrate expertise in the field, and include their research results and findings in their upcoming grant applications.

**The second reason why the publication term matters** relates directly to a university’s mission. Most, if not all, universities have a statement or policy on “openness in research.” A university exists to educate and disseminate information, and maintaining broad openness within research contracts is critical to that function. To curtail dissemination for any reason deteriorates that foundation and erodes the public’s trust and investments in academic research. It could be argued that the mission of the university and the mission of a company are directly at odds over this matter. However, as organizations like the University-Industry Demonstration Partnership have shown — this is not the case. Appropriate carve outs should be made in the context of understanding these downstream implications, whether they are Export Administration Regulations (EAR) or the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).

**The third reason why the publication term matters** relates to downstream impacts of accepting a publication restriction by a sponsor. By intending to publish and broadly share their work, faculty ensure that their research results are exempt from the US government’s export control regulations. Within the export control regulations, whether they are Export Administration Regulations (EAR) or the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), there is a fundamental research exclusion whereby research results that are ordinarily published and shared broadly within the research community are excluded from the regulations. An exclusion may be nullified when a university accepts a publication restriction, such as agreeing to allow a sponsor to review and approve a publication before it is disseminated. Your institution may have specific reasons why it would accept a publication restriction in a particular case. That decision should be made in the context of understanding these downstream implications, in addition to the other cautions noted within this article.

**The final reason** (discussed in this brief article) relates to how a publication term fits within the complex matrix of contract terms. A publication term is not an island. The terms of any contract need to be consistent such that no language in some other clause might unduly negate the hard fought, elegantly crafted publication term. For instance, if the confidentiality term includes study results in the definition of confidential information and the intellectual property term assigns exclusive ownership of results to the sponsor, then there may be nothing your faculty member can publish that would not be a violation of the contract. Careful reading and an appreciation of the implications of language throughout a contract are required to retain the necessary rights to publish.

The publication term is a critical element of each contract or agreement we negotiate on behalf of our faculty and institutions. The publication language supports the faculty member’s own development and influence in the field, furthers your institution’s mission to freely and openly disseminate the latest research to the larger community, and serves as a bulwark against onerous export control regulations that might otherwise limit whom can participate in the research conducted on campus. The next time you review a publication clause, remember, your work is crucial to the success of the research and the researcher.

References

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Since March 2020, many of us have scrambling to take learning from the classroom to the virtual environment. In past editions of the NCURA Magazine, we’ve shared on best practices for engaging the virtual learner by providing online opportunities for learner-to-content, learner-to-instructor, and learner-to-learner interactions.

In this issue, we focus on preparing for the eventual return to the classroom. While undoubtedly a lot of our training will remain in the virtual environment, we should prepare our learners for a return to in-person training and the anxiety that might ensue.

Panopto, a popular online video platform for instructional videos, defined the flipped classroom as a “form of blended learning where a student is first exposed to new material outside of class, usually in the form of an online presentation. When the student attends class in a brick-and-mortar setting, the class time is used to apply the material in the form of problem-solving and discussion” (Panopto, 2019).

What might a flipped classroom look like in a blended-learning environment?

- Participants view a pre-recorded video on a specific topic, such as cost transfers. Upon return to the classroom (whether in-person or online), the instructor presents a case study on the specific topic (e.g., a problematic cost transfer) for interactive class discussion.
- Participants are asked to review a mock budget. Upon return to the classroom, the instructor leads an interactive discussion on issues that came up during the review.
- Participants review on-demand learning modules followed by office hours with the instructor. For example, participants go through an on-demand module on subrecipient monitoring. During their scheduled time with the instructor, participants discuss issues that came up for them in the module and share on subrecipient monitoring issues in their day-to-day work.

In all of the above examples, the flipped classroom provides the instructional learning that is self-paced and the application of what was learned “in-person”.

As we embrace this New Year, let’s be thankful for all the things we were able to accomplish last year, and be prepared to make the necessary adjustments in 2021, knowing that “nothing changes if nothing changes.”

Reference

Stephanie F. Scott, MS, CRA, is the Director of Policy and Research Development, Sponsored Projects Administration at Columbia University, responsible for education on policies and procedures impacting the day-to-day management of proposals and awards. She is active in the Federal Demonstration Partnership and served on NCURA’s Professional Development Committee. Stephanie can be reached at sfs2110@columbia.edu

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**TRAINING TIPS**

Turn and Face the Strange Ch-Ch-Changes

By Stephanie Scott and Tricia Callahan

1. Start with a communication plan. Participants may be uneasy about returning to in-person training, so provide them with information on:
   - What the training environment will look like in terms of ability to socially distance.
   - If PPE will be required and made available.
   - If there will be alternatives for virtual engagement through Zoom (or similar) attendance.

2. Shorten in-person time by chunking content into smaller segments. Supplement in-person training with microlearning opportunities such as job aids, video tutorials, and on-demand learning modules.

3. Incorporate activities (openers, energizers, and games) designed to reduce tension. Participants learn best when they are free from psychological and physical stressors.

4. Plan for infrastructure needs to support both virtual and in-classroom delivery for learners who are unable to return to the in-person setting.

5. Allow for blended learning, which combines virtual and classroom modalities and may include eLearning modules, videos, simulations, job-aids, and instructor-led activities.

**Blended Learning**

In the blended-learning environment, instructional materials are combined with opportunities for learner-learner and learner-instructor interaction. Interaction may take place online or in a more traditional classroom setting.

One blended-learning model that may be delivered virtually or in a hybrid virtual/in-person environment is the flipped classroom.

**Zoom (or sim ilar) attendance.**

**Reference**

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The topic of adaptation to changes is especially relevant to our context in the Middle East, as our research infrastructure environment is rapidly developing amidst a period of growth in relevant productivity metrics. Having worked in both North America and the Middle East, I can say the environment here is characterized by a greater degree of flux in many different aspects to include policies, regulations, and budget. It is for this reason that our administrative processes must retain a degree of flexibility and nimbleness to be able to cope with the changes. Sometimes this can be a little frustrating but on the other side, we also have opportunities to provide actionable feedback to the relevant stakeholders in order to influence changes that benefit the overall research environment.

One example of the above, is the change implemented over the years by the leading research funding organization in Qatar. It was established about 15 years ago, with the goal of facilitating the creation of a research ecosystem in the country and to further a national quest for transformation to a knowledge-based economy. The funder initially adopted an investigator-driven model with hardly any restrictions on the topics or subjects that can receive research funding. This had the effect of incentivizing a large number of applications and widespread adoption of the funder’s programs. However, the model gradually shifted from an investigator-driven one to a mission one focused on the strategic priorities of the country. This meant that the research output needed to have a tangible impact in key areas important for the country’s development and economy. Fortunately, we were given enough heads up about these changes, which enabled us to establish contacts with relevant stakeholders and “end-users” in the country to better understand their research needs. The changes in the funder’s model also had the positive byproduct of incentivizing an emphasis on research impact in general amongst our faculty. As a result, our institution successfully adapted to this transition and continued to participate in the funder’s programs.

In the last few years, the trends we are seeing in the research-funding world are an increase in requirements’ stringency or a higher bar for acceptance coupled with less dollars to go around. This is also the case in our local context. We have dealt with these factors, by boosting our researcher support mechanisms, to include more proposal writing trainings, enhanced administrative support and the facilitation of collaborative endeavors with researchers from around the world. We also generally encourage our researchers to apply for funding sooner than later, to increase their likelihood for success.

Of course, no discussion about external changes in this day and age can be complete without mention of the unprecedented impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. We were impacted by the crisis much like the rest of the world and have had to adapt to a new reality amidst the crisis. This meant that a majority of our research projects were affected, and many have had to devise alternate work plans to work within the newly imposed social distancing measures. Human subject research and primary data collection was shifted to the online realm to the extent possible, which meant a much greater dependency on technology and virtual communication platforms in order to accomplish the research objectives. From an administrative standpoint, the forced changes demonstrated the feasibility of working in an almost paperless set-up, and the efficiencies that could be realized with such adoption. This is hugely beneficial in a part of the world that up until recently viewed paper transactions as essential to an organization’s operation.

However, the dependence on virtual communication technology put some countries with damaged or underdeveloped infrastructures at a disadvantage. This is applicable to some of the poorer or war-stricken countries in the Middle East. As a result, different measures sometimes had to be implemented to assist researchers or research subjects in those countries. This includes utilizing technologies that do not require large data bandwidths or allocating additional funding to the individuals in those countries in order to acquire needed technology.

The imposed travel restrictions significantly affected our ability to recruit talent from overseas and as a result local research capacity greatly increased in importance. This provided additional urgency to the matter of dedicating effort and resources to develop indigenous talent, which has always been a central tenet of the country’s developmental strategy. The Coronavirus pandemic has made the matter an immediate necessity. We hope to leverage the opportunities created by this crisis to build sustainable research capacity for the immediate and long-term future.

Research is characterized to a great degree by uncertainty and so adapting to new information or changes to work plans is inherently part of the process so to speak. Research administrators must also adapt in a positive way to changes in their context. This is accomplished through anticipating change but also by building robust mechanisms that can withstand unanticipated difficulties and capitalize on presented opportunities. 

By Raed Habayeb

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Virtual Experience

22nd Annual Financial Research Administration (FRA) Conference

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We are excited to welcome you to the 22nd Annual Financial Research Administration Conference held virtually March 15-17, 2021 from the comfort and safety of your computer! It is common knowledge research administrators have several superpowers, one in particular proven useful this past year is our ability to adapt and change! We are capturing this concept in our conference theme the “Versatility of Us”. Amid a global pandemic, our profession has remained agile, and flexible to continue to get the job done, supporting all the various programs and people contributing to the world’s betterment.

We will kick off the conference with an engaging and timely talk from our keynote speaker, Dr. Wayne Frederick, surgeon and President of Howard University in Washington D.C. Dr. Frederick has conducted research bridging health disparities among African Americans and other underrepresented groups. Dr. Frederick will speak on the topic of Diversity and Inclusion and Unconscious Bias.

We would like to extend a special thank you to the entire 2021 FRA conference program committee who devoted their time and talents to put together a robust schedule with over 80 options to choose from in Panel Discussions, Concurrent Sessions, and Workshops led by our knowledgeable peers who offer distinct contributions to advance our profession. There is a myriad of professional development sessions to complement the various professional stages we occupy within our careers. Highlights include sessions from our federal sponsors, NSF & NIH who will share agency-specific updates, including how each is handling COVID-19 and foreign influence. In addition, new this year is a track devoted to offering several sessions on diversity and inclusion in research administration.
The Versatility of Us!

Tracks that will be represented in the 22nd Annual FRA program include:
- Accounting & Finance
- Central
- Clinical/Medical
- Departmental
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Federal
- Global
- Human Capital
- PUI
- Regulatory Compliance/Audit

We all share a collective disappointment we cannot meet in-person, but there are many significant advantages to attend FRA virtually!

- **COST-EFFECTIVE** – with no travel costs (and travel restrictions at many institutions) and a lower registration fee – the conference is a great value.
- **TIME EFFECTIVE** – in addition to no travel time, half-day conference offerings which allow for work/home flexibility.
- **ACCESS TO CONFERENCE SESSIONS & MATERIALS** – instead of only attending one session at a time, attendees can enjoy access to all sessions for 90 days after the conference to view or re-watch.
- **EASY TO NAVIGATE** – the sessions, materials, zoom Q&A rooms, exhibit hall, and chats are a breeze to attend and contribute.

