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COLLABORATE

IN THIS ISSUE: In this issue we focus on Collaborate. Collaborating is not a new concept for research administrators because we know how to successfully work together to achieve a goal or a shared project. We have an innate ability to join forces with other colleagues as a way to work together and problem-solve. Collaborating leads to innovation, efficient processes, increased success, and improved communication, all of which have a positive impact on research administration. More importantly, collaboration brings research administrators and universities closer together, creating opportunities to learn from each other. What new ways or approaches do we use to collaborate? What interesting ideas do we have to develop collaboration? What have we learned from collaborating?

This issue begins with an article from the DRA community, “It Takes a Village: Navigating Communication and Collaboration Internally.” In this article, a team from the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth, emphasizes the importance of having strong lines of communication between internal collaborators, which includes faculty, central research administration, and other departmental units on campus. When principal investigators are collaborating across campus, communication is essential during proposal submissions and post award management. The article offers tips such as using MS Teams to create dialogue, share files, and jointly work on tasks.

In “The Joys and Challenges of the PUI,” Roger Wareham of University of Wisconsin-Green Bay shares his enthusiasm for working at PUIs. In fact, his entire career has always been at a PUI and he wouldn’t have it any other way. He does share the challenges that come with being at a PUI, especially when you are an office/team of one. However, being a part of a professional organization, such as NCURA, serves as a vital resource.

In the Work Smart column, Denise Moody of the Boston VA Research Institute (BVARI) emphasizes the importance of taking a look outside of institutions to collaborate. There are many opportunities to collaborate with more than 80 Nonprofit Research and Education Corporations (NRCs). This collaborative opportunity will contribute to expanding your network.

This issue offers many refreshing ideas about Collaborate!

Robyn Remotigue, MPP, CRA, is Director, Office of Research Services, in the School of Public Health at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth. She has been in research administration for more than 20 years. She is a graduate of the 2012 NCURA Executive Leadership Program and 2010 NCURA Leadership Development Institute. She serves as Chair of Region V’s Mustang Mentoring Program. Robyn serves as a faculty member of NCURA’s SPA II workshop. She is a Co-Editor of NCURA Magazine and a NCURA Peer Reviewer. She can be reached at Robyn.Remotigue@unthsc.edu.

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

By Rosemary Madnick, NCURA President

Summer has officially come to an end. Change is in the air. For some, it is having kids start school, having your young adults start college, draining the pool, putting away patio furniture or getting back to a routine. After a summer of sunshine, fun, and play, we were ready to embrace fall. Autumn is a time when we can slow down the pace of life.

While autumn is as much about pumpkin patches, apple picking, boots and scarfs, wine tasting, and pumpkin spice everything, saying goodbye to summer is never easy. However, with every season’s end comes a new beginning. The plants, trees and flowers let go of their leaves so that they can turn their attention inward and generate the energy they need for new growth. It is an opportunity to start fresh and looking ahead to what is to come. Just as the leaves change, so should we.

As I was writing this article and thinking about what I wanted to convey, my thoughts immediately went to being open for new opportunities. What a perfect intersection with autumn and thinking of it as a new beginning. I have been with the University of Alaska for the past seven and a half years as the Executive Director for the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration. Moving up from Southern California to the interior of Alaska was an incredible journey with being in a new state, institution and new environment.

Fall seems to be my season for embracing new beginnings. Perhaps that is why fall feels so right to announce a change that I will be moving back to Southern California to start anew as the Vice President for Research Administration with The Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation.

Here are a few items to consider as you think about wanting to make a change in your life, take a cue from those leaves.

• **Take Inventory of Your Goals**—The fall is a great time to check in on your progress on the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the year, you don’t need to create new goals. It is important to check in and evaluate your goals.

• **Celebrate Your Accomplishments**—This time of year it is a great time to check in on your accomplishments. Intentionally celebrate and acknowledge the areas in your life where you are doing well, where you’ve grown and made progress. Create a healthy balance between striving for the future and enjoying the present moment will allow you to experience greater gratitude.

• **Discover and Find Your Motivation**—Getting off track is going to happen especially with the hustle and bustle of life. Surround yourself with positive people. Positive family, friends and colleagues enhance ability to stay the course.

We can all carry a little bit of fall…and new beginnings with us. Take the advice you feel from the season, make plans and let your leaves fall where they may so you can begin again.

I hope your fall is wonderful, inspiring and life-changing. 🍁

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

“If a year was tucked inside of a clock, then autumn would be the magic hour.”
—Victoria Erickson
Communication is vital in research administration. We know that we need to have strong lines of communication with our faculty, our central offices, our sponsors, and our external collaborators. What often gets left out of the communication discussion is communication with our internal collaborators. The coordination of faculty effort on an award that resides in another department is often overlooked.

The University of North Texas Health Science Center has two centralized departments to provide department level proposals and award management support to faculty. The Faculty Research Support Team and the Office of Research services were established using a shared services model to provide research administration expertise. While this is a great service to have, it is vital that these two departments communicate successfully with each other so both teams can effectively help their respective faculty manage their awards, especially the effort commitments on proposals and awards.

When working on either a proposal submission or administering an award, it is easy to assume one person is taking the helm of the project, but really it takes a village. When HSC was awarded a large statewide COVID consortium grant that included faculty members across many different departments, it created a challenge for those of us who were trying to ensure the project could get up and running smoothly. Several challenges presented themselves, such as:

- Who was going to oversee the project?
- How would pending expenditures be approved?
- How would our campus manage the subawards?

A meeting was necessary to clearly delineate who would oversee what and how communication would work when departments had questions or concerns for the other one. Taking the time to sit down and establish an action plan allowed us to efficiently determine the roles and responsibilities for the administration side of the grant. It also laid the groundwork for similar collaborative efforts between the pre-award and post-award sides of the departments.

The Office of Research Services (ORS) in the School of Public Health (SPH) was founded in 2014 in response to faculty members requesting assistance with their grants and contracts. Faculty members wanted assistance putting their proposals together. They did not want assistance with the scientific portion, but more with required components and budget preparation. Additionally, funded SPH faculty did not always understand the principal investigator’s responsibility in managing projects and they needed assistance with financial monitoring.

Similarly, the Faculty Research Support Team (FRST) was created because faculty members wanted assistance with developing proposals and overseeing the finances of their projects. Additionally, FRST was born out of a need for improved compliance on the campus, as faculty non-adherence to effort and financial policies was potentially putting the institution at risk.

Despite their similarities there are many differences between these teams. FRST is a true centralized departmental administrative office. Pre- and post-award staff members are assigned to a department to help develop or administer the grant but are not housed in the department itself. Rather, the team is located centrally on campus, ensuring accessibility to the faculty members they serve. Additionally, except for the School of Public Health and another institute, FRST serves the entire campus. Meanwhile ORS has a more “classic” set-up, with the departmental administrators housed within the school they work for. ORS team members can walk down the hall to the faculty which they serve, whereas FRST team members may need to set up a schedule or walk across campus to locate their faculty members. ORS also oversees a smaller subsection of the faculty population so they can easily administer changes to their workflow with minimal pushback. FRST has to appease different faculty, chairs, and deans in order to ensure that there is “buy in” from everyone. Finally, each department has a different style of interacting with their faculty. These differences further complicate items like administrating large multi-component projects because internal collaborators have different styles and methodologies of managing their projects, despite having similar roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the need to communicate and collaborate with our internal partners became even greater as HSC saw an increase of multi-component projects on campus, including the large statewide COVID consortium project that was received.

Respecting PI questions and requests is of significant importance. It is
our goal to respond to them in a timely manner. If we do not have the answer immediately, we let them know we are working to find the answer. PIs are overseeing research projects and a lot of their time is also spent teaching classes and working with students. When we request their time or a clarification, we use the “two-days-to-a-week,” rule based on level of urgency. Also, when PIs request something of you, ask for a timeline so you can better manage your tasks.

Common practices often followed in administration include the following:

- If an email chain grows past three exchanges and nothing seems to be getting accomplished, pick up the phone.
- When coordinating busy schedules such as those of faculty, see about scheduling a quick chat in advance and stick to this time.
- Set agendas and expectations before meetings. Also, take a moment after a call to decide if additional meetings are really needed or if follow-up can be handled by email.
- In this time of digital age and ease of hopping on a call, be considerate of who is invited. Respect others’ time. Does this person need to be here or can they be caught up later in a team meeting or with an email? Also, is anyone missing from a call?

Find what works best for you and set yourself and others up for successful working communications.

There are multiple ways to increase communication and coordination amongst departments. A joint MS Teams account can be used to create dialogue between teams, share files, and potentially work jointly on tasks. Joint meetings on a regular basis with a set agenda not only help teams communicate, but also help them develop strong professional relationships. Allowing the other department access to project management systems and automated system emails can facilitate exchange of information regarding faculty effort on the other department’s projects.

After any meeting or discussion, review your action items. Verbally say actions and specify who will be tackling what. At this time, you can also determine who needs to be involved going forward. For example, does the topic at hand need to be escalated or deescalated? Will there need to be approvals? When approvals and signatures are needed, it is best to go ahead and let those in the approval chains know the purpose and timeline of what they are signing.

Follow up on conversations with an email, especially when new topics are discussed, and problems are solved or realized. It is important for us to own items from start to finish—research administration starts and ends with us!

Take the time to get to know your PIs. Just as you get to know your other colleagues across departments, it is important to have a positive working relationship with your research faculty. Ask them about their research interests, how their projects are coming along, who they are collaborating with across your campus or other institutions, and what their preferred methods of communication are. In time you will learn how much they are willing to share, how detailed they expect you to be, how closely are they watching the administrative side of their project activities (and where you may want to dive deeper to confirm understanding), and who they are most comfortable receiving important allowability determinations from.

It truly takes a village to get an idea to a proposal, to award, and finally to close-out. Communicating with our peers across departments helps all of us, including the faculty, to successfully navigate through the various institutional and sponsor processes. Open communication also reduces the burden of compliance monitoring. It is vital for successful interdisciplinary projects to ensure regulations are being followed and commitments to sponsors are being met. When departments collaborate, the collaboration helps achieve the overall institutional goals of maintaining compliance.

Kathryn Simpson-King, CRA, MPH, is the Grant and Contract Manager for Post-Award Faculty Research Support Team at the University of North Texas Health Science Center. As an active member of NCURA Kathryn regularly presents at conferences, and has led presentations at the PRA, FRA and annual meetings. Recently she graduated from the inaugural class of the Region V Mustang Mentoring program. She can be reached at kathryn.king@unthsc.edu.

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Paul Below, CRA, MBA, Executive Director of Research Administration at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth. A longtime member of NCURA, Paul has presented at Region IV and National annual meetings. Recently he was a mentor with the inaugural Region V Mustang mentoring program. He can be reached at paul.below@unthsc.edu.
The NCURA Board met on August 29, 2021 at the AM63 Reconnect meeting at the Washington Hilton. Some board members were present virtually during this first ever hybrid meeting.

**Updates:** Ara Tahmassian, Vice President/President-Elect, and Kris Monahan, Secretary, discussed and acknowledged the hard work of the annual meeting program committee, staff, and the volunteers and speakers who worked to make AM63 Reconnect a reality. Cathy Snyder, Treasurer, shared that NCURA is in extremely strong financial shape despite the challenges of the pandemic thanks to the watchful eye of the NCURA financial team and executive director. NCURA’s auditors, CliftonLarsonAllen, recently completed the annual audit and issued NCURA an unmodified opinion, which is the highest level of assurance.

**Excitement about New Programs:** The board enthusiastically discussed the launch of the Young Professionals Program, which will provide specialized professional development designed for the next generation of research administration leaders who are ages 35 and younger. 868 invitations are set to be sent to qualifying members and there are plans for establishing a Young Professionals Council. The board also discussed the EMERGE program, a program which was developed by the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion and will be implemented by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee (N&DLC). The EMERGE program will begin in January 2022 and a call for nominations (self-nominations) occurs in September 2021. There was much excitement about expanding leadership opportunities to more NCURA members and to providing many avenues for developing inclusive leaders in research administration. The board discussed synergies with the Executive Leadership Program (ELP) and regional mentoring programs.

**Discussion Items:** Other board discussion items included a preliminary review of the NCURA climate survey and a review of the RAPiD Taskforce final report on their review of professional development activities and processes across the NCURA regions. The board spent the afternoon engaged in thought sessions on the following questions:

- How can we work together to increase NCURA’s visibility?
- How can NCURA maintain community in a “remote” world?

Creative ideas were offered by the Board of Directors on all these topics.

**Board Action Items:** The only board action items taken up at this meeting were approval of consent agenda items and approval of four peer reviewers for the NCURA Peer Review Program.

After a day of engaging discussions, the board concluded. The next board meeting is scheduled in November and will focus on a review of NCURA’s strategic plan and action items.
Collaboration Across the Continuum: 
Leveraging Foundation Partnerships to Expand Funding

By Amanda Neese and Lorraine Sautner

It’s no secret that collaboration has always been critical to research administration. In fact, relationships among researchers, scientists, and the staff that support them can either result in successfully funded projects and a healthy award portfolio or researcher reluctance and frustration. In many ways, 2020 was a year that tested the reaches of collaborative work across the globe. There were the obvious impacts that came with transitioning staff to remote work, accounting for equipment and technology infrastructure to support such work and retooling how to engage with researchers and external sponsors when face-to-face meetings were no longer possible. While many found themselves spending a great deal of time on the logistics of remote work, the funding landscape changed as well.

At the federal level, the funding needed for the national response to COVID-19 reduced overall federal resources available for research and development. Increased federal spending to address the pandemic, coupled with decreased federal revenue associated with an economic contraction, impacted spending across the government (Morgan & Sargent, 2020). These funding shifts may influence the fiscal environment for years to come.
Our federal entities were not the only sponsors to change course. When it came to fighting a global pandemic, the philanthropic community’s response became a call to action with ‘all hands on deck.’ Foundations were pushed to give at unprecedented levels and to award grant funds through rapid review cycles with fewer strings attached in order to support a prompt investment in pandemic relief measures (Lieberman, 2020). As the virus shows no signs of retreat, private funding for COVID-19 may become a routine part of the foundations’ standard giving portfolios (Lieberman, 2020).

Among private philanthropists, charitable contributions also shifted toward providing relief for healthcare and hospital systems. Funds for personal protective equipment, contact tracing, COVID-19 test kits, and vaccine research took the place of those formerly used for equipment upgrades, building improvements and special events.

Although the future funding landscape is unpredictable across all sectors, seeking out creative strategies for collaboration offers one solution for vaccine research took the place of those formerly used for equipment upgrades, building improvements and special events. 

Although the future funding landscape is unpredictable across all sectors, seeing out creative strategies for collaboration offers one solution for mitigating this challenge. For Nuvance Health, this has meant disrupting the traditional silos of public versus private funding to initiate a partnership between the Nuvance Health Foundations and the Department of Research and Innovation. Below are five approaches to shift collaboration from theory to practice.

1. Consider research and development funding as a continuum.
   Successfully growing a large award portfolio is not the sole responsibility of sponsored project offices. In fact, federal funding for research and development is often the culmination of progressive investments from both charitable contributions and smaller, short-term funding obtained through private philanthropic foundations. Viewing funding through a wider lens provides a way to support researchers at all levels of expertise. Individuals with little or no grant experience may find start-up funding from a private donor to initiate work, while others with significant funding histories can advance their programs through federal grants.

2. Leverage donor gifts to initiate research and development.
   Donor gifts can serve as the catalyst for implementing research and development while also helping to maximize private grant support. These contributions may provide essential funds to launch new programs or underwrite costs such as lab space, small equipment needs, materials, and researcher time. Once research programs are established, efforts can shift to identifying seed funding through private grants awarded to the institution by foundations, corporate partnerships, and industry collaborations. Donor gifts can then be used as matching funds for grant programs that require them, or to demonstrate existing support for developing research activities.

3. Connect early career researchers to seed funding to develop expertise.
   In many cases, early career researchers may be reluctant to initiate research and development work on a large scale. Working with foundation staff to identify smaller seed grants for project initiation can increase engagement among new researchers and low-activity service lines. These grants can provide limited, short-term support that allow researchers to generate preliminary data and publications needed to establish themselves as experts in their field. Private grants also prepare researchers to be competitive for larger federal grants, helping them to create a track record of successful funding—a prerequisite for many federal agencies.

4. Make Major Gift Officers aware of research and infrastructure needs.
   Federal funding has perhaps never been more competitive than it is now. Even in the best of fiscal climates, sponsors like the NIH and CDC fund less than one-quarter of requests received. Instituting a process whereby a summary report of each grant application submitted for federal or scientific funding is shared with the Nuvance Health Foundation through the Director of Foundation Partnerships. These summaries are shared further with Major Gift Officers who can match individual donor interests with high value projects when federal requests are not funded. This helps retain existing donors, engage new ones, and create a shared ownership of the research and development enterprise across the health system network.

5. Collaborate with Foundation staff on impact statements.
   Foundation staff, particularly Major Gift Officers, are skilled at communicating value to donors. These skills can be leveraged to develop shared impact statements for grant applications and donor appeal, alike. This facilitates consistency of messaging across platforms, streamlines funding requests, and improves staff efficiency by not recreating existing documents in multiple formats.

Whether clinical investigators practice in an academic or medical setting, most institutions have a Development or Foundation Office. These offices, when used as part of a holistic fundraising strategy, can serve as critical resources to growing sponsored project award portfolios. We encourage you to reach out to your foundation staff to see how you can partner with them to support research and development activity at your own institution!

References

Amanda Neece, MRA, CRA, is the Director of Public Grants for Nuvance Health. She holds a Masters in Research Administration from the University of Central Florida and has been a Certified Research Administrator since 2019. Amanda’s responsibilities include oversight of the Federal, state, and research grants portfolio across the Nuvance Health network in both New York and Connecticut. Amanda also oversees policy development and implementation, pre-award activities and post-award non-financial activities for public grants and contracts. She can be reached at Amanda.Neece@NuvanceHealth.org.

Lorraine Sautner, MSLIS, is the Director of Foundation Partnerships for Nuvance Health. She holds a Masters in Library and Information Science from the Pratt Institute and an undergraduate degree in journalism from Western Connecticut State University. Lorraine’s responsibilities at Nuvance Health include managing all pre- and post-award private grant activities for the health system as well as writing major gift proposals. She can be reached at Lorraine.Sautner@NuvanceHealth.org.
Are you looking for a way to introduce colleagues at your institution to the benefits NCURA has to offer? Do you want to make sure folks at your institution are aware of NCURA’s professional development opportunities? Are you interested in connecting with research administrators at your institution? Do you want an opportunity to volunteer without leaving your desk? Do you want to an opportunity to get to know other NCURA members volunteering for the activity? NCURA’s Campus Liaison Program may be what you need!

In the spring of 2022, President Denise Wallen charged a task force consisting of Kay Gilstrap, Donna Smith, Martin Williams, Tanta Myles, Amanda Snyder, Thomas Spencer, Shannon Sutton, Bella Blaher, and Josie Jimenez to determine the level of participation and awareness of the Campus Liaison program. Through a survey of current participants in the Campus Liaison program and a survey of the full membership, the task force presented the following recommendations to raise awareness of the program. All were approved by the Board of Directors.

- Campus Liaison ribbons will now be provided at national in-person meetings. (Who does not enjoy wearing a ribbon?)
- Volunteers serving as Campus Liaisons will be listed on the screens at the volunteer luncheon at the national annual meeting along with other national volunteers.
- There will be Campus Liaison tables at the volunteer lunch at the national annual meeting. This is a great opportunity to meet your fellow Campus Liaisons!
- Offer annual training for those serving as Campus Liaisons.

The NCURA Campus Liaison program involves one individual per institution acting as the liaison between research administrators at the institution and NCURA. The campus liaisons receive a monthly email filled with professional resources from NCURA to share with research administrators on their campuses. How a liaison chooses to share the email varies according to the institution’s structure and needs. They can do so through a listserv maintained and provided by their institution, an individually managed email list, individual emails, or through other institutional channels.

The monthly emails contain:
- Information about upcoming meetings, workshops, and webinars, with links to learn more or register
- Featured videos from the NCURA’s YouTube channel
- Links for readers to learn more about NCURA tools, such as Collaborate
- Featured articles from the recent issue of the NCURA Magazine
- Information about featured publications
- And, more!

As we continue to do more and more of our work remotely, it is helpful to have both online and in-person opportunities and resources like those covered in the monthly campus liaison emails. As an NCURA member, you learn about these resources through direct outreach like emails, social media, the NCURA website, or through your network of NCURA friends. The campus liaison email provides up-to-date and relevant links in one communication that can go to any interested research administrator at your institution, whether or not they are a current NCURA member.

Are you interested in becoming a Campus Liaison for your institution?
See the listing of current institutions with a Campus Liaison at www.ncura.edu/MembershipVolunteering/CampusLiaison.aspx.
If you don’t see your institution listed please reach out to Emily Ainsworth at ainsworth@ncura.edu.
Whether you work at a research institution or a predominantly undergraduate institution, the importance of providing quality services to your faculty in support of their research and scholarship is undeniable.

NCURA Peer Programs can help you improve your office functions so you can provide the best possible services to your faculty.

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

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PEERREVIEW@NCURA.EDU
Research administrators are known as problem solvers, and it has been reported greater than 75% work more than 40 hours per week (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011). Even with research administrators working extra hours it has been noted that there can be a “us versus them” culture in the researcher -- research administrator relationship. According to the Nature article about research administration as a career, researcher Hilary Noone found that as many as 281 research administrators felt undervalued by researchers (Reardon, 2021).
Research administrators fall into five primary categories: departmental, proposal/research development, pre-award, post-award, and compliance. Each role is essential for the research enterprise to be successful. The relationship between researchers and research administrators can also cause trouble between the various administrative roles. Because of the challenges of the researcher versus administrator relationship, research administrators in all roles must work well together for the common goal of facilitating research, although the specific goals of each role are different. One way of working together to improve relationships and improve performance is through collaborative partnerships.

There are many aspects to establishing successful collaborative relationships regardless of whether these are symbiotic or interdisciplinary. Some critical parts of the collaborative relationship include collaboration, trust, active learning, and effective communication. For example, in an effort to improve the overall productivity of the Office for Research and Economic Development (ORED) at the University of Alabama, there was a collective effort to improve collaboration between the Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP) and the Office for Research Compliance (ORC).

“TRUST is at the foundation of all relationships; building and developing trust in the workplace is ESSENTIAL”

Collaboration
What skills does collaboration require? How do you use those skills in order to bring offices and personnel together? Can collaboration bridge the gap between Research Compliance and OSP Administrators? How do the office structures affect these relationships? These are some of the questions that we posed in our discussion group with the above title. Here is what we found.

Understanding processes and workflow:
Working with each unit to understand their processes and unique issues helps the dialogue between the various offices and the researcher remain consistent. For example, suppose each administrative role is aware of the other’s processes and challenges. In that case, there can be harmonized messaging shared with the research community and there is less chance of appearing to have an "us vs. them" mentality. Not everyone needs to be the subject matter expert, but each person can show that they will work with the other department to get to the answer and be aware of issues affecting the overall goal.

What we have done:
- Attend training sessions held by each department to gain a better understanding of their processes and workflow.
- Invite compliance staff to present at OSP Specialists meetings.
- Invite the OSP manager to speak with research compliance staff.
- Cross-training between the two areas.

Messaging:
Administrators should work on becoming more aware of the messaging that is used in each department. Emails need scrutiny to make sure that the blame is not being passed on to another department. To provide good customer service to the researchers, there is often a need to share the status of their projects within the cycle; however, attention must be paid to the wording of communication so that it does not appear that blame is being cast.

Communication across departments:
Communication must be continuous because changes in personnel and in roles within departments can affect the sustainability of previous success.

What we could do next to foster the collaboration:
- Announcement or inter-office board that could show latest changes within departments.
- Establish a monthly or quarterly newsletter sent out to ORED staff.

Presenting a united front:
It is always helpful to participate in co-presentations and discussion groups across campus.

What we have planned:
- ORED Pop-Up locations—Announce temporary office locations that include members from the units to give researchers a chance to talk with administrators on their “turf.” This would allow researchers to see that the units are working together to assist them.
- Core offices presenting with departments across the research enterprise in departments—with representatives from each office as part of the team to do a presentation and answer questions.

We learned some key takeaways about collaboration, including the importance of trust, active listening, and communication.

Trust—In order for the process and effort to work, there needs to be trust between the offices. As we work toward a common goal, increased research capacity, each team needs to feel that they can depend on the other party to do what they say they will do. Trust is at the foundation of all relationships; building and developing trust in the workplace is essential.
When teams see that they can count on each other to do what they say they will do, team bonding will follow.

Active Listening—focusing on what others are not only saying but also feeling. When you actively listen, you can put yourself in their position and see things from another’s perspective. This can create empathy and encourage bonding between personnel and offices. What is a day like in their shoes?

Communication—clear and thoughtful communication is a must, as well as brainstorming, and talking openly and honestly with the group. Open lines of communication promote trust and a positive work environment. Conversely, ineffective communication can result in workplace failures.

Collaboration is vital in pursuing a specific result, solving problems, or designing new products. ORED, OSP and ORC collaborated to improve workflow. Critical aspects of the collaboration included understanding the reason for the collaboration, identifying collaborators, allowing time for the collaboration to occur, and sharing the results (Denise, 1999). As a result, there have been improvements in the overall operation. There will continue to be an effort to maintain this collaboration and possibly expand it to include other areas.

References

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In Mid-March 2020 we were asked to pack our laptops and supplies as we may be working temporarily from home for a couple of weeks, which turned into close to a year and a half of remote life. Because of the pandemic, NCURA’s 62nd Annual Meeting was a successful virtual experience that provided a wonderful array of workshops, concurrent and discussion sessions.

As the planning for AM63 started, there was much uncertainty as the pandemic was at its peak and for most, work was still remote and travel restrictions were in place. Despite this uncertainty, the foresight, and the courage of the Program Committee and the NCURA staff rose to the occasion with the concept of a hybrid event providing an opportunity for those who were unable to travel to join the meeting virtually and for others to be present in-person.

RECONNECT

WAS APTLY SELECTED AS THE THEME AND AS THEY SAY, “THE REST IS HISTORY”.
The AM63 Program Committee rose to the occasion by putting together an incredible combined program that included 6 in-person and 9 virtual workshops, and over 100 in-person and over 100 virtual concurrent and discussion sessions. Over 360 presenters worked hard to provide the quality programs experienced.

What a success it was, both the virtual program and the in-person meeting at the Washington Hilton, where those attending had the wonderful experience of reconnecting with old colleagues and finding new colleagues. With approximately 1,200 virtual attendees joining remotely and some 375 members, of whom 55 were first-time attendees, present live at the Hilton, it was another history making first for NCURA. Three sets of presentation types were offered: fully virtual, in-person only, and hybrid. The hybrid sessions offered the virtual audience the opportunity to join the in-person attendees for a Q&A session which was an opportunity to reconnect!

The meeting started with the presentation of the NCURA awards and the official announcement of the renaming of NCURA’s Outstanding Achievement Award to honor our late colleague Robert Andresen of the University of Wisconsin, Madison for his long and distinctive contributions to NCURA and providing the NCURA Gold Award to Bob posthumously.
NCURA 63rd Annual Meeting
~ Hybrid Event ~

Following the awards ceremony, the live keynote address by Erica Dhawan who was named by Thinkers50 as the “Oprah of Management Thinkers” inspired the in-person audience. Dhawan is the author of "Get Big Things Done: The Power of Connectional Intelligence" and "Digital Body Language: How to Build Trust and Connection." Among other things, Dhawan asked us to reconsider the way we connect in the workforce and highlighted the distinctions between digital natives and digital adapters. The keynote speaker for the virtual conference was Dr. Michael Lauer, the NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research who focused on providing an update on trends in NIH funding, the non-COVID flexibilities, and research integrity.

While the meeting will be forever remembered as being unique, what remains the same is the way the NCURA community continues to innovate, reconnect, push boundaries and support research together.

AM63 Co-chairs,

**Ara Tahmasian**
Harvard University

**Kris Monahan**
Providence College

**David Richardson**
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Keynote Speaker Erica Dhawan and Monday Opening Night Jazz Quartet from the Main Stage.
August 30 – September 2 2021

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In today’s world filled with data security breaches and identity theft, many governments have made data privacy a priority. In the last five years, we have seen the GDPR (European Union) take effect, as well as the California Consumer Privacy Act (2018), the Colorado Privacy Act (2020) and the Virginia Consumer Data Protect Act (March 2021). In addition to these laws, another five states have proposed privacy acts. While most of these new acts focus on consumer protection, we should not be lulled into a false sense of security at our universities. After all, our students—and for those of us that have affiliated medical centers, our patients—are our consumers and their data deserves our protection.

These laws, along with FERPA and HIPAA, try to protect our data. In 2020, we all read about data breaches involving such well-known companies as Microsoft (250 million records), Estée Lauder (440 million records), Facebook (267 million records) and Instagram, TikTok and YouTube (235 million records). The largest breach, however, was the adult website Cam4 with 10.88 billion records being compromised, including such personal identifying information (PII) as full names, email addresses and payment logs (Henriquez, 2020). While these excessive data breaches took place in the commercial realm, the world of higher education has also suffered data breaches, 1,327 of them between 2005 and 2020. These higher education breaches led to the exposure of 24.5 million records over this fifteen-year timespan (Povejsil, 2021).

So how are DTUAs supposed to help? Executing Data Transfer and Use Agreements (DTUAs) allows universities to have at their disposal a readily accessible record of data they have received, from whom and for what purpose, as well as a record of what data they have shared, with whom and for what purpose. By having these records in place, universities can more readily determine when data has been exposed, what data was exposed, respond to the breach in a timely fashion, rapidly notifying the affected parties and mitigating the exposure.

It is essential to have accurate records of data sharing, as several laws require the notification of the impacted individuals in a set amount of time. If you do not know who has what data, it is nearly impossible to comply with these laws. Failure to notify affected individuals in the allotted period of time can result in hefty fines for the institution.

Not only will DTUAs help universities comply with applicable laws, they will help ensure that the entity receiving the data is handling it in the appropriate manner when the DTUA includes terms that spell out how the data is to be treated, who is allowed to use it and for what. If the receiving party breaches the terms of the DTUA, not only can they be liable for damages for the breach, but they could also face damages for breach of contract. The potential of double damages provides your institution more security for your data, as the receiving party will want to avoid these costly damages.

Having a rapid response is vital to comply with the applicable laws and helps protect your university’s reputation. If your university suffers a data breach and that breach is not addressed rapidly to minimize the damage to your consumers, your reputation may be irreparably damaged, ultimately resulting, for example, in lower enrollment rates and patients finding other health care facilities.

“"It is essential to have accurate records of data sharing, as several laws require the notification of the impacted individuals in a set amount of time."
When should I execute a DTUA?
A DTUA should be executed every time your institution shares data, of any type (including HIPAA de-identified data, limited data set, and Personal Health Information or any Personal Identifiable Information (PII)), with any outside individual or entity, especially with a commercial entity. This may appear overly cautious and time consuming. However, in today's environment a DTUA represents the best way to ensure an accurate accessible record, its location, the unit responsible for the data, who is using it, and how it is used. If your entity requires a DTUA for all incoming data, you will have a similar record for data you have obtained from others, should your institution suffer a data breach.

What terms should be included in the DTUA?
While there are differences in the terms based on the type of data, the following should always be included:

- Name and address of the other party, also the name of the PI authorized to use the data at recipient, if applicable.
- A description of the data being shared.
- A description of the use of the data by the receiving party.
- Who to contact in case of a data breach.
- Signatures of authorized representatives of both parties.
- Language describing liability in the event of a breach. Here is an example taken from the FDP DTUA template: “Except to the extent prohibited by law, the Recipient assumes all liability for damages which may arise from its use, storage, disclosure, or disposal of the Data. The Provider will not be liable to the Recipient for any loss, claim, or demand made by the Recipient, or made against the Recipient by any other party, due to or arising from the use of the Data by the Recipient, except to the extent permitted by law when caused by the gross negligence or willful misconduct of the Provider.” (One-Way DTUA Template [Face-Page with Attachments 1 and 3], 2019)
- The actions the receiving party must take and prevent to adequately protect the data.
- Any other HIPAA, GDPR or state specific terms required for the particular type of data being shared.

By following the applicable laws, taking appropriate security measures, and executing DTUAs, universities can help safeguard their data and mitigate any breaches in a timely fashion. The combined result is a lower chance of data breach and a minimization of damages suffered in case of a breach.

References

Amy Crosby, M.L.S., is an agreement administrator in the Office of Research and Project Administration at the University of Rochester. She works on drafting, reviewing, and negotiating Confidentiality Discloser Agreements (CDAs), Data Transfer and Use Agreements (DTUAs), and Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs). Amy can be reached at acrosby@orpa.rochester.edu.
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Global Collaboration in a Pandemic

The global pandemic has forced many universities to move to online learning platforms for their students. Although online learning has been available for many years, in the last year we have seen learning programs that would have traditionally been delivered face-to-face being adapted for virtual delivery. Online staff development programs are not new; however, staff development through virtual interactive workshops is perhaps less explored.

Research administration has become a global profession over the last decade. Societies representing the profession, such as NCURA, ARMS, ARMA, and EARMA, have also grown in professionalism, size, and activity. Research administration societies globally provide like-minded professionals opportunities to connect through professional networking forums, online and in person conferences, and even travelling scholarships.

There is no doubt that as a profession, we have bragging rights over our collaboration efforts and our openness to share with each other across the world. There is also something about our profession that leads us to develop strong, lasting bonds with our international colleagues.

Even in a time where travel is limited, research administration societies have found many innovative ways to share information and development opportunities through Zoom workshops. Along with short sessions being offered online, many of our INORMS societies have moved accreditation modules to online offerings and have run successful, virtual conferences.

So why not consider applying the same principles to more tailored sessions. Before COVID-19, the University of Maryland Borderless Research Administration Knowledge Exchange (BRAKE) team would travel the globe to deliver their workshops by invitation. A recent collaboration between Deakin University in Australia and BRAKE resulted in a two-part virtual workshop to help a newly formed team at Deakin University better understand the U.S. Federal funding landscape. This then led to further collaboration between Deakin University and Kings College in London to run a similar session for the team on the UK and European landscape.

“In addition to offering workshops, use these platforms [Zoom and Microsoft Teams] to enhance international collaboration in general.”

Not only did these sessions teach the Deakin team valuable skills, it also led to better engagement with the rest of the sector and a lift in morale as part of a globally recognized profession. It also increases the global network in support of an increasingly globalized research landscape. Having contacts at international organizations where the faculty collaborate makes it easier for a research administrator to do a better, more effective job of managing those collaborations.

Here are some tips for running international collaboration workshops:
- Reach out to international colleagues through Collaborate or other networks. Ask your network who they know, and then be bold and reach out. If attending a virtual (INORMS, NCURA, ARMS, ARMA, or EARMA) conference, make contact with the people presenting and ask if they would present the same or a similar one for your institution.
- Be clear about the topics you wish to cover, and what skills are to be
developed. Be creative. There is a whole range of skills and topics that colleagues can cover, from funding landscapes and compliance to management experience and leadership skills. What is your particular team’s need? Consider breaking sessions into two or three events to keep them short and targeted and to avoid Zoom fatigue.

- Think critically about the target audience; is it brand new research administrators? People from a specific department or center? An audience of experienced departmental administrators should perhaps attend different types of sessions than new administrators from across your campus.
- Be prepared to run these sessions either early in the day or in the evening to accommodate the different time zones.
- Consider running some of the sessions following a hybrid model. Can some small groups of people gather in a conference room to attend a virtual session? This can encourage conversation and engagement with the topic and will be more appealing to individuals who prefer a group setting.
- One thing that the pandemic taught us is how easy it is to use Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and similar platforms to carry out meetings. Because of the forced use of these platforms during the pandemic, there are less psychological and technological barriers to using them.

In addition to offering workshops, use these platforms to enhance international collaboration in general. For example, if your institution has a project with collaborators in other parts of the world, you can coordinate a meeting with your administrative counterparts at those institutions and go through the administrative requirements for the project. Those virtual face-to-face meetings will make the collaboration more fruitful and if you find that one collaborator would benefit from training in a specific compliance area you can arrange for that. Virtual meetings can also assist in keeping in touch with international colleagues where distance and the pandemic have limited the face-to-face time at conferences.

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**Rebecca Hunsaker** is the Executive Director for Research Management in the Dean’s Office of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS), at the University of Maryland, College Park where she has been since 2003 when she started as a research assistant in a federally-funded research center. She has worked at the departmental and central levels on budget development and management, proposal development and submission and a variety of compliance issues at every level. She can be reached at hunsaker@umd.edu.

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While we strive for more collaboration in many of our processes, we tend to focus on generating more output, in this case, generating more research proposals. I argue that we should be looking at the researcher’s dilemma from a different perspective. To be successful with your research efforts, you should focus on submitting better and not more research proposals. Higher quality research proposals have a better chance of success, and even if they fail, they garner more helpful feedback that can lead to more successful resubmissions.

Some junior and senior researchers are going through a crisis due to very low success rates for some research calls. For example, more than 88% of proposals submitted to Horizon 2020 were not successful. Some make excuses, saying the calls are very competitive, focused on excellence, or many other reasons. This interpretation ignores the wasted time and resources that go into preparing these proposals. Research I have carried out raises several issues that stop or slow the engagement in research projects and proposals: the lack of time to write proposals, challenges with internal and external administration, bureaucracy, knowledge and skills gaps of the researchers and research office staff, and the poor success rates of very competitive calls.

The grand challenge for research administrators, research offices, and others is providing better support to researchers engaged in chasing research funding. Telling researchers they were unlucky and to keep generating more proposals might not be the best tactic. Advising researchers not to collaborate with weak partners, engage in poorly led calls, or submit proposals that might struggle to pass the initial review could help teams make better decisions around the best use of their time. Hopefully with better advice, analysis, and planning, they will submit to fewer calls and be less inclined to engage with mediocrity.

This approach will require a change in culture and process for most institutions. While some researchers crave feedback and engage with their departmental peers and research office for advice early in the process, others leave it too late or do not engage at all. Experienced researchers within the department will know the science and possibly have some idea about the funding agency or the requirements for their calls, so their feedback can impact a more junior researcher in that area. While the role and responsibility of research offices vary by institution, some institutions, and very focused research institutes, are much more targeted in their internal reviews and deliberations on research proposals. This very selective mentality delivers higher success rates, as researchers are involved in fewer proposals. While it might be easy to suggest such a course of action, it is far harder to deploy since the concept of academic freedom is alive and well in most institutions, and most calls do not require multiple levels of approval before submission.