Whether you have attended many NCURA conferences or this is your first, we invite all versatile research administrators to reset, refresh, refuel your research administration knowledge, and connect with your colleagues worldwide!

We hope to see and chat with you on the Zoom screen in March!

Conference Co-chairs,

Timothy Schailey
Thomas Jefferson University

Sinnamon Tierney
Boston University
Working from home has been a salient issue in the research administration community for the past several years. Whereas in the past we’ve discussed it as a perk to help employees achieve work-life balance, the pandemic has forced a majority of our community into unplanned-for, fully remote work for the foreseeable future. Many guides to working from home are designed for the pre-pandemic world, so we worked with our research administration community to develop tips to help research administrators work in our new reality.

PARTs (Partnering in Administration of Research at Tufts) is a training and knowledge development program for research administration staff across Tufts University. PARTs sessions are usually offered as in-person sessions on each of Tufts three campuses. This year, our virtual curriculum is called PARTs at Home and is designed to cultivate a sense of connection between staff working remotely due to the pandemic. The inaugural remote session, conducted via Zoom, was titled How We Make This Look So Easy (Even When It’s Impossible). Gathering as a large group and then using breakout rooms, participants shared how they manage the workflow remotely, what tools have worked for them, and what has fallen flat. Perhaps their most important conclusion was that each person is experiencing this situation differently—facing different obstacles with different resources—and while we can all offer each other ideas, what works for one person might not work for another.

Among the great pieces of advice that were shared were blocking off time daily to get away from your desk, creating routines for getting ready for work in the morning and for ending the workday, having brief daily check-ins with your team, and the helpfulness of screen sharing. Without the ability to pop back to someone’s office for a follow up, participants stressed the importance of “pre-organization” before reaching out to an investigator by email or gathering for a virtual meeting. Our community discussed their

### Benefits to Working from Home During the Pandemic

- Commuting time/cost has gone away (especially key in the Boston area)
- More virtual opportunities to meet colleagues across Tufts three campuses (*“we are now part of the same ‘Zoom campus’”*)
- Greater sense of work/office community, more interactions because barrier of engagement is lower with Zoom
- Greater sense of appreciation for colleagues
- Better use of electronic records systems, moving forward the transition to a paperless system
- More efficient, getting work done faster
- More sleep, more time with family/easier to help care for family members
- Easier to work uninterrupted
- Better ability to get outside during the day for breaks
- Learning how much can be done remotely; can be productive without needing to be in the office

### Downsides to Working from Home During the Pandemic

- Hard to stop working at the end of the day/lack of a boundary between work and personal time. Overall work/life balance (*“working all the time”*)
- New systems and technology to learn
- Loss of ability to ask a quick question in person
- Harder to stay connected as a team
- Depend on technology/connectivity at home which can be a challenge
- Missing the social aspect of work
- Facing increased stress due to the pandemic
- Harder to work uninterrupted with family home
- Feeling locked in at home, not enough changes in scenery
- Use of personal resources for home office set up, which are not equal for everyone; poor ergonomic set ups
efforts to avoid working nights and weekends now that work is always at our fingertips, including not starting work early thinking that you can finish early (because you most likely will not), and using different tools for communicating with your work team, friends, and family.

We also discussed the benefits and downsides of working from home. This conversation revealed that positives and negatives of remote work—especially during the pandemic—are flip sides of the same coin. For example, some staff noted greater sense of community, greater appreciation of colleagues, more interactions, and better communication because the barrier of engagement is lower with Zoom. Because Tufts has three geographically distinct campuses, these research administrations feel they now have more opportunities to meet colleagues from other campuses (“we are now part of the same ‘Zoom campuses’”). Others noted it is harder for them to stay connected as a team, the valuable aspect of work is no longer present, and it is more difficult to interact with investigators because the ability to ask a quick question in person is lost. Similarly, some staff praised the fact that commuting time and associated costs have gone away, that it is easier to work from home uninterrupted, be more productive, and get outside for a break during the day. Others countered that they are feeling locked in at home, having to invest personal financial resources to create a remote work set up, and experiencing difficulty working uninterrupted because of family obligations such as elder or childcare. Lastly, while some staff touched on the fact that much can be done remotely and paperless, others found the shift a challenge, involving an unwelcome learning curve.

While we’re all working remotely, work looks different for each of us in the pandemic environment. We must strive to be gracious and understanding of our colleagues. It goes without saying that research administrators are not getting a break because we do not have to report to the office. It is worth remembering that the experience of the ongoing pandemic is difficult for everyone in their own way, and that one person’s experience is likely not every person’s experience. While some may be comfortable, many of our colleagues are struggling. Radical empathy is necessary from both managers and colleagues. Managers should especially make space for staff to tell us about their challenges, and it is our responsibility to support them as much as we can.

We thank Greg Simpson at Tufts University for the inspiration to write this article.

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A Primer on Intellectual Property in Research Agreements

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It is said that change is inevitable. Certain changes, however, come along so infrequently that there is no outline, no guidebook, and very few people from whom you can receive advice. The combining of academic departments is one of those scenarios for which one can never really properly prepare. There is no formal training nor textbook to rely on as a guide. This article explains the steps and lessons learned upon the merger of two departments at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

In October 2019, it was announced to the faculty that the Division of Biostatistics and the Institute for Informatics would form ally merge into one administrative unit. The official merger was effective January 1, 2020 and the administrative changes were complete in December 2019. The largest and most visible change was that the chairman of more than 40 years in the Division of Biostatistics stepped down to relinquish leadership to the Director of the Institute for Informatics. Though they would become one administrative unit, it was determined that for the time being each research team would continue to function as semi-autonomous units while a new master plan was built.

Just as drastic a change, but surely not as visible, was the creation of a new research administration team for the new Institute. The Institute for Informatics, founded in 2016, had one financial specialist who performed many of the financial transactions. However, it did not have its own research administration team and contracted with another department for many of its core administrative functions. The Division of Biostatistics had a very small and dedicated research administration team of three people: a business manager, a financial specialist, and a grant specialist who split his effort as a research project manager for the Division Chairman. To add additional complications to the merger, the business manager was scheduled to retire by the end of 2020 and the grant specialist accepted another position at the university prior to the beginning of the transition. Only the two financial specialists remained, each retaining the administrative history of their respective departments.

Following are the steps taken and the lessons learned about facilitating a successful merger.

**Step one:** Build a new research administration team that can effectively manage a new research unit twice the size of either preceding unit. In November 2019, a new business manager was hired to guide the two departments through the transition. In December, one month prior to the merger, she hired two new team members to join the existing financial specialists (one from the Institute and one from the Division). The team now consists of the business manager, who manages all aspects of administration; a research administrator to oversee all pre- and post-award activities for sponsored projects; a senior financial data analyst to help manage the multiple core units within the newly combined Institute; and two financial specialists, one for each semi-autonomous unit, who do all of the purchasing, asset management, and billing for each unit.

**Step two:** Keep calm! Upon arrival, it was clear to the new administrative team that faculty and staff from both the Division and Institute were nervous about the transition. There were many unanswered questions. Who will we report to? Will there be layoffs due to redundancy? Are we moving to a new building? Who will handle my administrative needs? While it was up to the Institute’s new leadership to answer the big picture items, it was up to the new administrative team to keep business running as usual. The business manager sat down with each faculty member one-on-one to discuss their concerns and to assure them that though changes would likely be made at all levels, the impact to each faculty member’s research was considered in the planning process. One key to this was the remaining financial specialists. They were able to teach the new administrators how to implement the changes while minimizing the impact to the faculty and staff. The goal was to be supportive and not overwhelm them.

**MANAGING CHANGES**

When Merging Departments

*By Amy Reily and Bill Courtney*
It was now the administration team’s job to assure the faculty members that any change would be both beneficial and timely.

**Step three:** Remain transparent. One of the chief concerns mentioned by the faculty regarding transition planning was the need for leadership and administration to communicate as honestly and transparently as possible. Open communication to introduce even the simplest changes, such as updating the style of a monthly fund report or changing an online form to increase efficiency in reporting billable core hours, helped reduce anxiety surrounding the change itself. A simple explanation ahead of time allowed the faculty and staff to ask questions and the team to address faculty and staff concerns.

**Step four:** Work toward the future. The administrative team continued to create new procedures and workflows to provide continuity while still considering the unique needs of each research area. The team worked hard to get to know each other professionally and personally. Time was spent clearly defining job duties, cross-training, and understanding the business needs of both areas. This work made the team well-prepared to take on future challenges and growth.

**What did we learn:** Small changes can have unintended impact. For example, a simple suggestion for a switch in coffee service led to some unintended consequences, which reminded us to have all information before making decisions! Additional time would have been beneficial to the Business Manager to acquaint herself with the team. Overall, the administrative team as well as faculty and staff in both research units proved they were willing to get to know each other, try new things, and weather change with grace. Change can be hard, but people treating each other kindly and respectfully, getting to know each other, and having some fun along the way can create a team well poised for successful transition.

**“SMALL CHANGES CAN HAVE UNINTENDED IMPACT.”**

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**Adapting to Change**

There is one constant in research administration—change is imminent. Whether it is adapting to new regulations or changing approaches and guidance from our sponsors, addressing ever-evolving policies and practices from our institutions, or facing new challenges (and opportunities) that are presented to us by principal investigators and others on a regular basis, the way we handle these changing landscapes can have an ever-lasting impact on our offices.

During this time of pandemic the need to adapt to change is elevated even more. In conducting more than 125 reviews at institutions of all shapes and sizes, NCURA Peer Reviewers have found that many of the most successful research administration offices are those that embrace change. Key to adapting to change is clear communication. When communicating during a time of change, key components to keep in mind include:

- **Uniform voice**—ensuring the message has been crafted and is being communicated with a uniform voice helps avoid confusion and mixed messages.
- **Consistency**—whether communicating on behalf of yourself, your office, your campus or others, it is important to present a consistent, clear message. While the message may be conveyed to different audiences, a consistent—and consistently repeated—message will pave the way for a smoother transition to change.
- **Responsiveness**—responding in a timely manner to questions, concerns and calls for clarification will help address any negative reactions or roadblocks one may encounter.
- **Building relationships**—constant work to build relationships with constituents and to remind them that research administration offices are primarily service units will help smooth the way when change comes around.
- **Flexibility**—approach change with openness and as much flexibility as possible; sometimes we don’t think of all issues prior to introducing change and being nimble enough to address new issues that arise will help make the process easier.
- **Assessment**—assess how you are communicating change, the response to that change and work to address how you can continue to help change happen in as painless a process as possible.

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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
2020 was a year rife with change and raised many pertinent questions. How do you respond to an epidemic—a pandemic? How do you count votes in a presidential election? How do you continue to work and educate when you must stay home? How do you stay engaged and tied to those you are connected to and love? Where is the justice for those who have been marginalized and disparaged? How do you accommodate change, make room for differences, acknowledge that nothing is forever and move on?

As resilient as human beings are, no one could have predicted the amount of turmoil, transition and consideration the last year has required of us all. For those of us in research administration, the lessons may be even more profound and long lasting.

COVID-19 has proven that technology is an essential tool that requires constant updating and evolution in order to enable the work to go on and continue at an elevated pace. Clinical trials for SARS-CoV2 vaccines and treatments have indicated that science can move faster; there is a lot at stake, and personal data is one of the many impacted elements. Some concern and discussions ensued that examine when the rights to data truly exist—do they still exist during a pandemic? In July 2020, the US Congressional Service reported that the EU and Data Protection Supervisor continues to review this, while other data professionals fear that exceptions to protections currently being utilized during the pandemic may last well beyond and become woven into daily practice.