Early access to guidance on positioning and shaping a proposal, or feedback on engaging as a partner in a collaborative proposal, might help determine the outline suitability to proceed with the proposal. Early reviews help shape the outline, ensure proposals fit the call, and have a chance of being selected. While there will certainly be doubts at the early stages of the proposal development, if some advice and counselling on the approach can be leveraged, then the decision can be made quickly whether the proposal stands a reasonable chance or if it is best to say no and stop working on it.

The trade-offs between success for the few and frustration and despair for the many who submit proposals can be lessened to some extent if a more deliberate approach is taken when considering which calls to engage with. More engaging and intrusive collaborative reviews can help guide expectations and train researchers in developing proposals so they can understand at an early stage whether the call is suitable and the proposal has a real chance of success. While collaboration is usually understood to drive progress, the argument being made here is that by stopping work on a proposal with a low chance of success, time is being saved to work on something else with a far higher chance of producing a positive outcome.

This approach seems to resonate well in the Business School where I am located, as well as in research institutes that are very selective about what calls to engage with. In the survey I administered, lack of time was the biggest barrier for researchers to engage in research proposals and projects. It is only by looking at the entire chain of research that starts with considering research calls, going to information events, searching for partners, developing research proposals, or engaging with others in developing a proposal, right through to submission, evaluation and finally getting rejected (or possibly accepted), that we can understand the effort invested in a proposal. In this value chain, time is a valuable resource for lecturers and researchers, the advice that Research Office staff and their peers give them needs to help them weigh the real costs of failure and distraction with the remote chance of success with weak proposals or highly competitive calls. In closing, if you are a researcher, then really listen to the input and advice you get from your peers and Research Office contacts. If you are a peer or based in a Research Office then don’t be afraid to say the call or proposal or partners or timing is not right as early as possible in the process. Be a good colleague and don’t be afraid to say NO!

JB McCarthy is the Development Director at Financial Services Innovation Centre, Cork University Business School (CUBS), University College Cork (UCC) in Ireland. He is focused on stimulating collaborative industry and academic research engagements as well as research funded by the EU and other national and international funding agencies. He can be reached at jb.mccarthy@ucc.ie.
Ann M. Holmes received the inaugural 2021 Robert C. Andresen Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration Award at the 63rd Annual Meeting. This award is given to a member who has made a significant contribution to the profession and demonstrated noteworthy service to NCURA. The following are her remarks:

Good Morning–Before I begin let me say what an honor it is for me to be named the first recipient of this award named in honor of our dear friend and colleague Bob Andresen. I am truly humbled. I want to start this morning by thanking my dear friends and colleagues Dick Seligman and Denise Clark for their heartfelt introductions. I am humbled by the nomination letters put forward by these icons of research administration, and my thanks to my other great colleagues Tim Reuter of Stanford University and Erin Bailey of the University of Buffalo. And my dear boss and mentor Dr. Greg Ball.

How did I get so fortunate to happen upon a profession that would give me the gift of friends from all other the country and allow me to travel across the world? What a journey this has been. When I started—I knew nothing–The concept of contracts and grants were completely new to me. So, I asked a long-time employee what is the difference between a contract and a grant? Her very serious reply was: “The contracts are in the BLUE Folders and the grants are in the Green Folders.” What? Did she misunderstand the question? So, I repeated the question—unfortunately, the reply was the same… I knew then that I had an uphill climb… oh, in so many ways.

I can remember my first NCURA meeting–Region 2–Princeton, New Jersey. I was, like many of us I suppose, a deer in the headlights. I was overwhelmed by the knowledge the presenters had and wondered if I would ever be able to remember all the regulations and rules that these gifted presenters were telling me about.

A short time later I came to a Fundamentals workshop at this very same hotel. I was given a binder as big as two telephone books and knew for certain then… I was going to end up in jail! Thank goodness for the late, great, Julie Norris, who I quote repeatedly—“There is no jail big enough for all of us.”

I struggled to understand this thing called “indirect costs”—but then they changed the name to F&A…OMG—Presentations that contained complicated flow charts and terms like—Direct Cost Equivalents and Separately metered buildings—Blew my mind. I came up with my “water” thing while presenting on A-21 with Pat Fitzgerald—he accused me of taking all the “funny parts” of A-21! It has been at least a decade since I first used my “cups of water” and I still continue to be asked for this demonstration. Who knew that a desperate attempt to explain a complicated calculation would become a YouTube sensation—Well almost—I would like to thank all of you who clicked on the “like” button multiple times so that my then 8-year-old grandson thought I was cool!

Slowly with the help of friends and mentors like Erica Kropp, Denise Clark, Tim Reuter, Dick Seligman, Erin Bailey, Marianne Woods, Pat Fitzgerald, Beth Brittan-Powell, Dennis Paffrath, David Mayo, Cathy Snyder and countless others—I began to grasp these complicated issues. How can I thank them all?

But as I sat to think about my career - it wasn’t those people that turned me to a self-proclaimed geek and “Regulation Nerd”—it was you, the people
in this audience that asked the hard questions—the research administrators from universities large and small who simply asked “Why?” You made me think, made me research, made me read and re-read and think and turn back to those mentors to ask their opinions. How did I get so lucky to have people like Rebecca Hunsaker, Tim Schailley, and Margarita Morales constantly pushing me to understand our profession on a deeper level? Thanks to my close colleagues at University of Maryland—Maureen, Amanda, Julie, Colleen and Kim... And especially Carolyn, you continue to make me better... I have grown to love arguing the finer points of compliance. Is there anything better than trying to convince Denise Clark that your point of view is correct? The fact that I lose 98% of the time doesn’t matter—or arguing a point about allowable with Rebecca Hunsaker? I think we made a young administrator cry once while discussing a point—we had to explain that fighting was our way of...showing love!

Oh, and then there is the public speaking thing—I sometimes can’t believe I can gather the courage to stand in front of, well, lots of people and just go on and on and on...

Remember in high school when you had to get up for 3 minutes—I think I had to sell shampoo or something—the longest 3 minutes of my life! Now... I actually heard myself saying. If you can’t give me 20 minutes...forget it... So many good times. The time just before starting a workshop...I was in a lecture hall sitting on a chair with wheels—I fell off and landed behind the lab table—lucky for me because my skirt was up around my neck.

Or when I was in Alaska and my clothes ripped—note to self—don’t throw your clothes in the wash the night before you get on a plane—sometimes they really do mean “Dry Clean Only.”

How many times did I have to suppressed laughter when speaking with Tim and Denise—Oh and thanks Denise for always letting me know there was spinach in my teeth... 30 seconds before we started.

As many of you know, preparing for a session or workshop is harder than it looks. Hot topics sessions are the best example—I can spend hours reading, just to narrow down what to include in the lecture—I admire each of you for the effort I know you put into the presentations you will hear over the next few days. I thank each of you for striving for this excellence.

As my presentation skills improved so did the opportunities. First, I was presenting at regional meetings, then national and eventually becoming a part of the training team for the Fundamentals, and eventually helping to create some proposals–you calculated budgets and read and re-read those proposals—and IRB’s and and and...

As my presentation skills improved so did the opportunities. First, I was presenting at regional meetings, then national and eventually becoming a part of the training team for the Fundamentals, and eventually helping to create some proposals–you calculated budgets and read and re-read those proposals—and IRB’s and and and...

I have had the opportunity to visit 5 continents and met countless research administrators across the world. “Oh, the places I go.”

But enough about me—What about you? I read an article by Johnathan Cole in a 2016 Atlantic Magazine that stated—and I quote: When educated Americans think of their best universities, they probably don’t think that lasers, FM radio, magnetic resonance imaging, global positioning systems, bar codes, the algorithm for Google, the fetal monitor, the nicotine patch, antibiotics, the Richter Scale, Buckyballs and nanotechnology, the discovery of the insulin gene, the origin of computers, of bioengineering through the discovery of recombinant DNA, transistors, improved weather forecasting, cures for childhood leukemia, the pap smear, scientific agriculture, methods for surveying public opinion, the concept of congestion pricing, human capital, or ‘the self-fulfilling prophecy’ all had their origins in the country’s research universities. Even the electric toothbrush, Gatorade, the Heimlich maneuver, and Viagra had their origins at these great universities. These institutions have become the engines of innovation and discovery that now drive a large part of the economic growth and social change in the United States.

Ladies and gentlemen—we are a large part of every one of these breakthroughs in science. Yes, YOU DID that!
Research Administration and Data

What the Data Reveal About Us and How We Can Leverage this Information to be the Change We Seek

By Laneika K. Musalini, Saiqa Anne Qureshi, Jennifer Shambrook, and Mario Medina

In today’s climate, you would be hard pressed to find an organization that does not talk about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) as a priority, a goal, a value, a differentiator, a part of organizational culture, and, at the same time, a focused area for improvement. It is for some of these same reasons that NCURA’s Presidential Task Force on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (now the DEI Select Committee) developed the 2021 DEI Webinar Series as a free resource to NCURA’s membership. The webinar panel for the July session—-Drs. Saiqa Anne Qureshi, Jennifer Shambrook, and Mario Medina—examined the outputs of NCURA demographics data, as well as the trajectories and impact of a series of surveys of the research administration community. Attendees were able to gain a better understanding of the general make-up of NCURA and the research administration community as a whole, in comparison to the U.S. workforce overall, and how these data impact the research administration profession.

Research Administration and Data

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS STRESS PERCEPTION SURVEYS (RASPerS)

During the July, 2021 DEI webinar, Dr. Jennifer Shambrook presented data from RASPerS, a survey that she authored. Dr. Shambrook was able to gain a baseline with the launch of the RASPerS in 2007. Since that time, she has measured the perception of stress of research administrators from all demographics, and more than 3,000 research administrators (both internal and external to NCURA) have participated in the survey (Figure 1). Responses have revealed that there is a high level of stress amongst research administrators, heightened for specific demographic populations.

Figure 1: RASPerS Information

It is also noted that major events occurred in research administrations during the years that RASPerS was administered. In 2007, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget doubled. In 2010, the United States was coming through a major recession and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding was being distributed to institutions from federal agencies. In 2015, the new Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circular, 2 CFR 200, had just been implemented. In 2020, the world was thrown into a global pandemic due to COVID-19. As research administrators are well aware, all of these circumstances can cause an increase in - what is an already heightened - stress level.

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION DATA

Age. According to Drs. Saiqa Anne Qureshi and Mario Medina, the workforce, as a whole, is approximately 50% Baby Boomer and Gen X and 50% Gen Z and Millennial. NCURA is more demographically skewed age wise compared to higher education staff overall: higher education is about 40-45% over 40 or Gen X and Baby Boomer (Catalyst, 2021; Fry, 2018; Pritchard et al., 2019; Torpey, 2020). NCURA and research administration is closer to 80% in favor of the older generations, which means that NCURA is approximately 35% underrepresented in younger workers (approximately under the age of 40). Additionally, retirement data show that at least a third of the older education administration workforce will be retiring in the next five years (Pritchard et al., 2019). There is a real shift in the workforce that will occur in the next five years, as older workers retire and younger workers continue to join the ranks. What does this mean for research administration? What does this say about hiring, recruiting, and retention in research administration? How can we proactively plan for succession in research administration?
administration overall, and ensure that our profession is a “destination of choice” for those entering the workforce?

**Race.** Demographic data show that NCURA is more heavily racially skewed White than the U.S. working population, and is less Hispanic (NCURA Profile Data). There is also a lack of Native American, Pacific Islander, and Alaskan & Hawaiian Native representation in research administration. Knowing this, there are opportunities to intentionally create a diverse hiring pool.

RASPerS data (2020) show a change in demographics over time. Using 2007 as a baseline year, the Hispanic research administration population has grown by almost 3% and the Asian population has grown by approximately 1%; however, there has been a significant decline in African-American research administrators. There is less clarity about whether employees feel equally able to access opportunities for promotion across race and have equal confidence in their career trajectories. The reduced diversity in terms of race intensifies an existing and growing issue in terms of age: younger workers seek out diverse environments, race being a large proxy for this. As they do not see the diverse racial environments in which they wish to work, they steer away, exacerbating the lack of age diversity in research administration, as these problems feed into each other (Tulshyan, 2015).

**Gender Pay Ratio.** NCURA data have aligned with RASPerS data over the last 15 years, confirming that the profession of research administration is heavily saturated with females. Traditionally, NCURA has a significantly higher percentage of women in membership than the percentage of women in the U.S. workforce, 81% to 47% respectively (BLS, 2019).

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA) data show that a woman who remains in a position for 8-22 years, is more likely to have her salary flatline, compared to men (Pritchard et al., 2019). For men, their salary continues to increase, in the same role, for up to 25 years, causing inequities in an already disproportionate salary distribution. Further, CUPA data (2019) show that women in higher education are paid $0.86 for every $1 that men earn for the same position. Over the lifespan of a career, the cumulative pay difference is $67,000 for women, not including benefits matching, such as employer retirement contributions. At entry into the field, it is almost equal, so women are seeing this effect as they continue in their career, moving laterally and upward, yet not receiving the same pay increases as men.

Moreover, women are less likely to apply for positions that they believe to be outside of their core ability (ILO, 2018). Women are more likely to apply if they check off all of the skills and/or requirements, whereas men will take more chances to pursue opportunities outside of their core skillset. Women should be encouraged to apply for more advanced positions throughout their career and also be encouraged to advocate for promotions and increases on the job.

**Gaps**

Data show that there are significant gaps in age, race and gender within research administration. There needs to be an inclusion plan, both at individual institutions and professional organizations, because diversity does not work without inclusion. Numerous studies show that diversity alone does not drive inclusion. In fact, without inclusion there is often a diversity backlash. A study from Harvard Business School (2017) on sponsorship and multicultural professional representation, for example, shows that 41% of senior-level African-Americans, 20% of senior-level Asians, and 18% of senior-level Hispanics feel obligated to sponsor employees of the same gender or ethnicity as themselves (for Caucasians the number is 7%), creating additional in-office “labor” for professionals of color (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). This is compounded by sponsors of color, especially at the top, being hobbled by the perception of giving special treatment to protegés of color and the concern that protegés might not “make the grade.” The result: only 18% of Asians, 21% of African-Americans, and 25% of Hispanics step up to sponsorship (and 27% of Caucasians). Qureshi adds that companies must understand that narrative along with the data is what really draws the picture for organizations, not data alone.

The Center for Talent Innovation constructed a unique, robust framework for measuring the key drivers of inclusion. The quantitative and qualitative research performed gives a more in-depth, rich meaning to findings. The Center has defined four levers that drive inclusion: inclusive leaders, authenticity, networking and visibility, and clear career paths (Payne, 2017).

Inclusive leaders are defined as those who ensure that team members speak up and are heard; make it safe to propose novel ideas; empower team members to make decisions; take advice and implement feedback; give actionable feedback; and share credit for team success (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Authenticity occurs when people feel like they can bring their whole self to work without compromising who they are. Networking and visibility are key for any professional. However, for women and people of color, the key to rising above a playing field that remains stubbornly uneven is sponsorship. A sponsor is a senior-level leader who elevates their protégé’s visibility within the corridors of power; advocates for key assignments and promotions for them, and puts their reputation on the line for the protégé’s advancement. Finally, clear career paths are inevitable for retention. For women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people of color, the map to career success is murky. Work at Harvard Business School also found that 45% of women off-ramp to take care of children, compounded by elder care that is increasingly pulling women off the career track, with 24% leaving to care for aging relatives (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). But a significant number of women also feel pushed off the ladder. LGBTQ+ individuals and people of color, too, struggle to name a simple solution to open up a blocked career path. Ironically, it is usually the majority group that presumes to identify the reason why underrepresented populations are not advancing, which too often results in the problem being oversimplified or misunderstood.

**Managing through Demographics Change**

Since retirement is inevitable, the research administration community must engage with the younger cohorts of research administrators, along with the diverse and different values and expectations they bring. This situation creates new recruiting and retention imperatives, and it is critical that the industry engage with them. There has to be a way for the current research
administration recruiting and retention model to shift in order to provide new research administrators with growth opportunities and support. Some of the support mechanisms that younger workers value include: work-life balance, sense of purpose, flexible work schedules, professional development, and opportunities for advancement (SHRM, 2017). When these things are not in place, it is difficult to retain newer employees for an extended period of time, according to Qureshi.

Retention
RASPerS data show that African-American research administrators perceive that they are being bullied on a regular basis. In fact, of the 4.6% of African-American survey respondents, 18% reported being bullied on the job (RASPerS, 2020). Further, African-American and Asian research administrators responded they are planning to leave research administration in the next two years. More alarming, these two racial groups along with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders responded to RASPerS (2020) that they are not only planning to leave but are actively looking for another job currently.

All research administrators should feel that they are valued and that their work is valued and appreciated. As fellow research administrators, we can help mitigate these underrepresented populations from leaving the profession by asking ourselves:

- What can I do to ensure my colleagues feel supported and included?
- Can I mentor someone who is different from me?
- Can I ensure that my colleagues are not being bullied and feel confident in their job?

Dr. Shambrook has been in research administration for three decades. As the director of a sponsored programs office, she understands the various nuances of meaningful recruiting and retaining valuable employees. Dr. Shambrook’s view is that hiring managers should want to hire someone who will stay on the job for an extended period of time, not just replace retirees with someone who already has 25-35 years of experience. Instead, hiring managers are to look to develop a career ladder for people who are moving up in the profession, coming from the outside, or who are re-entering the profession but with limited experience. It is not wise to look for someone with equivalent experience of those retiring, exclaims Shambrook.

Conclusion
As research administrators, we boast about our “super power” of being able to be agile, resilient, and adaptable. But what do we do when our super power is not enough? What do we do when something as unpretentious as skin tone, age, or gender prohibits our colleagues from being valued and included? What do we do when these very things are used to subjugate our intelligence and passion? How do research administrators make underrepresented and marginalized populations feel welcomed, included, and a sense of belonging?

The panel and facilitator for this particular webinar made the following suggestions:

- Create an internal training program to create opportunities for people internally to advance (Medina).
- Create an office environment where employees have a sense of purpose (Qureshi).
- Pair junior employees with senior employees for mentoring, coaching, and job shadowing opportunities (Musalini).
- Develop a career ladder for employees to advance their careers (Shambrook).
- Allow flexible work schedules and remote work options (Medina, Shambrook, & Qureshi).
- Advocate for female employees and empower them to advocate for themselves (Musalini).

References


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As proposals for sponsored funding have become more complex, the questions groups of researchers propose to answer often require expertise from multiple disciplines spanning traditional administrative units (departments, schools, institutions). To help these groups, the science of team science (SciTS) was developed. The field of SciTS is “concerned with understanding and managing circumstances that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of collaborative cross-disciplinary science, and the evaluation of collaborative science outcomes” (Falk-Krzesinski et al., 2010). Simultaneously, the complexity of collaborating scientifically and of supporting these proposals administratively has increased, often requiring administrative support from multiple units on a fast timeline. Each of these groups, which can include research administration, research development, senior leadership, and others, differ in motivation, vocabulary, and roles and responsibilities. One solution is to apply team science principles to administrative teams that cross institutional boundaries, reporting structures, and incentives.

**Background**

The science of team science emerged from the need for teams of scientists from different backgrounds to work together effectively. By studying how groups best work together, SciTS works to overcome the inherent tensions of collaborating across disciplines. While much SciTS literature focuses on challenges specific to scientific collaboration, we will show how five principles can help teams supporting researchers move from taskwork (individuals working on discrete elements, typical of administrative proposal support) to teamwork (a unified, cohesive approach):

1. Building and sustaining trust;
2. Developing a shared vision;
3. Creating a shared vocabulary;
4. Understanding individual and systemic motivators and detractors; and
5. Establishing roles and responsibilities for each team member.