Things are changing in the world of data protections for research, much of which has been due to foreign influences and the rapid evolution of technology. What used to be comprehensive measures put into place to govern and regulate data management may not be adequate in the protection of both health and personal data. Now, in addition to the HIPAA Privacy Regulation, the DHHS Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the California Consumer Privacy Act, governments are requiring additional levels of comprehensive organizational policies, processes and enactments to ensure compliance.

The GDPR, enacted in May 2018, outlined the acceptable practices for the use, disclosure and security of personal data for population members of the EU. The impact of this international law and the addition of the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) have changed the way data are managed for research in some profound ways. Data repository or big data collection studies for example, must ensure that data are protected by providing policies, procedures, access, device checks and computer systems validations in order to be contractually compliant. As if things weren’t complicated enough, they are about to get more exciting, as some states begin enacting their own privacy laws. The web of compliance will increasingly become problematic and difficult to mitigate, impacting potential future advancements in research.

Of course, of high concern and of highest risk is whether data can be re-identified, along with the access to data. We know that the HIPAA rule requires that electronic data confidentiality and integrity be protected from impermissible uses or disclosures, but HIPAA does not cover personal information beyond health data. Given this fact and the introduction of GDPR, it is no wonder that states are positioning to protect their population data from risky data behaviors and misuse.

Perhaps states’ cries are being heard, because according to Crescioni and Sklar, in their paper, “The Research Exemption Carve Out: Understanding Research Participants Rights Under GDPR and U.S. Data Privacy Laws,” “Legislators in the United States have been considering a federal data privacy law and are actively studying principles from both the GDPR and the CCPA in informing the new law.” As the conversations continue and legislators review current laws to maximize protection and minimize administrative red tape, the path forward is murky at best. It is presumed that health care will continue to digitize and technologically adapt as we evolve. We can think about digital health in the time-being, as the FDA describes it, as including mobile health, health information technology mobile devices (including COVID applications), telemedicine and personalized medicine. This will become increasingly more important as research, especially clinical trials, continues to engage in wearable and AI technology that collects data of the wearer. Where do the data from your Fitbit live and who has access to it? Do you know what happens if that data has been compromised? Denise Myshko, in her article, “Wearables in Clinical Trials,” indicates that by 2025, in just 4 years, 70% of clinical trials will incorporate some form of health device or technology in an attempt toward real-world data. The future of health research may lie here. If this rings true, we are and will increasingly deal with higher levels of red-tape and contract language, which will require additional and increasingly difficult negotiations to ensure...
proper protections, especially if participants are located all over the country and the world.

The US attempted to assume some responsibility surrounding research data in 1997 by requiring that institutions comply with 21 CFR Part 11. The intent was to put controls into place that managed and mitigated the electronic environment around the auspices of e-record keeping, a narrow vision to say the least. Requirements included security, archiving, audit trails, copy controls, sequencing controls, device checks, change control, document control, and computer systems validations. In effect, internal control is tantamount to risk mitigation. But how is this accomplished without losing scientific innovation?

It’s time to think more broadly about data privacy. There are still many differences in how the EU and the US regulations compare, for example, the differences in the way the EU and US regulate privacy, the context in which to implement, application to research (specifically clinical trials), required data protections, transparency, roles and responsibilities, requirements of consent, and how to report and handle data breaches uniformly. In a nutshell, we must continue to plan, monitor, and report effectively. How we get there will be dependent upon the technology available and our ability to speed up and globalize legislation.

References

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What are the possible outcomes of an OIG investigation?
We investigate allegations of legal and regulatory violations related to NSF proposals, awards, and those who work for or conduct business with NSF. If wrongdoing is found, potential outcomes range from a warning letter to imprisonment in the most egregious cases.

That sounds scary. Is this always the case?
As neutral fact finders, our job is to find out what happened. Sometimes, what someone thought was a violation turns out to be unsubstantiated, and we can close the investigation with no action taken.

What are potential administrative outcomes of an investigation?
Administrative investigations cover a broad range of allegations, including research misconduct, whistleblower retaliation, abuse of authority, grantee conflicts of interest, mismanagement, and waste. If our investigation uncovers administrative concerns, there are many potential outcomes, including: (1) suspension of award(s), (2) termination of award(s), (3) certifications and assurances that submissions are free from research misconduct, (4) warning letters, (5) letters of reprimand, (6) exclusion from being a peer reviewer, and (7) in the most egregious cases, government-wide suspension or debarment.

What are potential civil outcomes of an investigation?
Most of our civil cases are prosecuted under the False Claims Act (31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733). This law was passed after the Civil War to combat fraud against the government. An entity, such as a university, may violate this law if it submits a false or fraudulent claim to the government, or if it submits a false statement in support of a claim to the government. Violators may have to pay up to three times the amount of damages (misspent funds or improper claims) and a monetary penalty for each false claim or false statement submitted. Our office works with the Department of Justice to pursue this type of action. Most such cases end in a settlement agreement where the subject agrees to pay a sum to the government in exchange for the government agreeing not to file suit. Additionally, an entity may have to hire a compliance officer or revise policies as part of a compliance agreement to ensure the wrongdoing will not recur.

What are potential criminal outcomes of an investigation?
The most serious instances of grant fraud can result in criminal proceedings. In such cases, as with civil matters, we work with the Department of Justice. In addition to theft and embezzlement, typical criminal violations include wire fraud, false statements, obstruction of justice, and aggravated identity theft. Some criminal cases end with the subject(s) pleading guilty, while others go to trial. Sentences may include one or more of the following: imprisonment, home confinement, supervised release, probation, fines, penalties, or restitution.

Where can I learn more?
Our Semiannual Reports to Congress summarize recent substantive case activities, including types of wrongdoing and outcomes:
- Audit Reports: www.nsf.gov/oig/reports
- How can I report research misconduct or other forms of fraud, waste, abuse, or whistleblower reprisal?
  - Web: www.nsf.gov/oig/report-fraud/form.jsp
  - Anonymous Hotline: 1.800.428.2189
  - Email: oig@nsf.gov
  - Mail: 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
  - Attention: OIG HOTLINE

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

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Why Investing in Research Compliance Is a Good Bet: An Overview of Investigative Outcomes

By Pamela Van Dort

Need another reason to invest in research compliance? With the COVID-19 pandemic, budgets are tighter than ever. But the long-term costs of shrinking oversight may outweigh any short-term savings. In this article, we’ll describe potential outcomes of administrative, civil, and criminal investigations to demonstrate why it’s as important as ever to ensure compliance with federal laws and regulations.
“Hey, would you mind helping me out with some research data?”
“Would you be interested in partnering on a research project?”
“I cannot log into my email on my laptop. Would you mind if I tried on your system?”

These are all comments that we have heard in the past. Many times, they are legitimate and innocent. We in the research administration world tend to be supportive and willing to help others. After all, is it not the point of academic research to generate and share knowledge?

Once in a while, however, the requests are based on nefarious motives. We continually hear about bad actors from China or Russia, or another country that may not have the U.S.’s best interests at heart. Common parlance and governmental usage refer to this as foreign influence. These are legitimate concerns and need to be taken seriously. The challenge is that the comments above are not linked to any country. They could come from anyone, anywhere, even domestically.
In the current age, we live in a world full of information, instantaneous data sharing, and access to more people than ever before. This is both a boon and a risk. Sun Zu once wrote, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.” (Sun-Tzu and Griffith, 1964) While this is typically associated with militaries, the concept applies to many other situations.

In the research arena, one could translate this into how well we understand ourselves and how we operate, and how well we understand those around us or who wishes to impact our research negatively. This is a challenge that ranges along a spectrum from naïve to paranoid. We want to be trusting but not gullible. We want to be careful but not draconian in our defense. As with most things in life, this is a balancing act. Foreign influence as a concept focuses a great deal of energy on foreign actors and countries. The problem with this is that when we focus on foreign actors and influencers, we are not looking in other directions.

When people join the U.S. military, they swear an oath to “…support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic…” (10 U.S. Code, Part 502, 1960). This oath recognizes that threats could come from outside and from within. In the research world, this translates into a recognition that many factors can influence and impact research and come from many different directions. This standpoint helped shape a different perspective of what we perceive as a threat to our research enterprise’s integrity. Factoring in a more holistic approach, Ball State University (BSU) recently started an alternative approach to the foreign influence conundrum by creating an outside influences program. However, its genesis was more organic than typical policy development.

When I initially started discussing the concepts and practices related to foreign influences in late 2018 and early 2019 with colleagues at BSU, I ran into an understandable degree of apprehension and concern. After all, this was not an easy topic of conversation, and it painted some people in a negative light. The concept was also new to many and had a twinge of being an affront to academic freedoms. Discussions with peers and researchers about better approaches ran the gamut from being very supportive and sharing ideas to at least one person referring to me as a “…tool for the government.” Locally, many of our constituents felt the concept of foreign influence unnecessarily discriminated against people from certain countries. Some faculty and researchers from these countries expressed feeling pressured and, in some cases, felt a sense of persecution. While there were no overt actions taken against anyone, the fact that some thought this was possible gave us pause. Meanwhile, the news and other sources were bombarding us with horror stories about Chinese nationals stealing our research data or engaging in industrial espionage, which resulted in oppressive feelings.

Furthermore, this was not unique to BSU. Many peer intuitions were facing a similar challenge. However, there still seemed to be the lingering question, is this the only thing we need to worry about? When talking with colleagues and researchers at a conference that year, many had epiphany moments when recalling data lost because it was stolen by a research assistant who was a U.S. citizen allowed a peer to access a secure cloud storage site, or when an employee with ulterior motives compromised research security. Once again, nothing new, but a light bulb moment for me came when a non-BSU researcher told me that they were spending so much time focusing on their Chinese co-investigator possibly being a “spy” that they never realized their graduate research assistant was the one stealing the data until it was too late.

So, what is one to do when faced with unfunded obligations to address foreign influences, national and local security concerns, and maintaining the public’s trust, all while maintaining our integrity as an institution of higher learning? Well, we took the look-outside-box, placed it on the ground, stood up, and took a better look around. After initial conversations with the Vice Provost for Research (VPR) and the directors from Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA), we realized we needed to provide more awareness and education to our university community above and beyond the external sources. Moreover, it needed to be done in a much different manner.

The first step was addressing what was perceived as a limited view of things that could impact research integrity. This step included two essential items: a working definition and an explanation for why. As many policy writers will...
attest to, one of the hardest and possibly most time-consuming parts of the process is settling on definitions that work for their intended purpose. The ultimate goal was to capture the obligations wrapped up in foreign influences and those that could happen internally or more locally. After several versions, we came up with the following operational definition for outside influences:

“Any external financial, personal, professional or coercive pressure that alters or compromises a person’s decision-making such that the results are contrary to sound ethics, professional standards or maintaining the public’s trust in research.”

In addition to creating an operational definition, we also needed to illustrate why we opted for this route rather than merely adopting the Foreign Influence model. This was done in two parts. The first part was comparing foreign influences against our new definition. After several conversations, the following was what we conceptualized:

Once we completed a comparison of the two approaches, the second part was explaining why this distraction was necessary in the first place. Taking some of our conversation points forward, the following items surfaced as key:

- Outside influences can be a long-term process, not limited by current events, and may not be one-time events.
- They are not limited geographically or geopolitically.
- Influencers and influences can come in many different packages and with various intents. Not all are foreign actors.
- Sometimes when we are looking too much in one direction, we are not looking in other directions.
- From an academic perspective, research’s primary mission is to
generate knowledge and information to be shared.