**Applying Team Science Principles to Administrative Teams**

Just as teams of scientists come from varying disciplines, so do teams of administrators supporting a proposal. Members of an administrative team may be pulled from offices like Research Development, Research Administration, Corporate & Foundation Relations, Technology Transfer, and others. Just like with scientific teams, these units have different languages, motivators, and goals, and trust must be developed among members to collaborate successfully.

**Trust as Foundation:** Though building and sustaining trust among team members is crucial to a team’s success, such trust can be difficult to maintain, particularly in contexts in which teams aren’t co-located (Stokols et al., 2008). Team members must trust that a) others will follow through on responsibilities, b) they’re competent to complete tasks, and c) they will communicate honestly and openly about challenges and opportunities with other members of the team. Crucially, administrators must recognize their colleagues’ expertise across boundaries and assume good intentions wherever possible. Techniques for developing trust include shared staff meetings and informal gatherings before complex projects arise.

“Trust can be difficult to maintain, particularly in contexts in which teams aren’t co-located.”

**Shared Vision:** While having a shared vision seems obvious when the goal of the team is to submit a fundable proposal, each team member may have different ideas about what that looks like. It is important to openly discuss a vision of how each team member’s needs will be met (e.g., in terms of a unit’s metrics of success), while simultaneously ensuring a competitive proposal, early in the process and to revisit this topic as the project progresses. An administrative team kick-off meeting, where the vision of the project is jointly decided upon and where potential challenges and strategies can be addressed, is essential, preferably before meeting with the scientific team.
Developing a Shared Vocabulary: All of us who support researchers in seeking extramural funding have a shared vocabulary to some degree, and we might assume that each of us knows what we mean when we talk about, for instance, an LOI. However, LOI might mean “letter of interest” — an unsolicited letter to a potential funder — to our colleagues who work with foundations, while to those who work most closely with NIH, it might mean a non-competitive and non-binding “letter of intent.” Or it might mean a competitive “letter of intent” — more closely aligned to a preproposal — to those who work with other funders. Recognizing and sharing how differences in vocabulary, and how these differences might affect support, is essential to forming a cohesive team.

Motivators vs. Detractors: Different units have different incentive structures (i.e., metrics of success) and different priorities (e.g., assigned by a single school’s dean, within particular institutional goals). Similarly, if something doesn’t “count” toward a metric, or there isn’t a quantitative payoff in terms of these metrics, individuals may be less likely to want to work within a team, even if something is an institutional goal. Understanding and being empathetic to differences in motivators and detractors is crucial and will reduce unproductive conflict.

Motivators and detractors can be personal as well as systemic (Lotrecchiano et al., 2016). Some people may get a thrill out of tight deadlines for example, while others may feel overwhelmed. Understanding these individual differences through self-awareness and emotional intelligence will enhance team productivity (L. Michelle Bennett, 2010). Both personal and systemic factors should be taken into consideration when assigning roles and responsibilities (see below).

Importance of Assigning Roles and Responsibilities: Teamwork requires that individuals work independently and interdependently (Cordery & Tian, 2017). Thus, each team member needs to understand the roles and responsibilities required, based on their strengths and expertise (Ch’ng & Padgham, 1997). Identifying both the needs of the project, as well as the strengths and capacity of those who can contribute, provides the foundation for a plan that advances the project toward the shared vision.

To keep the team on track, a named leader can be important, with the understanding that integrated teams should share leadership responsibilities, including decision making. Leaders of administrative teams, like those of research teams, should work collaboratively with the team to assign roles and responsibilities and determine how each member gets credit for their work. Additionally, the leader will ensure regular communication among team members, as well as with the research team, to address any challenges that arise in the midst of the often stressful proposal development phase of a project.

Conclusions
Using the Science of Team Science in building administrative teams is about positioning yourself for success. Just like with groups of investigators, administrators are a diverse group with varying motivators and skillsets, and being intentional in building teams can go a long way toward having a successful collaboration. Like with groups of scientists, it is helpful to extend your team building beyond the task at hand. Having regular cross-unit meetings and informal gatherings can help to build relationships that will withstand stressful projects. Knowing one another also helps build understanding of what each of the units brings to the table, and how that expertise strengthens the team. Finally, operating as a team can build a culture where territoriality across institutional boundaries is neither valued nor rewarded.

References
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Operating as a team can build a culture where territoriality across institutional boundaries is neither valued nor rewarded.

“Operating as a team can build a culture where territoriality across institutional boundaries is neither valued nor rewarded.”

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Lessons Learned from Auditing COVID-19 Flexibility Implementations

By Keith Nackerud

Since the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic began, it has caused disruption, uncertainty, and hardship in all areas of our society, including the research enterprise. In response to the pandemic, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) authorized, and NSF implemented, temporary administrative flexibilities that relaxed standard grant management requirements and helped the award recipient community better respond to the health, safety, and operational challenges it was facing.

Examples of flexibilities offered include allowance of costs that are not typically allowable, continuation of salary payments to individuals unable to perform work due to COVID-19-related shutdowns, extension of currently approved indirect cost rates, and extension of Single Audit submission timelines. Given the unique and extraordinary nature of these flexibilities, we contracted with an accounting firm to conduct 10 audits of award recipient institutions to examine how they implemented these flexibilities. These 10 audits provided a snapshot of the successes and challenges related to the flexibilities and provided insights into how these flexibilities could be enhanced in the case of a future emergency.

Success Stories
The NSF award recipients we reviewed used the COVID-19 flexibilities to help ensure essential research continued throughout the pandemic. The recipients were generally prudent in their stewardship of federal resources and generally complied with the flexibilities and associated guidance. The flexibilities also helped recipients facilitate a smoother transition to remote work, while, simultaneously devoting significant time and resources to address immediate pandemic-related issues.

The audits found all 10 award recipients implemented multiple flexibilities so researchers could effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure research continued. For example, all 10 auditees used the COVID-19 flexibility that allowed salary costs to be charged for employees who were unable to work due to stay-at-home and social distancing orders. Additionally, 4 of the 10 awardees used the COVID-19 flexibility allowing for the donation of medical supplies purchased with NSF award funds.

Lessons Learned
Amidst these successes were valuable lessons learned. The award recipients were not always able to, or were hesitant to, implement the flexibilities. Reasons for not implementing the flexibilities included:

- not having sufficient time or resources to implement the flexibilities;
- unclear or vaguely defined guidance;
- inconsistent implementation by federal agencies; and
- the short window of time for which the flexibilities were available.

Additionally, recipients worried that if they implemented all available flexibilities, they would run out of funds needed to achieve research objectives. According to the guidelines, recipients should not assume more funds would be available. This made it difficult for recipients to justify using the flexibilities if doing so may jeopardize achieving research objectives.

Finally, many recipients did not formally track their use of the flexibilities—which OMB and NSF did not require. As a result, many recipients were unable to confirm which flexibilities they used or identify flexibility-related costs.

Future Best Practices
In the event of another emergency that impacts the research enterprise, we identified a few best practices for the federal government’s consideration:

- Providing more comprehensive and precise guidance.
- Creating a Frequently Asked Questions website to help award recipients better understand options for implementing future flexibilities.
- Developing additional federal and agency guidance about supplemental funding availability to help award recipients better plan and identify which flexibilities to implement.

Additionally, both the federal government and award recipients could benefit if recipients are required to formally track the flexibilities they implemented and any flexibility-related spending.

For more information, please see our Capstone Report: Observations on the OMB COVID-19 Flexibilities, issued on August 3, 2021.

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While these questions have been raised in the past, the shift to remote work, due to COVID-19, has accelerated this trend for institutions and individuals around the globe. More and more, this trend takes workers farther from the institution’s home base, including across international borders.

Universities and research teams in the United States are aware of the increased scrutiny on foreign involvement in federally-funded projects and the requirements to report foreign collaborations and support or seek foreign component approvals. That is likely the research administrator’s concern with requests to engage employees outside the US on sponsored projects. However, there are additional risks in the foreign work location to consider. Spotting these issues is important, as compliant resolutions usually require specialized knowledge or expertise outside the US research office. Some situations involve engaging a local expert (legal, accounting, tax) or local Professional Employer Organization (PEO) in the remote work location.

Some of the key employment and tax considerations when presented with an international remote work arrangement are outlined below.

**Institution/Corporate Registration and Tax**
For many organizations, the most serious risk of global remote work is that an employee working overseas is creating a “permanent establishment” (PE) in the foreign country, necessitating corporate registrations, or that they are generating revenue that can create a corporate tax liability. A PE can exist if the employee is working overseas from a fixed place of business (including a home office), and/or if the employee is deemed to be a “dependent agent” of the US institution, entering contracts on its behalf. Rules on creating a PE are multifaceted and can vary by country. However, if an employee’s remote work creates a PE, the organization that was otherwise not considered as “doing business” in the country will have to formalize its business registration and be subject to ongoing compliance requirements. Profits attributable to this PE may be taxable in the overseas jurisdiction. Unless they have applied for and received status as a non-profit locally, US non-profit institutions are generally treated as for-profit entities. Funding received from the public, government, and private foundations may be considered income generated by the remote employee and subject to income tax.

**Immigration**
Employees must have the right to both live and work in a country. Employers are usually legally responsible for ensuring and documenting that their staff have the appropriate right to work. Failure to comply with immigration rules can lead to criminal liability, fines, and audits by local immigration authorities for employers and deportation for employees. Such enforcement action may also mean that the employer organization is ‘red-flagged’ for any future individual entry into the country, potentially hindering future projects or activity.

A common misconception is that a business visa, a spousal visa, or other right to enter a country for a specific amount of time, allows an individual to work in that country. US employees on US payroll can travel on business, tourist, or other visas for the purposes indicated by the visa. Business visas will generally allow the employee to perform “ancillary” activities, such as attending meetings and conferences; however, they do not allow an individual to perform day-to-day activities on behalf of the US employer, or set-up a “home office” in a foreign location.

**Income and Social Taxes**
If an individual is a tax resident in the country where they perform services, withholding requirements may be triggered for the employer. Usually, an
individual will automatically be a tax resident in their permanent home location, or they may become tax resident in another country if they spend a certain amount of time (usually 180 or 183 days) in it during a tax year. However, tax residency tests can also be multi-factorial, impacting individuals with fewer days in country, if there are other personal factors involved (family or assets in the jurisdiction, or number of days present in the country over a lookback period). Also, where an employee moves to a new jurisdiction and it is clear from the outset that they intend to reside there permanently, local income tax and social security obligations could be triggered from the day of entry.

If tax residency is established, an employer may need to set up a new payroll to ensure the correct tax amounts are remitted to the applicable overseas tax authority. Taxes may include income tax, as well as employee and employer contributions to social tax systems. Failure to assess and correctly deal with the withholding and remittance requirements can lead to retroactive assessments for back taxes, penalties, and interest. If the employer has been remitting income or social tax to a tax authority in the incorrect location (US payroll tax), this must be unwound, refunds claimed, and double taxation avoided, if possible. Special considerations are necessary for US workers given the US citizenship-based tax regime and global withholding and reporting obligations.

Labor and Employment Regulations
An employee working in a foreign country, even for a short period of time, may acquire local mandatory employment rights, sometimes from the first day of employment. Common statutory rights include:
• termination rights, such as notice periods and severance pay,
• family leave rights,
• mandatory minimum vacation and sick time allowances,
• minimum pay levels, and
• eligibility or requirements for health, retirement, and safety benefits.

Many countries outside the US and most in the EU do not operate “at will” employment, as is the case in the US. Additionally, contractual protections for the employer institution may not be enforceable in the foreign location, including protections such as confidentiality and intellectual property provisions.

Alternatives to Employment Overseas
There are several options to explore in mitigating the employment and tax risks, though some can be an administrative burden and/or cost prohibitive:
• Engaging local workers as independent contractors,
• Collaborating with an established local organization,
• Contracting with a PEO, or
• Monitoring days and activities of home-based personnel traveling to the foreign location.

Illustrated in Fig. 1 is how you might go about determining a compliant solution in the proposed scenarios.

To sum up, these are difficult issues to address with nuanced solutions. Each case is based on facts and circumstances specific to the institution, the individual, the remote work location, and the activity of the worker. There won’t be an easy answer in most cases, therefore, research teams will need to consider the additional time and costs when presented with an international remote work scenario.

References

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Fig. 1: University of Pennsylvania Hiring Abroad Toolkit (modified)
One of the exciting aspects of the profession of research administration is simply how many facets of it there are. Just looking at the categories of NCURA Magazine contributes to the numerous topics that need to be addressed to meet the needs of all of NCURA’s members: clinical/medical; compliance; departmental research administration; financial research administration; electronic research administration; global (Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East and U.S.); pre-award; predominantly undergraduate institutions; and Spotlight on Research. Reviewing the programs of the most recent NCURA Annual, FRA and PRA meetings show even more: federal/sponsors/agencies; professional development/personal growth; system/data/metrics; research development; career development; central; diversity and inclusion; and human capital. And within these numerous topics are several different levels — basic, intermediate, advanced, senior, and executive, just to name some of them.

While, for many of NCURA’s members, it may be easy to determine where in the above list(s) one’s responsibilities fall, for others it may not be so clear. That is probably never truer than for a research administrator at a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution (PUI). In many ways the PUI research administrator serves a multifaceted function that is often split among different roles at larger institutions — departmental, collegiate, central, pre-award, post-award, compliance, research development, training, undergraduate research, and potentially others depending upon the needs and makeup of the institution. In my 20 plus years in research administration I have only been at PUIs — although they have been primarily at public institutions that are part of large university systems — and I don’t think I would want it any other way!

There are numerous challenges that come with research administration at a PUI but there are also many joys. One thing that seems pretty constant is that many people don’t understand the many things a research administrator has to juggle at the PUI — and, certainly, not all PUIs are the same! PUIs come in all shapes and sizes from a one-person office that is responsible for the gamut of responsibilities in sponsored programs or a larger office that has functions divided out among a variety of team members.

One could say that at the PUI we are “a jack of all trades, master of none,” which might be a fairly accurate statement but I tend to think that we are simply at a place where no two days are exactly the same and we are constantly learning new things because we don’t really have any other choice! It is true that we may have to find answers to questions even if they aren’t in our wheelhouse or within our expertise or comfort level but that might be part of the fun of it — and a perfect time to remember we are part of a terrific professional association that can serve as a vital resource and with so many members that are generous with their time and expertise.

While there are many challenges to life at the PUI, the joys and opportunities far outweigh them.
At PUIs we really have to balance protecting the university and complying with federal, state, sponsor and institutional policies and procedures with that of being advocate, cheerleader, friend, educator, and enforcer, among others. One day we might be a “buddy” with a principal investigator and the next day we might have to tell them they can’t do something they really, really want to do. It just comes with the territory. We often have to work with much tighter budgets and some of our systems might be outdated or simply not cutting edge. At my institution about four years ago we finally implemented electronic routing of grant proposals but the system is far from perfect and the pre- to post-award processes have much to be desired. While there may not be tons of professional development opportunities there is a need to stay current and active in the profession so we find ways to be creative in supporting staff professional development.

At the PUI (as in most areas of research administration) there is always more to do. There are more policies and procedures that need to be developed, more communication that needs to happen across campus, more faculty, staff and administrators to train and educate, and more unusual and “one-time” situations that arise. It’s all just part of what makes life interesting at the PUI!

While there are many challenges to life at the PUI, the joys and opportunities far outweigh them. We get to support a variety of disciplines and it is always fun to read about the fascinating work that is happening throughout the campus. We often get to see—and sometimes be a part of—how research impacts students. There are opportunities to actually get to know our faculty, staff and administrators—oftentimes becoming friends in addition to colleagues. Some of my best friends are professors in English, economics, geology, biology, studio art and other disciplines, as well as campus staff and administrators. This definitely makes for lively conversation and fun dinner parties!

Collaboration is just a natural part of what we do on a daily basis at the PUI. We get to work with a variety of folks from across the university and at all levels in the decision-making continuum. Our PIs see us as collaborators and not just a necessary evil to get their proposal submitted and award accepted. And we get to see hands-on how our work is benefitting our principal investigators and our institution. It is always fun when a proposal is awarded and we get to celebrate successes or when books are published and the author recognizes the office and/or grants team member by name as someone who has contributed to the final product.

At the PUI, we often contribute significantly to “institutional” grant proposals that can be a part of helping to shape campus-wide initiatives and priorities. We get to lead or participate in developing institutional policies, procedures, and practices that can better support the research enterprise and can help make things more clear and easier for our constituents. There can also be opportunities—and expectations—of participating in larger university activities outside of research administration such as participating in shared governance and serving on search committees.

While there are so many facets to research administration and seemingly many opportunities to move forward, onward or outward, I suspect I’ll always be at the PUI. It’s where I find work most interesting and where I can truly make a difference!

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Roger Wareham is a member of NCURA’s Professional Development Committee and Select Committee on Peer Review. He has more than 20 years of research administration experience and is currently working with Jeremy Miner (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire), Kris Monaban (Providence College) and Katie Plum (Angelo State University) on rewriting the PUI chapter of NCURA’s Sponsored Research Administration: A Guide to Effective Strategies and Recommended Practices. He serves as the Director of Grants and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. He can be reached at warehamr@uwgb.edu.

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A Collaborative Approach to Reducing Subaward Delays
Part II: Results and Recommendations

By Kevin Ritchie

In the Oct/Nov 2019 issue of NCURA Magazine, I encouraged research administrators to gather data on their subawards, and submit responses to the FDP’s Subaward Delays survey on behalf of their home institutions (Ritchie, 2019). We were examining the subaward process, which, despite the many efficiency gains that the FDP’s subaward templates and guidance provide, still seemed to move slower than expected. By the time we closed the survey in December 2019, 99 institutions had responded, providing quantitative and qualitative insights from both the Pass-Through Entity and Subrecipient perspectives. This engagement, along with the quality of the responses, showed that our community was eager to address root causes of subaward delays and improve our collective approach to the issue. After presenting initial results in January and September 2020, the Subaward Delays working group reconvened in early 2021 to complete the project, offering final recommendations during the May 2021 FDP virtual meeting.

The contexts, results, and recommendations follow.

Several years have elapsed since we initiated this working group, and we cannot dismiss the idea that we have improved since then. The quantitative data concerning how long it takes to process subawards were not as ominous as we originally thought. It is reasonable to conclude that the FDP’s ongoing work to update templates, improve attachments, and revise FAQs does actually reduce burden and streamline subawards. Moreover, increased template adoption, greater participation in the FDP Expanded Clearinghouse, and improved systems rollout at institutions have also helped move things along in recent years. Many recommendations focused on continuing processes that are already working, like using the FDP as a forum to clarify evolving federal subaward requirements, building consensus around best practices, and discouraging the use of extraneous terms and conditions or unnecessary documentation.

Of course, there is still room for improvement.

For example, the FDP Subawards Subcommittee and Expanded Clearinghouse are launching a working group to update and refine our risk assessment and subrecipient monitoring tools, in part, because survey respondents asked for more support and better resources in these areas. The FDP Subawards Subcommittee can also invite more institutions that have particularly efficient subaward processes or innovative systems to present their ideas to the community as part of the semi-annual meeting agenda. Another suggestion going forward is for FDP to start exploring digital signatures and different file formats, which could allow institutions to more seamlessly integrate FDP templates and other documents into their own systems.