Once the “easy step” was done, we were ready to look at this in practice. The next stage involved identifying those items that could be considered an outside influence and potential impact points. So, what did we consider an outside influence? As can be imagined, we had a rather long list initially, but the following are some of the more prominent examples keyedin on:

- Foreign influences
- Research misconduct events
- Conflicts of interests
- Peer/professional pressures (need to publish; promotion and tenure)
- Pressures from those above you who pay the bills
- Ulterior motives and other agendas
- Politics (various types)
- Fake information/misinformation/rumor mill
- A pandemic (a later addition)

Using the items we considered potential outside influences, we conducted an internal risk assessment and generated our initial list of possible impact points:

- Contracts and grants
- Integrity of research results
- Integrity of research processes
- Reputation (institutional and individual)
- Public’s trust
- Publications
- Intellectual property rights
- Export/deemed export control
- Recruitment of students, personnel, and researchers
- Retention of personnel and students

The final step was figuring out how we would make this program work and what it would entail. So, the question was asked: how do we mitigate not only the impact of foreign influence sources but also those that regularly rear up from the darkness? This stage, ironically, was not as hard as we had thought it was going to be. After all, we already had many of the programs and elements in place! Those were:

- Contract and grant management programs
- Responsible conduct of research programs and training
- Conflict of interest (COI) programs
- Research review committees (ex. IRB, IACUC)
- Export/deemed export control programs
- Research ethics courses
- Presentations routinely provided to faculty and students

While we knew some of these programs were going to need to incorporate the elements of outside influences, the core was already there from which to build. Add a good education and a presentation process, bake for 45 minutes at 350 degrees, and we had the start of our outside influences program.

At this point, we were ready to present our concept to university leadership. BSU has a group called the Advisory Council on Scholarship (ACS) started by our VPR and Provost. The council is composed of leaders across campus and disciplines, including Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs, faculty from every college on campus, Directors from SPA, and the Office of Research Integrity (ORI). The council reviews and discusses matters that impact scholarship and research across campus as a means of disseminating information vital to the university’s wellbeing.

So, on a chilly October morning in 2019 at an 8 am meeting, our outside influences concept was presented to the ACS. With so much news about foreign influences streaming across multiple media sources at the time, I was anticipating a degree of resistance or at least serious concern. Instead, the opposite happened. The presentation was well-received, productive conversations were had, questions asked, and even suggestions for improvement were offered. More surprising, at the end of the meeting, one of our faculty who has been concerned about this topic as they are from one of the targeted countries, came up and said, “Thank you.” The thank you was for creating a program that was not discriminatory because of someone’s origin but focused on the problems affecting research. The thank you was also for not making them feel like they were somehow the “enemy.” At this point, we knew we had both buy-in and support for our approach, for they had become part of the process and not just a recipient of it.

References


Chris Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, is the Director of Research Integrity at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. Chris oversees an integrated compliance office responsible for administering the IRB, IACUC, and IBC committees, and the RCR, COI, Export/Deemed Export Control, and Lab Safety and Security programs. Chris currently serves as the HIPAA Privacy Officer, Export Control Officer, Acting RCR Officer, Acting COI Officer, and more recently, responsible for BSU’s Outside Influences program. Chris can be reached at cmangelli@bsu.edu
As institutions begin to design and implement strategies to survive and thrive post pandemic, many research administrators are seeing the bigger picture and owning their situations by using this time to reflect back on their careers. In the midst of COVID-19 impacts, many research administrators are considering if they should continue onward, pause or contemplate something new.

New Professional Journey for Research Administrators

With COVID-19 realities, many research administrators are looking for job security with institutional stability. They begin to contemplate exploring a new professional path instead of a pivot or reset of the current trajectory. This new career journey could mean:

• Moving from a university job to become a consultant,
• Transferring from sponsored projects to financial compliance,
• Starting a new business,
• Transitioning from a leadership role to a staff position,
• Going back to school to obtain a new degree,
• Staying in the same position, or
• Working on building skills for a move in the future.

Each research administrator will make their own choices regarding what journey is best for them. They will be guided by their passion and motivation as they take the next steps in their professional journeys. Some will be seeking stability and security, while others are looking for a new challenge, and quite possibly a combination of all the aforementioned will factor into their career decision making. Therefore, the following situations may mean different things to different people, and we’re going to provide options for research administrators to consider if presented with making a choice.

A Deeper Dive

Imagine two individuals in the early stages of their careers in research administration. Both are the same age with master’s degrees in public health and three years of experience working in academic departments assisting with grant proposals and creating budgets. The individuals have entered central administration in the same pre-award office of a research-intensive university as grants specialists for the very first time. It is unlikely these two individuals will have the same job ten years from now. Just like the game of Life, they will be presented with different opportunities and circumstances where they will have to make choices that will alter their futures.

We all have wished, at some point in our lives, for a do-over. Let’s explore those parallel universes in the next sections of this article based on our collective experiences and those of our colleagues when presented with opportunities that could alter our professional journeys.
Talking to other people who work there, or have worked there, side if the office has a working culture that doesn’t match your needs. We find the ultimate landing place. Ultimately want. That may mean going backwards at times. Switching their previous institutions because they realize they didn’t have it that bad to begin with!

There are lots of things to consider before taking a similar job for more pay elsewhere. Are the benefits the same? That pay raise might actually be a decrease if the institution’s premiums for health insurance are a lot higher, or if the institution provides a smaller contribution (or no contribution) to their retirement plan. You need to do a dollar and cents comparison.

If you are making a geographical change, you should also consider the difference in the cost of living. The same salary may have more buying power in another location, or a higher salary may have a lower buying power. There are tools online that can compare cost of living at sites like bankrate.com that can show you that there can be a vast difference in buying power. For example, you would need to make $120K in the Washington, DC metro area to have the equivalent buying power as you would have with $80K in Dallas, TX. However, $80K in Augusta, GA has the equivalent buying power of $90K in Dallas.

What is the culture like? The grass is not always greener on the other side if the office has a working culture that doesn’t match your needs. Talking to other people who work there, or have worked there, will provide some insight. Will a negative shift in culture outweigh your need for more money? Many individuals make the switch only to return to their previous institutions because they realize they didn’t have it that bad to begin with!

Is there room for growth? Do you want to grow further in your career with bigger titles and greater responsibility, or are you happy remaining with your current responsibilities?

Sometimes we need to move on to help us discover what we really ultimately want. That may mean going backwards at times. Switching institutions is something many of us do in research administration until we find the ultimate landing place.

Obtaining an Additional Degree
Many research administrators work in academic environments. Degrees are the currency of the realm. According to the last two Research Administrator Stress Perception Surveys (RASPerS), the most frequently held degree is the master’s degree (Shambrook, et al., 2011). If you want to compete for the best jobs, there is a great likelihood that you will be competing with someone who does hold a master’s degree.

At many institutions, tuition waivers or tuition reimbursement is a fringe benefit to employees. Failing to use that benefit is like leaving money on the table. If you do not have your master’s degree, you will make yourself more competitive by getting it. You can get a master’s degree in any area, and it will help. Within the last decade, we have seen the emergence of several highly esteemed universities with fully online master’s degree programs in research administration, such as the University of Central Florida and Johns Hopkins University.

Conclusion
In the end it is up to you to decide which path you want to take, and COVID-19 has presented us with new options to consider in our profession as more institutions are allowing research administrators to work from home. However, applicants need to still consider whether switching institutions, especially in another state, is a financially lucrative move. In addition, it is harder to assess the office culture, making the decision to leave a little harder.

Obtaining an additional degree during the time of COVID-19 may be more feasible for some individuals if they are unable to travel and commute. If this is something you have always wanted to do, this may be an easier time to pursue a degree if your current position seems fairly stable.

No matter your situation, networking and maintaining strong relationships with research administrators at your current institution and research administrators outside your institution will be important. In this period of uncertainty, we can rely on each other for possible leads, referrals, and opportunities we may not have considered until now. Our counterparts who came before us learned how to persevere in uncharted times, and they paved a new professional journey for research administrators. Now it’s our time to shine.

Reference
If this past year has taught me anything, it is to consider different ways to account for the changes within our field. One of those ways is how our education, training, and development influence the day to day work. Within research administration, we are driven primarily by our experiences in practice. With practical application, we can effectively employ strategies and decisions that ensure the advancement and stewardship of high quality innovative research proposals and subsequent funding.

As a research administrator who became an “academic” later in my career, I have advocated for the amalgamation of theory and practice in the different aspects of our work to continue to advance broad ideas of innovation, customer service approaches, and diversity as well more specific functions of budgets, oversight, and compliance.

In academia, we stress the importance of theory in our work. Theory drives our research. Theory informs our questions and gives us perspective when analyzing data. With theory, the researcher has a roadmap for critical study ultimately resulting in (hopefully) fruitful discussion, discourse, and action plans for the topic du jour.

However, there is a push-pull present when the discussion turns to applying theories to practice. One issue is the question of the relevance of theory in a procedure-guided field. This is especially so in areas that rely heavily on the experience of the practitioner. Grant management and by extension proposal writing, for example, is a practice that is equally “art” and “science,” as data and methodology are included as well as the injection of skillfully written prose and storytelling behind many successful proposals. Writers will sharpen their technique and comfort with a proposal, especially if they have had prior experience in writing for a funder or are a subject matter expert. Research administrators who are experts in pre- or post-award processes desire functionality and flexibility in their work and procedures. So, if grant management is best honed by experience, then how does theory play a role in developing the practice?

I argue that theory can indeed inform research administrators related to grant management application. There may be some merit to developing a new theoretical component that surrounds a specific sub-topic or at least a broader philosophy that expands existing theoretical information. This is not to say that there is not existing literature on the topic. Of course, there are a several studies that discuss grant management and proposals as a communications tool, the “how-to process” of the proposal itself, and the differences between grants and contracts in both funding and administration. But many are articles on the “how” (process), not ones that may develop the “why” (theory). Both the “how” and the “why” are equally useful for professional development.

If we are to expand sub-fields of research administration such as grant management both as academic field and a practice, it requires guidance of where we can take the profession and assessment of where it has come from. This guidance may begin from theoretical approaches. Together, these ideas can use theory to address human behavior, conscientiousness, and the facilitation of appropriate tasks.

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The most necessary point, however, is to ensure that developing theory works in concert with practice and does not dilute its value. It is up to us as research administrators to ensure that we are providing a context for application of our theoretical work. If theory is supposed to guide and inform, what is the point of utilizing it if practitioners are not using it to guide their communication or inform the techniques that make their research award ecology unique, and might I say, innovative? As our profession continues to evolve, let us think a bit more about how theory can support our growth and our disciplines.

**“Theory informs our questions and gives us perspective when analyzing data.”**

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Angela White-Jones, PhD, is the Director of the Master’s in Research Administration program and faculty member in the School of Public Administration at the University in Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. She has worked in grant and contract management for more than 15 years directly for and in collaboration with stakeholders in nonprofit, education, private, and government sectors. She can be reached at angela.white-jones@ucf.edu
Research Administration in Asia Pacific

How Research Administrators in a Japanese University Responded to the COVID-19 Crisis
A Case of the University of Tsukuba

By Hideyuki Kato

The function of a research administrator develops in a country-dependent manner, where critical factors include how research institutes in that particular country have evolved. The concept of research administration is now barely beginning to make its shape in Japanese research universities. Its recent particular emphasis is to help build a university-wide research strategy. This function of a research administrator in leading Japanese research universities is placed on the top of the more conventional function of helping a researcher with their pre/post-award procedures or the technology-transfer of their scientific discoveries, etc.