Our recommendations as to how institutions can expedite subawards range from free to expensive and include a few obvious and idealistic points. Having a representative survey allowed us to aggregate and amplify the voices of administrators most deeply involved with subawards and most frustrated by their delays. Specifically, survey respondents indicated the need for more staff and for FTEs dedicated primarily or exclusively to subawards. Staffing shortfalls was the second most commonly cited reason for subaward delays. Respondents also expressed a desire for more internal training on subawards and for enhanced systems solutions to help with tracking subawards, running reports, and automating routine tasks.

“Institutions could also seek out low-cost solutions that may involve no more than rearranging a business process. For example, they could consider ways to prompt PIs instead of waiting for them to initiate or approve subawards, or better yet, look at which decisions do not truly need to be made by PIs in the first place. The most commonly cited reason for subaward delays in our survey, by a wide margin, was “waiting for the PI.” Yet based on the FDP’s Faculty Workload survey (Schneider, 2020), PIs are equally as keen as administrators to reduce burden, and we can probably help alleviate them of some of the more mundane responsibilities, when it comes to subawards.

Self-imposed requirements also seem to be an obstacle to subaward efficiency. Respondents said that completing internal checklists could be more burdensome and time consuming than gathering information or documents from the other party. One clear recommendation is to avoid general subrecipient questionnaires, and only require additional paperwork if you have specific concerns about the project or subrecipient. Some administrators felt there were too many people and steps involved in their subawards process, each one preventing the subaward from moving forward. It may be possible to trim workflow, minimize handoffs, reduce paperwork, delegate approval authority, and see which parts of the subawards process can run concurrently rather than remain rigidly dependent on previous steps. Some steps or documents could be moved to after the subaward is fully executed, or left at “upon request.”

“Research administrators and their institutions take compliance, risk mitigation, and record keeping seriously, and most people just want to make sure they are doing the right thing.”
Because subaward timelines are not quite as bad as we thought, we could focus more energy on preventing the most egregious delays. Illustratively, we could consider running reports to catch subawards that remain pending 60 days after the prime award start date and develop a process to escalate these. We might also consider alternatives to a first-in-first-out system, and instead try to prioritize subawards based on the project start date. Likewise, once a subaward is up and running, it may be possible to get ahead of the annual amendments you know are coming. Some institutions have automated reminders as the continuation date approaches. Others have found ways to pre-populate amendment templates and pare down their approval process or signature requirements for amendments. Two counterintuitive data points from the survey were (1) amendments take the same amount of time to process as initial subawards, despite being less complex, and (2) most institutions still do not use the FDP’s unilateral template, which was designed to simplify and accelerate the amendment process.

A final point.

One of the more interesting questions we debated was how to define the word “delay,” when it comes to subawards. Yes, we have templates, and the subaward process looks fairly rote from a distance. Subawards, however, can be quite intricate arrangements in both a scientific and administrative sense, and they do take some time to complete. Research administrators and their institutions take compliance, risk mitigation, and record keeping seriously, and most people just want to make sure they are doing the right thing. We should all be comfortable with a certain amount of lead time when it comes to subawards. Evidence from the survey and from subsequent polling at the FDP meetings suggests that subrecipients should expect to see their draft subaward around 45 days after the start date of the prime award (and that most subrecipients are ok with this). I am optimistic that we can reduce this number even further in the future, but for now, maybe we can all agree to remain calm and resist following up with our Pass-Through Entities during that window.

Thank you, again, to all those who responded to the survey. In addition to the May 2021 presentation on Subaward Delays (Hamaker et al., 2021), we intend to post results, recommendations, and other resources to the FDP Subaward Forms website and to incorporate this valuable information into future FDP discussions about reducing the administrative burden associated with subawards.

References

Kevin Ritchie is the Associate Director of Awards Management in the Office of Research Administration at Harvard Medical School. He manages the school’s outgoing subawards process and co-chairs the FDP’s Subawards Subcommittee. He can be reached at kevin_ritchie@hms.harvard.edu.
Rese…

**TRAINING TIPS**

**Collaborate!**

By Christyne Anderson, Helene Brazier-Mitonart, and Abby Guillory

Whether you work on an article with some colleagues from other institutions, or brainstorm with some internal team members on a new onboarding system for faculty members, platforms for interaction are great tools to initiate the work.

**Be honest with what you know, and what you don’t:** Being transparent on how you can contribute to a project, and also on what is not so familiar or even difficult for you, really invites people to jump in, contribute and bring their ideas. Everyone has myriad life and work experiences waiting to be shared. Inviting a collaboration really means asking a compound question: “what can you bring to the table that can help us untangle this situation or make things work better for everyone?” Everyone should feel that their contribution is unique and valued!

**Bring people together:** Including representatives from different roles, backgrounds, expertise, departments, and even organizations can bring a whole new perspective to a project or initiative. While working on an ERA project, do you have folks from IT, central offices, colleges, departments, and users in your meetings? Redesigning your internal proposal approval form or process? Be sure to include representation from all areas to evaluate and determine next steps. Not only does this produce a better product, but it also provides an opportunity to obtain buy-in. Work groups should be diverse.

Collaboration can take many forms. Although the world looks different compared to two years ago, there’s no doubt we work well and we work better together.

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**Ways to Collaborate Better**

The community of research administrators has always demonstrated a great enthusiasm for collaboration. The pandemic revealed how we were able — through collaboration — to be more resilient and shine through hard situations. We’d like to offer some collaboration tips to keep you on-task and collaborating effectively.

**Connect more - Attend training or conferences:** Whether in-person or virtual, training and conferences are a great way to connect with others and create new access to additional resources. Internal training provides a way to network across departments or centers. If the training is external, you may have the opportunity to break into groups and make some connections with others across the globe. Using different platforms, like Zoom or WebEx, offers a unique opportunity to bring experts from around the world to you without the high costs of travel.

**Connect more - Join committees:** Committees for professional research administration organizations and other volunteer opportunities are great ways to meet others and become aware of available resources.

**Don’t be shy:** Collaboration may knock unannounced at your door, but many times, you will need to initiate it in order to perform better and make the world of research administration a better place to work. When facing a difficult situation or when having unpolished ideas about a project that could really make a difference, reaching out to folks is the way to go! Not only will it boost your creativity and performance, but it will allow you to gain fresh perspectives from colleagues sharing their experience and skills.

**Be flexible and playful:** As we work in a more virtual environment, it’s not uncommon to be e-introduced by another colleague. Virtual meetings via Zoom or Teams or Google Meet are great ways to connect. Utilizing these tools frees up other logistical barriers such as location and timing. Other fun tools such as Microsoft Office Teams, Padlet, Miro, or Jamboards can be useful. Miro allows participants to use white boards and pre-designed interactive spaces for playful and creative virtual collaboration.

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n May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a Black man, lay helpless on a Minneapolis street while a White police officer forced his knees into Floyd’s neck and back. Over the course of nine minutes and 29 seconds Floyd said, “I can’t breathe,” more than 20 times. Eventually, his heart stopped and life slipped away from his body as dozens of onlookers recorded his murder with their cell phones. This tragic and very public event roused a nation already reeling from the recent murders of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, two unarmed Black people killed by White men, while sleeping and running respectively. During the Summer and Fall of 2020, those living in the United States demanded racial justice like never before, and books teaching antiracism and decrying white fragility flew off the shelves. The pursuit to find new and more equitable ways of doing things found its way into every area of life, including higher education. College presidents renamed auditoriums, revised curricula, and declared themselves antiracist campuses (Bartlett, 2021). Of course, the need for a significant racial and cultural overhaul in higher education is nothing new; people have been demanding increased accessibility, improved campus climate, and safer spaces for years (Bell, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). However, 2020 seems to be the year when the majority of white leadership in higher education was listening and willing to act.

It is important to note that the issue of white supremacy is a global one. Countries like Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia continually struggle with reconciling their violent history toward native populations while many other nations are attempting to successfully and peacefully integrate an influx of immigrants in ways that do not intensify racial divides (Johnson et al., 2020; Msoroka & Amundsen, 2018). However, as campuses across the globe struggle to create inclusive and equitable environments for everyone, there is increased pressure in the United States for institutes of higher education to confront their own identities with the intent of creating lasting and systemic change. Over the past year, the nationwide reckoning of racialized structural injustice and continued oppression of Black and Brown people has been a catalyst for introspective assessment and action—notably in higher education.

As colleges and universities search for real and effective solutions to counter the centuries of racial oppression, it is critical to recognize that true antiracist work must be done at a policy level (Kendi, 2019). Institutions
must have a network of administrators and employees on campus ready to help develop and implement antiracist policies at a local level. Research administrators work in all areas of campus supporting the research infrastructure by submitting proposals, negotiating contracts, assessing research risk, evaluating compliance with federal and state regulations, and managing financial components of the research enterprise. The importance of research administrators on research-intensive campuses cannot be understated: “Educated and capable research administrators not only help the institution retain research funding, but they also help researchers navigate the complexities involved with sponsored research by providing customer service qualities and removing administrative burdens so researchers can focus on research.” (Smith, 2019, p. ii)

Research administrators interact with nearly every area of campus and thus have the opportunity to influence, create, interpret, and apply policy in an impactful way. In order to do their jobs well, research administrators depend on developing relationships with undergraduate and graduate students, the graduate school, human resources, financial aid, business services, the diversity office, facilities, the police department, student unions, and others. Through policy, there is the potential to produce serious change within campus cultures by implementing strategies that challenge the status quo and seek to advance equity, inclusion, and antiracist strategies.

DeBoer (2019) notes that without research administrators supporting research development, universities would have a difficult time producing and submitting as many proposals as they do. In the last fiscal year, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded 21 percent of submitted proposals and the National Science Foundation (NSF) funded 28 percent (NIH Data Book, 2020, NSF Summary Information, 2020). Considering only a fraction of proposals are funded, it is important for universities to ensure they are getting a large number of high-quality proposals out the door. It is during this integral phase of the research process that research administrators work closely with faculty members, principal investigators, and research staff to identify funding opportunities that match current or anticipated lines of research. Some of the research administration activities supported by administrators include familiarizing themselves with sponsor expectations, tracking down appropriate requests for proposals, coordinating proposal development, reviewing budget drafts, and serving as a liaison with other research compliance units on campus (DeBoer 2019).

The federal government, which provides most research funding to institutes of higher education, also plays a large role in ensuring research administrators are approaching their jobs with an eye toward equity. On January 20, 2021, President Biden issued a directive titled, Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (The White House, 2021.) Section five of this order instructs the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to work with each federal agency to identify barriers to accessing federal benefits and opportunities. Considering the OMB is the federal entity that sets each budget, including research appropriations, for federal agencies, this is an important directive, structurally tying available funds to antiracist initiatives.

In the coming federal fiscal year, it will be imperative that research administrators familiarize themselves with new initiatives and opportunities stemming from this order, including diversity initiatives which they may not yet be acquainted with.

For example, in Fall 2020, the NIH launched an initiative to end structural racism. NIH Director Francis S. Collins wrote, “To those individuals in the biomedical research enterprise who have endured disadvantages due to structural racism, I am truly sorry. NIH is committed to instituting new ways to support diversity, equity, and inclusion and identifying and dismantling any policies and practices at our own agency that may harm our workforce and our science.” (Ending Structural Racism, 2021)

Since the start of 2021, NIH has released several funding opportunities specifically targeting the end of structural racism. These opportunities include: Funding opportunities for the Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity, NIH funding for research on impact of structural racism on biomedical career progression, and funding opportunity on impact of structural racism and discrimination on minority health and health disparities. It will be critical for research administrators to understand and fully embrace the motivation behind these initiatives to assist the faculty members they support in producing successful proposals. For example, if research administrators are familiar with the tenets of critical race theory (CRT) and feel comfortable serving as antiracists, they may be in a better position to question researchers on their research plans that do not incorporate an appropriately diverse pool of research participants or neglect to meet the sponsor guidelines in terms of addressing multiculturalism and diversity in their recruitment plans.

Research administrators play an integral role on college campuses. They assist with research development, prepare research proposals for submission, monitor financial and non-financial compliance throughout the lifespan of an award, and support the researchers and the research enterprise in a variety of administrative ways with the goal of reducing the overall burden on the faculty members. They are in a unique position to interface with nearly every area of campus. It would be a wasted opportunity to not leverage this profession as a catalyst for change on college campuses by arming the hundreds of research administrators on any given campus with the capacity and tools to view their work through an antiracist lens and affect change within their institutions.

References

www.chronicle.com/article/the-antiracist-college


www.nih.gov/ending-structural-racism


BonnieJean Zitske, has been a research administrator at UW-Madison for nearly 15 years, working in a department and dean’s office before taking on a leadership role in the central office. She is a Past Chair of NCURA Region IV and currently serves on the NCURA Presidential Taskforce on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She is currently working on a master’s degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at UW-Madison. She can be reached at bzitske@rsp.wisc.edu.
Backed by the European Union and its Member States, EURAXESS is a unique pan-European initiative delivering information and support services to professional researchers, while enhancing scientific collaboration between Europe and the rest of the world. Our target audience are researchers, universities/academic institutions, entrepreneurs, and businesses. In general, EURAXESS has five main pillars:

- **Jobs & Funding** – Providing researchers and innovators of all nationalities and scientific domains, as well as research managers, with a platform to look for job vacancies, funding, and hosting offers in academia and industry in Europe.

- **Career Development** – Whether you are a researcher or organization, we have training resources and policy recommendations available from the Europe-based EURAXESS Service Centers, with expertise in different fields.

- **Partnering** – This is a collaboration tool designed to allow registered users of the EURAXESS portal to search for both individuals and research organizations/businesses to explore various angles and possibilities of partnership or collaborative projects.

- **Information & Assistance** – We have service centers in 42 European countries offering free services for researchers and their family members to facilitate relocation from their home country to a European one. Scientists get personalized help on topics such as accommodation, visas & work permits, healthcare, taxation, and more. This is incredibly useful whether you are moving from one European country to another, or coming from North America or any other region of the world and moving to Europe. The idea behind offering personalized help is that it allows the researchers to focus on the work and not deal so much with the nitty-gritty work of figuring out every detail involved in an international move.

- **EURAXESS Worldwide** – This is essentially the networking arm of EURAXESS – supporting and facilitating researchers’ efforts in connecting or collaborating with European researchers and institutions alike.

With EURAXESS North America already working with many NCURA members, we asked them to introduce their work and how they are supporting researcher mobility.

At the EURAXESS North America hub, we focus on supporting researchers of all nationalities who live in the U.S. or Canada. We provide information about European fellowships, grants, and calls for proposals for all researchers, and this includes the social sciences and humanities, which are sometimes overlooked. We also connect and network European scientists based in Canada and the U.S. to the European Research Area through a platform we manage called the European Scientific Diasporas in North America.

The current coronavirus pandemic really highlights how multidisciplinary and comprehensive research is inherently international and collaborative. With cross-border cooperation, training, and all the benefits that come with mobility, researchers at the individual boost their impact and credibility, and at the institutional level, the overall body of research produced collectively is enhanced. Broadening horizons about European funding opportunities is one way to achieve this. We act as primary information brokers to connect people to Europe regardless of how much you already know. For university research administrators, you can simply approach us and tell us a bit about your community, and we can work together to give a talk on European funding, on hosting paid European fellows, and facilitate ties to European institutions.

At the end of the day, we are here to reduce the friction that you may experience in identifying and communicating funding opportunities to your researchers. Our bread and butter is our Jobs and Funding Portal, which sees new posts on a daily basis and gives you the direct URL and contact information for the institution with the offer, so you can jump right into it.

We welcome NCURA members and invite you to reach out so we can share relevant opportunities with our office. To start by seeing the news, events, and funding opportunities we share in our twice-monthly flashnote emails, you can subscribe here.

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The NCURA Distinguished Educator designation recognizes exceptional contributions through the development, creation and delivery of NCURA’s national and global research administration educational offerings. An individual holding the Distinguished Educator designation is one who has had a major impact on multiple educational levels in professional development within NCURA.

Since 2016 NCURA has recognized members who have made sustained and distinctive educational contributions to the organization with this special designation. This year the recipients are Heather M. Offhaus and Jeffrey A. Silber.
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The Roles and Prospects of University Research Administrators (URAs) in International Collaborative Research at Kumamoto University

In Japan, the decline in the international competitiveness of universities has become a major concern. The research strength of Japanese universities has diminished, with both the number of published papers and the ratio of Japanese papers to other papers published internationally having decreased. In addition, the number of citations, a measure of the quality of a paper, has also declined. While various possible factors have been considered as contributing to this situation, one particular highlight is the rarity of joint international research and the corresponding small percentage of internationally coauthored papers. Conducting international joint research is often facilitated through the personal contacts of individual researchers, which can break off when researchers retire or move to other universities. Furthermore, the strategic promotion of international joint research by organizations has rarely taken place in Japanese universities.

The Program for Promoting the Enhancement of Research Universities (RU Program) was initiated by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in 2013, with a University Research Administrator (URA) system introduced to actively strengthen Japan’s research capacity. URAs are responsible for planning and developing research strategies, supporting applications for external funding, and coordinating joint research with private companies. MEXT also launched the Top Global University (TGU) program in 2017 to strengthen the international competitiveness of Japanese universities. These complimentary programs have resulted in increased globalization of education and research in Japanese universities, and the importance of URAs has become apparent as they are responsible for coordinating international joint research activities. As a participant in both the RU and TGU programs, Kumamoto University has recognized the important role their URAs play in international joint research. This article details the activities of Kumamoto University URAs in international collaborative research.

Kumamoto University

Kumamoto is located in the middle of Japan’s Kyushu Island and has abundant natural scenery. The history of Kumamoto University begins with the founding of Saishunkan Medical College in 1756, followed by the establishment of Kumamoto Medical University in 1896. The 5th National High School, Kumamoto Pharmaceutical College, and Kumamoto Technical College, which all supported higher education at the time, were established successively around the same period. After World War II, in 1949, these institutions were merged to form the current Kumamoto University, making it one of the oldest universities in Japan. Currently, the university has seven faculties, nine graduate schools, and 25 research institutes and centers, with 1,000 faculty members supporting about 8,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students. Kumamoto University contributes to the local community and global society by fostering intelligent, ethical, and skilled individuals, while also creating, developing, and sharing knowledge.

Research organization establishment and URA activities

Kumamoto University established two research organizations within the university after joining the RU Program. The International Research Center for Medical Sciences (IRCMS) was created for life sciences research, and the International Research Organization for Advanced Science and Technology (IROAST) was established for science and engineering research. URAs have played a leading role in international collaborative research at IROAST. The IROAST opened in April 2016 as a “Center of Excellence” in Kumamoto University, promoting world-class, cutting-edge research in science and engineering. One of the aims of the IROAST is to promote international collaboration by establishing international research networks, with a focus on the following four research areas at Kumamoto University: nano-material science, green energy, environmental science, and advanced green biology. A senior URA with extensive international experience was appointed as its director, and one URA was assigned to oversee international affairs.

One of IROAST’s functions is to invite distinguished professors from top-level overseas universities and research institutions to Kumamoto University to play a key role in international collaborative research. The senior URA receives recommendations for appropriate candidates from graduate school faculty, investigates the background and achievements of the candidates, visits the universities and research institutions where the candidates work (if necessary), and conducts interviews before deciding to invite them. During their stay at
Kumamoto University, these distinguished professors receive a salary and are responsible for conducting international joint research with graduate school faculty and lecturing and supervising graduate students. So far, three distinguished professors have been invited to Kumamoto University.