The COVID-19 crisis served as a unique opportunity where a university-wide research strategy became critically important, and every stakeholder can take this chance to refresh, reconsider, diversify and re-summarize his/her idea of how a research administrator in Japan should behave. The following explains how research administrators in the University of Tsukuba (UT) responded to the COVID-19 crisis in order to bring out the real value of UT as a research university.

Keeping their own researchers up-to-date with the global situation
The COVID-19 crisis presented problems in every part of the world, and it is always wise to learn from other world universities how they have been overcoming the problems. A serious situation caused by the COVID-19 in European and American universities and their strategy of surviving the situation were reported well in Nature News, etc.
First of all, UT research administrators started delivering such useful tips to their own researchers who do not have enough time to learn how their world peers fight. A world-watching role of a research administrator is considered significant in Japan since the country even in the academia still tends to operate largely domestically in a self-sustained manner, resulting in the ignorance of the ongoing world reality.

Speaking out on behalf of a researcher
In the growing concern of the COVID-19 in early April 2020, the lingering atmosphere in Japan was to shut down every research activity. The UT research administrators tried to take a researcher’s viewpoint to decide what really they should do.
The Japanese public are very conservative and tend to think of shutting down everything as a safety measure, whereas from an analytical point of view, as shown in Table 1, there are research activities that can be done now, and there are necessary research activities under the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Should we stop every kind of research?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk-free researches -achievable with teleworking etc.</th>
<th>Researches involving risks -lab works/fieldworks etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Simulating the spread of infection</td>
<td>• Study of SARS-Cov-2 infection with mice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• web-based survey of mental and physical health caused by the pandemic</td>
<td>• In vitro/in vivo study of covid-19 drug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Infodemic research with twitter data</td>
<td>• In vivo study of hyper-immune response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social and economical study of lockdown—literature-based, online discussion</td>
<td>• Study of the mask use with the SARS-Cov-2 virus particles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Computer study of drug repositioning</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has to be done now</th>
<th>Can/should be done now</th>
<th>Should be permitted to do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Study of superconductivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simulation of climate changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Study of Japanese classic literature</td>
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| Can be done other times                                  | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------| | |
| • Demographic study of general human behavior requiring the field work |
| • Social experiment involving a large mass of people     |
| • In person interview for elderly people                  | |

| | Do not need to stop but not urgent | Need to stop |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| • Study of SARS-Cov-2 infection with mice |           |
| • In vitro/in vivo study of covid-19 drug |           |
| • In vivo study of hyper-immune response |           |
| • Study of the mask use with the SARS-Cov-2 virus particles |           |
If I were a researcher working only with my PC, pen and paper, I would find this unprecedented opportunity to be a once-in-a-lifetime chance of devoting all my time to research because I am free from administrative duties and teaching duties, one UT research administrator thought. Actually, it was Prof. Isaac Newton who made the best use of a research-only period to achieve his three groundbreaking discoveries to open up the modern mathematical physics in 1665 to 1666, referred to as his annus mirabilis, the “year of wonders.” He did it because the University of Cambridge was locked down in the midst of the Plague, De Peste, pandemic that killed more than 70,000 Londoners (Brokell, 2020). The UT research administrators wanted their researchers make use of this precious period.

In addition to securing doable research activities to continue, working on research that helps the society was obviously important. Medical research is not the only urgent need. Simulating the spread of the infection, better understanding psychological or physical problems caused by the lockdown as well as needed economical counter measures are urgently needed. Much psychological/social/economic research can be done safely under a teleworking setup. Such research needs no shutdown and should be encouraged.

**Internal COVID-19 grant launched**

In order to efficiently encourage doable and needed research, the UT research administrators decided to set up an emergency call for an internal grant of COVID-19 related research. The budget for the internal grant was available because an international travel grant program was cancelled and its budget remained unused this year. The total budget size for the emergent COVID-19 grant is not big, and the COVID-19 grant is meant to support small starts of diverse research subjects. The grant money was either a million yen (= $10,000) or half a million yen.

A solid aim of the COVID-19 grant, which the UT research administrators intended, was the diversity of research projects. The prominent feature of the COVID-19 crisis was that it involves virtually all kinds of disciplines. Avoiding and curing the disease is just the beginning of the story. Throughout the lockdown, the city function was paralyzed, the economy was disrupted, the education system was frozen and/or the online shift was forced, and public transportation to carry Tokyo’s huge commuters lost its function. Residents started developing physical and mental problems, teleworking changed the roles of family members, athletes lost a place to perform/exercise, various artistic activities lost in-person viewers, etc. For all these subjects, UT has a relevant researcher. The meaning of the university, not a college, was now re-discovered. UT consists of ten Faculties, Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Health and Sport Sciences, etc. After the call of the COVID-19 grant opened, researchers at all the Faculties applied, resulting in truly multi-disciplinary teams of project leaders.

COVID-19 provided a great opportunity for building truly valued interdisciplinary research. The significance of the interdisciplinary research is emphasized again and again. However, there are not many successful examples because such a collaboration is simply tough to start and tough to continue with cultural and language gaps between researchers. Only when researchers in different disciplines share a solid important purpose do they have enough courage to overcome such difficult hurdles. COVID-19 has been the unique and critical problem for everyone that has bonded researchers. UT research administrators will hold an online meeting where they will bring together researchers working on the COVID-19 crisis with different weapons, trying to ignite collaborations between them naturally.

The administrative speed was a key

The Japanese research universities are dominated by the national universities funded by the government. Just like all the other nationally funded institutes in Japan, the national universities are plagued by conservative attitudes and inefficient operations. Keeping conformity among the stakeholders, which takes time, is the highest priority and something new is targeted as a risk factor. Obviously however, the speed was critical in April 2020 in order to save precious researchers’ time and to liberate researchers’ strong desires to employ their expertise to fight against the COVID-19. The UT research administrators did not want to waste a minute. The good thing was that the UT research administration team is positioned to report directly to the vice president for research. The president of the university was just another step away. Tediou and lengthy processes generally needed to get some new measure through the huge university hierarchy were absent. Just an hour after convincing the president of the university regarding the emergent COVID-19 grant, a university-wide consensus was formed. The COVID-19 grant got started.

In general, the non-research staff in the Japanese national universities are devoted mostly to the housekeeping tasks ensuring that the university runs properly, whereas research administrators are expected also to play a revolving role in the university. In the FY2021 budget document, MEXT has framed research administrators as leaders of digitizing research-related procedures/operations in order to adapt to the new normal. Japan is a paradoxical country in the sense that its introduction of IT technology or digitization into offices is far behind their North American and European peers as well as advancing Asian countries, although the country produces and sells high-tech devices to the world. Paperwork literally still depends on paper. The thousand-year-old stamps still are a major player in decision making procedures in offices. In this respect, the UT research administrators had developed an electric application/evaluation/reporting system, which they named u-rad, and the system played a critical role when the COVID-19 emergency grant was called. There was no way to handle the application and evaluation processes without u-rad when most applicants and evaluators work from home. This was one example of how they contributed to the digitization of the university operation.

In summary, research administrators in Japanese research universities have evolved in a unique manner to put their emphasis on the university-wide research strategy in addition to the more conventional tasks of helping researchers with pre/post-award activities. The COVID-19 crisis happened to offer the best experimental setup to test their possible function in the university. A specific case in the University of Tsukuba was introduced here to offer the readers a sense of Japanese research administration in general. It is a general phenomenon that operations in Japanese national universities are old-fashioned and domestic. It is generally true that Japanese administrators are to some extent expected to play a modernizing role of the hundred-year-old Japanese university system.

Reference


Hidesuki Kato is Senior Research Administrator at the Research Administration/Management Office, University of Tsukuba. In 1992, he obtained his PhD in elementary particle physics at Tokyo Metropolitan University and became a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Tokyo. In 1994, he began studying the brain signal processing at RIKEN and then at New York University. He returned to Japan in 2005, and then set up his own laboratory at the RIKEN BSI–Toyota Collaboration Center in 2007 working on AI related research. He began his current position in 2012. He can be reached at hkato@md.tsukuba.ac.jp
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The Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) Phase VII kicked off on October 1, 2020 with new members, a new administrative co-chair, and an exploration of new working groups. Phase VII is intended to run through 2026. The September 2020 Virtual FDP Meeting gave us a snapshot into what Phase VII will look like. With the expanded definition of a demonstration, as reported in the NCURA Magazine article, *The ‘D’ in the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP)* (Scott & Moody, 2020), the FDP is positioned more than ever to demonstrate its successes to its many stakeholders.

Membership of the FDP went up from 154 institutional members to 217, with an increase of Emerging Research Institutions (ERIs) (N=48/22%) and Minority Serving Institutions (N=32/15%). In addition, 10 Federal Agencies participate in the FDP. To support new members, a series of onboarding webinars oriented old and new members regarding their responsibilities. These responsibilities include: FDP members are expected to follow the standards and requirements of the federal government for administering federal awards for research; appoint a Faculty Representative, an Administrative Representative, and an optional Information Technology Representative; ensure that the Administrative Representative and the Faculty Representative each attend at least two (2) regularly scheduled FDP general membership meetings within each calendar year (either in person or virtual); and participate in new or ongoing FDP demonstrations, as appropriate. Institutional members are also expected to provide an annual report and utilize products from previous phases, as appropriate.

The strategic planning process that occurred during the 2018-2019 Phase VII provided a number of goals and objectives that will help to guide our work. They include:

1. Demonstrate positive impact on administrative efficiency and effectiveness.
2. Institutionalize evaluation to determine the relevance and impact of the FDP.
3. Strengthen resources and infrastructure to sustain FDP growth.
4. Actively engage community partners — administrators, faculty, and federal representatives.
5. Tell a powerful FDP story to internal and external audiences.

The September meeting included some major highlights and discussions leading to potential new workgroups and demonstrations. The FDP meeting newcomer welcome webinar (slides can be found at [http://thefdp.org](http://thefdp.org)) provided a useful guide to the FDP committee structure, their focus, and the primary functions they carry-out, as well as the types of demonstrations and the expected processes for conducting them. It also provided a comprehensive list of institutional and agency members, important contacts and reminders about ways to get involved in the various initiatives and groups of FDP. For new members as well as for continuing members who may just want to refresh their understandings of these elements of the FDP, the webinar is a great resource!

For those of you who are members and who could not attend sessions of interest during our September meeting, the website also has all of the presentations and accompanying materials available. You might also want to bring these resources to the attention of faculty, staff, and administrators at your institution. For those of you who are interested in the work of the FDP and think it may be useful at your home institution, please feel free to access these offerings and let us know what you think! We welcome institutions who are not members to still participate as “Friends” of the FDP. The site provides a quick summary of the meeting that can help you find presentations of interest. Links to the videos of each session are available, along with downloadable PDF versions of slides and handouts. Please access these as you have time and interest and provide us with feedback and additional suggestions for future meetings regarding topics you would like to see covered or addressed in greater detail.

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**Reference**

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**Jennifer Taylor, PhD, MBA**, is Vice President for Research at Tennessee Tech University. Jennifer serves on the Board of the FDP and is Co-Chair of the FDP Communications Committee. She has been a senior research administrator for more than 15 years and a member of NCURA during that time. She can be reached at jennifertaylor@tntech.edu

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Trouble Keeping New Hires?
Here are 18 Reasons that Might Explain Why

(inspired by the whispers of former unnamed new hires)

By Kelly Lam-Tickle

Finding qualified and competent applicants in research administration can be like finding a needle in a haystack. You screen for competence, screen out all red flags and find a new hire who shows potential, promise, and perseverance. Six months, or maybe a year later, they...leave. You’re dumbstruck. They seemed fine and never complained. Or did they? Think back. What really happened during that delicate and impressionable six-to-twelve month window?

Here are 18 possible explanations and suggestions to prevent this scenario:

1. You just throw manuals at them. While it is easy to throw the manual (or various manuals) toward your new hire, have you ever considered what he/she actually learns from just reading that manual? **Suggestion:** Context is key. Give your new hires an overview of basic concepts before burying them in manuals.

2. Even if you aren’t really throwing manuals at them, the ones you pass on are outdated. It can be frustrating for a newbie to diligently follow steps in an outdated manual only to find out that they have to go back and revise their work. **Suggestion:** Update the manuals regularly.

3. You just tell them, “Just do what I did.” In a world where the answer to questions will often be “it depends,” applying the same 12 steps from another award file may seem like the quickest way to whittle down that stack of work, but it doesn’t prepare the new hire for outliers. **Suggestion:** Be thoughtful assigning work. There may be nuances in a situation that only you can explain. Specifically set aside time to check in and allow staff to ask questions rather than assuming they will come to you.

4. You tell them, “Just go read.” Is it reasonable to have newbies read and understand Uniform Guidance without explaining how pertinent subparts specifically apply to their job duties? **Suggestion:** Don’t confuse your new hire with too much text and not enough context. Sprinkle in some real-life application examples in your training.

5. You send them to a few NCURA traveling workshops and think that it will be enough. There are can be problems with relying on only NCURA for all your training: NCURA usually covers fundamentals applicable to every institution, an NCURA workshop may be too advanced, or the workshop doesn’t relate to actual job duties. **Suggestion:** Review the course material to ensure it supplements or builds upon your own in-house training.

6. You hinder the collaborative nature of research administration in your training (translation: you ONLY focus on and explain your new hire’s job duties). If you train your staff as if your office is on an island, you may work against the culture of collaboration needed to solve the complex problems that arise.
**Suggestion:** Abstain from teaching the “not-my-problem” attitude. Explaining the priorities and concerns of other offices will work to provide more context to your new hire’s own job duties as well as foster the collaborative problem solving much needed in research administration between different offices.

7. You see training as a chore or you are “too busy” to train.
**Suggestion:** If you cannot or don’t want to conduct the training, find someone who can. It is better to find someone who enjoys training so that positivity can transfer over to the new hire.

8. You have imposed an unrealistic workload on your new staff member.
**Suggestion:** Measure out certain job duties and awards in relation to complexity and time needed for completion before assignment.

9. Your distribution of workload is not equitable.
**Suggestion:** Reevaluate workload distributions periodically in your office. A good analysis will examine not only proposal and award data but should also take complexity of processes into consideration.

10. Your order of work assignments may not be appropriate for the level of experience of your new hire. There is a reason video games start easy and end very hard. If you start your new hire with difficult topics, you risk losing employee engagement.
**Suggestion:** While challenges can make for great learning experiences, early tasks should involve fundamentals while later tasks should involve building on those fundamentals.

11. You are not open to changing your procedures in favor of more efficient ones. A common complaint among new hires (especially during this time of COVID-19) is time wasted on (often) paper processes that can be replaced by electronic ones.
**Suggestion:** Although a common roadblock to this complaint usually involves budgetary constraints for new electronic systems, offices should consider proposing changes as part of a strategic two- to four-year plan. Conduct a thorough cost-benefit-time analysis as part of your proposal to management. Offices should capitalize on new hires because they may bring new ideas for efficient processes.

12. You train more in the “how” instead of the “why.” High-volume offices tend to quickly train in the “how” more than the “why” in the beginning to tackle the volume. While that may ease the workload, it may not be conducive to your new hire’s comprehension of their job tasks in an industry full of “it depends” scenarios.
**Suggestion:** Sprinkle in more “why” by discussing institutional policy and federal guidance. Ground your new hires in the bigger picture to prepare them to make informed decisions for those complex award outliers.

13. Your office policies may be unreasonable. Are staff put between a rock and a hard place when they (through no fault of their own) prepare or submit proposals last minute and still get scolded for proposal non-compliance?
**Suggestion:** Create a policy to protect your staff (both new and old) from these situations or establish clear expectations of what is reasonable.

14. You focus more on their job than their career. Do your new hires have any idea of the outside resources, professional organizations, training, certificate programs, master’s degree programs and professional certifications available to them?
**Suggestion:** Encourage your staff to consider the options outlined above. Ask your staff what opportunities they would like to have available to them (both short- or long-term). Show them they are an investment, and not just a body to tackle the workload.

15. You rely on only one method of training (translation: you assume that everyone learns in the same manner).
**Suggestion:** Be open to new methods of training. Check in with your new hires (and established staff) regularly to ensure the styles of instruction work well with their learning styles. Being open to feedback ensures improvement of training.

16. You don’t engage them in the science.
**Suggestion:** Encourage staff to read the SOWs. Promoting an understanding of the research reinforces the importance of research administration.

17. Your staff member has exceeded the skill level requirements of your current position.
**Suggestion:** Consider new responsibilities for the position (without breaking any HR rules), or assist in looking for more challenging opportunities for your staff member. Your investment in their professional growth will pay off for their next employer or perhaps for you when your grateful staff member gets promoted.

18. You do not take advantage of exit and stay interviews.
**Suggestion:** Talk to your HR office about exit interviews and suggest some questions that will provide you invaluable information you might not otherwise get. A staff member on the way out is less inclined to hold back to a third party (HR), and the information may be vital to understanding how others perceive you and your office. Also consider conducting “stay” interviews with your staff periodically.

In an industry where reasonableness pervades the landscape, the same spirit of reasonableness should be applied to onboarding and keeping your new hires. Research administration, especially when you learn more about it, can be as fun as a theme park. Like those parks, managers should provide engaging maps for new research administrators to help them navigate (but not confuse) the fun.

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**“Promoting an understanding of the research reinforces the importance of research administration.”**

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**Kelly Lam-Tickle, CRA, CPCM, CPCM** is a Contracting Officer at the California Institute of Technology. Kelly currently administers and negotiates outgoing federal and non-federal subawards and subcontracts to other universities, nonprofits, and for-profit entities and has more than 5 years of Pre-Award experience prior to that. She can be reached at kelly.lam@caltech.edu
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We can now all see 2020 in the rearview mirror (pun intended). Hopefully, we have emerged from this memorable year wiser for having experienced it. NCURA Magazine was quite prescient by launching the “Self Care for the Research Administrator” article series in 2020, surely never imagining what we would be facing and how important self care would be. Through the article series in 2020, we looked at some key ingredients to good self care that I hope have inspired you and helped you to set some goals for your own wellness and self care.

The articles discussed very basic wellness goals and looked at information we had about the research administrator community from the Research Administrator Stress Perception Surveys. Those articles looked at weight, sleep, stress, peer support, preventive screenings, and coming to work while sick. You are encouraged to refer to any of these articles through the NCURA Publications website as you reflect on areas where you would like to set self care goals for the coming year. For your convenience, the articles are referenced below.

Setting SMARTER Goals

It is customary for many to spend some time in January reflecting on the past year and setting new goals for the new year. It is also customary for 60% of those with a New Year’s resolution to abandon it within six months. What is worse, 25% will not even keep their goal for a week! There are some simple tactics you can employ to help you set and achieve your self care goals for 2021. According to Peter Economy (2018), a columnist for INC., you are 42% more likely to achieve your goals if you write them down.

Since the early ‘80s, we’ve been seeing the acronym for SMART goals. Peter Drucker (1954) is credited with inspiring the SMART goal acronym with his Management by Objectives model. As noted by Rubin (2002), the exact words associated with each letter have seen some acronym drift over time. You may encounter SMART goals being presented as:

Specific, simple, sensible, significant, serious, or strategic
Measurable, meaningful, or motivating
Action-oriented, achievable, accountable, attainable, acknowledged, acceptable, or assignable
Relevant, realistic, reasonable, results-based, resourced, resourceful, or rewarding
Time bound, time-lined, timely, time-sensitive, tangible, or truthful

Whatever combination of words you may choose, the message is the same: If you want to achieve a self care goal, create a thoughtful plan. If you really want to succeed, create a written plan. You may want to look at your written plan with consideration for each of the iterations of the SMART goal acronym listed above.

Alternatively, you may want to choose just your SMART favorites. Some of my favorites for wellness goals include:

Simple – If it is too complicated, it is too easy to get discouraged, make excuses, and become a part of the unsuccessful 60%. Even worse, you may not even be at the front of the 25% who don’t last seven days because you have created a plan with so many requirements, you cannot even get to the launch pad.

Measurable – Set small incremental goals to help you get to the bigger long-range goal (e.g., one to two pounds of weight loss per week, rather than 25 pounds in six months). Seeing measurable incremental progress helps you maintain monumental motivation.

Action-oriented and accountable – Ask yourself to what actions you will commit and identify a trusted accountability partner to help you stay with those actions. Just as there is something powerful in measuring and writing goals, there is also something powerful in speaking them aloud to someone whose good opinion is important to you. Choose someone who will encourage you and help celebrate your success. It may be someone who has already achieved a similar goal, or someone who will join you while they also strive for a mutual goal so you can cheer one another toward success.

Relevant – This is your “why.” Why do you want to achieve this goal? Perhaps you would like to improve your stamina because you have always wanted to run a marathon. Perhaps you want to lose weight so you can fit into your wedding gown for your 20th anniversary. Maybe you want to improve your cholesterol and blood sugar levels with diet and exercise to avoid therapeutic drugs. Why is this goal important to you?

You are 42% more likely to achieve your goals if you write them down.
Time-lined — Timelines are another secret weapon. As suggested above, try setting small incremental goals that will stack up to larger long-range goals. Small incremental goals also lend themselves easily to more celebrations along the journey. Those celebrations strengthen your resolve and help you stay the course toward the long-range finish line.

We can go from SMART goals to SMARTER goals by including Evaluated and Reviewed (Rubin, 2002). When developing the timeline for your written plan, set specific check points for evaluation and review. At the check point, evaluate your progress toward your goal. Is the goal too easy? Is it too hard? Do we need to re-set the goal to be more realistic?

Imagine setting a goal to lose one pound a week for twenty weeks with monthly check points. At the first monthly check point, we find we are losing two pounds a week. We could decide to revise the duration to ten weeks or allow ourselves a few more calories. Likewise, if we found we were only losing half of a pound per week, we could extend our final goal date or reduce our caloric intake. Either way, we should celebrate our perseverance for making it to each check point.

**Finding a better new normal**

At some point in 2021, as vaccines become available, most of us will likely be returning to campuses and finding a new normal. Let us resolve not to return to any bad habits we may have had before public health forced itself to the forefront of the consciousness of the entire world. We can set a goal that we will stay home when we are sick for all of 2021. We can set a goal that we will do one thing every day that will contribute toward good health, so that our immune systems will be more resilient if we are faced with another infectious disease. Even those who are usually diligent with preventive screenings, eye exams, and dental care, may have let that lapse while isolating ourselves from the pandemic. Perhaps you can resolve to create a plan for how and when you will get back on track for routine exams and health screenings. Let us resolve together to create SMARTER goals in our new normal that will help us have better self care and demonstrate that we have gained some valuable insight as we sing “Auld Lang Syne” to 2020, a year we will never forget.