IROAST has also concluded memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for international joint research with overseas universities and research institutions, and formed 22 international joint research units, as shown in Figure 1. To establish these international joint research projects, the senior URA visits overseas universities and research institutions with Kumamoto University researchers, and when necessary, concludes MOUs. Additionally, IROAST supports the acquisition of external research funds in collaboration with overseas universities and research institutions. As a result, the number of papers published, the number of papers coauthored with overseas researchers, and the number of papers in the top 10% journal have greatly increased, as shown in Table 1, contributing significantly to the globalization of research at the university. In addition to inviting distinguished professors and visiting professors, Kumamoto University has also made great progress in developing research units to facilitate international collaborative research. This indicates that the URA system is becoming firmly rooted and that the URAs play a particularly important role in coordinating international collaborative research.

However, to promote international joint research, it is important to develop contracts and other arrangements, including dealing with intellectual property (IP) issues. Currently, URAs have little involvement in these matters, which are dealt with by the university’s administrative office, but sometimes the process is particularly lengthy. In the future, a system needs to be established in which the URAs are involved in the initial stages of securing international joint research so that they will be able to respond promptly to administrative matters such as contracts.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers are unable to travel internationally and international exchanges are currently limited to online meetings and conferences, but collaborative research is still being conducted. However, in research fields where field surveys are required, international joint research has, unfortunately, been completely halted. Furthermore, international collaborations with new universities and research institutes cannot be initiated. While this is deeply regrettable, especially given the expansion happening in the URA role, it is anticipated that international exchange will recommence once the pandemic is over.

| Table 1 Academic achievements of IROAST |
|------------------|------|------|------|
|                  | Year | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Number of Papers |      | 43   | 72   | 112  |
| Number of Top 10% papers |  | 7    | 15   | 26   |
| Percentage of Top 10% papers | | 16.3% | 20.8% | 23.2% |
| Average Impact Factor | | 4.86 | 5.04 | 4.16 |
| Number of international co-authored papers | | 34   | 59   | 93   |
| Percentage of international co-authored papers | | 79.1% | 81.9% | 83.0% |
| Category Normalized Citation Impact | | 1.31 | 1.59 | 2.41 |
| Citation per Publication | | 10.60 | 7.17 | 3.38 |
Last summer, NCURA launched an online salary survey, designed to collect salary information for specific research administration positions. Over 1,175 NCURA members contributed to the inaugural salary survey. The information collected in this salary survey has been aggregated and made available to NCURA's members as a resource for selecting job titles, potential job families, and determining salaries based on years of experience, position type, institution type and geographic location.

Start using this tool - a benefit of your NCURA membership - today!
www.ncura.edu
Collaboration is becoming an increasingly necessary component when it comes to competitive sponsored research. This is evident with the rise in federal agencies requesting to fund projects involving teams, and more specifically, teams involving multiple disciplines. While much of the time we in research administration are focused on recognizing these trends and figuring out how we can help our faculty and researchers use these components to develop and submit stronger proposals and effectively manage them later, we sometimes forget how collaboration comes naturally for those in our field and is ingrained in the kind of work we do. It then comes as no surprise that when members of NCURA are faced with new challenges or we’re coming up with innovative ways to promote programs and resources within our organization, we turn to our network and outreach abilities to collaborate with other amazing professionals.

The NCURA Education Scholarship Fund Select Committee kicked-off 2021 by organizing subcommittees to disperse some of our efforts for each initiative we will be pursuing this year. Each member was able to select a subcommittee to take part in based on their interests. Currently, the ESF Select Committee has been focusing on using collaborative abilities to determine how we can get the word out about the scholarships we offer and how we can shape the role we play in promoting NCURA and the resources and opportunities provided for research administration professionals. Because this committee has representation from each region, we naturally have different perspectives and insight to contribute when determining how we grow these initiatives and uphold the mission of NCURA. This has been a key component in our initiative to establish and grow relationships with institutions that offer MRA programs.

While the focus of our committee work continues to be raising funds for scholarships we also realize it’s important to increase and diversify the pool of candidates for these scholarships. Therefore, it’s vital to broaden our reach by having relationships with the institutions that offer MRA programs. This entails getting input from multiple stakeholders and NCURA members. While the relationship-building initiative is still in the works, our committee members have offered different perspectives on what going through the MRA program is like, how dispersing scholarship information at their home institutions works, some of the benefits NCURA has for students, how we can grow and diversify the pool of applicants we receive, and other ways we can reach out to MRA institutions to let them know we’re here to offer support for their students.

Our committee work has largely been collaborative, with everyone offering ways we can reach out to different people and encourage those interested in the research administration profession to apply for these scholarships and become involved with NCURA. These scholarships are meant not only to offer some financial support for these candidates during their time in the program, but also encourage them to engage with our organization and feel they can take part in growing this field and steering what direction we should take in the future. The more input and involvement we have in our organization, the better chance we have at creating a truly diverse space for amazing collaborative initiatives to improve our profession and help one another. Collaboration has always been a vital part of research administration, so we’ll continue to uphold this in every endeavor we pursue on the ESF Select Committee to grow our organization and our profession.

“...it’s important to increase and diversify the pool of candidates for these scholarships.”

For more information about the Education Scholarship Fund, please visit us at: www.ncura.edu/esf
SAVE THE DATES

New Orleans, LA

Financial Research Administration (FRA) Conference
March 14-15, 2022

Pre-Award Research Administration (PRA) Conference
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REGISTRATION OPENS IN EARLY NOVEMBER

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Once you have entered the realm of research administration (you know - the profession you just happened to fall into), you come to realize this field is full of acronyms. Shoot, why not, let us add a few more to your repertoire: CRA, CPRA, and CFRA — Certified Research Administrator, Certified Pre-Award Administrator, and Certified Financial Research Administrator.

The certification for the Certified Research Administrator focuses on the full lifecycle of an award and has the broadest subject matter to study and retain. It provides independent confirmation you have a basic level of knowledge in research and sponsored programs administration. The certification for the Certified Pre-Award Administrator has a more streamlined focus for those who work with investigators to plan, develop, and prepare grant proposals for submission. This certification is great for anyone who will trouble-shoot with various agency and institutional personnel as well as with investigators to ensure all issues are clarified prior to submission for funding. The certification for the Certified Financial Research Administrator is geared towards those who prepare financial reports and manage the fiscal side of sponsored programs activities. Of course, you can always work towards becoming a triple threat and sit for all three certifications.

These professional credentials are highly sought after and assist to establish a higher level of credibility to your knowledge in this exciting and ever-changing profession.

We recently had the privilege to co-present a virtual NCURA Region V Lunch & Learn to share tips and tricks to taking these three exams successfully. We both had similar experiences that some may not consider the traditional method of exam preparation such as attending a Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC) Body of Knowledge session, taking one day off from work, studying at home that day, and passing the exam on our first attempt. We know everyone’s experience will be unique and our way may not work for all. We are here to share with you some quick tips on what can help you succeed and achieve your goal of becoming certified! Of course, one will need to adapt these ideas based on one’s own personal needs. Adjust for how you best retain information.

Attend a Body of Knowledge workshop, offered by the RACC, join a study group (Virginia Tech CRA Study Team) and make the commitment to attend every session and review the study materials provided, and review NCURA’s Regulation and Compliance compendium reference book. You can also find a mentor or subject matter expert within the RACC directory, or within your NCURA region or NCURA Collaborate, or your institution who can assist in areas where you may need further guidance.

Apply to take the exam and ensure you meet the minimum requirements.
- Bachelor’s or advanced degree + three (3) years professional experience in research administration OR
- An Associate’s degree + five (5) years of professional experience in research administration OR
- No degree + six (6) years of professional experience in research administration (by petition)

Schedule the exam once you have received your scheduling authorization email. Currently, the test has a two-week testing window and is a four-hour exam, which can be scheduled in the morning or the afternoon. Consider what your most productive time of day is and what will work the best for you.

Prepare to review the contents of your study materials. Consider taking a practice test, an official test can be found by contacting http://secure.ptcny.com/webtest for a fee or you have the option to try an unofficial test by searching the web for http://WizIQ.com/tests/certified-research-administrator for free. Identify your strengths and weaknesses and concentrate on the areas you have identified as a weakness. Review your test taking strategies and look for the best or the most correct answer. Flag any question you cannot determine an answer for at first review, you can then return to these flagged questions as you work your way through the exam. Pay attention to small details and look for items, which may divert attention from the real question, otherwise known as red herring questions. Types of questions, which may be on the exam, include fill in the blank, best description and classic math problems. Become familiar with the area you will travel to on the day of the exam. Factor in traffic to the test site. Take into consideration parking, building access and possible construction.
collaborations come in many different forms in research administration — networks, informal gatherings, formal meetings, and more recently during COVID-19 restrictions, also through on-line dialoging. These types of successful collaborations can be seen in many colleges and universities, both nationally and internationally; as internal constituencies involved in the conduct of research or the administration of research, come to realize that working together brings about better results than working alone in silos. The mantra “putting our heads together” to foster idea sharing and thinking to accomplish a common goal or to solve a recurring issue has sparked unique ways to collaborate as we have seen in working within our own universities or in working with our colleagues at other institutions.

As Peer Reviewers, we have found innovative and note-worthy ways in which institutions have created networking and engagement opportunities to enable, expand, and enrich cross connections and collaborations. Some examples include:

- Facilitating collaborations that cultivate relationships and foster open exchange of ideas between research administrators through “Lunch and Learn” opportunities or “Speed Networking” sessions
- Creating Peer-to-Peer mentoring programs for research administration staff that foster dialogue and improved processes and procedures by pairing individuals from different offices in the roles of mentor and mentee - central office staff with departmental research administration staff or pre-award with post award staff or research compliance staff with pre or post award staff
- Creating Proposal Development Offices (or positions) to foster interdisciplinary collaborations within campuses and across institutions thereby strengthening research administration offices that produce more competitive and successful proposal submissions
- Using digital communication platforms to communicate and collaborate with research administrators world-wide on common issues of importance and allows for collective creativity and problem solving to occur
- Creating and formalizing a Research Administration Network composed of individuals from research administrative units campus wide with scheduled meetings, formal agendas and an engaged and active membership

I often say that research administration is a team sport. Every person on the team has a specific role to play in the outcome of the project — but it is only in working together and closely collaborating with each other by using the best practices can we ensure a positive (winning) outcome.

Valera T. Francis, Ph.D. is the Director of the Office of Sponsored Programs at the University of North Carolina Greensboro where she has primary responsibility for pre-award activity. She has over 21 years of experience working in research administration and has been an NCURA Peer Reviewer for several years. She has a special interest in Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions. She can be reached at vtfranc2@uncg.edu.

Whether you work at a research institution or a predominantly undergraduate institution, the importance of providing quality services to your faculty in support of their research and scholarship is undeniable. 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

Do not do anything out of the ordinary and get a good night’s sleep. It’s Test day! Eat what you normally eat, dress comfortably and be aware that a sweater or jacket may not be allowed into the testing area. Upon entering the site, present your current state issued ID, passport or US Military ID to be admitted. All personal items will be placed in a locker with a key given to you. No food or drinks can be taken into the testing area. Do not be offended if you feel like you are being treated like a criminal when they ask you to invert your pockets, check your eyeglasses or check items on your person. These are normal practices they are using on each subject in the facility; they are doing their due diligence to ensure honesty prior to taking the exam. Please note, not everyone at your specific test site is there to take the same exam as you are. You will be at a professional testing site for all types of professional exams. It is highly encouraged to take your bio break prior to the exam as any breaks you take once your exam has started is taken away from the timed exam.

You will be provided with a pencil, a calculator and a two-page blank blue folder or two pieces of blank paper to allow you to process calculations by hand if needed. You will have 240 minutes to complete 250 questions. A little less than a minute per question. Remember, you have the ability to flag questions to return to for review and response. Work through what you know and then return to what you have flagged for a good gauge of how much time you will have for those harder questions.

After the exam, consider scheduling something nice for yourself to relieve the stress of the past few days as you have worked your heart out to pass the certification exam! Celebrate your achievement in about six weeks when you obtain your exam results! Currently, you will receive an email notification with your results. Congratulations you have passed! Start tracking your contact hours of continuing education. Requirements are to accrue 80 hours of continuing education within a five-year period. The contact log can be found on the RACC website. You do not want to let this lapse. Recertification requirements include meeting the 80 hours of continuing education, paying the recertification fee and submitting three questions for a future exam. Failure to meet these requirements means you have the pleasure of retaking the certification exam. In the off chance, you did not pass the exam, assess your weaknesses, study, and plan to retake the test. YOU can do this!

Remember, you are in this profession for a reason, a season or a lifetime! Go get certified!

2022 Examination Schedule

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Su Cole, CRA, CFRA, is the Director, Award Management in the Office of Sponsored Programs at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth. Su’s experience in research administration spans 20 years beginning at Baylor College of Medicine in the heart of the Texas Medical Center. She earned her CRA in 2015 and her CFRA in 2020 and has a strong passion for Research Administration and it’s benefits to our community. She can be reached at SUCole@unthsc.edu.

Jennifer Husmo, MBA, CRA, CPRA, CFRA, has more than 20 years in research administration. For the past 15 years, she has worked at the department level and division level, having worked in five of the 10 basic science departments at MD Anderson. She has been with the Department of Infectious Diseases since the start of the pandemic. She can be reached at JAHusmo@mdanderson.org.
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Why Develop Training Programs?

By Julie Cole, Tricia Callahan and Robert Holm

NCURA, long a leader in providing exemplary training and professional development to the research administration community, is embarking on a project that seeks to identify and document the multiple college and university training initiatives found among NCURA’s members. NCURA believes that a compendium of institutional training programs — with specific details, identified audiences, desired outcomes, and requirements — will benefit NCURA members as they strive to maintain an effective and highest quality research administration workforce. The compendium is a project of the NCURA Professional Development Committee. Watch for the invitation to participate in this exciting project by responding to a survey that will be sent to NCURA members through which the components of your institutional training programs will be shared with your colleagues.

Why is NCURA undertaking this initiative?
While NCURA offers a diversity of multi-modal programs, there are times when customizing the NCURA programming to meet specific institutional dynamics can produce a powerful outcome. For a quick review of NCURA’s programs, visit: www.ncura.edu/Portals/0/Docs/Membership/NCURAProgramsProductsServices_4.2021.pdf.

Why has the demand for training so significantly increased in recent years?
It is likely due to the growth in both the number and diversity of universities and colleges receiving external dollars for research and the concomitant growth in support activities. Faculty are overwhelmed with an increased administrative burden at times, and institutions are encountering challenges with new regulations, systems, and requirements. Many institutions are turning to training and professional development to ensure a supportive and compliant environment. Most recognize that well-trained specialists in research administration are essential to the continued success of their research programs. In the past, grant managers acquired their knowledge of sponsor rules and regulations “on the job.” With greater responsibility for the growing complexity of the field, interest in developing research administration training programs — both institutionally and among national professional groups — is an obvious outcome.

Underlying all these challenges are two basic requirements: training newly hired personnel and keeping current personnel up to date. Developing an in-house training program from scratch can be a formidable challenge. Fortunately, NCURA provides an extensive menu of meetings, training conferences, webinars, online tutorials, on-site workshops, and publications in support of the research administration professional. However, customizing the excellent NCURA resources to specific institutional practices requires in-house training as well as ongoing updates and continuous improvements.

Who Should Be Trained?
Training reflects the overall administrative organization. Many universities have a decentralized approach, with research administrators housed in departments, etc. who perform both pre- and post-award functions. Other institutions have separate pre- and post-award central offices whose staffs...
require a slightly different training content. Still, other institutions have created “pods” or “research service” areas dedicated to a “cradle to grave” approach in support of the faculty they serve. The training for these personnel may have to be specifically customized to their respective clientele or broadened beyond the traditional research administration functions that are the standards for most training programs.

**What Should Be Taught?**
Most successful programs build backward — they consider what a successful graduate should know to meet institutional outcomes and performance expectations and then create a curriculum or a curricular approach that meets these standards. They build a framework that considers the need for the training, the expectation of changes in performance or compliance that will result, and the impact the training will have on participants (rewards, recognition, and retention) and those they support.

The first step in developing training content might be to review the institutional roles and responsibilities (R/R’s) associated with research administration. Note that institutions typically develop roles and responsibilities for managing compliance and defining them by grant management function is also worthwhile. By matching these sets of performance expectations to training content, institutions can develop comprehensive learning outcomes oriented to job performance, and compliance management. Another critical consideration is how to continuously review and refresh training content. Is continuing education, either in-house or through NCURA required?

**Who Should Be a Trainer and What does a Training Structure look like?**
Not every content expert is a good trainer, nor do good trainers always have the nuts-and-bolts expertise to answer workplace questions. Some institutions match dedicated trainers with skilled practitioners who provide a “reality check” on how processes are implemented at the departmental level. Other institutions have dedicated training offices staffed by research administration experts.

**Training Delivery Mechanisms**
What are the desired training mechanisms? Most of these options depend on the resources available and the content. NCURA offers excellent on-demand programming that can be used alone or in conjunction with institution-specific follow-up. Many institutions have developed online, on-demand training modules, which are particularly helpful for training on important new processes, systems, and policies that must be distributed continuously to a broad audience.

COVID has forced many institutions to change their training delivery. Many established training programs use traditional classroom training, which has become increasingly problematic in today’s world. Classroom instruction is labor-intensive but may offer the added benefits of dialog between trainers and learners and the opportunity to clarify and elaborate when needed. Several electronic training platforms provide alternatives, and institutions are adjusting to this “new normal.”

**Demonstration of Success (ROI)**
How can trainers demonstrate that their program has addressed perceived institutional needs, produced meaningful outcomes, enabled trainees to meet performance and proficiency standards, and result in an overall return on investment? Whenever possible, training should be based on quantifiable learning objectives that emphasize key concepts, desired learning, measurable performance enhancement, etc.

How should training programs report their success? Measures might include enrollment, feedback, percentage of trainees passing a test, or perhaps the percentage of those completing institutional training demonstrating continued excellence through NCURA training or national certification.

Consider the rationale for creating the training — the institutional expectations of positive outcomes as a result. Success might be reported in these larger, qualitative terms: increased faculty satisfaction in services provided; internal audit or monitoring reports of improved compliance practices; or evidence of increased and successful adoption of new technologies or systems.

“As the compendium of institutional training programs takes shape, we have attempted to include many of the considerations presented in this article. Or perhaps readers would like to add more. Please engage with us and respond to our upcoming survey and provide feedback as the compendium develops and is published.”

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After beginning her research administration career in the US, Cira Mathis became an international research administrator when she moved from Florida to Saudi Arabia. Currently the manager of internal programs at Khalifa University of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Cira recently discussed her experiences with Marianna Gurtovnik of NCURA’s Global Collaborate Working Group.

Marianna Gurtovnik (MG): You moved from the US, first to Saudi Arabia and then to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). How did this happen and why did you decide to move overseas?

Cira Mathis (CM): It started with a conversation I had with a woman on LinkedIn who was recruiting people to bring US-based backgrounds in research administration to join a university in Saudi Arabia. The institution recognized the importance of staffing a robust administrative backbone to foster its research enterprise. I interviewed with the institution and was offered the opportunity. My husband and I didn’t have children at the time and although we loved Florida and I was very happy with my job, we thought moving to Saudi Arabia would be a grand adventure. I was also drawn to the part of my role that had me working in an internal funding office and functioning as an internal sponsor of research. This particular university’s drive to build global collaborations and invest in its faculty was on another level. We spent nearly four years in Saudi Arabia and my son was born there. Eventually we returned to the US and tried to make it work for a few years, but I always kept my ear to the ground and was open to returning to the region.

A former colleague from Saudi Arabia had moved to UAE several years ago and we reconnected when he had an opening for a manager’s position in University Sponsored Research at Khalifa University of Science and Technology. I simply couldn’t decline this great opportunity. We moved to Abu Dhabi this spring and I am reinvigorated to be in this international space again. I manage a large portfolio of internal funding programs covering a broad range of areas. I’ve enjoyed the room to contribute creatively and influence the strategic direction of research in this region. Despite the institutions in this region being relatively new, the research outputs are astounding and I’m thrilled to contribute to the research ecosystem here.

MG: It’s sometimes difficult for professional women to move geographically due to family constraints. Your husband seems to have been very supportive of your move and that probably was a big factor in your success.

CM: Yes, having his support helped me overcome my hesitations. The truth is, there’s never a perfect set of circumstances. How do you know if you are truly ready for your next professional challenge? When we accepted the Saudi opportunity, we sold our cars and house, resigned our jobs and only then found out, weeks before getting on the plane, that we were expecting our son. We panicked, thinking, “What are we going to do?! We’re leaving our family support, I am starting a new job in a foreign country, and we are going to have a baby!” But my husband has always been my biggest supporter. He jumped in with both feet to encourage me and make me truly believe, “We can do this.” When we pursued opportunities for his career, I coasted for a bit, and vice versa. We have a good give-and-take and that’s how you make it work, in marriage and otherwise.

MG: In your experience, how does research administration in the United States differ from these Middle Eastern countries and in what ways is it similar?

CM: In the US, it’s fairly easy for a research administrator to move between states: while state statutes differ, the umbrella of federal rules is the same. Unlearning it overseas was difficult: what would be a red flag in one country’s context may be no problem at all somewhere else (think Export Controls, for example). I also had to adapt my communication style and be more mindful of the perspective each person I encounter brings to the conversation. Liaising between institutions in the US is very different thing from negotiating a tense, 14-party consortium agreement with faculty and institutional officials from multiple countries, where everyone has their own sticking points whose context might not be understood by other players in the room who have different constraints and norms.

As for similarities, it all comes down to researchers working on important issues and how we facilitate their work with collaborators and sponsors. That’s the common thread regardless of geographical context. For research administrators, the key is to become deeply familiar with risk tolerance, strategic priorities, and return-on-investment expectations of your institution and its governing bodies. This helps you understand the difference between...
what you’re perhaps used to saying “no” to vs. what you actually must say “no” to. And, conversely, how you can best structure collaborations to get to a “yes”! We all have a legal department in our institutions to guide us in this process but research administrators always start from a place of, “How can we shift things to help the science happen, and what are our true no-go points in these proposals or agreements?”

**MG:** How do you overcome obstacles in international research administration?

**CM:** First, let go of the institution-centered view, particularly if you’ve spent a long time in one organization. Our job is both to protect our institution and facilitate the research and sometimes, we may get stuck thinking there’s only one way forward—or, fail to keep these two objectives in reasonable balance.

Second, don’t lose sight of the forest for the trees. Your institution and its collaborators initiate a proposal or agreement toward the same goal. Think about the real risks and benefits of this arrangement. Try to evaluate objectively whether the sticking point is something inconsequential, the likelihood of which being a problem is small compared to the probability of the resulting partnership being great if we could get it off the ground.

**MG:** When you help create successful international collaborations, do you share the best practices for the benefit of other research administrators? If so, how? If not, have you given any thought to this possibility?

**CM:** Understandably, the spotlight of these collaborations is typically on scientific and programmatic outcomes. I’ve been fortunate to work at institutions with excellent research communication departments; we work together to ensure the world knows about our institutions’ accomplishments. Personally, I haven’t put forward any best practice guidance or tips in a formal forum. I’ve had informal dialogues within my own network. I’d certainly be happy to contribute as part of a wider best practices working group.

**MG:** What advice would you give to people contemplating going into the field of international research administration?

**CM:** I would tell them, “100 percent, without a doubt, do it.” It’s going to be scary at first and you’re going to be uncomfortable. But you might feel this way even while changing jobs within the US, so why not go a step (or several thousand!) further? Humans tend to be creatures of habit, mostly opting for things that are comfortable and don’t force us to change. But when you take a leap like working abroad, you’re going to absorb all that’s new/different and find where you need to grow very quickly.

Also, go into it with an unassuming attitude. I admit I went into my first international post naively over-confident, thinking, “No problem, I will take the skills that I have, I will apply them there, and it’ll be easy.” That’s not how it goes. Be genuinely willing to take what that experience teaches you in terms of your personal and professional growth. You’ll find areas where you can contribute and exercise influence. But you should also be willing to pull up the mirror to yourself and acknowledge where you need to grow and adapt to your new environment.
Are you new to post-award administration? Do you need to learn about the financial management of sponsored programs? NCURA’s newest publication contains a wealth of information on post-award management.

Topics include:

- Explanation of the framework that governs the management of post-award activities
- Detailed information on the Uniform Guidance
- Guidance on allowable costs
- Key issues of post-award management
- Coordination of roles and responsibilities for monitoring, reporting, cash management, prior approvals, compliance, and other activities

This 80+ page resource is available exclusively as a PDF for immediate download
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Community partnerships establish a symbiotic relationship between research institutions and local community members. This increases ethical accountability, creates trusting bonds, and fosters mutual understanding between both parties. These qualities lead to benefits such as increased research expenditures and local economic growth which provide widespread advantages.

Research institutions should maintain positive relationships with communities, so they understand who is best suited to serve in these positions. Often local leaders from churches, businesses, or schools are asked to participate on an IRB or IACUC, but without a prior relationship, or a relationship of mistrust, this becomes more difficult. Engaging community members in research connects them to the research goals and helps researchers advocate on behalf of the community.

Community Partnerships Start with Engagement
Each local community has unique considerations. Research institutions should ensure these are addressed before any Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review any protocol involving human or animal research subjects.

To help meet this need, IRBs and IACUCs must have at least one community member serving on the panel as they can present the community's perspectives.

Research institutions should maintain positive relationships with communities, so they understand who is best suited to serve in these positions. Often local leaders from churches, businesses, or schools are asked to participate on an IRB or IACUC, but without a prior relationship, or a relationship of mistrust, this becomes more difficult. Engaging community members in research connects them to the research goals and helps researchers advocate on behalf of the institution to the community's members.

Forming Bonds Between Community Leaders and Research Institutions
Community relationships may be long standing at one institution and brand new at others. It is important for research administrators to know the history an institution has with their local community. Workshops and community outreach can help foster that knowledge. Many research administrators are highly skilled collaborators which increases their ability in bringing community members and institutional leaders together. While research administrators may be familiar with presenting to faculty and staff on ethical and compliance topics, it is important that similar educational opportunities are afforded to the community. These efforts enhance communication between the institution and the community which can lead to a partnership where both parties more fully understand the other’s needs. Research institutions can accept community-based awards which can provide the largest benefit to the community when allocated with the help of local leaders.

Fulfilling Community and Institutional Needs by Utilizing Small Businesses
Forming and strengthening partnerships requires keen attention from institutional officials and researchers who can use their ideas to enhance the local community. Investigators involved with a small business can apply for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) awards that help stimulate the local economy and sometimes lead to legal partnerships that include other community members employed by or involved with the small business’s transactions (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2020). The “business sector performed 73% of the U.S. R&D in 2017,” so SBIR/STTR programs can launch profitable community partnerships into larger corporations that establish a strong bond between the small business and research institution (National Science Board, 2020).

Takeaways for Research Institutions
Growing an institution’s research portfolio should not be performed in a vacuum, and partnering with local communities for support makes the process more fruitful. Education, community-based awards, and SBIR/STTR awards are avenues worth exploring for research administrators and researchers aiming to form these partnerships with their communities. Positive outreach helps institutions understand their community's needs and allows community members to participate and take an active interest in the ongoing research.

References

Elisabeth Holmes is a graduate student in the Masters of Science in Research Administration program at Johns Hopkins University. She also works as the Senior Research Assistant at Virginia Commonwealth University for the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study® where she works to retain enrolled subjects. She can be reached at eholmes3@vcu.edu.
Serving as a research administrator at a small predominately undergraduate institution (PUI) means you are often a “jack of all trades.” The role encompasses all stages, from proposal development and submission to project management, to closeout. Research administrators at PUIs find they must wear many hats: opportunity provider, grant writer, pre- and post-award manager, technology transfer, export control, financial research administration (RA), IRB and compliance office. We do it all. However, being a generalist is not without its challenges. What happens when you need to take a deep dive into an area of RA that is new for your office and/or the institution?

Not quite two years after establishing the first sponsored programs office at my institution, I found myself in the position of helping faculty with Industry-University Collaboration (IUC), specifically industry contracting. This was a new area of research partnership for our office and the university. As a PUI with no technology transfer office, vice president of research, or contracting officer, we successfully learned how to navigate the initial complexities of collaboration between industry and university.

Managing Expectations

One key to effective IUCs is managing expectations, or the belief that IUC contracts will or should happen a certain way. As a research administrator, be mindful of managing your own expectations, as well as those of the faculty and administration at your institution. Everyone has a part to play.

Do Your Homework

If you are new to private industry contracts, there are a plethora of NCURA resources that are extremely helpful. Pull up a chair, get out a notebook, and get ready to do your homework!

- *A Primer on Intellectual Property* (Bartunek, 2015). This publication is very helpful to understanding: 1.) Various types of research agreements, 2.) The differences between copyrights and patents, and 3.) How the Bayh-Dole Act applies to IUC agreements if there is federal funding involved.
- *Administering Research Contracts* (Mayo, 2018a). A downloadable publication, this guide addresses “issues associated with the administration of research contracts” (Mayo, 2018a, p.6). The “Contracts with the Private Sector” and “Special Issues for Small Institutions” sections are particularly useful.
- *Diving into Contracting* (Mayo, 2018b). This webinar, available through the NCURA online learning platform, covers a variety of contracting concepts. Areas of particular assistance are the pros and cons of fixed price vs. cost reimbursement contracts, and a review of contract requirements that may bring potential risk to Institutions of Higher Education (IHE).

Understand the Intellectual Property Landscape

One area that can derail a potential collaboration is not understanding the difference between a Sponsored Research Agreement (SRA) and a Service Agreement (SA), which, would generally be understood as a “service” the faculty member is providing to the industry partner with little to no benefit to the institution. If an industry partner asks to own all data, all intellectual property (IP), and gives the IHE no right to publish, this may very likely be an SA.

IHEs do research for the public benefit as tax-exempt organizations. Research not only serves the greater good, but also provides educational opportunities for students. If the industry research is private, with restrictions on publication, the IUC may no longer align with the purpose of the IHE. In one of our early agreements, the industry partner wanted the PI on the project for the sole purpose of conducting proprietary research. This raised many questions. Who owns the results of the research? Can we publish? Is this IUC in line with the educational mission of the university? Or is this simply private consulting on behalf of the faculty member? The answers to these questions can help determine the best approach to negotiating key terms in the agreement.

The Pros and Cons of Cost Reimbursable vs. Fixed Price Contracts

When embarking on a new partnership, prepare to do some coaching of both parties to ensure everyone gets what they need. For instance, the type of contract used will matter. In its simplest form, cost reimbursement agreements (CRs) are typically paid monthly or quarterly and have very low financial risk to the institution, as you are incurring costs that are reimbursable. However, CRs are subject to audit. Fixed price (FP) agreements are just that: fixed payments based on a schedule of milestones with no audits. The risk is “if you don’t deliver, you don’t get paid” (Mayo, 2018b).
Once, while negotiating terms and conditions, a new industry partner requested an FP contract, yet also wanted itemized monthly expenditures including payroll, supplies, and computing costs. Based on what we learned from *Diving into Contracting*, one of the benefits of FP contracting is that it involves “no financial reporting” (Mayo, 2018b). Is it reasonable for our industry partner to ask for an itemized invoice on an already agreed upon monthly fixed rate? The RA office questioned the need for this request in the contract negotiations. Ultimately, performance metrics and milestones were established as the trigger for payment vs. expenditures (Mayo, 2018a).

**Create and Vet Templates**

Many IHEs with well-established research infrastructure have contract templates available for both faculty and industry partners to review prior to the negotiation stage. Industry can review the SRA templates to see where the university stands on issues such as the right to publish, ownership of IP, confidentiality, and indemnification.

As a PUI new to industry partnerships, Liberty University brought many departments and administrative offices to the table when developing SRA terms and conditions, including deans, Legal Affairs, Risk Management, Research Administration and the provost. Discussion ensued over the following questions:

- Who owns the right to the IP, inventions, and discoveries?
- How long should an industry sponsor have to review and comment on research publications prior to disclosure?
- Is this IUC covered under the IHE's general liability insurance?

As research administrators, give yourself—and your university administrative and academic partners—time and space to process these questions and the implications. Understand contract terms and conditions may evolve over time as projects are implemented and managed, and as new IUCs enter the scene.

**Leveraging Resources**

Familiarizing yourself with research agreement terms and conditions, templates, and the differences among them, can go a long way towards identifying potential hurdles, while assisting the PUI to navigate Industry-University (I-U) partnerships. Perhaps even more crucial are the elements already available within your own institutions that can help IUCs grow.

**Leverage the Strengths of Faculty**

Faculty who come from industry settings bring not only their expertise, but may also bring ties to research funding. At a PUI it may be easier to engage one-on-one with faculty members to connect the industry partner with the institution. Consider the unique talents, skills, or relationships your faculty have with industry and become a resource to help PIs connect the dots between the expectations and needs of both groups.

However, it is important to communicate with PIs that these processes (i.e., contract negotiations and internal reviews) may take longer than they are used to, particularly if their own frame of reference is serving as a private consultant to industry. In these cases, it is helpful to remind the PI that IUC contracts are between the industry partner and the IHE, not the industry partner and the individual.

**Leverage the Strengths of Your Institution**

As you begin the process of establishing an IUC, it is helpful to take time to assess your institutional resources and identify strengths. RA offices are often heavily reliant on the complementary services of other departments, such as finance, legal, and human resources. Which departments can you lean on to assist in furthering I-U partnerships? Are there any administrative offices that have developed pathways that you can leverage instead of building the path alone?

“**It should be our goal to assist our faculty, administrators, and partners in the decisions and processes that leverage the strengths of both industry and university to foster research, innovation, and future growth.**”

At our institution, the Procurement and Contract (P&C) office has well-established systems and procedures for managing purchasing and oversight for all university contracts. Once the IUC process began, we utilized the internal P&C database and management system to track all negotiations, approvals, and final executed agreements. This removed the administrative burden of processing contracts from the RA office and avoided a duplication of efforts across the university.

**Leverage the Strengths of Your RA Office**

For offices new to IUCs, there are many differences between grants and contracts that can seem overwhelming at first. Even terminology is different. What exactly is indemnification, for instance? The process involves different players. For example, who owns the terms and conditions negotiation process? Is it legal affairs, research administration, or contracting and procurement? Finally, what if the industry partner has no experience with IHEs? Despite being “standard business practices,” some industry commercial terms and conditions in contracts (e.g., restrictions on publications) can be difficult for IHEs to accept (Mayo, 2018b).

The initial concern that our office was underprepared for IUCs belied the reality: we had much of the infrastructure in place needed to make private sector contracting work successfully. Over the last several years we have built strong relationships across departments (e.g., Finance, Legal, C&P, and Risk Management). We trained and developed pre-award staff to process RA internal approvals; assist in budget development and help faculty navigate statements of work; and prepared post-award staff to provide oversight for reporting, compliance, and close-out.

Diving into contracting with industry provided a challenging yet informational process, resulting in successful agreements and projects. The process of navigating this new area was full of opportunities and ultimately a win-win for all involved. It should be our goal as research administrators to play a key role in shaping IUCs by assisting our faculty, administrators, and partners in the decisions and processes that leverage the strengths of both industry and university to foster research, innovation, and future growth. ⬤

**References**


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FOREIGN INFLUENCE AND INTERFERENCE

Do We Know What’s Ahead and are Research Administrators Prepared?

By Lisa Kennedy

National security risks posed by transfer of intellectual property has become increasingly controversial topic in universities across the world. This article focuses on the Australian Government’s introduction of legislation to address the issue and contextualises this approach where many other governments across the world are introducing similar legislation. What does this mean for research administrators as we manage this within our own institutions and with our global collaborators?
The risks posed by undisclosed foreign influence, data theft and espionage lie at the heart of the concern that governments have expressed about exchange of information and collaboration on research projects. At the same time there is a recognition that globalisation and the enrichment of wider society, including the Third World, will come through sharing the benefits of academic endeavours and the translation of science into real world outcomes.

The momentum for a government policy response in Australia has been building. In 2018 the government introduced the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act (Cth) 2018 (FITSA). In 2019 the Australian Minister for Education established the University Foreign Interference Taskforce and subsequently released a set of guidelines to counter foreign interference in Australian universities. The guidelines set out to balance risks of foreign influence and intellectual property leakage with the undeniable benefits of collaboration to produce ground-breaking research.

Then in 2020 the Australian government announced a range of compliance obligations on universities which significantly increased the day-to-day management of research contracts. The introduction of the Australia’s Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 (Cth) (AFRA) requires universities to make an assessment about the institutional autonomy of the collaborating organisation.

From 10 March 2021 Australian universities must notify the government when they enter into certain arrangements with a government and other agencies deemed to be non-autonomous. Furthermore, all arrangements entered into prior to 10 March which are still in operation were to be notified by 10 June. The legislation defines a foreign entity as a government department (including State, Local or County). Furthermore, universities are to notify the government of collaborations with universities deemed to be ‘non-autonomous’. With that task now complete the Australian government has a large data base of thousands of contracts.

When liaising and negotiating contracts with our North American colleagues and the majority of collaborators across the globe, the first decision that needs to be made is to establish whether the collaborating organisation is a government department and then secondly, if the collaborating organisation is university, there is the question about whether the university is autonomous from the sovereign government.

A litmus test for determining whether a university is non-autonomous is to ascertain whether the majority of the members of the university’s governing body are required to be members of the political party that forms the government or is required to declare allegiance to the reigning political party or the government. Once that determination has been made research administrators determine whether or not the Australian Government needs to be notified that the university intends to enter into this arrangement.

The University of Queensland (UQ), as a research intensive organisation, has developed a range of resources for research administrators to work within the policy framework provided by the Australian Government to ensure that UQ maintains its position as one of the leading research and teaching institutions in Australia. UQ ranks among the world’s top universities, as measured by several key independent rankings, including the U.S. News Best Global Universities Rankings 2021 (36), the Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities 2020 (39), QS World University Rankings 2022 (47), Academic Ranking of World Universities 2021 (51), and Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021 (62).

UQ’s collaboration with foreign entities is extensive. As a proxy measure for estimating the breadth and scope of foreign collaboration, data shows that the number of co-publications is highest with the European Union, followed by the USA, the UK and China (Group of Eight, 2020).

The effect of the introduction of this legislation in Australia is that there will be two tiers of notifications. The first tier will be where the contracts and agreements are notified and they appear on a register but the relevant government minister will have determined that there is no adverse effect on Australia’s foreign relations or policy.

In the second tier of agreements where the arrangement is with either a foreign government or a university that is considered non-autonomous the minister will be able to make a declaration that the arrangement is invalid or unenforceable. This is not to suggest that all arrangements with foreign governments and/or universities will be declared invalid but there will be scrutiny of the subject matter of some of the arrangements with some countries.