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Jennifer Shambrook is Director of Sponsored Programs and instructor for the Masters in Research Administration program at the University of Central Florida. She has a PhD in Community Health Education and Promotion and is the author of the Research Administration Stress Perceptions Surveys. She is a Region III Guru and enjoys being a percussionist for NCURA’s own band, Soul Source and the No Cost Extensions. She can be reached at Jennifer.Shambrook@ucf.edu
What We Wish We Knew about Our Research Administration and Compliance (RAC) Master’s Program Before Enrolling

By Sarah Browngoetz and Lindsay Britt

In 2018, the authors enthusiastically embarked on a graduate program in Research Administration and Compliance at the City University of New York (CUNY) with high hopes and perhaps unrealistic expectations. As they near completion of their studies, they’ve taken some time to reflect on what they wished they knew before they started.

PROS
Benefits to Our Institutions

M any of the program’s assignments require looking at institutional policies and making changes to improve them. These assignments are great opportunities to help our institutions update and improve policies, streamlining our institution’s research administration functions. Now, knowing how much our enrollment in this program helps our institutions, we could justify requesting financial support from our institutions to enable enrollment in the program; something neither of us pursued at the start of this journey.

Another surprise was that most class projects in the program help facilitate discussions with people on our own campuses who we had not previously reached out to and have resulted in strengthened internal relationships, laying the groundwork for a more comprehensive research administration team. We appreciate the many new relationships we’ve established within our institutions and the amount of information we learn about our organizations while working on assignments.

Our program builds leadership skills, preparing graduates to move into management positions. This may seem obvious, but the depth to which we are prepared is surprising. Our shared experience in this area is equally relevant even though we are at different stages of our careers. Our studies have provided insight into how research administration fits into the organizational structure of an institution. This insight has provided a global perspective of our schools and the vocabulary to communicate with leadership, faculty, and colleagues about sponsored programs. These tools facilitate our performance when explaining how our profession fits into the organization to support the mission. Every class has provided tools to connect research administration to the greater vision and mission of our institutions.

We have found that the materials and resources presented through the RAC program have also provided the skills and tools necessary to prepare for the Certified Research Administrators (CRA) test. While this may be a very long way to go about studying for the certification exam, it has proven to be very helpful. Many of the program’s books can be used to study for the CRA exam, so while the textbook costs can be somewhat high ($200 - $500 per semester), the books serve a dual use and are well worth the money in our opinion.
**Benefit to Professional Development**

Working on an advanced degree gives us credibility within the academic research community. Holding an advanced degree validates our expertise to the academically centric-population we work with.

Enrolling in a graduate program provides fantastic networking opportunities. This became more apparent as we moved through the program and regretfully, we did not initially use the program as a networking tool, but wish we had. It is fascinating to learn how other institutions handle situations our institutions are facing and get suggestions for best practices in research administration. This program gave us an outside perspective on issues we face every day and new ways to solve those problems. Be sure to take advantage of this benefit; access to peers across the country is invaluable. We each made close, professional connections with our classmates who we regularly ask non-academic related questions about research administration practices and offer advice. The connections we have made and the perspectives we’ve gained from student peers are invaluable and amazing. It deepened our understanding of our profession in an unanticipated way.

This program has provided us an academically recognized and identified body of knowledge resulting in well-rounded expertise in research administration. We have used the curriculum to identify and fill gaps in our knowledge. This program builds our confidence in all aspects of our jobs, which makes it much easier to validate the existence of our jobs to our institutions and to answer the most dreaded question “what do you do?” when meeting new colleagues and friends.

We were pleasantly surprised to find that enrollees in the program include a wide range of expertise. There are new graduates fresh out of undergrad programs, some not even in the profession mixed with seasoned professionals. When we enrolled in the program, we expected to be in courses with seasoned professionals, however, that was not the case. While it was a bit frustrating at first to have to explain the profession to beginners, it also helped expand our knowledge of the field. When we explained research administration to classmates who did not know the profession, it deepened our understanding and was a confidence booster, we do in fact know what we are talking about! Sometimes, we get so caught up in the details of research administration that we fail to see the bigger picture, and helping classmates understand the bigger picture really helped us take a step back and appreciate why we do what we do on a daily basis.

**CONS**

After many years in the workforce, with our college years far behind us, we forgot that homework does not pause because of proposal or post-award deadlines. Professors in our program may not be aware of large proposal deadlines. Assignments can be due around large NSF or NIH proposal deadlines. We were under the impression that all program faculty were research administrators themselves and would be cognizant of federal proposal submission deadlines and tailor their assignments around those deadlines to help working students with work-life-school balance, but that is not the case. It has been a balancing act to juggle school, work, and family, and we want other prospective students to take this into account prior to enrolling.

The time commitment is significant and ongoing. We underestimated the time commitment the program would take. We both anticipated we would be able to take two or three classes a semester and finish the program in a year and a half, but with the significant time commitment and full-time jobs, it was really only possible to take one or two classes a semester which made the program take much longer than anticipated.

We would encourage prospective students to evaluate their work and family life commitments before deciding to enroll in a research administration graduate program.

Not every employer sees the value of an advanced degree. There may not be any additional compensation after completion of a master’s degree. The additional education we work so hard to obtain may or may not be a factor to qualify us for a raise of any kind, even though our expertise expands exponentially while completing this program. If earning potential is a motivating factor in your decision to enroll, make sure to find out your institution’s policies on the relationship between academic degrees and salary ranges prior to enrolling.

It is hard to balance school, full-time work, a family, and life in general. When we were in college for our bachelor's degrees, we did not have any of these obligations and school was much easier. We falsely anticipated this program would be easy to manage, but we have found it has led to much more stress and taken us away from our families much more than we anticipated. This has been a hard adjustment not only for us, but also our families.

**Conclusion**

Overall, we are both very happy we decided to embark on the graduate program in Research Administration and Compliance. While it has been a challenging journey, it has been one full of learning, networking, friendship, and growth. We strongly encourage anyone interested in completing a graduate degree to first evaluate the time commitment of the program to determine if it is a good fit. Second, we encourage prospective students to speak with their institutions to determine the level of support they will receive both from their immediate supervisor and their institution in general. Finally, we encourage prospective students to speak with their families to determine if their family schedules will support or hinder participation in the program. We hope this article and these tips will help prospective students be successful in their program and utilize the resources available to them during the program. All the information provided in this article are things we wish someone had told us prior to entering our program, so we hope readers find it useful as well!

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**Sarah Brown goetz** is the Director of Grant Development at Olympic College. She has been an NCURA member for 15 years and currently serves on the Education Scholarship Fund Select Committee and the Predominantly Undergraduate Institution Collaborative Committee. She can be reached at sbrown goetz@olympic.edu

**Lindsay Britt, CPRA,** Contract and Grant administrator at The University of New Mexico (UNM), is in her final semester of the program and will graduate in December 2020. Lindsay’s responsibilities at the UNM include departmental pre-award services. She can be reached at lcampbe4@unm.edu

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With 2020 behind us, we are collectively looking forward to 2021 with hope and optimism. It goes without saying that 2020 brought much uncertainty, fear, and heartache. Throughout the year, many institutions were faced with the task of pivoting to a remote work environment overnight, while simultaneously navigating a flurry of compliance issues and unknowns including details about the Covid-19 virus and unfortunately, job security of colleagues and loved ones. A silver lining to these challenges was the rallying of support, empathy and impressive agility of our colleagues not only in Region 1, but throughout the country. The network of resources offered by NCURA – both formal and informal – has allowed us to persevere through these immense difficulties.

I am enthusiastic about working closely with the members of Region I and the Advisory Board to make 2021 a success! I am confident that we will not only continue with the traditional professional development offerings throughout the year, but also re-imagine how Region I engages with and reaches out to its colleagues and members. I welcome any and all feedback from you on how we can amplify our purpose and mission.

It is with much gratitude that I thank Louise Griffin, of the University of New Hampshire, outgoing Chair, for her steadfast support and guidance during this tumultuous year.

Now, on to 2021! Let’s do this!

Eva Pasadas, JD, is the Chair of Region I and serves as Director, Grants & Contracts at Northeastern University. She can be reached at e.pasadas@northeastern.edu

Happy New Year from Region II!

2020 has been a challenging for all of us, and I would like to thank the Steering Committee for guiding Region II through this year. In particular, many thanks to the outgoing officers for all of their hard work, dedication, and guidance: Katie McKeon (Chair), Charles Bartunek (Immediate Past Chair), Danielle Brown (Secretary), Ted Fehskens (Immediate Past Treasurer), and Tim Schailey (Regionally Elected Member to the National Board).

The 2021 Regional Officers are: Katie McKeon (Immediate Past Chair), Adam Greenberg (Chair-Elect), Berlin Bermudez (Secretary), and Gabriela Anglon (Treasurer). The Steering Committee will include our elected officers and the following committee chairs: Jaquion Gholston (PDC); Jared Littman (Mentor Me); and, Sandy Collier (Program Committee). I look forward to working with all of the Steering Committee members and the standing committees in the coming year.

The 2021 Region II committees are transitioning roles, scheduling PDC workshops and webinars, updating the website, planning the Mentor Me program, and identifying our goals for this year. Look out for announcements on the web and in e-blasts as we move forward into the year. Additionally, we are working on plans for the 2021 Regional Meeting, which was postponed for 2020. For more information or to be involved in the planning of the Regional Meeting, please contact Sandy Collier at collier@umd.edu.

To stay connected to the Region, be sure to join our Facebook page and the Region II community on NCURA Collaborate. If you are looking for other ways to get involved within the Region, please reach out to our Chair-Elect, Adam Greenberg, Adam.Greenberg@asrc.cuny.edu or myself, and we can work with you to find a volunteer opportunity in our Region that matches your interests and talents!

Finally, I would like to thank the Professional Development Committee (PDC) for its flexibility and hard work over the past year to develop free webinars for the Region since in-person workshops haven’t been possible. For the full list of offerings and upcoming workshops for 2021, visit the PDC website (https://ncuraregionii.org/pdc). If you are interested in hosting a PDC workshop for your institution, please contact Jaquion Gholston at jgholsto@stevens.edu.

Best wishes for the new year! We hope to see you (virtually or in person) very soon!

Catherine Parker is the Chair of Region II and serves as a Contract Administrator in the Office of Research Administration at the University of Maryland, College Park. She can be reached at caparker@umd.edu
Happy New Year from Region III! As we move into 2021, we hope that this message find you and your loved ones healthy, happy, and ready to tackle a new year!

We hope to be able to see many of our members at our 2021 Spring Meeting in New Orleans in April. Our chair-elect, Scott Niles (Georgia Tech), his co-chair, Kay Gilstrap (Georgia State), and our planning committee are working with the Hilton New Orleans Riverside to plan a safe, socially distanced meeting that allows us to meet in person while keeping everyone’s health and safety in mind.