“AFRA requires universities to make an assessment about the institutional autonomy of the collaborating organisation.”

As a practical response to the introduction of the Australian Government’s requirements to notify agreements and the possibility that these agreements could be cancelled, UQ has provided guidance through the legal office to support the negotiation of contracts and has drafted template clauses for inclusion in agreements that could be caught under the legislation:

- **Confidentiality/disclosure clauses**: agreements with all overseas institutions that will be notified to the government are assessed to ensure that there are no terms and conditions in the agreement that would prevent the disclosure of the existence of the agreement. Where necessary these terms are negotiated with the other party before UQ enters into the agreement.
- **Termination clauses**: if there is a possibility that the agreement could be cancelled by the relevant government minister but there is still sufficient ambiguity about this and a desire to proceed with the research, UQ will try to negotiate the inclusion of a no-fault termination clause.
- **Jurisdiction**: depending on the risk threshold of the agreement a neutral jurisdiction clause is sought to mitigate the risk in defending action arising from a cancellation of an agreement or disclosure of the terms and conditions.

UQ template agreements have been updated to ensure that UQ can comply with the AFRA legislation.

Whether or not it is possible to negotiate these terms into an agreement the risk appetite for projects with non-autonomous foreign entities has now changed and there are resources within the university to ensure that research administrators are aware of the obligations. Many of our overseas collaborators are working with the same restraints and there is generally an understanding of the need for the inclusion of these new clauses. Occasionally this causes a delay in signing an agreement which can be detrimental to the research endeavour but, again, this is generally regarded as one of the complexities of contract management in a complex university environment.

In our post COVID-19 world we’ll be vaccinated and travel will be possible again. The NCURA annual meetings are an ideal opportunity for us to debate the hard questions.

**Reference**


Lisa J. Kennedy, BSW, MSWAP, is the Director Research Partnerships at The University of Queensland (UQ). UQ is one of Australia’s leading research and teaching institutions with more than 55,000 students and consistently ranked in the top four Australian universities for research income. Lisa is also the Secretary of NCURA’s Region VIII. She can be reached at L.kennedy@uq.edu.au.
James Casey is now Interim Associate Vice President for Research Administration at Florida Gulf Coast University. He is also an Adjunct Associate Professor in the CUNY M.S. in Research Administration and Compliance Program.

Rosemary Madnick will be rejoining The Lundquist Institute as the Vice President of Research Administration in late October.

Ben Prince, Administrator for the Division of Geriatric Medicine and the Meyers Primary Care Institute, University of Massachusetts Medical School, retired at the end of September after 37 years in research administration. Ben has been a member of NCURA since 1993 and was involved in many volunteer roles over the years, including Chair of Region I, national board member, conference co-chair, and numerous program committees at the national and regional levels. He is also a 2020 recipient of the Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award. Ben plans to stay connected with research administration.

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

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Greetings, Region II! It is hard to believe that the fall semester has started, the Annual Meeting is already over, and the Regional Meeting and officer elections are just around the corner!

AM63. It was wonderful to reconnect with everyone at AM63 at the end of the August. Region II participated in the NetZone and hosted a dinner group with some of our in-person attendees.

Region II was proud to boast several recipients of awards presented at AM63:

- **Robert C. Andresen Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration Award**
  - Ann Holmes, University of Maryland, College Park

- **Julia Jacobsen Distinguished Service Award**
  - Mary Louise Healy, Johns Hopkins University

We were pleased to offer 5 virtual or in-person travel awards to AM63. This year’s recipients were: Amber Bassett, University of Baltimore; Shawna Campbell, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Morgan Eastman, Gallaudet University; Laura Reddington, Pennsylvania State University; and, Cody Watson, West Virginia University.

Regional Meeting. Region II is looking forward to the Super Regional Meeting with Regions VI (Western) and VII (Rocky Mountain): Navigating the Future. Months of hard work by the program committee have produced an exceptional and diverse program, and we look forward to seeing everyone virtually October 19 - 21, 2021. www.ncuraregionvii.org/regional-meeting.

Elections. Region II is accepting nominations for the following officer positions for terms beginning on January 1, 2022: Chair-Elect, Treasurer-Elect, and Secretary. Visit www.ncuraregionii.org or contact Katie McKeon at kpetrone@umd.edu for more information.

Mentor Me. Region II is accepting applications for the Cheryl-Lee Howard Mentor Me Program. The program matches a Mentee with a Mentor to assist them in identifying leadership and professional development goals and objectives. The Mentor will help the Mentee formulate a Leadership and/or Professional Development Plan and assist in the identification of a Leadership Project. More information: https://ncuraregionii.org/mentor-me

Reminders:
- If you are interested in hosting a PDC workshop for your institution or would like to present a webinar, please contact Jaquion Gholston at jgholsto@stevens.edu and Chea Smith at chea.smith@rutgers.edu
- Stay connected to the Region: Join our Facebook page and the Region II community on NCURA Collaborate.
- Want to volunteer? Please reach out to Chair-Elect, Adam Greenberg, Adam.Greenberg@asrc.cuny.edu.

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.

With the new academic year underway, Region I is excited to have delivered a new offering to its membership - the inaugural New Member Orientation, held on October 6. Thank you, Anjali Pansé and Jill Mortali, for organizing this terrific event, and to the Region I Advisory Board for leading the discussions. In addition, I’d like to congratulate the members of the Curriculum Committee for planning a great series of events for this fall, including a virtual RADG focused on Foreign Influence, Research Security and International Collaborations, and a pilot series of Region I Virtual Discussion Groups which will have a variety of discussion topics based on community input. In this time of uncertainty, the Curriculum Committee has put much thought into offering meaningful and creative sessions to the region’s membership so that we can stay connected, engaged, and continue learning from each other even if in a virtual environment.

Chair-Elect: Stacy Riseman, College of the Holy Cross
Treasurer-Elect: Randi Wasik, UMass Memorial Medical Center
Secretary-Elect: Jessica McDonough, Dartmouth College
National Board Representative-Elect: Jill Mortali, Dartmouth College

Congratulations to our newly elected Region I Officers!

A big thanks to Nick Fisher, Boston Children’s Hospital, Chair, Governance Committee and the Committee members for assembling a wonderful pool of candidates and overseeing the election process.

We are also looking forward to Region I’s Annual Meeting being held November 8-10. Please be on the lookout for emails and website updates regarding our upcoming Region I Annual Meeting.

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.

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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 fall semester to our flamingo family! We hope that all our members and their friends, families, and communities are safe and healthy.

Region III would like to thank the NCURA national staff and the AM63 program committee for putting together an inspiring hybrid conference and allowing us to “Reconnect” with our research administration family. Seven Region III members served on the program committee for this year’s meeting:

- **Aurali Dade** (George Mason University)
- **Abby Guillory** (North Carolina State University)
- **Rashonda Harris** (University of Connecticut)
- **Nathan Jones** (University of North Carolina, Wilmington)
- **Lauren Magruder** (Virginia Tech)
- **Jill Tincher** (University of Georgia)
- **Anthony Ventimiglia** (Auburn University)

With AM63 complete, it’s time to shift our focus to Region III’s Spring Meeting at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, KY. The meeting will be held April 30 – May 4, 2022. This year’s theme is “Renewing Our Commitment, Reimagining the Future, Reaching for the Winner’s Circle.”

Finally, earlier this summer, Region III held our 2021 elections. We would like to thank all our candidates for their service to the region and congratulate our new Chair-Elect Tanta Myles (University of Alabama), Secretary Laney McLean (Florida State University), and Treasurer-Elect Jamie Petrasek (Virginia Commonwealth University).

Did AM63 inspire you to lend a hand to help your flock? Fill out our volunteer survey (http://ncuraregioniii.com/volunteer) and one of our coordinators will reach out to talk about opportunities. Until next time, stay in touch by following Region III on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram or joining the RIII Collaborate Community.

**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.
Howdy Region V! We are in the final planning stages of our Fall 2021 meeting. Registration is still open for those wanting to attend. We are working hard in our plans to keep everyone safe. Our Keynote speaker, Shayla Rivera, is definitely going to wow and inspire us all. On the Region V website (https://ncuraregionv.com), you will find the schedule, workshop information (including a free one on Sunday), hotel block links, and a link to the meeting registration. I want to say a BIG THANK YOU to the entire program committee for helping me plan this meeting. We are also working to stream our business meeting and other activities via Zoom, so watch those e-blasts for more information. We are excited to be able to get everyone back together again and “CELEBRATE YOU - Research Rock Stars.”

As we move into 2022, we will continue to provide educational opportunities to our members via our two recently implemented programs; Mustang Mentoring and Lunch & Learns. Thank you to Robyn Remotigue and Courtney Frazer-Swaney for their leadership to make the Mustang Mentoring program vision become reality. Applications for Cohort 2 were due in October and we are excited to see who all will be participating in the next Cohort. The Mustang Mentoring Program webpage has more information on this (https://ncuraregionv.com/mustang-mentoring-program).

We will continue our monthly Lunch & Learns in 2022. They are scheduled for the 2nd Wednesday of each month. Watch the e-blasts for monthly topics and sign ups. As always, we will be reaching out to our members to help with topics and speakers.

I would also like to take this time to thank those who are going off our board. Katie Plum was our Past Chair. Katie has served in many capacities within the region over the years including Treasurer. We appreciate all the guidance and support over the past years. Jeffery Garza has been the Chair Appointment At-large position for the past year. Jeffery is our new chair of the Sales and Promotion Committee, so he is not going far. We want to say THANK YOU again for all your hard work this past year.

I am looking forward to serving as your Chair in 2022.

**Tribbie Grimm** is Region V Chair-elect and serves as Research Services Administrator at Texas A&M University. She can be reached at tgrimm@tamu.edu.

Well, in our line of work we often have to deal with “it depends” situations…and apparently travel during a pandemic can be an “it depends” situation. As I write this I am still at home in California, rather than in Washington DC, getting ready for AM63 and reuniting with my NCURA colleagues. This definitely bums me out, but I keep reassuring myself that there will be time for in-person get togethers soon, and hey – I’ll get to try out this new hybrid meeting format! While the upcoming SUPER REGIONAL will be an all-virtual event, who knows what the future brings for meeting flexibilities!

On that note, be sure to keep an eye out for regional calls for registration awards to the Super Regional — if we can help get you there, our Region VI Awards committee would be glad to see your application.

Many announcements to be made at both AM63 and RM2021, including the commissioning of our region’s first DEI committee, and the incoming officers for 2022. While I know you’re waiting with bated breath to hear about those outcomes (or new endeavors), I’ll summarize those in the next regional corner. For now, I will just put in an encouraging word (or several) for volunteering — our region and our institutions operate at their best with the inputs from diverse voices — please consider volunteering and using your voice to help guide the region’s activities, programming, and direction!

Final reminder: Save the Date – RM2021 is planned for Oct 19-21, and this year will be EXTRA — we have the great fortune to bring three regions together - Region 2, Region 6 and Region 7! Calls for opportunities to volunteer, present, and get involved with our FIRST SUPER REGIONAL have been issued — we look forward to hosting you in October! In the meantime, be safe and well and keep in touch!

**Lisa Wottrich**, CRA, is the Chair of Region VI and serves as Manager for Contracts at SRI International. She can be reached at lisa.wottrich@sri.com.
Happy fall fellow Jackalopes! It is hard to believe that 2021 is almost over. I hope you all are doing well! This year Region VII has had some awesome activities and offerings for us all.

Let’s look at the amazing offerings from Region VII this year. The Professional Education and Development Committee, led by Kathryn O’Hayre at CU-Boulder, offered three sessions — topics including workplace ergonomics, CRA Exam prep, and microaggressions (scheduled for November 2021). If you missed a session, visit the Region VII website. Links to sessions are available! Thank you to all involved with PEDC for providing great programming in the Growing in Your Profession series.

By the time you read this, we will be close to our Regional Meeting 2021. Coming together with Region II and Region VI is going to prove to be a success with a program rich in subject experts and spaces to come together virtually. Thank you in advance to all of the presenters and volunteers. A special shout out to the Region VII members on the organizing committee – Natalie Buys, Liz Grinstead, and Alexa Van Dalsem!

Congratulations to the incoming officers! Chair-elect Tricia Callahan, Secretary Noelle Strom, Treasurer-elect Kelly Bergeron, and Member-at-Large Joelina Peck.

In January we will welcome the 2022 officers lead by Chair Natalie Buys with Treasurer Jason Papka, Secretary Noelle Strom, Regionally elected Member to the Board of Directors Vincent Borleske, and Members-at-Large Lisa Allen and Joelina Peck.

Start planning now for RM2022 – WE WILL BE IN PERSON (yes, you read that correctly – IN PERSON!) in Tucson, AZ! Mark your calendars! October 29 – November 2, 2022. Be on the lookout in early 2022 for the call for presenters and presentations.

Stay connected to the Region: Join our Facebook page and the Region VII community on NCURA Collaborate.

Do you have an idea for a PEDC workshop or want to present a webinar? Contact PEDC chair Kathryn O’Hayre, kathryn.ohayre@colorado.edu.

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

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.

Konnnichiwa, hola, hello colleagues,

As we wrap up on the Annual Meeting, I can hardly believe that I contributed to the regional corner a year ago and wrote about the 1st NCURA AM virtual meeting. AM is an opportunity for our global region members to meet colleagues across the globe face-to-face, but for the second year, many of us meet once again in a virtual setting for the 63rd AM hybrid meeting.

The last 12 months have flown. To say that this has been another year like no other is, of course, an understatement. The pandemic continues to disrupt every aspect of our lives, for many of us, the ability to travel. Nevertheless, we were fortunate to Reconnect virtually.

Our region held our virtual Connect and Business Meeting on September 1st. Members from places including Australia, Austria, Italy, Japan, Kenya, and the UK joined the discussion. I imagine that the next time we meet, face-to-face interaction will be felt in a whole new way. I found many of the AM sessions, including International Speed Dating: Building and Sustaining an International Network; How to Build a Collaboration with a European University: The Process Step by Step, Building and Maintaining a Culture of Trust within a Hybrid Workforce; and Effective Partnerships with Foreign Subawardees: Finding A Compliant Path Forward, Fostering Connections Through Employment Development invaluable. These sessions and others touched on reconnections, partnerships and a good reminder of some of the existing untapped opportunities from your NCURA network.

Are there colleagues you’ve lost touch with and miss? Or perhaps you would like to connect and meet new colleagues? If you’re feeling nervous or uncertain about reaching out — you’re not alone. Don’t resist; more likely than not, your message would be a pleasant welcome surprise. For our global region, the biggest challenge is connecting in person, so make the first step — reach out with an email, LinkedIn message and learn more about your international colleagues on how they do things different or the same.

I hope that reading this article will encourage you to have an impact on others and connect with your global friends. Finally, if you have an idea or topic you would like the Executive Committee to address, reach out and let us know how to support you.

Elly Pineda is Volunteer Coordinator for Region VIII and is the International Research Grants Manager in the Research Office at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Australia. She can be reached at elly.pineda@uts.edu.au.
New augmented-reality system changes how humans and robots interact

ARROCH offers two-way communication and integrates AI so robots can adjust plans as needed

As automation becomes more prevalent at warehouses and in other environments, humans and robots are increasingly sharing each other’s spaces. Real-time collaborations between them remain tricky, however, and focus on how people adapt to their mechanical co-workers.

Research from Binghamton University and the consumer electronics and mobile communications company OPPO has developed a new way to bridge the human communication gap with multiple robots using augmented reality (AR), which uses technology to add digital visuals, sound or other stimuli to a real-world view.

Assistant Professor Shiqi Zhang, a faculty member in the Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and Applied Science’s Department of Computer Science, led a team that created a system it calls Augmented Reality for Robots Collaborating with a Human — ARROCH for short.

Included on the team were PhD students Kishan Chandan and Vidisha Kudalkar as well as Xiang Li, a senior engineer for augmented reality research at OPPO.

In 2020, Zhang received a $50,000 OPPO Faculty Research Award to support the research. OPPO is developing wearable AR devices, and this project could lead to new avenues for its hardware and software.

Their research on ARROCH was presented in June at the 2021 International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA).

Utilizing AR interfaces to manage robots is not a new concept, but ARROCH offers a few new features. First, multiple robots can be directed at the same time. Also, the humans can observe the robots’ current locations and provide feedback that affects what the robots do next.

“Usually, people just have AR for visualization of what a robot is currently doing — maybe I can hold up a tablet and see the robot is making a delivery, for example,” Zhang said. “But here, we provide a bidirectional communication channel where the human can comment on the robot’s plan or behaviors. The communication channel is not very complicated, but it’s the first time we have that kind of interaction.”

The technology for human/robot interaction used in warehouses and other industrial settings is primitive in comparison and generally separates each group into a separate zone.

Pretty recently, Amazon started to encourage workers to wear special vests that send signals, so if humans have to go into the robot zone to fix something or because there is a box falling from a shelf, all the robots around the human immediately stop. That’s definitely not the best way for humans and robots to co-exist or collaborate with each other.

“What is the robot doing? Is there any robot coming into this area in the near future? If the human sees there are robots coming in, the human can say: ‘Please hold this movement for a few minutes — I need to work in this area.’ Such functionalities are not in the warehouse environment yet.”

The Binghamton team’s study included sending three robots to retrieve objects and return to the closed door of the lab. A human in the lab worked on a task while the robots were gone, and then needed to open the door when they arrived. ARROCH monitored the robots’ progress throughout the experiments.

Zhang believes the development of ARROCH leads to a number of new research directions.

“If the human is moving in a big warehouse environment, how does the robot know what a human is doing? This coupled system needs to be tighter,” he said.

“Also, how do they communicate with each other? Currently, we have an interface where the robot avatars are shown as a warehouse with maybe 500 robots. If a human opens this AR interface and the robot avatars are everywhere, the whole screen will be super-crowded, and then what does the human do? If a wearable AR interface was being used, the human probably couldn’t even see what’s in the real world — it’s all robot avatars. We’re thinking of developing more advanced visualization strategies for better communication.”

For more information visit www.binghamton.edu/news/story/3156/new-augmented-reality-system-changes-how-humans-and-robots-interact
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NCURA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

LIVE VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS
- Departmental Research Administration Workshop
  October 12-15, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET
- Contract Negotiation & Administration Workshop
  October 12-15, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET
- Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration
  December 7-10, 2021
  1:00-5:00 pm ET

IN-PERSON TRAVELING WORKSHOPS
- An Auditor’s Guide to Research Administration Workshop
  December 13-15, 2021
  Austin, TX
- Contract Negotiation & Administration Workshop
  December 13-15, 2021
  Austin, TX
- Departmental Research Administration Workshop
  December 13-15, 2021
  Austin, TX

WEBINARS
- Cost Share: Tackling the Challenges
  October 25, 2021
  2:00-3:30 pm ET
- Developing Compelling Budget Justifications
  On-Demand
- In-N-Out: Here’s What PI Transfers Are All About
  On-Demand
- Participant Support Costs: An Overview of Dos and Don’ts
  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

REGIONAL MEETINGS
- Region I (New England)
  Nov 7-10, 2021
  Virtual
- Region II (Mid-Atlantic), VI (Western), VI (Rocky Mountain)
  Oct 19-21, 2021
  Virtual
- Region V (Southwestern)
  Nov 7-10, 2021
  Fort Worth, TX

NATIONAL CONFERENCES
- Financial Research Administration Conference
  March 14-15, 2022
  New Orleans, LA
- Pre-Award Research Administration Conference
  March 17-18, 2022
  New Orleans, LA

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