A draft program as well as information about registration and lodging are available on the Region III website (http://ncuraregioniii.com/spring-meeting). We would like to thank our program committee for their hard work under unusual circumstances:

- Compliance: Carpantato Myles, University of Alabama
- Department: Leigh Stephens, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
- Government/Federal: Greg Adams, Broward College
- Human Relations in Research Administration: Ashley Whitaker, Nova Southeastern University
- International: Andrea Moshier, University of Melbourne
- Organizational Development: Abby Guilloir, North Carolina State University
- Pre-award: Ken Carter, University of Tennessee at Knoxville
- Post-award: Laneika Musalini, Tri-County Technical College
- PUI/Small: Alison Krauss, Western Carolina University
- Senior: Kay Gilstrap, Georgia State University
- Workshops: Kathleen Halley-Octa, Georgia State University

The keynote speaker for this year’s meeting will be Angela Birnbaum, Director of Biosafety, Biocontainment Operations, and Quality Assurance at Tulane University. Angela oversees Tulane’s biosafety program research including recombinant DNA, clinical trials, and research with high risk pathogens. During the pandemic, Angela and her team developed highly efficient, high containment operations across Tulane University needed to perform research with SARS CoV2. We look forward to hosting Angela and hearing about her hands on experience keeping researchers safe during the pandemic.

In an effort to keep our members connected, Region III has launched the “Flat Pat” initiative. Modeled on the children’s book Flat Stanley, and named after Region III’s flamingo mascot Pat, members can share their adventures with Pat on Facebook and Instagram, and we encourage you to join in the fun!

Kathleen Halley-Octa is Region III Secretary and serves as Director, Office of Research & Sponsored Projects in the College of Education and Human Development at Georgia State University. She can be reached at khalley1@gsu.edu

Happy New Year! While the pandemic continues to impact our lives in countless ways, hopefully everyone was able to connect safely with family, friends and loved ones over the holidays. As we look forward to a new year and hope for a return to “normal” in the coming months, we continue to rely on our network of support to help us through such challenging times. The NCURA Region IV family is a vital part of this supportive network for us all, and the Region is committed to supporting our members in the coming year.

With heavy hearts, we have regretfully delayed our 2021 Region IV regional meeting until May 2022. With thoughts of safety and possible travel/budget restrictions for most, if not all, this was the best decision for the membership as a whole. Please mark your calendars for the Region IV Spring Meeting, to be held May 8-11, 2022 in Minneapolis. We look forward to gathering safely, seeing you in person and learning together in 2022! Until then, the Region IV Program Committee and Board are working to deliver different learning and networking opportunities throughout the coming year. Please watch for announcements regarding fun virtual learning opportunities and social events to help keep us connected and continue to expand our knowledge and skills as research administrators.

Just because we aren’t getting together in person in 2021, that doesn’t mean we don’t need your help! The success of our Region is built upon the generous commitment of time and talent from our diverse team of volunteers. There are many opportunities to get involved… from helping to plan or lead a virtual event to serving on one of our many committees, the Region is always looking for more people to help move us forward as an organization and to delivering the best possible experience for our members. If you are interested in helping the region, please contact Diane Domanovics, Region IV Volunteer Coordinator (dd4@case.edu). Until we can safely gather together again, be well and healthy this new year. We hope to see you all (virtually) very soon!

Matt Richter, JD, MA, is the Chair of Region IV and serves as Manager of Research Compliance at the Medical College of Wisconsin. He can be reached at mrichter@mcw.edu
Greetings, Region V, and Happy 2021!

Your Region V officers held their 2020 Fall Retreat in November in beautiful Fayetteville, Texas. We hosted our first Fall Update to membership via Zoom and shared updates from our various committees, including our Mustang Mentoring Program which launched in 2020. It was also announced that our annual regional meeting will be held in Fall 2021. Tribbie Grimm, Chair-Elect, will be sending out a call for program committee volunteers soon. If you’re interested in other volunteer opportunities, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Hurley, at sdhurley@shsu.edu. More information can be found on our website at https://ncuraregionv.com.

I’m excited to share Region V’s launch of the Lunch & Learn series. The series will be a FREE monthly one-hour virtual offering targeting hot topics in research administration. The first Lunch & Learn will be held on Wednesday, January 13, 2021, from 12-1:00 p.m. The topic will be geared towards our new Region V members. Be on the lookout for an eBlast with registration information. Future sessions will be scheduled on the second Wednesday of the month. If you have questions or suggestions for topics, please contact Becky Castillo, Chair, at bcastillo@mdanderson.org.

Finally, I want to recognize Roxanne Smith Parks (Lamar University), who is finishing her three-year term of service as Treasurer-elect (2018) and Treasurer (2019-2020). Amid hurricanes and other regional obstacles, she improved processes and documented policies to make the transition between Treasurers seamless. She also engaged in a significant amount of work and research to reduce regional administrative costs, allowing us to direct more of our resources to our members. Her dedication and hard work are to be commended, and Region V extends grateful thanks to Roxanne for her service to NCURA.

Thank you all for your continued support and commitment to Region V.

Becky Castillo is the Chair of Region V and serves as Manager, Post Award Funding at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. She can be reached at bcastillo@mdanderson.org.
Greetings fellow Jackalopes! With 2020 behind us, Region VII is focusing on a great 2021.

It was wonderful to see almost 500 registrants at the virtual Region VI/VII Regional Meeting 2020 (November 17-19). Our meeting theme “Working Apart Coming Together” really describes how we, as research administrators, have adapted over the past year! Thank you to everyone that volunteered on the program and logistics committee. This team developed a rich and diverse program that furthered the professional development of the attendees.

A special thank you to Ashley Stahle for all of her hard work as Region VII 2020 Chair. In coordination with Region VI, Ashley was able to pivot RM2020 from an in person meeting to 100% virtual meeting with great success.

As was announced in the Regional Business Meeting at RM2020, we will be coordinating with Region VI for RM2021. Be on the lookout for more information on this meeting and how you can be involved at www.ncuraregionvii.org and if you are interested in volunteering for RM2021, contact Alexa Van Dalsem at alexa.vandalsem@colorado.edu.

Congratulations to the newly elected regional officers for 2021 (term beginning January 2021):

- Natalie Buys – Chair-Elect
- Jason Papka – Treasurer-Elect
- Vince Borlesk – Regionally elected Member of the National Board
- Lisa Allen – Region VII Member at Large

Thank you to Diane Barrett for serving as Region VII chair (2019) and past chair (2020). Her leadership, vision, and determination will be felt throughout the region for many years to come. Thank you for your service Diane.

Be on the lookout for our next Region VII newsletter. If you have a topic or item for newsletter spotlight please contact me.

Stay up to date with the latest from our region on our website www.ncuraregionvii.org.

Over the past 12 months we have lived into our region motto of “Inspiring research administrators to pioneer frontiers!”

Trisha Southergill is the Chair of Region VII and serves as Grant Support manager at Montana Technological University. She can be reached at psouthergill@mtech.edu

From the abnormal to the New Normal – same same, but different still…

It seems we only recently “gathered” for our Annual Meeting - yet, as it happened virtually, attending from our teleworking spaces. This remoteness holds even more important for our diverse international community across the globe - trying to stay connected.

This is what we want to achieve over the coming months. We want to stay as close in contact with you all to foster the collaboration amongst global members community. With this, I am announcing the set-up of regional Ambassadors, who will act as facilitators and network nodes to make connecting even stronger and easier. You will receive further details on this initiative shortly. If you are interested in becoming a regional network node, feel free to contact me directly or any of the NCURA Global community committee members.

Speaking of which, a big THANK YOU to our outgoing committee supporters Bella Blaher and Nicolas Schulthess for their work over the past years. Also, a very big domo arigato gozaimashita to our immediate past chair, Tadashi Sugihara from OIST, Japan. You did your best to manage us all excellently well in those difficult times over the past year!

A big welcome to incoming committee members for Chair-elect, Makram Halawani from American University Beirut, and Ioannis Legouras from MDC Berlin as Treasurer. Together with them and all the current committee members, I am very happy as your new Chair for 2021 to serve your needs and to bring our community to the next level in collaborating across continents, sharing knowledge and exchange ideas.

For the upcoming gatherings planned for 2021 – INORMS ’21 in May in Hiroshima, Japan, the Annual Meeting or any meetings scheduled along the way, let’s see how we can proceed in a hybrid, onsite or online way to hold those important gatherings.

Our upcoming RVIII/RIII joint meeting has been postponed for exactly that matter as traveling for most of us is still out of the question. Let us hope we do not have to wait too much longer to see everyone again.

STAY SAFE, HEALTHY!y apart but TOGETHER in our efforts to get through this new normal in our global community!

Bruno Woeran is Chair of Region VIII and serves as Head Research Management & Technology Transfer, PMU Private Medical University, Salzburg, Austria. He can be reached at Bruno.Woeran@pmu.ac.at
Samford’s Department of Geography and Sociology has long been engaged with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology, which allows sophisticated gathering, analysis, mapping and reporting of geographic data. In mid-March, as higher education was upended by COVID-19, professor Jonathan Fleming sought a way to apply the technology to help make sense of the pandemic.

The data Fleming wanted to see was scattered around the internet. In those early days of the pandemic shutdown in the south, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) didn’t have a data dashboard, and was posting updated counts in a table on its website. Even the most widely used COVID-19 data site, created by Johns Hopkins University, wasn’t reporting county level data in the U.S. “This provided an opportunity to create something specifically for folks in Alabama using the expertise we already had in our department—to practice what we preach and demonstrate the use of spatial data science in action for collection, analysis, visualization, and sharing of pertinent information with the public,” Fleming said.

The resulting Coronavirus COVID-19 in Alabama data dashboard project goes far beyond simple counts of infections and deaths. “I wanted to include other data to give folks more spatial and social context,” Fleming said. “Our dashboard included data from Centers for Disease Control’s social vulnerability index and population data broken down by age and race, which are still hot topics being discussed with regard to impacts from COVID-19.” He has continuously updated the site and added additional content as different model projections and methodologies are developed to show trends in the spread of COVID-19.

The overwhelming public response to Fleming’s project suggests that others were as hungry as he was for meaningful regional data. The site was viewed almost 135,000 times in a single day in March. The traffic has decreased as new dashboards have emerged, including from ADPH, and as data fatigue sets in, but Fleming said the site still averages 1,000-2,000 visits per day. The project has been viewed more than half a million times since its mid-March launch.

Fleming didn’t get much chance to incorporate the project into his teaching in the spring semester, but sees two important classroom applications going forward. “First, this is what we do, so this is a great way to teach students how to create these tools and to illustrate their importance in keeping the public informed,” he said. “Second, it is a centralized place to discuss the geography of Covid-19 and how it relates to other social and demographic factors across the landscape. Everyone these days has gotten a taste of data science and we want to help our students learn to apply critical thinking skills to get past what the
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RESOURCES CENTER

The NCURA Resource Center is your source for the best of NCURA’s Magazine, Journal, YouTube Tuesday and Podcast resources. In addition, members will be writing for the NCURA Resource Center so look for new content!

We look forward to your feedback and comments!

Click here to visit the RESOURCE CENTER

ncura.edu/ResourceCenter.aspx
NATIONAL CONFERENCES
- Virtual Financial Research Administration Conference
  March 15-17, 2021
- Virtual Workshops
  March 18 & 22, 2021
- Virtual Pre-Award Research Administration Conference
  March 23-25, 2021

LIVE VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS
- Level I: Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshop
  February 9-12, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET
- Contract Negotiation & Administration Workshop
  April 19-22, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET
- Financial Research Administration Workshop
  May 11-14, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET
- Level II: Sponsored Projects Administration Workshop
  May 18-21, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET
- Departmental Research Administration Workshop
  June 14-17, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET

WEBINARS
- Data Security in a Remote Environment
  February 22, 2021
  2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Is Remote Working…Working?
  March 11, 2021
  2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Navigating the Revisions to the Uniform Guidance
  On-demand
- Your Work and Life Matter: Managing Fear, Anxiety
  and Stress During Pandemics
  On-demand

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

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